

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

Muslim 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 word 'Islam' in Arabic means peace, submission and obedience; it is a way of life not only a religion.
- Islam is the second largest religion in the world after Christianity and encompasses many different cultures and nationalities.
- Muslims in Australia come from a number of countries and are influenced by different cultural contexts and experiences.
- It is important to note that not all Arabs are Muslims and not all Muslims are Arabs. There are two main sects of Islam, the Shi'a and Sunni. Most Muslims in Australia and worldwide are Sunni; Shi'a are predominately from Iran, Iraq, Bahrain and Lebanon.

Migration:

- Muslims have a long history of migration to Australia, dating back to the 1800's when Afghan camel drivers played an important role in opening up Australia's vast arid inland areas.
- Post World War II between 1947 and 1971 saw the first significant arrival of European Muslims, in Australia, mainly Cypriot Turks.
- In 1975, with the outbreak of civil war in Lebanon, larger numbers of Lebanese migrants arrived in Australia, many of whom were Muslims.
- Recent Muslim arrivals are from the Horn of Africa, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq.
- Australian Muslims come from over 68 different countries.

Local Demographics: Number of Muslim residents in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	Total Number of Muslims	% of total Muslim Population in ER	% of total Population in ER
City of Boroondara	1,431	12	0.9
City of Knox	1,799	16	1.2
City of Manningham	2,365	20	2.1
City of Maroondah	595	5	0.6
City of Monash	3,489	30	2.0
City of Whitehorse	1,577	14	1.0
Shire of Yarra Ranges	304	3	0.2
Eastern Region	11,560	100%	8%

(ABS Census 2011)

- According to the 2011 census, there were 152,799 persons who responded having religion affiliation with Islam, which is 2.9% of total population. This is an increase of 39.7% since the 2006 census, amounting to an increase of 43,410 persons. This data excludes those that chose not to respond to this question.
- In 2011, the top ten countries of birth for people who are Muslim were Australia, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Lebanon, Bangladesh, Iraq, India, Iran, Bosnia-Herzegovina.
- Of the birthplace of Muslims in Australia, 58,071 were born in Australia, amounting to 38% of the religion in the 2011 census.
- 62% of the Muslim population in Australia were born overseas. This amounts to there being more recently arrived migrants than longer-standing migrants among the Australian Muslim population.
- According to the 2011 census, 31.1% of the Islam population in Australia had less than 12 years of schooling, 25.5% attained year 12 or the equivalent, 21% have a bachelor degree or higher.

Language:

- Muslims speak different languages, but for religious practice they recite prayers in Arabic.
- The holy book, the Qur'an, and the traditions, the Hadith, are written in Arabic and have been translated into many different languages. Not all Muslims are fluent in Arabic, however just over one third of Muslims in Australia speak Arabic (DIAC, 2006).
- More than 80% of Muslims in Australia speak English or have good proficiency in English (DIAC, 2006).
- 86% of Muslim Australians speak a language other than English at home (DIAC, 2006). In addition to Arabic, the other main languages spoken at home are Turkish, Urdu, Bengali and Dari.

Religious Practices:

Beliefs:

- Followers of Islam are called Muslims.
- Muslims believe in a single God (Allah). The Arabic word for God is 'Allah'.
- Muslims believe in the life hereafter, in the angels created by God and in a day of Judgement when God will reward individuals for good deeds and punish the evil.
- Muslims believe in the prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and the prophets before him (e.g. Abraham, Moses and Jesus) through whom his revelations were sent to humankind. Muhammad is considered the greatest and the last (the Seal) of all Prophets.
- Muslims believe in all the holy books, the Qur'an and the books that came before it (that is the Torah, the Psalms and the Gospel).
- Central to the life of the Islamic community are the five Pillars of Islam:
 - Declaration of Faith – (Shahadah) – 'There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of God'
 - Praying 5 times a day – (Sallat)
 - Giving donations to the poor – (Zakat)
 - Fasting during Ramadan – (Saum)
 - Pilgrimage to Mecca – (Hajj)

- Muslims are required to recite blessings whenever the name of the Prophet is mentioned or written. The letters *pbuh* are often written after the Prophets name standing for 'peace be upon him'.
- Muslims may use the phrases 'God willing' and 'In the name of Allah the compassionate, the merciful' prior to meaningful activities or medical procedures to assure God's benevolence. The phrase 'God willing' is more commonly used.

Worship:

- Prayer is obligatory and occurs five times a day: dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset and evening. These five daily prayers contain verses of the Qu'ran.
- Prayer is conducted in Arabic.
- When praying, Muslims turn and face towards the Ka'ba, the grand mosque in Mecca.
- Prayers are performed by ritualistic prostrations on a prayer rug
- "Cleansing" must be performed by ritualistic washing of hands, face and feet prior to prayer.
- A sick person is allowed to combine noon and afternoon and sunset / evening prayers. Also, it is permissible for the sick and elderly to perform their prayers whilst seated or lying down in bed without performing the ritualistic prostrations of prayers on a prayer rug.

