Russian Cultural Profile

PLEASE NOTE: This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of Russians who live in the South Eastern Region of Melbourne. This description may not apply to all people as individual experiences may vary. However this profile can be used as a guide to some of the issues that may concern your clients. **We gratefully acknowledge the contribution of the Russian Welfare Society to this work.** Information was also gathered from *Cosmopolitan Melbourne* by J. Collins, L. Mondello, J. Beheney & T. Childs, 2001 and *Victorian Community Profiles 2001 Census: Russian Federation-born*, published by the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs, 2003.

Introduction:

To understand Russian people, we must appreciate Russia's history and how it shaped their nation today. Russians effectively survived two revolutions (in 1905 and 1917), two World Wars and a Civil War (1918-1922). From 1922, the nation was known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), an official communist state until 1991. During the 1930's, millions died in the Great Purges. In 1989, the new generation of Soviet leaders headed by Mikhael Gorbachev led the Perestroika reforms. In 1991, USSR collapsed, ending the nuclear arms race and signaling the beginning of a new government. The Russian Federation, with Vladimir Putin as President, consists of fifteen independent nations, of which Russia is the largest.

Migration:

There have been multiple waves of migration of Russian people to Australia, some being major waves other involving less people. In this local area, Russian residents have mainly come from China.

- ABS in 1901 recorded 3,358 Russian born people in Australia.
- In the wake of the 1905 Revolution, many opponents of the Tsar came to Australia, mostly via the Far East. A small portion of these people were Jews.
- After the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, there was further emigration of people to Western Europe, China and Australia. This group brought the religious practices of the Russian Orthodox Church.
- An unprecedented level of migration occurred after World War 2 with Displaced Persons migrating from war torn Europe. In the early 1960s, as a result of the Cultural Revolution in China, many Russians came from China to Australia, with most who came to Melbourne settling in Dandenong and Geelong.
- The 1970's & 80's saw several thousand Jewish families migrate as a result of changed Soviet regulations.
- The 1990's saw another migration period at the collapse of the Soviet Union.
- Starting again in 1995, there were smaller numbers migrating through the skilled migrant program, family reunions and the spouse visa.

Local Demographics: (ABS 2006)

	City of Greater Dandenong	City of Kingston	City of Casey	Cardinia Shire
Total population of LGA	125,520	134,622	214,961	57,116
Total no. of Russian speaking residents	598	1,153	475	28
Russian speaking residents, 55yrs and over	260	272	86	3

Language:

- Most of the Russian-born population in Australia speak a language other than English at home, with 78.7 per cent speaking Russian. (ABS 2001) Russian is the third most spoken European language in the world.

Culture and Religion:

- Russian culture is firmly based in its religious traditions
- Russian Orthodox is the predominant religion. Far smaller numbers of Russian-born in Australia follow Islam, Judaism, Protestantism and Buddhism, while some arrivals, post 1991, have no affiliation.
- Religious icons are very important to many, with most families having a prayer corner in their living area.
- Art and literature were still very strong influences. ie: Tchaikovsky, Bol'shoy Ballet, Pushkin and Tolstoy
- During the Soviet regime, religion, art and literature were under strict control. Even so, Soviet artists made noteworthy achievements in film editing, music composition and Paternak and Solzhenistyn were Nobel Prizes recipients.
- The Russian family name (surname) is derived from the male's family. All Russians have a middle name which is the father's first name with an ending to denote they are a daughter or son of their father (patronymic). Generally the polite form of address is a person's first name and their patronymic.

Attitudes to health and ageing:

- Older people have to deal with the loss of the possibility of being able to return 'home'.
- They have to accept that their family may be scattered all over the world and they don't know what may have happened to some members.
- Older people tend to fear the loss of independence and ability to make decisions which may come with ageing.
- They are stoic and independent and reluctant to ask for help.
- Although older people will tend to accept what life brings, they will fight it rather than resign themselves to it.
- There is a high incidence of mental illness, like depression and post traumatic stress, because of past experiences.

