

**MIGRANT INFORMATION CENTRE (Eastern Melbourne)  
Multicultural Equity and Access Program**

## Greek Cultural Profile

**PLEASE NOTE:** This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of Greek-born people 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:

- The Greek-born community in Melbourne is one of the largest outside Greece.
- At the 2011 Census, there were 49,991 Greek-born persons in Victoria, decreasing by 8.0% from 54,324 persons in 2006. Reasons for this decrease include ageing, some return migration, and lack of new arrivals (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2013).
- The Greece-born community reflects an ageing profile: with 58.5% aged 65 years and over. The median age was 67 years at the 2011 census, compared to 37 years for the total Victorian population (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2013).

### Migration:

- The majority of Greek migration to Australia occurred in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s.
- Most Greeks left their homeland for economic reasons, some for political reasons and others for educational opportunities. Many of those migrating were unskilled and had no knowledge of the English language. Many older Greek-born people have established their own small businesses.
- The greatest majority of Greek-born migrants have school education only ((Victorian Multicultural Commission 2011).
- Second generation Greeks have much higher levels of education.
- The Greek community has a strong ability to maintain a bicultural identity after migration.

### Local Demographics: Greek-born residents in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	Total Greek-born Population	45-54 years	55-64 years	65-74 years	75-84 years	85 years and over	Total number of Greek-born people aged 65 and over	People aged 65+ as a % of the Greek-born population
City of Boroondara	1820	256	340	568	502	87	1157	64%
City of Knox	593	122	181	139	61	12	212	36%
City of Manningham	3127	402	707	1120	656	92	1868	60%
City of Maroondah	223	37	68	65	30	6	101	45%
City of Monash	4545	517	957	1704	921	117	2742	60%
City of Whitehorse	1912	177	377	714	465	70	1249	65%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	149	28	46	39	11	3	53	36%
Eastern Region	12369	1539	2676	4349	2646	387	7382	60%

(ABS Census 2011 & MAV Data 2011)

- The median age of the Greek-born population is 67 years compared to 37 years for the total Victorian population (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2011).

### Language: Greek-speaking residents in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	Total number of people speaking Greek at home	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years and over	Total number of Greek speaking people aged 60 and over	Greek speaking people aged 60+ as a % of the Greek speaking population
City of Boroondara	5124	536	492	726	362	1580	31%
City of Knox	1984	267	211	127	51	389	20%
City of Manningham	7861	909	1094	1090	386	2570	33%
City of Maroondah	584	76	63	52	13	128	22%
City of Monash	10982	945	1695	1636	535	3866	35%
City of Whitehorse	4763	452	679	744	301	1724	36%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	393	70	34	24	20	78	20%
Eastern Region	31691	3255	4268	4399	1668	10335	33%

(ABS Census 2011 & MAV Data 2011)

- Although there are some regional dialects, including Cypriot, Pontian and others, all Greeks speak or understand standard Greek.
- Greek children are encouraged to learn Greek as well as English. Most Greek Australian-born children are bilingual. The Greek community has the highest uptake of second and third generation language.
- 32.2% of the Greek-born population in Victoria identified as speaking English 'not-well' and 2.4% spoke English 'not at all' (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2011).
- 25.5% of the Greek-born population in Victoria assessed themselves as speaking English 'very well' and 32.4% as 'well' (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2011).

### Religion:

- The majority of Greeks belong to the Greek Orthodox Christian Church. 91.1% of Greek-born people in Victoria identify as being Greek Orthodox (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2011). Most Greek celebrations and customs have their foundations in Greek Orthodoxy. Religion is a stronger influence with older Greeks than with the younger generation.
- Icons are significant religious symbols in Orthodoxy. Greek people pay honour to icons and usually have them in their homes. Icons and mirrors in the home are covered during the first few days of mourning as a sign of respect.
- Respecting the Greek belief system and spirituality is considered important in developing a good relationship.
- Following a death, a 'kandili' (religious burner comprising oil, water and a floating wick) must remain lit for 40 days next to an icon and a photo of the deceased, until the soul leaves this world.
- Fasting is an essential part of the Orthodox religion. Fasting from food means abstinence from meats, oil and dairy products. It is customary to fast 40 days prior to midnight on Easter Saturday. During Lent in the Easter period, Greeks spring-clean their homes and properties in preparation for the Holy Week.

