

# Vietnamese Cultural Profile – older people

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**PLEASE NOTE:** This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of Vietnamese people who live in 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.

**The following profile has been created from the Home and Personal Care Kit: Cultural and Religious Profiles to Assist in Providing Culturally Sensitive Care and Effective Communication 2004 produced by Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne). Information includes relevant services & activities for older people.**

## Introduction:

There are over 150,000 Vietnamese-born people living in Australia including people of Chinese (usually Cantonese) ancestry and ethnic Vietnamese as well as a number of smaller minority groups including the Khmer and Hmong. As a result there are many different cultural influences on people who were born in Vietnam.

## Migration:

- There have been three main waves of migration to Australia. The first wave began in 1975 and comprised mainly of an educated and privileged sector. The next commenced in 1978 with the large-scale exodus of 'boat people' from Vietnam, initially arriving directly in Australia, but later via refugee camps in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Hong Kong.
- From 1992 onwards, family reunions resulted in a third wave of arrivals.

## Local Demographics: Vietnamese born residents in the South East Region (ABS 2006)

	City of Greater Dandenong	City of Kingston	City of Casey	Cardinia Shire
<b>Total population of LGA</b>	125,520	134,622	214,961	57,116
<b>Total no. of residents born in Vietnam</b>	10,609	1,252	1,007	26
<b>Total number of Vietnamese speaking residents</b>	13,056	1,265	1,343	34
<b>Number of Vietnamese born residents, 55 + yrs.</b>	1,668	223	111	0
<b>Number of Vietnamese speaking residents, 55+ yrs.</b>	1,362	152	92	0

## Language:

- The national language of Vietnam is Vietnamese.
- At the 2006 Census, 78.6% of the Vietnamese population in metropolitan Melbourne spoke Vietnamese at home, 16.6% spoke Cantonese, 0.7% spoke Mandarin and 2.3 % spoke English
- Depending on their ethnic background, Vietnamese-born people may speak Chinese (usually Cantonese), English, French and Khmer.

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## Religion:

- The majority of Vietnamese people are Buddhists. 20-30% of Vietnamese people are Catholics.
- Vietnamese also practice Taoism, Islam, Cao Dai and Hoa Hao and a certain percentage are Protestant.
- Vietnamese Buddhists may fast on specific days in the lunar calendar months. Catholic Vietnamese may fast on Good Friday and on Ash Wednesday.

## Attitudes and Issues with Aging:

- Traditionally elderly parents are taken care of by the family.
- In Vietnam, elders were the leaders in families and had a strong influence in decision-making. In Australia the elders no longer have power, money or land, and become financially dependent on their children, creating a role reversal.
- Older Vietnamese people can become socially and culturally isolated from the younger generation.

## Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:

- Some Buddhist Vietnamese people may believe that they reap what they sow, or that disability is the result of misdeeds done in past lives.
- Traditionally, mental illness is a shameful thing within the Vietnamese culture. Mental illness is often feared or denied, and those who are ill are hidden away by their families until the family can no longer care for them.

## Customs / Values:

- Respect for elders is an important cultural value. Insults to elders or ancestors are very serious and can often lead to severed social ties.
- In general, the Vietnamese culture values respect for authority and avoidance of conflict.
- The traditional Vietnamese family is patriarchal; the mother is considered the home minister (noi tuong) and is responsible for family harmony, the family budget and family schedules.
- In the Vietnamese community the benefit of the family and community comes before the individual.
- Vietnamese people tend to be polite, guarded and non-confrontational. Disagreement may be expressed in the form of non-compliance, or not answering a question.
- Modesty and privacy are important cultural values.

## Communication Styles:

- To show respect, Vietnamese people bow their heads and don't look a superior or elder in the eye.
- Generally Vietnamese women do not shake hands with each other or with men. Many may greet by bowing slightly to each other.
- It is disrespectful to touch another person's head. Only an elder can touch the head of a child.
- Vietnamese people may say 'yes' to indicate that they are listening, this may not indicate that they agree. If a Vietnamese person does not understand something they may also smile or laugh to hide this and mask their embarrassment.
- Speaking in a loud tone with excessive gestures is generally considered rude.

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## Naming Conventions:

- Vietnamese names are traditionally written with the surname first, followed by their middle name, with their given name last. Most names can be used for either gender.
- Vietnamese people prefer to be addressed, using their title. For example, Dr. Mr. and Mrs.
- Many Vietnamese people have also adopted western names.

## Health Beliefs and Practices:

- Self-medication is in the Vietnamese community is common.
- Many use traditional remedies in conjunction to western health care. Chinese medicines such as herbal remedies, tonics and massage are used. Acupuncture, pinching, pulling on the skin, rubbing oiled skin with the edge of a coin or spoon (cao gio), or cupping may also be used. These practices may result in bruises or marks.

