

## **Croatian Cultural Profile**

**PLEASE NOTE:** This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of Croatians 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. This is an update of the profile in the Home and Personal Care Kit developed by the MIC in 2004.

### **Introduction:**

- There were 18,189 Croatian-born persons in Victoria (35.7% of Australia's total) in 2006, decreasing by 4.2% from 18,981 persons in 2001, mainly due to ageing of the population. The Croatian-born community was well distributed throughout Victoria, with distinct concentrations in Brimbank (17.0%) and Greater Geelong (9.0%). There were 38,960 persons identified with Croatian ancestry, including second and later generations.
- The Croatia-born community showed an older age profile: 18.8% were aged 26 – 44 years. 43.1% were aged 45 – 64 years; and 31.5% were aged 65 and over.

### **Migration:**

- There have been four waves of migration from Croatia to Australia. The first wave began in 1851 with the news of the gold rush. The first arrivals, mainly from Dalmatia, became miners, labourers, fishermen and many began their own small businesses. Most of them settled in the goldfields of Victoria.
- The second wave resulted after World War II and comprised of displaced persons. These people were often well educated and had been in refugee camps. In 1947, Croatian's made up approximately 80% of migrants from the former Yugoslavia, with at least 5000 Croatians living in Australia at the time and settling mainly in the fruit-growing districts around Mildura.
- The third wave of Croatian immigrants arrived in the 1960's and 1970's as a result of the high unemployment, difficult economic conditions and anti- Croatian sentiment in Yugoslavia. Immigration slowed throughout the 1980's with Croatian immigrants primarily arriving under family reunion programs.
- Finally, the most recent wave of Croatian immigration occurred in the 1990's as a result of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and arriving Australia as refugees.

### **Local Demographics: Croatian-born residents in the Eastern Region**

- The latest Census in 2006 recorded 51 000 Croatian-born people in Australia, a decrease of 1.7 per cent from the 2001 Census. The 2006 distribution by state and territory showed New South Wales had the largest number with 18 460 followed by Victoria (18 190), Western Australia (5170) and Queensland (3860).
- The median age of the Croatian-born in 2006 was 57.2 years compared with 46.8 years for all overseas-born and 37.1 years for the total Australian population.  
(<http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/comm-summ/summary.htm>)

Local Government Area	Total Croatian-born Population	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years and over	Total number of Croatian-born people aged 65 and over	People aged 65+ as a % of the Croatian-born population
City of Boroondara	247	43	55	60	24	38	16%
City of Knox	311	76	69	36	05	28	9%
City of Manningham	417	85	131	64	13	68	17%
City of Maroondah	169	37	31	29	04	20	12%
City of Monash	440	106	128	81	21	77	18%
City of Whitehorse	286	50	84	70	16	45	16%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	138	31	44	15	11	21	16%
Eastern Region	1154	338	540	355	94	297	26%

(ABS Census 2006 & MAV Data 2006)

## Languages:

Local Government Area	Total no. of people speaking Croatian at Home	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years and over	Total number of Croatian speaking people aged 65 and over	Croatian speaking People aged 65+ as a % of the Croatian-born population
City of Boroondara	243	26	36	46	19	87	36%
City of Knox	391	69	70	25	10	57	15%
City of Manningham	518	71	120	59	14	134	26%
City of Maroondah	197	33	28	22	9	50	25%
City of Monash	541	98	115	72	19	161	30%
City of Whitehorse	312	39	70	51	7	90	29%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	144	23	38	11	9	37	26%
Eastern Region	2346	359	477	286	87	616	26%

(ABS Census 2006 & MAV Data 2006)

The official language for Croatia is Croatian. Albanian, Czech, Hungarian, Italian, Serbian, Slovakian and Slovenian may be spoken by their respective Groups in parts of Croatia.

