

## Greek Cultural Profile

**PLEASE NOTE:** This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of Greek-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. This is an update of the profile in the Home and Personal Care Kit developed by the MIC in 2004.

### Introduction:

- The Greek-born community in Melbourne is one of the largest outside Greece.
- At the 2016 Census, there were 47,9240 Greek-born persons in Victoria (50.4% of Australia's total), decreasing by 5.5% from 49,991 persons in 2011 (Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion Division 2016). Reasons for this decrease include ageing, some return migration, and lack of new arrivals.
- The Greece-born community reflects an ageing profile: with 66.3% aged 65 years and over. The median age was 70 years at the 2016 census, compared to 37 years for the total Victorian population (Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion Division 2016).

### Migration:

- The majority of Greek migration to Australia occurred in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s.
- Most Greeks left their homeland for economic reasons, some for political reasons and others for educational opportunities. Many of those migrating were unskilled and had no knowledge of the English language. Many older Greek-born people have established their own small businesses.
- The greatest majority of Greek-born migrants have school education only (64.5%) (Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion Division 2016).
- Second generation Greeks have much higher levels of education.
- The Greek community has a strong ability to maintain a bicultural identity after migration.

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

Local Government Area	Total Greek-born Population	45-54 years	55-64 years	65-74 years	75-84 years	85 years and over	Total number of Greek-born people aged 65 and over	People aged 65+ as a % of the Greek-born population
City of Boroondara	1543	144	363	403	556	177	1136	73%
City of Manningham	2683	220	501	875	856	247	1978	73%
City of Monash	3968	409	622	1332	1311	398	3041	76%
City of Maroondah	196	29	52	73	51	7	97	49%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	116	15	33	39	21	6	66	56%
City of Whitehorse	1569	114	203	527	585	134	1246	79%
City of Knox	555	87	148	174	131	17	322	58%
Eastern Region	10,622	1021	1814	3419	3485	882	7786	73%

(ABS Census 2016)

## Language: Greek-speaking residents in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	Total number of people speaking Greek at home	45-54 years	55-64 years	65-74 years	75-84 years	85 years and over	Total number of Greek-born people aged 65 and over	People aged 65+ as a % of the Greek-born population
City of Boroondara	2927	1157	482	433	626	224	1285	43%
City of Knox	958	365	248	93	144	16	353	36%
City of Manningham	4403	1353	823	988	955	274	2216	50%
City of Maroondah	333	125	82	65	57	6	128	38%
City of Monash	6092	1867	930	1511	1436	344	3291	54%
City of Whitehorse	2643	804	379	627	665	167	1459	55%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	207	65	52	48	28	8	84	40%
Eastern Region	17559	5747	2999	3860	3811	1020	8691	49%

(ABS Census 2016)

- Although there are some regional dialects, including Cypriot, Pontian and others, all Greeks speak or understand standard Greek.
- Greek children are encouraged to learn Greek as well as English. Most Greek Australian-born children are bilingual. The Greek community has the highest uptake of second and third generation language.
- 33.2% of the Greek-born population in Victoria identified as speaking English 'not-well or not at all' and 58.4% of the Greek-born population in Victoria assessed themselves as speaking English 'very well or well'. (ABS Census 2016).

## Religion:

- The majority of Greeks belong to the Greek Orthodox Christian Church. 90.5% of Greek-born people in Victoria identify as being Greek Orthodox (ABS Census 2016). Most Greek celebrations and customs have their foundations in Greek Orthodoxy. Religion is a stronger influence with older Greeks than with the younger generation.
- Icons are significant religious symbols in Orthodoxy. Greek people pay honour to icons and usually have them in their homes. Icons and mirrors in the home are covered during the first few days of mourning as a sign of respect.
- Respecting the Greek belief system and spirituality is considered important in developing a good relationship.
- Following a death, a 'kandili' (religious burner comprising oil, water and a floating wick) must remain lit for 40 days next to an icon and a photo of the deceased, until the soul leaves this world.
- Fasting is an essential part of the Orthodox religion. Fasting from food means abstinence from meats, oil and dairy products. It is customary to fast 40 days prior to midnight on Easter Saturday. During Lent in the Easter period, Greeks spring-clean their homes and properties in preparation for the Holy Week.

## Attitudes and Issues with Ageing:

- It's not uncommon for older Greek people to find it difficult to understand and navigate the aged care service system hence there is a need in the community for services to support individuals on this journey and advocate on their behalf.