## Greetings:

English Greeting	Vietnamese	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello	CHA`O Ô / Ồ / Ờ	CHJOW ONG / BAA
Yes	ĐA	ZAA
No	KNÔNG	KHYONG
Thank you	CẢM ƠN	KOME -EARN

## Key Vietnamese Festivals / Significant Dates:

- Vietnamese follow the lunar calendar.
- Vietnamese Catholics celebrate Easter from Thursday to Saturday, concluding with a family gathering on Saturday night. Vietnamese Catholics celebrate Christmas with a family gathering after midnight Mass.
- Chinese (Lunar) New Year *1<sup>st</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> Lunar Month (Jan/Feb)*
- Ancestor's Day (Full moon Festival) *April*
- Commemoration of the fall of Saigon *30<sup>th</sup> April*
- Doan Ngu *June*
- Wandering Souls Day *August*

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### Services & activities useful for older Vietnamese people in Kingston, Greater Dandenong, Casey and Cardinia.\*

Organisation/Contact	Services/Activities
<p><b>Springvale Indo-Chinese Mutual Assistance Association (SICMAA)</b></p> <p>9 Hillcrest Grove Springvale, Vic, 3171 Phone: 9562 3266, 9547 7939 Fax: 9558 5742 Email: <a href="mailto:sicmaa@satlink.com.au">sicmaa@satlink.com.au</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and referral</li> <li>• ESL classes</li> <li>• Disability Access Project</li> <li>• Weekly seniors activity</li> <li>• Community Partners Project (C.P.P)</li> <li>• Settlement service for newly arrived Vietnamese.</li> </ul> <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Casey &amp; Cardinia</i></p>
<p><b>Vietnamese Community in Australia Victorian Chapter</b></p> <p>214 Nicholson Street Footscray, Vic, 3011 Phone: 9689 8515 Fax: 9687 9198 Email: <a href="mailto:info@vcavic.org.au">info@vcavic.org.au</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social and Recreational Programmes</li> <li>• ESL classes</li> <li>• Information and referral</li> <li>• Home and Community Care Programme <b>(West and North only)</b></li> </ul> <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Casey &amp; Cardinia for most services.</i></p>
<p><b>Vietnamese Australian Senior Association</b> VASA Vic Senior Citizen's Centre 5 The Crescent Springvale. Contact Truyen Thai (President) Ph:9547 9180 Ph: 0414 604 180</p>	<p>Members are mostly Vietnamese, some are members from Cambodia, Laos and Chinese.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wednesdays 10.00 am – 4.00 pm</li> <li>• Meetings, exercise, entertainment, outings, celebrations and meals.</li> </ul>
<p><b>City of Greater Dandenong</b></p> <p>Community Care Services Ph: 8558 7902</p>	<p>HACC services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vietnamese PAG held Tuesdays, at Cooina Centre 10.00 am -3.00 pm Vietnamese staff and volunteers &amp; qualified interpreter present.</li> </ul> <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong</i></p>
<p><b>Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities (ADEC)</b></p> <p>175 Plenty Road Preston. 3072</p> <p>Contact Rasaela Lopez Ph: 9480 1666 Fax: 9480 3444</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vietnamese Carers Group Thursday 11-12 Venue: Springvale Literacy Center 16 Grace Park Avenue Springvale, Vic. 3172</li> </ul> <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Casey &amp; Cardinia</i></p>

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<p><b>Vision Australia</b>            454 Glenferrie Road            Kooyong            Ph: 9864 9533            Fax: 9864 9544</p> <p>Contact for CALD Telelink            Ph: 1300 847 466</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vietnamese Telelink Program</li> </ul> <p>Open to <b>all</b> HACC clients, sighted and vision impaired.            Operates every Wednesday            Free</p>
<p><b>Uniting Aged Care Victoria &amp; Tasmania</b></p> <p>Suite 3            16/18 Windsor Avenue,            Springvale Vic 3171</p> <p>Vanta Ph: 9574 0401</p> <p>Contact Coordinator of Scott Club</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vietnamese Transit Club</li> </ul> <p>Social program providing small group outings which include lunch.            Clients need to be independently mobile and “low care”.            Thursday 9 am to 3 pm</p> <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong</i></p>
<p><b>South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre</b></p> <p>Level 1, 314 Thomas Street            Dandenong, Vic, 3175            Phone: 9706 8933            Fax: 9706 8830</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multicultural PAG core              Monday Dandenong and Friday Doveton</li> <li>• Multicultural PAG high              Tuesday Noble Park</li> <li>• Multicultural PAG core-high              Wednesday Noble Park</li> <li>• Carer Support Program</li> <li>• Volunteer Visiting Program</li> <li>• ESL classes</li> </ul> <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Casey &amp; Cardinia</i></p>
<p><b>New Hope Foundation</b></p> <p>40 Grattan Street            Prahran, Vic, 3181            Phone: 9510 5877            Fax: 9510 8971</p> <p>PAG &amp; ESL classes held at East Bentleigh            Moorleigh Multicultural Centre</p> <p>Contact for PAG Peter Kalathas.            Contact for ESL Warren Brewer            Ph: 9510 5877</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multicultural Planned Activity Group              High needs people</li> <li>• Multicultural ESL classes</li> <li>• Seniors Gym</li> </ul> <p>Venue: Moorleigh Multicultural Centre            Bignell Rd, East Bentleigh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Visitors Scheme</li> </ul> <p><i>Eligibility: Kingston</i></p>

**\*This resource list showing services (other than core 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.**