PLEASE NOTE: This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of Arabic speaking population who live in the 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 assistance of Victorian Arabic Social services (VASS) in preparing this profile.

Introduction:

The Arab world refers to Arabic-speaking countries stretching from the Atlantic Ocean in the West to Arabian Sea in the East, and from the Mediterranean sea in the North to the Horn of Africa and Indian Ocean in the South East.

The Arabic Speaking population represents 1.3% (287,174 people) of the total Australian population (ABS Census 2011). The Arabic speaking communities in Australia are diverse and include people from 22 countries. The 'Arab World' is where Arabic is either an official language or it is spoken by a significant portion of the population (VASS 2015). The Arab speaking community not only share common language, but history and heritage.

Countries that make up the Arab World:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>Tunisia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comoros</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Yemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(VASS 2015)

The countries that make up the Arab world can be further divided into the geographical areas of Middle East, Gulf countries and Northern African countries.

Migration:

- Many of the people from Arabic Speaking countries have migrated or come to Australia as refugees or displaced persons.

- The Lebanese community are the largest overseas-born Arabic people living in Australia, making up 23.8% of the total community. This is followed by Iraq (8.8%), Egypt (7.1%) and Sudan (3.7%) (SBS Census Explorer 2015)

- Lebanese migrants came in three waves:
  1) Before and after World War 1 (economic factors contributed to this)
  2) World War Two
  3) Immediate effect of civil war in Lebanon in 1975

- Egyptian born migrant who settled here after WWII between 1947-1971 were largely Coptic Christians. In smaller numbers, Muslim Egyptians arrived between 1970 and 1980s
• Iraq’s involvement in two gulf wars and recent “War on Terror” has influenced migration of Iraqis to Australia
• Approximately 95% of Sudanese migrants have arrived under the Refugee and Humanitarian program in recent years
• Migration from a particular Arabic country may not indicate the ethnicity, religion or language spoken at home of a particular migrant. Nationalistic or sectarian terms may be referred to for one’s identity, for example, an Egyptian migrant may identify as Coptic (religious term) and not necessarily an Egyptian or Arab.

Local Demographics: Arabic-Speaking residents in the Eastern Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Government Area</th>
<th>Total Arabic-Speaking Population</th>
<th>65-69 years</th>
<th>70-74 years</th>
<th>75-79 years</th>
<th>80 years and over</th>
<th>Total number of Arabic-Speaking people aged 65 and over</th>
<th>People aged 65+ as a % of the Arabic-Speaking population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Boroondara</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Knox</td>
<td>1165</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Manningham</td>
<td>1826</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Maroondah</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Monash</td>
<td>1219</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Whitehorse</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shire of Yarra Ranges</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Region</td>
<td>5843</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ABS Census 2011)

Language:
• According to the 2011 census, Arabic was the third most spoken language at home (other than English). 61.9% of these spoken English very well and 38.5% were born in Australia.
• The large number of Australian-born who can speak Arabic reflects that despite the community being in Australia more than 20 years, the language has been maintained through the generations (ABS Census 2011)
• In Victoria, Arabic ranks as the sixth most common language spoken at home. This equates to be 5.5% of Languages Other Than English spoken at home in Victoria (VMC 2011)
• Arab migrants speak a common mother tongue, Arabic, however their speech may be specific to a locality, a dialect or a vocabulary, all of which mark a more specific identity (Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia 2009).
• More Arabic educated migrants would also know one or two European languages, in particular, French, English, Italian or Greek
• The elderly lack English proficiency due to social isolation and lack of social networks outside community
• When professionals are communicating with the Arabic speaking community it is preferable to use interpreters who can speak the same dialect
• English proficiency amongst the educated migrants and Australian born is high while limited with uneducated migrants from the Arab world
• In more recent years there has been an increase in refugees coming from Iraq and Sudan. Wars and other civic strife in the Middle East have affected the flow of migration to Australia.
**Language:** English Proficiency among Arabic-Speaking residents in Eastern Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic Community</th>
<th>Speaks English only</th>
<th>Speaks English very well or well</th>
<th>Speaks English not well or not at all</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Not stated</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Boroondara</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Knox</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1061</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>1160</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Manningham</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1668</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Maroondah</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Monash</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1077</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>1207</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Whitehorse</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shire of Yarra Ranges</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Region</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5269</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>5787</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>5838</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ABS Census 2011)

**Religion:**
- The Arab world largely follows Islam. Arabic is the language of the Al Qur’an (Koran), the Holy Book of Muslims. For further information about the Muslim community please refer to the Muslim Community Profile.
- The majority of the Arabic Speaking population in Victoria are Muslim. There are also a number of Christians, particularly among the Egyptian-born community who are largely Coptic (The Coptic Orthodox Church is one of the earliest Christian churches).
- Other religions include Catholic, Orthodox Christian, Chaldean, Coptic and Maronite.

