

Indonesian Cultural Profile

PLEASE NOTE: This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of Indonesians 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:

- Indonesia is a hugely diverse nation. It is made up of over 17,500 islands (6,000 of which are inhabited) which are home to over 300 ethnic groups.
- Each province has its own language, ethnic make-up, religions and history. Most people will define themselves locally before nationally. In addition there are many cultural influences stemming back from difference in heritage. Indonesians are a mix of Chinese, European, Indian, and Malay backgrounds.
- To maintain cohesion, the "Unity in Diversity" motto was introduced. As a result, the language has been standardised and a national philosophy has been devised known as "*Pancasila*" which stresses universal justice for all Indonesians.
- At the 2006 Census, there were 12,605 Indonesia-born persons in Victoria (24.7% of Australia's total), increasing by 14.6% from 11,003 persons in 2001. There was a decrease of 9.4% between the 1996 and 2001 Census, due to the fact that the East Timorese population was counted as part of the Indonesian total in 1996, but had become a separate birthplace group at the 2001 Census after gaining independence from Indonesia. Only 14.9% of the Indonesia-born in Victoria had arrived in Australia prior to 1986; 44.3% arrived since 1996.
- The community is well distributed throughout metropolitan Melbourne, with a marked concentration, mainly students, in Melbourne City (21.0%). A total of 8,142 persons identified with Indonesian ancestry, including second and later generations (Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2008). This relatively low number is attributed to the fact that large numbers of the Indonesia-born have Chinese and Dutch origins.

Migration:

- People from Indonesia have lived and worked along the northern coasts of Australia seasonally from the 1750's, collecting *trepang* (edible sea slugs). Their influence is evident in the Aboriginal languages and culture of the region. In the late 19th Century, Indonesians from West Timor and Java worked as pearl divers in the northwest of Australia and as labourers in the sugar plantations in Queensland.
- From the late 1940's to the mid-1960's, over 100 Indonesians arrived each year. Many were children of Dutch residents posted to the Dutch East Indies in colonial times. As restrictions on the entry of non-Europeans eased in the late 1960s, more Indonesians settled here.
- Indonesian migration to Australia slowed down in the first half of the 20th Century, but increased again from the 1960's and 70's, due to the economic progress of the country; periodic unrests; and the arrival of students.
- There were 50,970 Indonesia-born people in Australia at the 2006 Census, an increase of 8.6 per cent from the 2001 Census.

Local Demographics:

- There were 12,605 Indonesia-born persons in Victoria at the 2006 Census (24.7% of Australia's total) (*Community Information Summary; Department of Immigration and Citizenship*).
- In 2006, the Indonesia-born had a young age profile: 33.1% were aged 19-25 years; 34.4% were aged 26-44 years; and 13.9% were aged 45-64 years. The median age was 26 years, compared to 37 years for the total Victorian population (*Community Information Summary; Department of Immigration and Citizenship*).

Local Government Area	Total Indonesian -born Population	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years and over	Total number of Indonesian -born people aged 65 and over	People aged 65+ as a % of the Indonesian-born population
City of Boroondara	776	76	33	18	9	35	5%
City of Knox	286	40	27	13	8	31	11%
City of Manningham	313	57	35	16	7	34	11%
City of Maroondah	114	23	10	17	3	31	27%
City of Monash	1547	129	50	35	13	74	5%
City of Whitehorse	732	60	32	29	7	45	6%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	114	25	20	11	8	32	28%
Eastern Region	3882	410	207	139	55	282	7%

(ABS Census 2006 & MAV Data 2006)

Languages:

- The official language is Indonesian (a variety of Malay). However, some 300 other languages are also spoken in the country. One of them, Javanese is the most common with more than 70 million speakers. More than half the population speaks some Indonesian or Malay. Because Dutch was the official language until 1942, some older adults still speak it. English is the leading international language and is taught as a second language in the schools (after Indonesian).
- According to the Department of Immigration, in Australia the main languages spoken at home by Indonesian-born people are Indonesian (66.6%), English (17.3%) and Mandarin (6.4%).

Religion:

- Religion is a most important aspect of life for an Indonesian.
- Islam began in Indonesia during the 14th century and the majority of the population are Muslims. Catholicism was introduced by the Portuguese during the 16th century while Protestantism was introduced by the Dutch.

The Indonesian-born population in Victoria identified as the following religions at the 2006 Census:

Religion	Total Indonesian-born persons	% Indonesian-born persons
Western Catholic	3,601	28.6
Islam	2,095	16.6
Buddhism	1,722	13.7
Uniting Church	938	7.4
Christian, nfd	772	6.1
Other religions	2,221	17.6
No religion	720	5.7
Not stated*	532	4.2
Total	12,601	100.0

(Victorian Multicultural Commission 2006)

*Includes 'Religious Belief, nfd (not further defined) and 'Not Defined'.