## Attitudes and Issues with Ageing:

- It's not uncommon for older Greek people to find it difficult to understand and navigate the aged care service system hence there is a need in the community for services to support individuals on this journey and advocate on their behalf
- Traditionally children and family members care for the elderly at home where possible. However it is no longer customary for Greek families in Australia to live together as an extended family unit. Many elderly people live alone.
- Residential care is taboo and seen as degrading to the care recipient. It is often seen as a last resort for people who are alone and have no family members to care for them.
- It is a common perception that a person's condition will deteriorate quicker when they are placed in residential care than if they were cared for at home.
- Greek elders have a high status in the family and community and are treated with respect. Younger people are expected to be submissive to older Greeks but also have positive attitudes to older family members.
- Older people are honoured.
- Women usually take on the caring role of older Greek people. This can lead to isolation as they are willing to sacrifice their own needs to be a carer.
- Language and cultural differences may cause generational issues to arise between older Greeks and their Australian-born children and grandchildren.
- Grandparents often play an important role in caring for their grandchildren.

## Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:

- The Greek-born community regards disability as shameful and a strong cultural stigma is attached to mental illness in particular.
- Older Greek people tend to suffer more from depression and anxiety when they have migrated. Greek women are more at risk than Greek men.
- Older Greeks may be reluctant to access mental health services as there is a general lack of understanding of mental health issues. 'Depression' is not understood to be a mental illness.
- Dementia is not openly discussed in the community and many people will become isolated due to a breakdown in communication and community members not knowing how to behave around someone with dementia. It is also seen as shameful. (Alzheimer's Australia, 2008)

## Customs / Values:

- A patriarchal social structure is the norm where Greek fathers are the protector, provider and authority in the family.
- Greek mothers are expected to take care of their children and honour their husband.
- Family relationships are very important to the Greek-born population. The family has a strong role in decision-making regarding the care of elderly people. Family honour is an extremely important cultural value.
- Greeks are proud of their cultural heritage and traditions.
- Emphasis is on honour, morality, spirituality and fatalism.
- The wearing of black for those in mourning is still very prevalent, particularly by older women.
- Confidentiality is an important value.
- Personal relationships are important in terms of familiarity and trust of services and workers.

## Communication Styles:

- Greek people generally have an expressive communication style and tend to express their emotions quite openly.
- Physical contact is both natural and normal but is generally restricted to the family / community.
- It is quite common for Greek people to greet each other with a hug and a kiss on both cheeks.
- It is important to maintain eye contact with someone who is older.
- Greek people are usually very sociable and generally prefer to be with others rather than be alone.

## Naming Conventions:

- Older Greek people prefer to be addressed using their title. For example, Mr., Mrs. and Dr.
- In well-established or comfortable relationships, older Greek people may prefer to be addressed by their first name.
- Some Greeks will have anglicised versions of their Greek names.
- Older family friends are often addressed in conversation as 'Auntie' and 'Uncle' out of respect, even though they may not be directly related.

## Health Beliefs and Practices:

- In cases of terminal illness, there is a tendency to avoid telling the ill person that they are dying.
- A small number of older Greek-born people may still practice cupping. This produces round bruises. It is important not to mistake the resulting marks as a sign of abuse.
- Many older Greek-born people use methylated spirits as a remedy by rubbing their arms and legs when they are tired or sore.
- Greek Australians tend to seek out doctors who understand their language and culture.

## Greetings:

English Greeting	Greek	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello	χάιρέτέ	YIA-SAS OR HE-RE-TE
Good Morning	καλήμέρα	KA-LI- <u>ME</u> -RA
Good Afternoon	καλησπέρα	<u>KALISPE-RA</u>
Goodbye	gia sou	YIA-SOU
Yes	ναι	NE
No	όχι	O- HE
Thankyou	ευχαριστώ	EF-HA-RIS- <u>TO</u>

## Key Greek Festivals / Significant Dates:

- Greece Independence Day *25th of March*
- Ochi Day (1940 Greeks say 'No' to Hitler invading Greece) *28th of October*
- St Basil's Day *1st of January*
- Epiphany *6th of January*
- Name days: The person who bears the name of a Saint celebrates their patron saint on that day.

