

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

## **Jewish Profile**

**PLEASE NOTE:** This religious profile provides an overview of the range of beliefs and practices that may apply to individuals who practice this religion. 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 saying, 'There are as many ways of being Jewish as there are Jews', sums up today's 50,000 strong Jewish community in Melbourne. There are many Jewish movements from Orthodox to Conservative and Liberal.
- Those aged between 75-84 years make up 7.5% of the Jewish population in Victoria, with just under 4% of the Jewish population of Victoria aged 85 and over, compared to 1.7% of the total population (Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, 2011)
- 48.9% of people reporting Judaism were born overseas, despite many having lived in Australia for many years. This is a significantly higher proportion compared with the total Australian population born overseas (ABS, 2012)
- It is projected that the Victoria Jewish population aged 75-84 will increase from 4,130 in 2021 to 7,469 in 2031; this represents an increase of 81% over the decade. This will put major pressure on services to the Jewish community in coming decades (Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, 2011)

### **Migration:**

- From the time of the first fleet in 1788 Jews have lived in Australia, migrating mainly from Britain.
- In the 1800s and early 1900s Jews migrated from Russia and Poland as a result of *pogroms* (series of violent attacks on Jews in Russia).
- Later, from 1939 onwards, German, Polish and Yiddish speaking Jews arrived from Eastern Europe escaping Nazi anti-Semitism and death. Jews were met with hostility in many countries, including Australia. Australia as a whole was opposed to non-English speaking immigrants at the time. Jewish people were encouraged to assimilate as quickly as possible and discouraged from speaking German in public. During and after World War II, large numbers of Yiddish speaking, Eastern European Jewish refugees arrived under the displaced persons scheme, many of whom were Holocaust survivors.
- Immigration was at its peak during 1947–1961, when the Jewish population increased by 101% in Victoria (Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, 2011)
- In 1961, the largest non-Christian religion was Judaism, outnumbering all other non-Christian groups combined by more than six to one (ABS, 2013)
- In the late 1960s a small group of South African Jewish people settled in Doncaster, City of Manningham and Jewish people continue to settle in this area.
- In the 1970s-80s, around 2000 Jewish people settled in Melbourne from the former Soviet Union.

- In Melbourne you will find Jews from Eastern Europe, Russia, Poland, South Africa, China and many other countries.

## Local Demographics: Number of Jewish residents in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	No. of Jewish Residents	% of Population
City of Boroondara	1860	1.6
City of Knox	191	0.1
City of Manningham	551	0.5
City of Maroondah	99	0.1
City of Monash	787	0.5
City of Whitehorse	302	0.2
Shire of Yarra Ranges	188	0.1
<b>Eastern Region</b>	<b>3978</b>	<b>0.4</b>

(ABS Census 2011)

## Language:

- The traditional language of prayer for Jewish people is Hebrew.
- Many elderly Jews who come from Germany, Poland, Austria, Eastern Europe (Ashkenazic Jews) may speak Yiddish. Yiddish is derived from Hebrew, Aramaic, German and Slavic languages.
- As Jewish people have come from all over the world they speak many different languages.

## Religious Beliefs & Practices:

### Beliefs

- Judaism is based on three pillars: the Torah (study), ritual/worship (prayer), and acts of loving kindness (action).
- Jewish people believe in a single God, the creator of all that exists.
- The Covenant is a contractual agreement between God and the Israelites.
- The Torah is the foundation of Jewish law (see scriptures).
- 613 Commandments regulate all aspects of Jewish life.
- Jewish people believe in the Day of Judgement: God rewards individuals for good deeds and punishes evil.
- Believers are able to sanctify their lives and draw closer to God by performing fulfilling good deeds and living by the commandments (*Mitzvoth*).

### Worship:

- Orthodox Jews pray three times a day; morning, afternoon and evening. They fit these prayer times into their normal work schedule. A quorum of ten Jewish men (*Minyan*) is required to perform weekly public religious services and certain other special ceremonies.
- Jews are considered adults and personally responsible to follow the Jewish laws at the age of 13 for boys (*Bar Mitzvah*) and 12 for girls (*Bat Mitzvah*).

