

## Croatian Cultural Profile

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

- The latest Census in 2016 recorded 43,687 Croatia-born people in Australia, a fall of 10.6% from the 2011 Census. The 2016 distribution by state and territory showed New South Wales had the largest number of Croatian-born people with 15,638 followed by Victoria (15,490), Western Australia (4,557) and Queensland (3,550) (ABS 2016 & ABS 2011).
- The Croatia-born community showed an older age profile: 12.3% (5,377) were aged 25 – 44 years; 35.8% (15,625) were aged 45 – 64 years and 49.6% (21,657) were aged 65 and over (ABS 2016).
- The latest Census in 2016 recorded 15,490 Croatia-born people in Victoria, a fall of 14.8% from the 2011 Census (ABS 2016 & ABS 2011).

### Migration:

- There have been four waves of migration from Croatia to Australia. The first wave began in 1851 with the news of the gold rush. The first arrivals, mainly from Dalmatia, became miners, labourers, fishermen and many began their own small businesses. Most of them settled in the goldfields of Victoria.
- The second wave resulted after World War II and comprised of displaced persons. These people were often well educated and had been in refugee camps. In 1947, Croatian's made up approximately 80% of migrants from the former Yugoslavia, with at least 5000 Croatians living in Australia at the time and settling mainly in the fruit-growing districts around Mildura.
- The third wave of Croatian immigrants arrived in the 1960's and 1970's as a result of the high unemployment, difficult economic conditions and anti- Croatian sentiment in Yugoslavia. Immigration slowed throughout the 1980's with Croatian immigrants primarily arriving under family reunion programs.
- Finally, the most recent wave of Croatian immigration occurred in the 1990's as a result of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and arriving Australia as refugees.

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

Local Government Area	Total Croatian-born Population	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years and over	Total number of Croatian-born people aged 65 and over	People aged 65+ as a % of the Croatian-born population
City of Boroondara	190	42	27	50	33	100	53%
City of Knox	228	60	57	56	25	113	50%
City of Manningham	316	42	73	107	49	216	68%
City of Maroondah	130	37	38	34	16	63	48%
City of Monash	400	60	90	129	65	246	62%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	108	22	31	32	9	58	26%
City of Whitehorse	224	34	44	60	56	148	66%
Eastern Region	1,600	297	360	468	253	944	59%

(ABS Census 2016)

## Languages: Croatian-speaking residents in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	Total no. of people speaking Croatian at home	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years and over	Total number of Croatian speaking people aged 65 and over	Croatian speaking People aged 65+ as a % of the Croatian-born population
City of Boroondara	214	29	24	38	23	70	33%
City of Knox	299	58	56	49	25	107	36%
City of Manningham	365	41	48	84	42	157	43%
City of Maroondah	140	25	24	24	8	43	31%
City of Monash	482	64	89	113	51	220	46%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	120	18	24	26	8	45	38%
City of Whitehorse	244	25	35	47	47	117	48%
Eastern Region	1,868	260	300	381	204	759	41%

(ABS Census 2016)

- The official language for Croatia is Croatian. Albanian, Czech, Hungarian, Italian, Serbian, Slovakian and Slovenian may be spoken by their respective Groups in parts of Croatia.

## Religion:

- The Croatian-born population in Victoria identified as the following religions at the 2016 Census (ABS 2016):
  - Buddhism – 20 (0.1%)
  - Christianity – 13,854 (89.4%)
  - Islam – 42 (0.3%)
  - Secular beliefs / other spiritual beliefs / no religious affiliations – 1,120 (7.2%)
  - Inadequately described / not stated – 433 (2.3%)

- Sundays are a holy day and the majority of Croatian-born Australians will attend church on Sunday mornings.
- Most young people are baptized, and most marriages are conducted in a church. Most families now observe Catholic rites of passage, including Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation and Marriage ceremonies in the Church.
- Feast of Our Lady (First Sunday in May) is an important celebration to many elderly Croats.
- When a family member passes away, the usual rituals of Roman Catholicism prevail. It is also a custom for the relatives to wear black clothing as a symbol of mourning.
- Christmas and Easter are important and widely celebrated:
  - Christmas More traditional Croatian families light candles with a ribbon representing the Croatian flag wrapped around it and placed amid green wheat as a display.
  - Easter A basket containing Easter bread, painted eggs, wine and produce from the garden is blessed at the Croatian church on Easter Saturday. On Easter Sunday, many families attend the Resurrection ceremony and Mass, followed by a family lunch.

### Attitudes and Issues with Ageing:

- The Croatian community is quite family-centred. There is a strong sense of family expectation that the children will take care of their parents at home for as long as possible. However, according to Liz Dimitriadis Consulting (2004) there has been an emerging shift in the community attitudes with some people departing from these traditional views.
- The elderly are respected and traditionally seen as a source of knowledge and information on culture, traditions and history and are valued within the family and the broader community.
- Many older Croats have difficulty in accessing health and welfare services due to poor proficiency in English, lack of mobility and lack of knowledge of the available services. Fear of authority also plays an important part.

### Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:

- Croatian-born people regard mental illness as a social stigma but this is changing.
- There may be the view that medication is the only treatment. Psychotherapy, group therapy or occupational therapy may be rejected.
- Members of the older generation are often less proficient in English and may experience additional frustration and isolation because of this.

### Customs / Values:

- Most young people are baptized and most marriages are conducted in a church. Most families observe Catholic rites of passage, including Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation and Marriage ceremonies in the church.
- When a family member dies, the usual rituals of Roman Catholicism prevail. It is also a custom for the relatives to wear black clothing as a symbol of mourning.
- For many, especially the older generation, life revolves around the church and its activities. The clergy is highly respected and involved in various aspects of community life.
- Croats are extremely proud of their heritage and culture. They call their country "Our Beautiful Homeland" ("*Lijepa naša*"), which is also the title of the national anthem. Folklore plays a key

role in preserving the culture. Their culture is expressed through verse, poetic songs, melodies, fairy tales, symbolic rituals, music, dance, costumes, and jewellery.

- The majority of Croatians maintain strong ties with their own community. This is done through the numerous national clubs and halls as well as churches.

### **Courtship, Marriage, Family, and Parenting:**

- Couples arrange their own marriages. Young people usually meet in school, through friends, or at work. They often begin to spend time together in the company of a larger group of friends. A young man and woman usually have a serious relationship before they meet each other's families. Individuals theoretically have a great deal of choice about marriage partners, but Croats tend to marry people of the same nationality and religion and with the same educational level and social status.
- The Croatian community is quite family centred and the family is still the basis of the social structure. The extended family is still the norm and relatives remain quite close with both the mother's and the father's sides. The family provides its members with a social network and assistance in times of need. While the nuclear family is becoming increasingly popular, Croatians still prefer to look after their elderly parents rather than send them to a nursing home. There is still a cultural preference for extended families, but young people tend to want privacy.
- There is also a preference for keeping small children in the care of resident grandparents.

### **Taboos:**

- Avoid talking about the conflict between Croatia and Serbia and the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as this may be a sensitive issue for many Croatian people. Discussing comparisons between the nationalities of the former Yugoslavian states may also be offensive.

### **Communication Styles:**

- Generally Croatians communicate in a direct and straightforward manner; however there is an emphasis on being respectful and diplomatic so as not to offend anyone.
- It is customary to shake hands and have direct eye contact when greeting.
- Close friends and family may greet each other with a kiss on each cheek and an embrace.
- Young people are expected to offer the first greeting to older people and women to men.
- Personal space is usually respected in Croatian culture. People generally don't touch each other when communicating until a familiar relationship is established.

### **Naming Conventions:**

- The naming system follows the standard western system i.e. the first or Christian name is followed by the family or married name.
- Generally Croatian people use their titles and surnames when referring to others, only close friends and family will use first names.

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

- Croatian-born rely on their doctors for information, assistance and referrals.
- Croatian-born people may use alternative therapies alongside mainstream medical treatment.

- Herbal medicines may be used.
- Croatian-born people tend to openly discuss their physical ailments and health conditions.
- Preventive health actions are not widely adopted by the Croatian community.

## Greetings:

English Greeting	Croatian	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello	Bok	Bok
Good day	Dobar dan	Dobar dan
Goodbye	Dovidjenja	Doveejenya
Good Morning	Dobro jutro	Dobro yootro
Yes	Da	Da
No	Ne	Ne
Thank you	Hvala	Hvala

## Key Croatian Festivals / Significant Dates:

- Easter Late March / Early April
- Assumption of Mary 15th August
- All Saints Day 1<sup>st</sup> November
- Christmas 25<sup>th</sup> December
- Epiphany 6<sup>th</sup> January
- Anti-fascist Struggle Day 22<sup>nd</sup> June
- Victory Day/Day of Croatian Defenders 5<sup>th</sup> August

## Local Services Useful for Croatian-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 <u>and</u> 18 Bond Street, Ringwood 3134	Ph: 9285 4888 (Box Hill) 9870 1351 (Ringwood)
New Hope Foundation	Grattan Gardens Community Centre 40 Grattan Street, Prahran 3181	Ph: 9510 5877

## **Aged Care & Disability Support Services**

### **Australian Croatian Community Services (ACCS)**

Address: Ground floor, 4-8 Parker Street, Footscray 3011

Ph: 9689 5811

Address: Suite 3, 57 Robinson Street, Dandenong 3175

Ph: 9791 6000

Email: [support@accs.asn.au](mailto:support@accs.asn.au)

ACCS is the peak community services agency for people from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in Victoria. The organisation offers Home Care Services and Education and engages communities.