\* Other religious observances are based around the Greek Orthodox calendar. These include Orthodox Easter and Christmas. Easter is the most significant celebration.

\* 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 Greek-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
New Hope Migrant and Refugee Centre	18 Chester Street, Oakleigh, 3166	Ph: 9563 4130

### Aged Care & Disability Support Services

#### **Australian Greek Welfare Society**

Address: 7 Union Street, Brunswick, 3056

Ph: 9388 9998

Provides Community Aged Care Packages (CACPs) for older people from Greek backgrounds: In home respite; community and residential volunteer programs; casework, legal information and referral service; Men's & Family Relationship Program; Community Partners Program; Cultural briefings to aged care facilities and other aged & health services including council; Community education and health promotion to elderly citizens clubs; telephone counselling; home visits; orientation to aged care facilities; Greek cultural celebrations to residents of aged care facilities; carer's supports. Some services are specifically based in the Eastern Region of Melbourne.

#### **Fronitha Care (Southern Region)**

Address: 94 Springs Road, Clayton South, 3169

Ph: 9552 4111 or 9495 2310

Provides residential aged care, community aged care packages, respite, social support, carer support and planned activity groups for older people of Greek backgrounds. Some services are specifically based in the Eastern Region of Melbourne.

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

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

Ph: 9275 6901

Website: <http://www.miceastmelb.com.au/agedcare.htm>

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.

### Greek Planned Activity Groups (PAG)

Name of Organisation & Contact Details	LGA	Venue	Time / Day
Australian Greek Welfare Society (AGWS)  Ph: 9388 9998	<b>EMR</b>	9-11 Marwal Avenue North Balwyn, 3103	9:00am – 4:00pm  Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday
Fronditha Care  Ph: 9552 4117	<b>Knox</b>	Knox Gardens Community Hall Argyle Way Wantirna South, 3152	9:00am – 2:00pm  Monday & Friday
	<b>Monash</b>	Ladies Auxiliary Room 94 Springs Road Clayton South, 3169	9:00am – 2:00pm  Tuesday & Wednesday
	<b>Whitehorse</b>	Greek Orthodox Community of Box Hill and Districts – Hall 1 Hopetoun Parade Box Hill, 3128	9:00am – 2:00pm  Thursday

### Senior Citizens Groups

#### Association of Greek Elderly Citizen's Clubs of Melbourne & Victoria

Ph: 9388 9998 (Contact: George Catsourakis)

For further information please contact local councils or the Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne) on 9275 6903.

Name of the Club	LGA	Venue	Time / Day
Boroondara Greek Senior Citizen's Club	<b>Boroondara</b>	405 Camberwell Road Camberwell, 3124	10 am – 2.30 pm Wednesday
Glen Iris Greek Senior Citizen's Club	<b>Boroondara</b>	Camberwell Central Bowls Club Bowen Street Camberwell, 3124	10am – 3:00pm Thursday
Ex-Servicemen Greek Elderly Citizens of Kew	<b>Boroondara</b>	Phillis Hore Room Kew Library Complex Civic Drive Kew, 3101	8am – 2:00pm Friday
Greek Senior Citizens of North Balwyn & District	<b>Boroondara</b>	9 Marwal Avenue Balwyn North, 3104	9:00am – 1:00pm Wednesday