## Religion:

The Croatian-born population in Victoria identified as the following religions at the 2006 Census (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2006):

- Catholic 81%
- Serbian Orthodox 6.6%
- Eastern Orthodox 2.4%
- Greek Orthodox 0.8%
- Christian 0.6%
- Seventh-day Adventist 0.5%
- Islam 0.5%

- Sundays are a holy day and the majority of Croatian-born Australians will attend church on Sunday mornings.
- Most young people are baptized, and most marriages are conducted in a church. Most families now observe Catholic rites of passage, including Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation and Marriage ceremonies in the Church.
- Feast of Our Lady (First Sunday in May) is an important celebration to many elderly Croats.
- When a family member passes away, the usual rituals of Roman Catholicism prevail. It is also a custom for the relatives to wear black clothing as a symbol of mourning.
- Christmas and Easter are important and widely celebrated:
  - Christmas More traditional Croatian families light candles with a ribbon representing the Croatian flag wrapped around it and placed amid green wheat as a display.
  - Easter A basket containing Easter bread, painted eggs, wine and produce from the garden is blessed at the Croatian church on Easter Saturday. On Easter Sunday, many families attend the Resurrection ceremony and Mass, followed by a family lunch.

### Attitudes and Issues with Ageing:

- The Croatian community is quite family-centred. There is a strong sense of family expectation that the children will take care of their parents at home for as long as possible. However, according to Liz Dimitriadis Consulting (2004) there has been an emerging shift in the community attitudes with some people departing from these traditional views.
- The elderly are respected and traditionally seen as a source of knowledge and information on culture, traditions and history and are valued within the family and the broader community.
- Many older Croats have difficulty in accessing health and welfare services due to poor proficiency in English, lack of mobility and lack of knowledge of the available services. Fear of authority also plays an important part.

### Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:

- Croatian-born people regard mental illness as a social stigma but this is changing.
- There may be the view that medication is the only treatment. Psychotherapy, group therapy or occupational therapy may be rejected.
- Members of the older generation are often less proficient in English and may experience additional frustration and isolation because of this.

### Customs / Values:

- Croatian family structure is based on the patriarchal model.
- Extended family is the norm and relatives remain quite close with both the mother and the father's sides. The family provides its members with a social network and assistance in times of need.
- For many, especially the older generation, life revolves around the church and its activities. The clergy is highly respected and involved in various aspects of community life.
- Croats are extremely proud of their heritage and culture. They call their country "Our Beautiful Homeland" ("*Lijepa naša*"), which is also the title of the national anthem.

- Folklore plays a key role in preserving the culture. Their culture is expressed through verse, poetic songs, melodies, fairy tales, symbolic rituals, music, dance, costumes, and jewellery.
- The majority of Croatians maintain strong ties with their own community. This is done through the numerous national clubs and halls as well as churches.

## Taboos

- Avoid talking about the conflict between Croatia and Serbia and the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as this may be a sensitive issue for many Croatian people. Discussing comparisons between the nationalities of the former Yugoslavian states may also be offensive.

## Communication Styles:

- Generally Croatians communicate in a direct and straightforward manner; however there is an emphasis on being respectful and diplomatic so as not to offend anyone.
- It is customary to shake hands and have direct eye contact when greeting.
- Close friends and family may greet each other with a kiss on each cheek and an embrace.
- Young people are expected to offer the first greeting to older people and women to men.
- Personal space is usually respected in Croatian culture. People generally don't touch each other when communicating until a familiar relationship is established.

## Naming Conventions:

- The naming system follows the standard western system i.e. the first or Christian name is followed by the family or married name.
- Generally Croatian people use their titles and surnames when referring to others, only close friends and family will use first names.

## Health Beliefs and Practices:

- Croats rely on their doctors for information, assistance and referrals.
- Croatian-born people may use alternative therapies alongside mainstream medical treatment.
- Herbal medicines may be used.
- Croatian-born people tend to openly discuss their physical ailments and health conditions.
- Preventive health actions are not widely adopted by the Croatian community.