Places of Worship:

- Worship occurs in a Mosque, especially the congregational prayer on Friday. Although it is preferable to pray in a Mosque, a Muslim may pray almost anywhere, provided the surface is clean.
- Muslims face Mecca to pray.

Religious / Community Leaders:

- A Mufti is the closest that Muslims get to an authoritative leader, the Mufti provides religious advice to the community and mediates disputes, giving rulings on matters of religious interpretation. The Mufti is usually appointed by the Government of the day.
- In Australia there is an honorary Mufti appointed by the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, which is the national umbrella body of the Muslim communities of Australia.
- The Leader of a Mosque is known as the Imam. The congregation and community leaders usually choose the Imam. The Imam conducts formal services and provides religious, social and welfare guidance to the congregation.
- In the absence of an Imam a knowledgeable person from amongst the congregation can conduct religious services.

Icons / Statues / Symbols:

- Religious objects such as the prayer rug, the Qur'an, and amulets or prayer beads should be treated with due respect.
- The Qur'an should not be touched by anyone who is ritually unclean. Nothing should be placed on top of the Qur'an and it should be kept dry and in its place.

Scriptures:

- The holy book is the Qur'an. The Qur'an is a record of the exact words revealed by God through the Angel Gabriel to Prophet Muhammad. Muslims are guided by the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, and the sayings and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad.
- The Qur'an is a comprehensive guide to living. It includes chapters on morality, code of conduct, nutrition and dress code.
- Recorded teachings of the Prophet Muhammad outside of the Qur'an (the 'Hadith') are also regarded as valid religious teachings by the Sunni's.

Clothing:

- Modesty and dignity is highly valued.
- Certain parts of the body are to be covered (Awrah). For men, the parts of the body are from the navel to the knee. For women, the whole body should be covered except the face and hands. But among other Muslim women or with men whom you cannot marry i.e. married men, women are only required to cover themselves from chest to knees, excluding arms.
- Some Muslim women may wear Hijab (head dress). Not all Muslim women wear Hijab. Reasons for wearing Hijab include cultural traditions or religiously informed choices.
- Some Muslim women may wear veils that cover their whole face, except for the eyes, the 'Chador' or 'Burka.' This is more cultural than religious.

Food:

- Muslims are required to observe dietary laws; they are permitted to eat only certain foods that have been slaughtered in the prescribed way. This is called Halal.
- Forbidden food that is not approved is called Haram. Pork or animal fat is prohibited.
- Toxins and the consumption of harmful products including drugs and alcohol are prohibited.
- Consumption of wholesome food and leading a healthy lifestyle are seen as religious obligations.
- Some Muslims use Kosher (Jewish ritually prepared) foods since these meet the requirements of Islam.

Holy Days:

- Friday is a religious day. It is compulsory for men but optional for women to attend the mosque.
- For other Holy Days see key Islamic Festivals (below) and significant observances.
- During the holy days of Ramadan (29 or 30 days), neither food nor drink is taken between sunrise and sunset, though the frail and the ill, pregnant or lactating women and young children are exempt.

Customs / Values:

- Education is highly valued for both men and women. It is obligatory for all Muslims to seek knowledge and improve their own condition.
- It is recommended by the Prophet that all Muslims should seek education from cradle to grave.
- Cleanliness and hygiene are highly valued.
- Modesty and dignity are highly valued as reflected in the dress code.

- The family is the foundation of Islamic society.
- Marriage and parenthood are important.

Health Beliefs and Practices:

- Allah is seen as in control of the beginning and end of life, and therefore complaints and expression of powerlessness are rare since it is all seen as in God's hands.
- Western medicine is generally accepted, however some Muslims may avoid pharmaceuticals and over-the-counter medications that contain alcohol or narcotics. However, if the medical condition is life threatening, then this is waived.
- Muslim women generally prefer women healthcare workers.
- Workers should determine the extent to which their Muslim clients follow halal or Muslim kosher requirements. They must eat non-pork or vegetarian meals.

Belief about Ageing:

- Caring for one's parents is considered an honour and blessing and an opportunity for spiritual growth. In Islam, serving one's parents is a duty second only to prayer; it is the parent's right to expect it.

Belief about Disability and Mental Illness:

- Disability is viewed as God's will.
- Disability is not seen as a curse or punishment. It is a test of faith and patience.
- Mental illness is more taboo. Many Muslims believe that a person cannot be depressed if following the Islamic tenets.

Belief about Death:

- There are no elaborate rites performed when a person is dying.
- Muslims do not give up hope because they believe that God, not medical science, has power over life and death.
- Palliative care is generally accepted as it supports the family's commitment to focus on comforting the patient, rather than curing them, which is understood as in God's control.
- A person's body must be handled with care and respect.
- It is best if burial of a body takes place within 24 hours after death. Cremation is generally prohibited.