- Among Orthodox Jews, men and women worship separately.
- Liberal and Progressive congregations permit women Rabbi and men and women sit together in the Temple.

### ***Places of Worship:***

- Worship is done in a Synagogue or Temple.
- Ultra-Orthodox and Orthodox Jews worship in a Synagogue while Liberal and Progressive Jews worship in a Temple.

### ***Religious/Community Leaders:***

- The communal leader or clergy in Judaism is known as the Rabbi. They are teachers whose authority comes from learning. They are not anointed priests.

### ***Icons/Statues/Symbols:***

- On the Sabbath it is traditional to light two or more candles in a candleholder before sunset.
- Siddur (Prayer book).

### ***Scriptures:***

- The *Torah* is the first five books of the Hebrew bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Torah is the Hebrew word meaning 'teaching' and it is often translated as the Law.
- The *Talmud* is the collection of ancient rabbinic writings on Jewish law and tradition. The Talmud, based on the Torah, interprets biblical laws and commandments.

### ***Clothing:***

- Observant Orthodox men will be bearded and wear a kippah (skullcap) at all times and especially during religious activities.
- Women may wear a prayer shawl (*tallit*) when praying in the Reform Congregations. Prayer shawls are common and are often passed between generations of family. A deceased male is wrapped in the prayer shawl before being put into a coffin.
- Married orthodox Jewish women also cover their hair with a sheitel (a wig), a hat or scarf and observe a modest dress code.
- Ultra-Orthodox Jewish men will be dressed in black, with beards, ear locks and large hats.

### ***Food:***

- *Kosher* is derived from the Hebrew word 'kasher,' which means 'proper' or 'pure.' *Kosher* foods conform to a strict set of Jewish dietary rules specified in the Hebrew Scriptures and practiced by many Jews. It relates to the type of food eaten, the kinds of foods combined in one meal, and how an animal is killed. *Kosher* involves no eating or mixing of meat with dairy, separate cooking and eating utensils for both, and particular processing for slaughtering and food handling. *Kosher* refers to animals killed and prepared by a trained religious person designed to lessen the suffering of animals. However, these laws do not apply to fish.
- Animals that may be eaten include cattle, sheep, and goats. Sea creatures that have fins and scales are also acceptable. While, most domestic fowl are permitted, only eggs from kosher fowl may be eaten. Foods that are forbidden are pigs, shellfish and any food which contains substances extracted from forbidden meats or fish (e.g. oil and gelatine).

- During the festival of *Pesach* (Passover) certain foods are prohibited. Any food or food products containing fermented grain products (*Chametz*) may not be used or remain in a Jewish home on Passover. Jews of Eastern European descent might not eat many legumes (*Kitniot*) and products containing them as ingredients throughout Passover.

### **Holy Days:**

- The Sabbath (*Shabbat* in Hebrew) is observed as a day of rest, starting from sunset Friday to Saturday evening. Work is not performed on holy days and the Sabbath and depending upon the group, work may be interpreted as use of electricity, handling money, riding in a car, cooking or use of the phone.
- Some holy days include a fasting period. For other Holy Days, see **Key Jewish Festivals**.

### **Health Beliefs and Practices:**

- Everyone has a duty to keep him or herself in good health. This encompasses physical and mental wellbeing, as well as early treatment of illness and prevention.
- In Ultra-Orthodox denominations of Judaism, the taking of medication on the Sabbath, that is not necessary to preserve life (such as vitamins or minor pain killers) may be viewed as 'work' (i.e. an action performed with intention of bringing about a change in existing conditions), and would therefore be unacceptable.

### **Beliefs about Disability and Mental Illness:**

- All individuals are considered to have value regardless of their condition. This includes individuals with disabilities.

### **Beliefs about Ageing and Carers:**

- Historically Jewish families have always cared for their elderly. The primary carer in the event of illness or physical disability of an older person is commonly the spouse or partner.
- The community has responded to the changes in society by providing residential care.