## Greetings:

English Greeting	Croatian	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello	Bok	Bok
Good day	Dobar dan	Dobar dan
Goodbye	Dovidjenja	Doveejenya
Good Morning	Dobro jutro	Dobro yootro
Yes	Da	Da
No	Ne	Ne
Thank you	Hvala	Hvala

## Key Croatian Festivals / Significant Dates:

- Easter Late March / Early April
- Assumption of Mary 15th August
- All Saints Day 1<sup>st</sup> November
- Christmas 25<sup>th</sup> December
- Epiphany 6<sup>th</sup> January
- Anti-fascist Struggle Day 22<sup>nd</sup> June
- Victory Day/Day of Croatian Defenders 5<sup>th</sup> August

\* To search for exact dates of key cultural and religious events, festivals and national days for this year, visit: <http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/a-diverse-australia/calendar-australia/>

## Local Services Useful for Croatian-born Residents in the Eastern Region

### Settlement Services

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

Name	Address	Contact
Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne)	Suite 2, Town Hall Hub, 27 Bank Street, Box Hill 3128	Ph: 9285 4888 <a href="http://www.miceastmelb.com.au">www.miceastmelb.com.au</a>
New Hope Migrant and Refugee Centre	18 Chester Street, Oakleigh 3166	Ph: 9563 4130

### Aged Care & Disability Support Services

Name of Organisation & Contact Details	Venue	Time / Day
<b>Victorian Multi-Ethnic Slavic Welfare Association</b> Ph: 9878 9199 or 9620 1200	Whitehorse Community Resource Centre Level 1, 79 Mahoneys Rd, Forest Hill, 3131	Social support group once per month and includes people from Croatian background

### **Australian Croatian Community Services**

Footscray: 40 Pickett Street, PO Box 2140 Footscray 3011

Ph: 03 9689 5811

Dandenong: Level 1, 128-130 Walker Street, PO Box 7006 Dandenong 3175

Ph: 03 9791 6011

Intake e-mail: [services@accs.asn.au](mailto:services@accs.asn.au)

### **Migrant Information Centre Aged & Disability Services**

Address: Suite 2, Town Hall Hub, 27 Bank Street, Box Hill 3128

Ph: 03 9275 6905

[www.miceastmelb.com.au](http://www.miceastmelb.com.au)

### **Senior Citizens Groups**

There are a number of Croatian Senior Citizens Clubs in Melbourne but none are located in the EMR. For further information contact Australian Croatian Community Services above. The closest group to EMR is based in Keysborough.

### **Other Support Services**

#### **Australian Croatian Association**

72 Whitehall Street, Footscray 3011

Ph: 03 9689 5866

The Australian Croatian Association is a meeting place for Australian Croatians with restaurant/bar facilities and halls for hire.

#### **Croatian Catholic Centre Clifton Hill**

Hrvatski Katolicki Centar

St. Nicholas' Church (Sv. Nikola Tavelic)

69 Hodgkinson Street, PO Box 157, Clifton Hill 3068

Ph: 03 9482 3479

E-mail: [cliftonhill@hkc.com.au](mailto:cliftonhill@hkc.com.au)

[www.hkc.com.au/index.php](http://www.hkc.com.au/index.php)

Offers mass services in Croatian language, Croatian Schools on Saturdays, folklore dance programs, Sunday lunches for the elderly and occasionally excursions are organized locally and interstate.

#### **Croatian Catholic Centre Keysborough**

'Duha Svetoga' Church

798 - 808 Springvale Road, Keysborough 3173

Ph: 9769 1966

The Church offers mass services in Croatian language, senior group meetings, dancing, religious and cultural functions.

#### **Croatian Catholic Welfare Association**

798-808 Springvale Road, Keysborough VIC 3173

Ph: 03 9701 6131

Located at the Croatian Catholic Centre Keysborough. The service includes HACC Assessment & Care Management, Social Support /Friendly Visiting Program, Information and Referrals.

#### **Victorian Multi-Ethnic Slavic Welfare Association Inc. (VMESWA)**

Address: Whitehorse Community Resource Centre, Level 1, 79 Mahoneys Road, Forest Hill, 3131

Ph: 9878 9199 or 9620 1200

A non-government, non-political and non-religious organisation which provides information and assistance to migrants, refugees and Slavic Australians in one of the following languages: Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, Slovenian, Macedonian and English.