Responding to professional care and services:

- Many elderly Russians tend to be suspicious of anything related to government.
- They will be very reluctant to provide information about themselves or their family in case it is used against them.
- Russians and their families' response to services like HACC are influenced by their place of origin.
- Russians mainly from rural China or smaller cities in Russia would be more resistant to ask for help. They may have large families and be resistant to ask for help because of existing family support received from children and grandchildren or other relatives. They may have little or no functional English at all so language can be a barrier.
- Russians mainly from former USSR, Western Europe, or from large cities in China are usually better educated, are skilled migrants and have a good knowledge of English language. They are more open to western culture and basic social and community services. They are more likely to appreciate the services being offered because of their exposure to community life and government services.
- Many Russians have a fear of going into hospital or Aged Care because they have a fear of being confined or trapped.
- Many older people are afraid of being in an English speaking environment and will usually be receptive to having an interpreter, especially if from same migration background.

Russian Identity:

Even though people's experiences varied immensely depending on time and route of migration and whether they had an urban or rural lifestyle, their common identity as Russians is paramount. They have language, traditions, food and religion to unite them.

Greetings:

English Greeting	Russian Greeting	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello	úÄÒÁ×ÓÔ×ÕÊÔÅ	zdras-tvuy-tea
Goodbye	äÏÓ×ÉÄÁÎÉÑ	das-vi-da-nya
Yes	äÁ	da
No	ÎÅÔ	nyet
Thank you	óÐÁÓÉÂÏ	spa-see-ba

Key Festivals/Event Dates:

- New Years Day 1st January.
- Russian Orthodox Christmas 7th January
- Russian Orthodox New Year Eve 13th January.
- Russian National Women's Day March 8th
- Russians celebrate Name Days (ie Patron Saints Days) in preference to Birthdays, however, many celebrate both.

Services & Activities useful for older Russian people in Kingston, Greater Dandenong, Casey and Cardinia.*

St. John of Kronstadt Russian Welfare Society Inc. 13 Conway St Dandenong South 3175 Ph: 9793 5955 Fax: 9791 3933 Email: kronstadtgardens@russianwelfare.org.au Website: www.russianwelfare.org.au	Services provided include: • Two Telelink services every Friday afternoon • Russian Seniors Club meets weekly • Swimming Club for HACC clients fortnightly • HACC Active Group every Tuesday meets for outings and excursions • Russian Women's Health Group & Knitting Group • HACC Friendly Visiting • Transport Support – 3 buses available • Kronstadt Gardens – 86 bed aged care facility • Russian Village – an independent living complex • Community Partnerships Programs • New Arrivals Program *Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Casey & Cardinia*
City of Casey **Home and Community Care Services** 1/9 Regency Dr. Narre Warren. 3805 Ph: 9705 5444 Fax: 8790 3754	HACC Services include: • **Russian Outing Group** Partnership project with Russian Welfare Society providing twice a month, on a Thursday, an outing by bus for eligible HACC clients. *Eligibility: Casey*
Russian Ethnic Representative Council of Victoria 118 Greeves St (PO Box 2811) Fitzroy 3065 Ph: 9415-6444. Fax: 9415-9866 www.rerc.org.au Email: mail@rerc.org.au	Services include: • HACC Friendly visiting program • Telelink program • PAG • Community Transport • Russian Migrants Club *Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Casey & Cardinia*
South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre	• Multicultural PAG core Monday Dandenong and Friday Doveton • Multicultural PAG high

Level 1 314 Thomas Street Dandenong 3175 Ph: 9706 8933 Fax: 9706 8830	Tuesday Noble Park • Multicultural PAG core-high Wednesday Noble Park • Carer Support Program • Volunteer Visiting Program *Eligibility:Greater Dandenong, Casey & Cardinia*
New Hope Foundation 40 Grattan Street Prahran 3181 Ph: 9510 5877 Fax:9510 8971 Contact for PAG: Peter Kalathas. Contact for ESL: Warren Brewer Ph: 9510 5877	Services provided include: • English class Thursdays for Russian Group • Multicultural English classes Tuesdays and Fridays • Multicultural PAG high Mon : Venue: Moorleigh Multicultural Centre Bignell Rd, East Bentleigh *Eligibility: Kingston*
Vision Australia 454 Glenferrie Road Kooyong Ph: 9864 9533 Fax: 9864 9544 Contact for CALD Telelink Ph: 1300 847 466	Russian Telelink Program Open to all HACC clients, sighted & vision impaired Operates weekly • Free
Russian Senior Citizen's Club, Russian Orthodox Church Hall, Dandenong. Ph: 9793 5955	

*** This resource list of services (other than Council HACC), has been prepared for aged care staff in the Council areas of Kingston, Greater Dandenong, Casey and Cardinia. Some services and activities listed are in fact available to residents beyond these four municipalities.**