Japanese Cultural Profile

PLEASE NOTE: *This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of Japanese-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.*

Introduction:

Japan is situated in North-Eastern Asia with a population of more than 126 million people. Japan is a country with unique culture, lifestyle and art which comprises of crafts, architecture, fashion and cuisine.

Migration:

- Despite the introduction of the Immigration Restriction Act 1901, many Japanese-born people came to Australia under indentured work schemes.
- With the outbreak of the war with Japan in 1942, most of the Japanese-born people in Australia were interned and deported at the end of the war.
- The number of Japanese-born migrants has increased in recent years due to the rise of the Japanese economy and increasing trade between Japan and Australia. Japanese-born migrants are mainly professionals and students.

Local Demographics: Japanese-born residents in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	Total Japanese-born Population	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years and over	Total number of Japanese-born people aged 65 and over	People aged 65+ as a % of the Japanese-born population
City of Boroondara	395	45	30	10	3	25	6%
City of Knox	113	19	7	6	3	9	8%
City of Manningham	138	21	16	5	4	20	15%
City of Maroondah	50	8	0	10	6	16	32%
City of Monash	455	58	25	12	3	25	6%
City of Whitehorse	281	48	7	8	0	14	5%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	75	14	3	6	0	6	8%
Eastern Region	1507	213	88	57	19	115	8%

(ABS Census 2006 & MAV Data 2006)

- At the 2006 Census, there were 5,780 Japanese-born persons in Victoria (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- The median age of the Japanese-born population is 32 compared to 37 years for the total Victorian population (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).

Language: Japanese-speaking residents in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	Total number of people speaking Japanese at home	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years and over	Total number of Japanese speaking people aged 65 and over	Japanese speaking people aged 65+ as a % of the Japanese speaking population
City of Boroondara	449	37	25	6	0	13	3%
City of Knox	125	13	6	6	3	9	7%
City of Manningham	162	27	14	3	0	16	10%
City of Maroondah	53	6	0	5	3	12	23%
City of Monash	537	52	23	7	3	21	4%
City of Whitehorse	327	41	11	3	3	18	6%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	88	11	0	6	3	12	14%
Eastern Region	1741	187	79	36	15	101	6%

(ABS Census 2006 & MAV Data 2006)

- The national language of Japan is Japanese and it is distinct from Chinese and Korean languages.
- Japanese use three different systems of writing with varying complexity namely 'Hiragana', 'Katakana' and 'Kanji'. *Hiragana* and *Katakana* has 50 characters where *Kanji* is a set of 2000 Chinese characters.
- Verbal forms and particular vocabulary reflect the hierarchical nature of the Japanese society and indicate the relative status of the speaker and listener.
- 28.1% of the Japanese-born population in Victoria assessed themselves as speaking English 'very well' and 34.0% as 'well' (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- 16.0% of the Japanese-born population in Victoria identified as speaking English 'not-well' and 2.1% spoke English 'not at all' (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).

Religion:

- The two major religions of Japan are Shinto and Buddhism. Shinto is the indigenous faith of Japan and the Japanese people.

The Japanese-born population in Victoria identified as the following religions at the 2006 Census (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008):

- Buddhism – 29.0% (1,674)
- Western Catholic – 4.1% (238)
- Anglican – 2.4% (140)
- Shinto – 2.0% (117)
- Baptist – 1.2% (69)
- Other religions – 6.0% (347)
- No religion – 47.9% (2,769)

Attitudes and Issues with Ageing:

- The Japanese are very conscious about age and status. The oldest person in a group is always honoured and revered.
- The traditional norm is for the family to care for older relatives. In government documents, family care is referred to as the 'Japanese way'.
- The key obligation to care for parents resides with the eldest son. However, Japanese mothers prefer to be cared by their own daughters in old age.

Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:

- Japanese-born people view disability as a family issue and try to keep every aspect of it 'all in the family'.
- Pain may even be endured by the person with the disability as a matter of family honour. Japanese-born people expect little involvement from others in dealing with these matters.

Customs / Values:

- Gift giving is highly ritualistic and meaningful.
- Saving face is crucial in Japanese society. Japanese-born people never criticise, insult or put anyone on the spot.
- The family is considered as the basic unit of the society and harmony is the key value.
- The main features of the traditional Japanese family were the strict gender based role division with a patriarchal head and a hierarchy with birth.

Communication Styles:

- Greetings in Japan are very formal and ritualized.
- Non-verbal communication is vital in Japanese culture and Japanese-born people rely on facial expression, tone of voice and body posture.
- It is considered disrespectful to stare into another person's eyes, particularly if the person is senior because of age or status.
- In crowded situations, Japanese-born people avoid eye contact to give themselves privacy.

Naming Conventions:

- In Japan, the family name (surname) is usually followed by the first name (given name). Middle names are not usually used.
- Most Japanese family names consist of two to four Kanji. The meaning of many of the Kanji used in family names is related to nature, geographical features or locations.
- Japanese first names also commonly consist of two to four Kanji or other characters. The meanings of those Kanji are often positive characteristics such as intelligence, beauty, love, light, etc. for females, and brave, strong or masculinity for males.
- The Japanese-born people commonly address each other by last names. Only close friends and children are usually addressed by first names.

Health Beliefs and Practices:

- East Asian medical traditions including herbal therapy, acupuncture and moxibustion are widely practiced and incorporated into popular and professional medical conceptions of health and illness.
- Traditional medicine is based on holistic principles that view the human organism in terms of its integration with the social and physical environment. The goal of these treatments is to restore or enhance flows of 'ki' (energy or spirit) within the body and between the human body and the environment.
- Although traditional medicine has been widely practiced since the nineteenth century, the dominant form of medicine is western-oriented bio-medicine.

Greetings:

English Greeting	Japanese	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello	こんにちは	KON'NICHIWA
Goodbye	さようなら	SAYONARA
Good Morning	おはよう	OHAYO
Good Afternoon	こんにちは	KON'NICHIWA
Yes	はい	HAI
No	いいえ	IIE
Thankyou	ありがとう	ARIGATO
Please	どうぞ	DOZO

Key Japanese Festivals / Significant Dates:

- New Years Day *1st January*
- National Foundation Day *11th February*
- Emperor's Birthday 23rd December

* 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 Japanese-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

Migrant Information Centre Aged Care & Disability Services

Address: Suite 2, Town Hall Hub, 27 Bank Street, Box Hill, 3128
Ph: 9285 4888
The aged and disability support services at MIC aim 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. Also receives funding for specific projects in this area.

Other Support Services

Association of New Elderly Inc

Address: PO Box 489, Williamstown, 3016
Ph: 9397 8421
Provides Japanese support services (with bilingual staff) for older people and people with a disability.

The Hope Connection

Address: C/- 40 Grattan Street, Prahran, 3181
Ph: 9510 5877
Provides social support and services for older people from the Japanese community.

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