Attitudes and Issues with Ageing:

- Indonesians pay full respect and honour to their older relatives and therefore caring for them is considered as a natural responsibility.
- When older people's functional ability declines, the required care is usually provided by the family or relatives.
- The responsibility for caring for older people usually falls on the adult children of the family, especially daughters followed by daughter in-laws, wives and other female relatives.
- Women tend to become primary carers for older relatives because culturally defined gender roles strongly impact on caring practice.
- In Australia today, aged care is perceived as a loss of honour and family cohesion. Family provides both emotional and financial support.

Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:

- In some cultures, impairments are considered a sign of witchcraft or divine punishment for the sins of the person or their parents. If a woman has a disabled baby, the father may believe that she has been cursed, and abandon her and the child. Traditional stories and modern myths can reinforce these beliefs. (VSO 2006)
- Stigma remains high in the community due to socio-cultural factors such as religion, and is worsened by poor understanding and a lack of integrated care within both the broader health care community and other sectors, particularly in rural and remote areas. (AAMH 2008).

Death and Burial:

In the majority of cases, death and burial practices are conducted in accordance with the specific faith followed by the person. It is appropriate to consult with the family or a religious leader for information about the most suitable practices and ceremonies to be followed. (Multicultural Communities Council Gold Coast 2012).

Customs / Values:

Religion plays an important role in Indonesian culture because it influences how Indonesians behave. According to Koentjaraningrat (2002), Indonesian cultures, values and ethics are highly influenced by their religion.

- Indonesian culture is based on honour and respect for the individual. Letters begin with *Dengan hormat* (with respect), and respect is also important in greeting others.
- Men and women usually shake hands and bow the head slightly when introduced for the first time.
- A man does not usually touch older women in public, except to shake hands, even if he knows her well.
- The family is very traditional in structure and members have clearly defined roles and a great sense of interdependence.
- Hierarchy plays a large role in Indonesian culture and relationships are respected, emphasized and maintained.
- Members of the extended family often live under the same roof or near one another. Loyalty and cooperation among family members are highly valued. The home is traditionally dominated by the father, and the mother is responsible for raising children and caring for the household. The trend today is for many urban women to work outside the home, and they comprise 40% of the labour force. Women generally have equal access to education.
- Women also have more rights than in other predominantly Muslim countries, including rights in property settlements, inheritances, and divorce.

Taboos:

- Indonesians will accept any lack of clothing on the part of poor people, who cannot afford them; but for Westerners, thongs (flip-flops), bathing costumes, shorts or strapless tops are considered impolite.
- While places of worship are open to all, permission should be requested to enter, particularly when ceremonies are in progress, and individuals should ensure that they are decently dressed. Always remove footwear before entering a mosque, and it is customary to take shoes off before entering someone's house.

Communication Styles:

- Indonesians communicate quite indirectly and imperfections should always be hidden and addressed privately.
- Generally speaking Indonesians speak quietly and with a subdued tone. Loud people would come across as slightly aggressive.
- Business is personal in Indonesia so time is spent through communication to build a strong relationship. Dealing with someone face-to-face is the only effective way of doing business.
- Indonesians abhor confrontation due to the potential loss of face. To be polite, they may tell people what they think they want to hear. If Indonesians are offended, they will mask their feelings and maintain a veil of civility. If an Indonesian begins to avoid someone or acts coldly towards them, there is a serious problem.
- Touching someone when speaking to them is reserved for friends and acquaintances of the same sex.
- Direct eye contact should be avoided. However, this is no longer true in contemporary Indonesian society.

- One should give and receive things, either with both hands, which is considered very respectful, or when using one hand only, the right hand should be used. The left hand is not used to shake hands, touch hands, touch others, point, eat, or give or receive objects.
- Superiors are often called "*bapak*" or "*ibu*", which means the equivalent of father or mother, sir or madam.
- Any gift given is accepted graciously because it is impolite to refuse anything. Gifts are not opened in the giver's presence.
- One should avoid using gestures to beckon another person, except for children or a *becak* (pedicab) driver. Beckoning is done by waving all fingers with the palm facing down. Approval is sometimes shown by a pat on the shoulder, but one never touches the head of another person.

Naming Conventions:

- If a person has a title, it is used in greeting and general conversation. Many Indonesians, especially the Javanese, have only one name and are therefore addressed both formally and casually by that name.