## Media

There are a number of specific Croatian media programs and outlets in Melbourne:

Media	Program	Details
Radio	SBS Radio Melbourne 1224 AM	PO Box 294, South Melbourne 3205 Ph: 9949 2121 Fax: 9949 2385 Email: <a href="mailto:croatian.program@sbs.com.au">croatian.program@sbs.com.au</a>
	Croatian Radio Program 3ZZZ - 92.3 AM	Email: <a href="mailto:admin@3zzz.com.au">admin@3zzz.com.au</a>
	Croatian Radio Melbourne	Email: <a href="mailto:ivica@cyberdude.com">ivica@cyberdude.com</a> Web: <a href="http://www.croradio.net">www.croradio.net</a>
Television	CroatianTV-Australia	<a href="http://www.croatiantv-australia.com">www.croatiantv-australia.com</a>
	Channel 31	Level 1, 501 Swanston St, Melbourne 3000 Email: <a href="mailto:info@c31.org.au">info@c31.org.au</a> Phone: 9660 3131
Website	SBS Audio and Language	<a href="http://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/croatian/home/page/in/english">http://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/croatian/home/page/in/english</a>
Newspaper/ Journal/Articles	The Croatian Herald	PO Box 109, Clifton Hill VIC 3068 Ph: 9481 8068 Email: <a href="mailto:CroatianHerald@netspace.net.au">CroatianHerald@netspace.net.au</a> <a href="http://www.croatianherald.com">www.croatianherald.com</a>
Bookshop	Zagreb Croatian Bookshop	309 High Street, Preston 3072 Ph: 9484 7236 E-mail: <a href="mailto:zagrebcb@bigpond.com">zagrebcb@bigpond.com</a>

## Useful Websites

- Information about Croatian community life in Australia can be found at the Australian Croatian Community Online Website - [www.cronet.com.au](http://www.cronet.com.au)
- Croatian Studies Foundation  
[http://www.croatianstudiesfoundation.com.au/index.php?option=com\\_weblinks&view=category&id=53%3Afoundations&Itemid=71&lang=en](http://www.croatianstudiesfoundation.com.au/index.php?option=com_weblinks&view=category&id=53%3Afoundations&Itemid=71&lang=en)

## References:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006, *Census of Population and Housing*, accessed via web March 2010, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/census>>
- Countries and Their Culture nd, *Culture of Croatia, people, clothing, traditions, women, beliefs, food, customs, family*. Accessed via web April 2012 <<http://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Croatia.html#ixzz1qSeIJ7BO>>
- Diversicare 2011, *Croatian Cultural Profile*, Queensland, accessed via web April 2012 <[http://www.diversicare.com.au/upl\\_files/file\\_366.pdf](http://www.diversicare.com.au/upl_files/file_366.pdf)>
- Kwintessential nd, *Croatia: Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette*, accessed via web April 2012 <<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/croatia.html>>
- Liz Dimitriadis Consulting 2004, *Australian Croatian Community Services Ten year aged care plan 2004-2014*, viewed 4 April 2012 <<http://accs.qmachosting.com/library/publications/10%20Year%20Aged%20Care%20Plan.pdf>>
- Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), 2008, *Seniors from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds*, Demography on the 50 years plus Victorian population from the 2006 Census, Victoria, Australia.
- Palliative Care Australia 1999, *Multicultural Palliative Care Guidelines*, accessed via web April 2012 <<http://www.palliativecare.org.au/Portals/46/Multicultural%20palliative%20care%20guidelines.pdf>>
- Umbrella Multicultural Community Services 2006, *Multicultural Resource Kit*, Western Australia, accessed via web April 2012 <[http://www.umbrellacommunitycare.com.au/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=cat\\_view&gid=8&Itemid=60](http://www.umbrellacommunitycare.com.au/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=8&Itemid=60)>

*\*\*We acknowledge the support of Silvana Pavlovski, Australian Croatian Community Services and Woody Jurkovic, Migrant Information Centre in the preparation of this cultural profile\*\**