### **Death and Related Issues:**

- Death and grieving are significant for all religious communities. Grieving families require strict observance of the law in relation to death and burial. Some important sensitivities include:
  - The body at death must be treated with the utmost reverence as it was the body that housed the soul in life.
  - Autopsies must be avoided and the body should be buried as quickly as practicable/possible.
  - Wherever possible, a Jewish Burial Society, (*Chevra Kadisha*) carries out the holy task of preparing the body for burial.
  - Where possible, it is important that the Jewish departed are handled only by members of the Jewish faith.
  - Jewish laws do not permit cremation.

## Communication Styles:

- Handshaking between men is appropriate and acceptable.
- Ultra-Orthodox persons avoid all physical contact with members of the opposite sex (besides immediate family members) and sometimes limit other forms of association and conversation with them.
- Judaism does not have specific communication styles, and this depends more on the cultural identity of the Jewish person.

## Naming Conventions:

- Judaism does not have a specific naming convention.
- Naming conventions are dependent on the cultural identity of the Jewish person. For example, it is important to use titles when addressing an older person from a German or Polish background.
- Jewish people are usually given Hebrew names at birth, e.g. David *ben* (son of) Abraham or Sarah *bat* (daughter of) Abraham. But most Jewish people use their given names followed by their family name or surname.
- Jewish clerics are addressed with the title *Rabbi* followed by their family name.

## The Role of the Family/Women:

- The family is the cornerstone of Jewish life. Marriage and parenthood are strongly expected in Jewish families.
- Being Jewish is determined through one's mother. This ascribes importance to women in Judaism. Education of children and the maintenance of traditions and rituals are the responsibility of the wife and mother in families.

## Greetings:

English Greeting	Hebrew	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello	לשום	SHALOM
Goodbye	תוארתהל	LEHITROAT
Yes	כן	KEN
No	לא	LO
Thank you	הדות	TODA

## Key Jewish Festivals / Significant Observances:

The Jewish calendar is based on the 12 lunar months that consist of 354 days, whilst the solar calendar consists of 365 days. Because of this discrepancy, Jewish holidays follow the non-Jewish calendar (solar calendar).

- *Purim* (The Feast of Lots) *March (one month before Passover)*
- *Pesach* (Passover) *March/April*
- *Shavout* (Pentecost) *May/June*
- *Rosh Hashanah* (Jewish New Year) *September/October*
- *Yom Kippur* (The Day of Atonement) *September/October*
- *Sukkoth* (Tabernacles) *September/October*
- *Chanukah/Hanukkah* (The Festival of Lights) *November/December*

\* To search for exact dates of key cultural and religious events, festivals and national days for this year, visit: <http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-services/calendar-of-cultural-and-religious-dates>

## Media

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

Media	Program	Details
Radio	Radio SBS Melbourne 1224 AM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hebrew programs</li> <li>• Yiddish programs</li> </ul>	<a href="mailto:yehuda.kaplan@sbs.com.au">yehuda.kaplan@sbs.com.au</a> <a href="mailto:alex.dafner@sbs.com.au">alex.dafner@sbs.com.au</a>
	Radio 3ZZZ Melbourne 92.3 FM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jewish programs</li> <li>• Hebrew programs</li> </ul>	(03) 9415-1928
Radio	Melbourne Jewish Radio Lion AM 96.1	Studio: 03 95716651 Office: 03 95716653 <a href="http://thehistoryofnow.net">http://thehistoryofnow.net</a>
Television	"The Shtick" Channel 31 Melbourne	<a href="http://www.theshtick.tv/about/">http://www.theshtick.tv/about/</a>
Newspaper/Journal	The Australian Jewish News	<a href="http://www.jewishnews.net.au">http://www.jewishnews.net.au</a>