Health Beliefs and Practices:

- Indonesian elderly are reluctant to accept western medicine. In times of illness, they are very private and some families may prefer to use traditional folk medicines and healing methods. It is common that superstition plays a role and illness is attributed to the will of god. There are many varieties of traditional medicine in Indonesia which are associated with different ethnic groups and historical processes.
- '*Jamu*' is the unique herbal remedies in Indonesia. There are two types of *Jamu* out of which one is to maintain physical fitness and health and other is to cure various kinds of illness.
- Nowadays western medicine is widely practiced in Indonesia.

Greetings:

English Greeting	Bahasa Indonesia	Closest English Pronunciation
How are you?	Apa Kabar?	Uppah Kabar
Goodbye	Selamat tinggal	Selumat tingal
Good Morning	Selamat pagi	Selumat pagi
Yes	Ya	Ya
No	Tidak	Tidak
Thank you	Terima kasih	Terima kasih

Key Indonesian Festivals and Significant dates:

- New Year's day January 1st
- National awakening Day May 20th
- Independence Day August 17th
- Armed Forces Day October 5th
- Youth Pledge Day October 28th
- Heroes 'Day November 10th
- Women's Day December 22nd

* 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 Indonesian-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 www.miceastmelb.com.au
New Hope Migrant and Refugee Centre	18 Chester Street, Oakleigh 3166	Ph: 9563 4130

Aged Care & Disability Support Services

Migrant Information Centre Aged Care & Disability Services

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

Ph: 9275 6901

www.miceastmelb.com.au

The aged and disability team 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.

Other Support Services

PEWIRA Indonesian Society of Victoria

Address: PO Box 71, Nunawading 3131

Ph: 9884 8733

Fax: 9874 2409

Email: perwira_inc@optusnet.com.au

Website: www.perwira.8m.com

Aims to promote harmonious relations with other communities, the physical and spiritual welfare of the Indonesian community, and maintain the heritage and culture of Indonesians in Victoria. Includes activities at Whitehorse spring festival, annual satay festival, annual food and trade festivals, the celebration of Ramadan and the provision of information about Indonesian culture and language.

IKAWIRIA (Indonesian Community Association of Victoria)

Address: PO Box 479, Glen Waverly 3150

Website: www.ikawiria.com

This is the oldest Indonesian community organisation in Australia open to anyone with an interest in Indonesia. Aims to foster mutual help and cooperation within the Indonesian community, to promote knowledge and understanding of Indonesian culture in Victoria and to provide information and assistance, in particular to Indonesians in Victoria.

IMCV (Indonesian Muslim Community of Victoria, Australia)

Address: 130 Rosebank Avenue, Melbourne 3169

Ph: 9546 0939

Email: info@imcv.org

IMCV is a non-profit religious society dedicated to the promotion of Islam amongst Indonesian residents in Victoria.

Masyarakat Buddha (Indonesian Buddhists Association)

Contact: deddy.chandra@gmail.com

Mahindra Bali

Address: 35C Harlington Street Clayton, VIC, 3168

Ph: 9544 6456

Mahindra Bali is a committed Balinese community organization that provides an exchange point for both Melbourne based Balinese and their families as well as the wider community to establish cultural understanding in the form of music, dance, food, art etc.

KKI (Keluarga Katolik Indonesia) (Indonesian Catholic Family)

St. Paschal Chapel

Address: 98-100 Albion Rd, Box Hill 3128

Offers mass services in Indonesian language (*Bahasa Indonesia*), every fourth week of the month.

The Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Melbourne

72 Queens Road, Melbourne 3004

Ph: 9525 2755

Fax: 9525 1588

Email: kjri@kjri-melbourne.org

Media

Media	Program	Details
Radio	3WBC – 94.1 FM	Whitehorse Boroondara FM Community Radio Inc. PO Box 159, Box Hill 3128 Ph: 9285 4846 Email: info@3wbc.org.au Website: www.3wbc.org.au
	93.1 FM SBS Radio 2 Tuesday 2:00 – 3:00pm, Thursday 10:00 - 11:00pm	http://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/indonesian/
	1224 AM SBS Radio Saturday 10:00 - 11:00pm	http://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/indonesian/
	Radio Kita (3zzz 92.3 FM) Friday 8:00 –9:00pm	Email: admin@3zzz.com.au
Newspaper/ Journal / Articles	<i>Buset</i> Newspaper	Ph: 9012 7764 / 0438012183 www.radioaustralia.net.au/indonesian/
	<i>Inspirasi</i> – The first on-line magazine about Indonesian Culture in Australia.	http://purl.nla.gov.au/nla/pandora/inspirasi
	<i>Buletin Indonesia</i> (monthly edition)	www.buletinindo.com.au
	<i>Ozindo</i> – First Indonesian Magazine in Australia.	www.ozindomagazine.com.au
	Indo Post (monthly edition)	www.indopost.com.au

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