- Traditionally children and family members care for the elderly at home where possible. However it is no longer customary for Greek families in Australia to live together as an extended family unit. Many elderly people live alone.
- Residential care is taboo and seen as degrading to the care recipient. It is often seen as a last resort for people who are alone and have no family members to care for them.
- It is a common perception that a person's condition will deteriorate quicker when they are placed in residential care than if they were cared for at home.
- Greek elders have a high status in the family and community and are treated with respect. Younger people are expected to be submissive to older Greeks but also have positive attitudes to older family members.
- Older people are honoured.
- Women usually take on the caring role of older Greek people. This can lead to isolation as they are willing to sacrifice their own needs to be a carer.
- Language and cultural differences may cause generational issues to arise between older Greeks and their Australian-born children and grandchildren.
- Grandparents often play an important role in caring for their grandchildren.

### **Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:**

- The Greek-born community regards disability as shameful and a strong cultural stigma is attached to mental illness in particular.
- Older Greek people tend to suffer more from depression and anxiety when they have migrated. Greek women are more at risk than Greek men.
- Older Greeks may be reluctant to access mental health services as there is a general lack of understanding of mental health issues. 'Depression' is not understood to be a mental illness.
- Dementia is not openly discussed in the community and many people will become isolated due to a breakdown in communication and community members not knowing how to behave around someone with dementia. It is also seen as shameful. (Alzheimer's Australia, 2008)

### **Customs / Values:**

- A patriarchal social structure is the norm where Greek fathers are the protector, provider and authority in the family.
- Greek mothers are expected to take care of their children and honour their husband.
- Family relationships are very important to the Greek-born population. The family has a strong role in decision-making regarding the care of elderly people. Family honour is an extremely important cultural value.
- Greeks are proud of their cultural heritage and traditions.
- Emphasis is on honour, morality, spirituality and fatalism.
- The wearing of black for those in mourning is still very prevalent, particularly by older women.
- Confidentiality is an important value.
- Personal relationships are important in terms of familiarity and trust of services and workers.

### **Communication Styles:**

- Greek people generally have an expressive communication style and tend to express their emotions quite openly.

- Physical contact is both natural and normal but is generally restricted to the family / community.
- It is quite common for Greek people to greet each other with a hug and a kiss on both cheeks.
- It is important to maintain eye contact with someone who is older.
- Greek people are usually very sociable and generally prefer to be with others rather than be alone.

### Naming Conventions:

- Older Greek people prefer to be addressed using their title. For example, Mr., Mrs. and Dr.
- In well-established or comfortable relationships, older Greek people may prefer to be addressed by their first name.
- Some Greeks will have anglicised versions of their Greek names.
- Older family friends are often addressed in conversation as 'Auntie' and 'Uncle' out of respect, even though they may not be directly related.

### Health Beliefs and Practices:

- In cases of terminal illness, there is a tendency to avoid telling the ill person that they are dying.
- A small number of older Greek-born people may still practice cupping. This produces round bruises. It is important not to mistake the resulting marks as a sign of abuse.
- Many older Greek-born people use methylated spirits as a remedy by rubbing their arms and legs when they are tired or sore.
- Greek Australians tend to seek out doctors who understand their language and culture.

### Greetings:

English Greeting	Greek	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello	χαίρέτέ	YIA-SAS OR HE-RE-TE
Good Morning	καλήμέρα	KA-LI-ME-RA
Good Afternoon	καλήσπέρα	<u>KALISPE-RA</u>
Goodbye	gia sou	YIA-SOU
Yes	ναι	NE
No	όχι	O- HE
Thankyou	ευχαριστώ	EF-HA-RIS-TO

### Key Greek Festivals / Significant Dates:

- Greece Independence Day *25th of March*
- Ochi Day (1940 Greeks say 'No' to Hitler invading Greece) *28th of October*
- St Basil's Day *1st of January*
- Epiphany *6th of January*
- Name days: The person who bears the name of a Saint celebrates their patron saint on that day.

\* Other religious observances are based around the Greek Orthodox calendar. These include Orthodox Easter and Christmas. Easter is the most significant celebration.

## Local services useful for Greek-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, Vic 3128 <u>and</u> 18 Bond Street, Ringwood Vic 3134	Ph: 9285 4888 (Box Hill) 9870 1351 (Ringwood)
New Hope Foundation	Grattan Gardens Community Centre, 40 Grattan Street, Prahran Vic 3181	Ph: 9510 5877

### Aged Care & Disability Support Services

#### **Australian Greek Welfare Society (PRONIA)**

Address: 1/64 Portman Street, Oakleigh 3166

Ph: 8560 444

Website: <https://www.pronia.com.au/>

PRONIA provides programs to meet the health and care needs of frail elderly, people with disabilities and their carers. Services include: Planned Activity Groups (PAG), Social Support Program (friendly visiting service), Community Visitors Scheme, Assessment, In-home & recreational Respite, Home Care Packages (West, East & Northern regions of Melbourne), Brokered Services, Private Brokered Services, Training (introduction to computers), Workforce Development Program and Volunteer Workforce Development Program.