Name of the Club	LGA	Venue	Time / Day
Hawthorn & Kew Greek Senior Citizens Club	<b>Boroondara</b>	533 High Street Kew 3101	8am-2.00pm Thursday
North Balwyn Greek Orthodox Church Senior Citizen Club	<b>Boroondara</b>	5-7 Macedon Ave Balwyn North, 3104	8am-1.00pm Tuesday
Palesviaki Enosis Seniors Group	<b>Knox</b>	26 Waldheim Road Bayswater, 3153	10:00am – 3:00pm Wednesday
Greek Elderly Senior Citizens Club of Manningham Inc.	<b>Manningham</b>	Ajani Centre 284 Thompsons Rd Lower Templestowe, 3107	8:30am – 2:30pm Tuesday
St Haralambos Church Greek Senior Citizens	<b>Manningham</b>	St Haralambos Church Hall 190-200 Porter St Templestowe, 3106	10am – 2:00pm Monday
Greek Elderly Citizens' Club of Maroondah	<b>Maroondah</b>	Bedford Park, Bedford Rd Ringwood, 3134	12 – 3pm Wednesday
Australian Greek Elderly Citizens' Club of Oakleigh	<b>Monash</b>	Oakleigh Hall 142 Drummond St Oakleigh, 3166	10:00am – 2:00pm Monday & Thursday
Faros Senior Citizens	<b>Monash</b>	23 Grenfell Road Mount Waverley, 3149	10:00am – 12:30pm Tuesday
Greek Elderly Citizens' Group of Clayton and Districts	<b>Monash</b>	Clarinda Community Centre 58 Viney St Clarinda, 3169	9:00am – 5:00pm Tuesday
Greek Orthodox Community of Clayton	<b>Monash</b>	10 Oakes Ave Clayton South, 3169	9:00am – 12:00pm Tuesday
Greek Pensioners' Association - Estia	<b>Monash</b>	15 Portman St Oakleigh, 3166	8:00am – 7:00pm Daily
Greek Senior Citizens' Club of Monash Inc.	<b>Monash</b>	Mulgrave Community Centre 355 Wellington Rd Mulgrave, 3170	9:00am – 3:00pm Tuesday & Thursday
Greek Seniors' and Pensioners' Association of Clayton and District	<b>Monash</b>	Clayton Hall 264 Clayton Rd Clayton, 3168	9:00am – 1:00pm Tuesday
HERA Greek Ladies' Club	<b>Monash</b>	Church Hall of Church of Nazarene 23 Grenfell St Mt Waverley, 3146	10:30am – 1:00pm Wednesday
Independent Hellenic Seniors' Association	<b>Monash</b>	Clayton Hall 264 Clayton Road Clayton, 3165	8:45am – 1:15pm Wednesday
Kariatides Greek Women's Group of Oakleigh	<b>Monash</b>	Oakleigh Hall 142 Drummond St. Oakleigh, 3166	11:00am – 3:00pm Tuesday

Name of the Club	LGA	Venue	Time / Day
Monash Greek and Macedonian Elderly Citizens' Club	<b>Monash</b>	Glen Waverley Community Centre 700 Waverley Rd Glen Waverley, 3150	10:00am – 2:00pm Wednesday
The Argos and District Australian Greek Senior Citizens' Club of Kastoria	<b>Monash</b>	Moorleigh Multicultural Centre 90 Bignell Road East Bentleigh, 3165	12:00pm – 4:30pm Friday
The Greek Orthodox Community of Monash and Districts	<b>Monash</b>	Monash Inn 72 Clayton Road Clayton, 3168	10:00am – 4:00pm Monday
The Greek Orthodox Community of Clayton and Districts	<b>Monash</b>		
Box Hill Greek Senior Citizens' Club	<b>Whitehorse</b>	Box Hill Senior Citizens' Centre 79 Carrington Rd Box Hill, 3128	10:00am – 12:00pm Wednesday
Community of the Greek Cypriots of the Eastern Suburbs Elderly Group	<b>Whitehorse</b>	Burwood East Hall Burwood Highway Burwood East, 3151	12:00pm – 3:00pm Thursday
Greek and Cypriots Elderly Citizens Club of Whitehorse and District	<b>Whitehorse</b>	Blackburn North Square	10:00am – 2:00pm Thursday
Greek Elderly Citizens of Nunawading	<b>Whitehorse</b>	Forest Hill Hall Crn Springvale & Canterbury Rd Forest Hill, 3131	12:00pm – 3:00pm Tuesday
Greek Orthodox Community Box Hill and Districts Incorporated	<b>Whitehorse</b>	1-3 Hopetoun Parade Box Hill, 3128	10:00am – 2:00pm Monday, Wed & Friday
Independent Senior Citizens Club of Nunawading	<b>Whitehorse</b>	Burwood East Hall Burwood Highway Burwood East, 3151	12:00pm – 3:00pm Monday
Senior Citizen's of the Greek Community of Forest Hill	<b>Whitehorse</b>	Forest Hill Hall Crn Springvale & Canterbury Rd Forest Hill, 3131	12:00pm – 4:00pm Mon, Wed, Thurs & Fri
St Andrew's Greek Elderly Citizen's Club	<b>Whitehorse</b>	Burwood Highway Burwood, 3151	11:00am – 3:00pm Tuesday



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