**Attitudes and Issues with Ageing:**
- The majority who migrated in the First and Second World War wave of migration used to be factory workers, while more recent migrants in the 90s and now rarely worked and were sponsored by their children. Latter groups are more accepting of social welfare services than those in previous waves.
- Elders are highly regarded. Their opinion is respected and valued
- There is high expectation that the family will care for elderly parents at home. Caring for the elderly is sometimes considered a religious duty.
- Some Elderly are becoming isolated, lonely and depressed due to families having their own struggles to meet economic needs

**Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:**
- Mental illness is largely stigmatised in the Arab speaking community. This greatly influences reluctance to access mental health services
Customs / Values:
- Traditionally patriarchal social structures are the norm in the Arab world, although this is being challenged today
- It is customary to wear black when in mourning
- An essential part of hospitality is offering food and drink to guests.
- When offering a service to the Arabic speaking community it is important to consider gender issues and the preference of people from the same gender to be matched in service provision
- Trust in the community is built from personal relationships with workers and service providers

Communication styles:
- Generally speaking, the Arabic speaking community like to express their emotions quite openly. They are understood to be quite expressive
- Although they may not use the word 'please' when asking for something, politeness will be evident in their tone of voice
- Arabic people are very social and will commonly gather together as a family and visit with each other
- Appreciation for a service may be expressed with words of blessing from the recipient
- It is appropriate to shake hands when greeting people of the same gender. Some Muslims may refrain from shaking hands with people of the opposite gender. If greeting a Muslim, it is advisable to wait for the Muslim to initiate the move
- Communication is preferred through personal contact with someone who can speak the same dialect

Naming Conventions:
- Older Arabic people prefer to be addressed by the term “UM” for women and “ABU” for men. It is always advisable to check with the elder person on how to address them, otherwise terms such as Mr. and Mrs. or if a doctor, Dr. are acceptable.
- Younger generations refer to older relatives as Aunty or Uncle as a sign of respect

Health Beliefs and Practices:
- Both Western medicine and herbal remedies or traditional healing practices are accepted in the Arab world
- Due to illiteracy among the older generation, the elderly may experience difficulty to read health information and materials in Arabic
- Medical diagnosis should be given to the closest family member, preferably an older son or daughter. Doctors and medical professionals are well accepted and respected in the Arabic speaking community
- It is not uncommon for health professionals to be sort for advice on a number of health matters including areas not related to their field of expertise
Greetings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Greeting</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Closest English Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hi</td>
<td>سلام</td>
<td>SALAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Morning</td>
<td>صبح الخير</td>
<td>SABAH EL KHEER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodbye</td>
<td>مع السلام</td>
<td>MA’A SALAAMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>نعم</td>
<td>NA’AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>لا</td>
<td>LAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thankyou</td>
<td>شكرا</td>
<td>SHOKRAN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Arabic Festivals / Significant Dates:

- Independence dates for each of the Arabic countries are celebrated according to the respective national calendar.
- Most other celebrations are based around religious occasions. For further information about these please refer to the different religious profiles.

Local services useful for Arabic Speaking residents in the Eastern Region

Settlement Services

Provide information, referral and casework for refugees and family migrants who arrived in the last five years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne)</td>
<td>Suite 2, Town Hall Hub, 27 Bank Street, Box Hill, 3128</td>
<td>Ph: 9285 4888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hope Migrant and Refugee Centre</td>
<td>18 Chester Street, Oakleigh, 3166</td>
<td>Ph: 9563 4130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Arabic Social Services</td>
<td>C1, 1-13 The Gateway, Broadmeadows, 3047</td>
<td>Ph: 9359 2861</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aged Care & Disability Support Services

Migrant Information Centre Aged & Disability Services
Address: Suite 2, Town Hall Hub, 27 Bank Street, Box Hill, 3128
Ph: 9275 6901
Email: wzhang@miceastmelb.com.au

The Access & Support Program provides short term support to help people access aged care and other services so they can stay living at home independently. The Program provides information, referral, support and monitoring. The aged and disability team generally aims to increase access to aged care and disability services for CALD communities in the EMR through working with CALD communities to promote those services, provide information and referral and supporting organisations to provide culturally appropriate care. The team also receives funding for specific projects in this area.

Victorian Arabic Social Services (VASS) (Head Office)
Address: C1, 1-13 The Gateway, Broadmeadows VIC 3047
Ph: (03) 9359 2861
Email: mail@vass.org.au
Website: www.vass.org.au/contact-us/

The Victorian Arabic Social Services is dedicated to addressing the social, cultural and welfare needs of the Arabic speaking background communities in Victoria.

VASS Dandenong Sub-Office (for South East Region)
Address: South East Region MRC, Level 1, 314 Thomas Street, (PO Box 1139), Dandenong, 3175
Ph: (03) 9706 8933

References:


Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia, 2009, Quality use of medicines issues amongst Arabic-speaking communities in Australia, Broadmeadows, pp. 5-10.