## Local services useful for Jewish residents in the Eastern Region

### Synagogues/Temples

#### **North Eastern Jewish Centre (Yeshurun Synagogue)**

Address: 6 High Street, Doncaster 3108  
Ph: 9816 3516  
nejc@bigpond.com; <http://www.nejc.com.au>

#### **Kew Hebrew Congregation Inc.**

Address: 53 Walpole Street, Kew. Victoria. 3101.  
Ph: 9853 9243  
Fax: 9853 1354  
<http://www.khc.org.au>

#### **Leo Baeck Centre for Progressive Judaism**

31-37 Harp Road, East Kew, 3102  
Ph: 9819 7160

### Support Services

#### **Access Inc**

Address: 632A Inkerman Road, Nth Caulfield 3161  
Ph: 0411 596 750  
Email: [office@accessinc.org.au](mailto:office@accessinc.org.au);  
<http://www.accessinc.org.au/>

Access Inc is a not-for-profit organization working to help integrate Jewish people with disabilities into the fabric of the Melbourne Jewish community.

#### **Advocates for Jewish Ageing Rights**

[ajar\\_inc@hotmail.com](mailto:ajar_inc@hotmail.com)

#### **Helpp**

Ph: Rosalie Freeman 9596 0330 or Nathan Kotler 9510 7001  
<http://www.jewishaustralia.com/helpp.htm>  
Support group for friends or family with an addiction.

#### **Jewish Care (Victoria) Inc.**

619 St Kilda Rd, Melbourne 3004  
Ph: 8517 5999  
<http://www.jewishcare.org.au>

Provides a range of residential and disability, community and aged care services for the Jewish community in Melbourne.

#### **Jewish Community Council of Victoria**

Address: 306 Hawthorn Road, Caulfield South, 3162  
Ph: 9272 5566

The peak body of the largest Jewish community in Australia, representing almost sixty major Jewish organisations in Melbourne and the State of Victoria.

#### **Jewish Task Force Against Family Violence**

Postal Address: P.O. Box 2439, Caulfield Junction Vic 3161  
Support Line: 9523 2100  
Admin no: 9523 6850  
<http://www.jewishtaskforce.com.au>

### **Kosher Meals on Wheels**

Ph: 9527 5525

Fax: 9527 4844

Provides Kosher food at home, on holiday, in hospital or any other institution. Meals are prepared under the supervision of Kosher Australia by leading Kosher caterer Unger Catering Services Aust. Pty. Ltd.

### **National Council of Jewish Women of Australia Inc.**

Address: 133 Hawthorn Road, Caulfield, 3161

Ph: 9523 0535

Email: vic@ncjwa.org.au

Website: <http://www.ncjwa.org.au> / [ncjwavic.wildapricot.org](http://ncjwavic.wildapricot.org) (for Victoria)

Empowers close to 2000 members to explore their interests, serve their communities, and engage with strong communities of support both in this country, and across the world.

### **VAJEX (Victorian Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen & Women Inc)**

<http://www.jewishmilitaryvic.org.au>

Caring for Jewish Military Personnel from Allied Forces & Their Families

### **Wings of Care (Kanfei Chesed) Inc.**

Ph: 9527 4866

Fax: 9527 4488

<http://www.wingsofcare.org.au>

Providing care for the Jewish mentally ill and support for their families.

### **Useful Websites**

#### **Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, Monash University**

<http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/jewish-civilisation/>

#### **Council of Orthodox Synagogues of Victoria**

<http://www.cosv.org.au/>

#### **Jewish Australia**

The gateway to everything Jewish in Australia

[www.jewishaustralia.com](http://www.jewishaustralia.com)

#### **Jewish Holocaust Museum + Research Centre**

13-15 Selwyn St Elsternwick 3185

Ph: 9528 1985

Fax: 9528 3758

email [admin@ihc.org.au](mailto:admin@ihc.org.au)

<http://www.ihc.org.au/>

#### **The Jewish Museum of Australia**

26 Alma Road, St Kilda 3182

Ph: 8534 3600

Fax: 9534 0844

<http://www.jewishmuseum.com.au>

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