### **Migrant Information Centre**

#### **Aged & Disability Services**

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

Ph: 9275 6901

Email: [wzhang@miceastmelb.com.au](mailto:wzhang@miceastmelb.com.au)

Website: <http://miceastmelb.com.au/our-services/elderly-people-younger-people-disabilities-carers/>

The Access & Support Program provides short term support to help people access aged care and other services so they can continue 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.

### **Victorian Multi-Ethnic Slavic Welfare Association**

Address: Level 3, 247-251 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000

Ph: 9639 1930

Email: [vmeswa@slavicwelfare.com.au](mailto:vmeswa@slavicwelfare.com.au)

The Victorian Multi Ethnic Slavic Welfare Assoc. is a non-government, non-political and non-religious organisation which provides information and assistance to elderly people who have migrated from the Former Yugoslavia. The organisation runs regular social support groups across Melbourne and have just launched a Community Visitors Program to match up isolated elderly people from the Former Yugoslavia who are living at home with a friendly visitor from a similar cultural or linguistic background.

### **Senior Citizens Groups**

There are a number of Croatian Senior Citizens Clubs in Melbourne but none are located in the Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR). For further information contact Australian Croatian Community Services above.

## **Other Support Services**

### **Croatian Catholic Centre Clifton Hill**

Address: Hrvatski Katolicki Centar, St. Nicholas' Church (Sv. Nikola Tavelic), 69 Hodgkinson Street, Clifton Hill 3068

Ph: 9482 3479

Email: [info@hkz-ch.com.au](mailto:info@hkz-ch.com.au)

Website: [www.hkc.com.au/index.php](http://www.hkc.com.au/index.php)

Offers mass services in Croatian language, Croatian Schools on Saturdays, folklore dance programs, Sunday lunches for the elderly and occasionally excursions are organized locally and interstate.

### Croatian Catholic Centre Springvale

'Duha Svetoga' Church

Address: 798 - 808 Springvale Road, Braeside 3173

Ph: 9769 1966

The Church offers mass services in Croatian language, senior group meetings, dancing, religious and cultural functions.

### Croatian Catholic Welfare Association

Address: 798-808 Springvale Road, Braeside VIC 3195

Ph: 03 9701 6131

Located at the Croatian Catholic Centre Keysborough. The service includes HACC Assessment & Care Management, Social Support /Friendly Visiting Program, Information and Referrals.

## Media

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

Media	Program	Details
Radio	SBS Radio Melbourne 1224 AM	PO Box 294, South Melbourne 3205 Ph: 9949 2121 Fax: 9949 2385 Email: <a href="mailto:croatian.program@sbs.com.au">croatian.program@sbs.com.au</a>
	Croatian Radio Program 3ZZZ - 92.3 AM	Email: <a href="mailto:admin@3zzz.com.au">admin@3zzz.com.au</a>
	Croatian Radio Melbourne	Email: <a href="mailto:ivica@cyberdude.com">ivica@cyberdude.com</a> <a href="http://www.croradio.net">www.croradio.net</a>
Television	CroatianTV-Australia	<a href="http://www.croatiantv-australia.com">www.croatiantv-australia.com</a>
	Channel 31	Level 11, 277 William Street, Melbourne 3000 Email: <a href="mailto:info@c31.org.au">info@c31.org.au</a> Phone: 9660 3131
Newspaper/ Journal/Articles	The Croatian Herald	PO Box 109, Clifton Hill VIC 3068 Ph: 9481 8068 Email: <a href="mailto:CroatianHerald@netspace.net.au">CroatianHerald@netspace.net.au</a> <a href="http://www.vjesnik.com.au/">http://www.vjesnik.com.au/</a>
Bookshop	Zagreb Croatian Bookshop	309 High Street, Preston 3072 Ph: 9484 7236 E-mail: <a href="mailto:zagrebcb@bigpond.com">zagrebcb@bigpond.com</a>

## Useful Websites

- Croatian Studies Foundation  
[http://www.croatianstudiesfoundation.com.au/index.php?option=com\\_weblinks&view=category&id=53%3Afoundations&Itemid=71&lang=en](http://www.croatianstudiesfoundation.com.au/index.php?option=com_weblinks&view=category&id=53%3Afoundations&Itemid=71&lang=en)

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- Australian Croatian Community Services <http://www.accs.asn.au/index.php/contact-us>
- Channel 13, <http://www.c31.org.au/contact>
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- HKC Croatian Catholic centres, Croatian Catholic Welfare Association, <http://www.croatiancatholiccentre.com.au/croatian-catholic-welfare>
- HKC Croatian Catholic centres, Croatian Catholic centre Springvale. <https://www.croatiancatholiccentre.com.au/>
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- Victorian Multi-Ethnic Slavic Welfare Association Inc. <http://humanservicesdirectory.vic.gov.au/SiteDetails.aspx?SiteID=25781>
- Community Information Summary Croatia-born, retrived from [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02\\_2014/croatia.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2014/croatia.pdf)

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