Belief about Organ and Tissue donation:

- The Muslim faith in Australia accepts organ donation during life provided it does not harm the donor and sought absolute permission, and after death in order to save a life. It is seen as an act of merit and in certain circumstances may be an obligation. (For a full ruling go to www.donatelife.gov.au)

Communication Styles:

- Handshaking is acceptable between the same sex but not acceptable between male and females.
- Looking down and crossing arms is a sign of respect for older people.
- Direct eye contact between males and non-family member females may be considered inappropriate.
- Communication styles may differ according to cultural background.

Naming Conventions:

- This is more dependent on the cultural background of the individual.

The Role of the Family / Women:

- Islamic beliefs include the father as being responsible for the family. The eldest son is usually responsible for the family in the absence of the father.
- Islam fosters a strongly united family and members of the family usually remain together until marriage.
- Women, whether single or married, are seen as individuals in their own right by Islam.
- Over 1400 years ago, Islam gave women the right to own property and dispose of property and earnings accordingly.
- Men and women are equal in the eyes of God, although they have different roles and responsibilities within the family and society.
- Unfortunately Muslim women are often the focus of misunderstanding, anxiety and concern about inter-cultural issues in the wider community.

Key Islamic Festivals / Significant Dates:

- Islamic Holy Days are based on the lunar calendar.
- All Muslims are required to observe fasting for one whole month every year during the Islamic Lunar month of Ramadan. No food or drink is consumed from sunrise to sunset during this holy month which is also a time for spirituality, forgiveness and goodwill towards others. Fasting increases one's spiritual status by sharing the hardship of those who are often hungry due to poverty.
- The two main Islamic Festivals are:
 - Eid ul Fitr - a feast day commemorating the end of Ramadan
 - Eid ul Adha - marks the close of Hajj (Pilgrimage to Mecca) which is celebrated with prayers and the exchange of gifts

* 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>

Local services useful for Muslim residents in the Eastern Region

Mosques

Doncaster Mosque

Address: 72 George Street, Doncaster East, 3109
Ph: 9842 6491

Lysterfield Mosque (located in the ISOMER complex)

Address: 1273 Wellington Road, Lysterfield, 3156
Ph: 9752 9977

Community Directory

Website: <http://www.ummahdirectory.com.au/index.php?action=page&id=21>

Phone: 1300 1UMMAH (1300 186 624)

Email: info@ummahdirectory.com.au.

Ummah (Arabic for 'nation' or 'community') Directory makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of the locations and contacts for mosques. Their website includes a comprehensive list of Mosques in Victoria.

Residential Care

Isomer Retirement Home

Address: 1273 Wellington Road, Lysterfield, 3156
Ph: 9752 9455

Email: info@isomer.com.au

Website: <http://www.isomer.com.au/>

Isomer Retirement Home is a not-for-profit Commonwealth-approved residential facility owned by the Islamic Society of Melbourne Eastern Region. They offer a home-like residential care environment for aged persons needing assistance with their daily living. They also offer Halal cuisine and weekly onsite services. Despite its ownership, IRH is open to ALL senior Australians, regardless of race, creed or religion.

Support Services

Islamic Council of Victoria

Address: 66-68 Jeffcott Street, West Melbourne, 3003

Ph: 9328 2067

Email: admin@icv.org.au

Website: www.icv.org.au

The Islamic Council is the peak body for Muslim organisations in Victoria coordinating the needs of the Islamic community and providing assistance to Muslims of all ethnic backgrounds. They run a range of services as well as short-term grant projects, from support to refugee and asylum seekers to interfaith and interreligious dialogue, plus referral to appropriate services and limited counselling.

Islamic Society of Melbourne Eastern Region (ISOMER)

Office: 1273 Wellington Road, Lysterfield, Victoria 3136 Australia

Website: <http://www.isomer.org.au>

Non-profit religious society dedicated to servicing the needs of the Muslim community of the eastern region.

Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights

Telephone: (03) 9481 3000

Fax: (03) 9481 3001

Website: <http://ausmuslimwomenscentre.org.au/>

The Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights (AMWCHR) is an organisation of Muslim women working to advance the rights and status of Muslim women in Australia. They are a non-religious organisation reflecting the cultural, linguistic and sectarian diversity within the Muslim community. The AMWCHR focus on practical work for women that improve their lives in tangible and measurable ways. They work with individuals, groups and service providers in the following areas: case work, referrals, secondary consultation and outreach, advocacy, community based program and service delivery, capacity building, leadership development, policy development, partnership projects.

Australian Institute for Minority Women is the research and consultancy arm of the AMWCHR, focusing on research, training development and delivery, publications, consultancy services.

Muslim Women's National Network Australia

Postal Address: PO Box 213 Granville NSW 2142

Email: info@mwanna.org.au

Website: <http://www.mwanna.org.au/>

Peak body representing a network of Muslim women organisations and individuals throughout Australia.

Islam-Australia Inc

Website: <http://www.islam-australia.net/index.html>

A non-profit organisation based in Perth that provides social and spiritual; services to new Muslims. They provide audio and visual material online, magazine and television material in addition to speakers for talks at various clubs, schools and religious organisations about Islam.

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