#### **Froniditha Care (Southern Region)**

Address: Support Hub, 16 Anzed Court, Mulgrave 3170

Ph: 9552 4100 or 9239 2100 (Clayton)

Website: <https://fronidithacare.org.au/>

Provides residential aged care, home care packages, access and support, domestic assistance, social support groups, volunteer program and brokerage. Some services are specifically based in the Eastern Region of Melbourne.

#### **Migrant Information Centre Aged & Disability Services**

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

Ph: 9275 6901

Website: <http://www.miceastmelb.com.au/agedcare.htm>

The Access & Support Program provides short term support to help people access aged care and other services so they can stay 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. The team also receives funding for specific projects in this area.

## Greek Social Support Groups

Name of Organisation & Contact Details	LGA	Venue
Australian Greek Welfare Society (PRONIA)  Ph: 8560 444	<b>EMR</b>	9-11 Marwal Avenue North Balwyn, 3103
Fronditha Care  Ph: 9552 4100	<b>Knox</b>	Knox Gardens Community Hall Argyle Way Wantirna South, 3152
	<b>Monash</b>	Ladies Auxiliary Room 94 Springs Road Clayton South, 3169
	<b>Whitehorse</b>	Greek Orthodox Community of Box Hill and Districts – Hall 1 Hopetoun Parade Box Hill, 3128

## Senior Citizens Groups

For further information please contact local councils or the Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne) on 9275 6903.

Name of the Club	LGA	Venue
Boroondara Greek Senior Citizen's Club	<b>Boroondara</b>	405 Camberwell Road Camberwell 3124 Ph: 9889 5961
Glen Iris Greek Senior Citizen's Club	<b>Boroondara</b>	34 Meron Street, Camberwell 3124 Ph: 9809 2761
Ex-Servicemen Greek Elderly Citizens of Kew	<b>Boroondara</b>	169 Auburn Rd, Hawthorn 3122 Ph: 9813 3062
Greek Senior Citizens of North Balwyn & District	<b>Boroondara</b>	9 Marwal Avenue Balwyn North 3104 Ph: 9859 3921
Hawthorn & Kew Greek Senior Citizens Club	<b>Boroondara</b>	533 High Street Kew 3101 Ph: 9278 4777
North Balwyn Greek Orthodox Church Senior Citizen Club	<b>Boroondara</b>	5-7 Macedon Ave Balwyn North 3104 Ph: 9278 4777
Palesviaki Enosis Seniors Group	<b>Knox</b>	26 Waldheim Road Bayswater 3153 Ph: 0438 893 380
Greek Elderly Senior Citizens Club of Manningham Inc.	<b>Manningham</b>	Ajani Centre 284 Thompsons Rd Lower Templestowe 3107

<b>Name of the Club</b>	<b>LGA</b>	<b>Venue</b>
St Haralambos Church Greek Senior Citizens	<b>Manningham</b>	St Haralambos Church Hall 190-200 Porter St, Templestowe 3106
Greek Elderly Citizens' Club of Maroondah	<b>Maroondah</b>	Bedford Park, Bedford Rd Ringwood 3134 Ph: 0413 019 190
Australian Greek Elderly Citizens' Club of Oakleigh	<b>Monash</b>	Oakleigh Hall 142 Drummond St Oakleigh 3166
Faros Senior Citizens	<b>Monash</b>	23 Grenfell Road Mount Waverley 3149
Greek Elderly Citizens' Group of Clayton and Districts	<b>Monash</b>	Clarinda Community Centre 58 Viney St Clarinda 3169
Greek Orthodox Community of Clayton	<b>Monash</b>	10 Oakes Ave Clayton South 3169 Ph: 9544 8695
Greek Senior Citizens' Club of Monash Inc.	<b>Monash</b>	Mulgrave Community Centre 355 Wellington Rd Mulgrave 3170 Ph: 9560 7452
Greek Seniors' and Pensioners' Association of Clayton and District	<b>Monash</b>	Clayton Hall 264 Clayton Rd Clayton, 3168 Ph: 9544 6141
Victorian Association of Argos Orestiko & District Inc	<b>Monash</b>	85-87 Warrigal Road Oakleigh 3166 Ph: 9338 6466
Box Hill Greek Senior Citizens' Club	<b>Whitehorse</b>	Box Hill Senior Citizens' Centre 79 Carrington Rd Box Hill 3128 Ph: 9803 7713
Greek and Cypriots Elderly Citizens Club of Whitehorse and District	<b>Whitehorse</b>	Blackburn North Square Ph: 9898 4814
Greek Elderly Citizens of Nunawading	<b>Whitehorse</b>	Forest Hill Hall Crn Springvale & Canterbury Rd Forest Hill 3131 Ph: 0411 058 939
Senior Citizen's of the Greek Community of Forest Hill	<b>Whitehorse</b>	Forest Hill Hall Crn Springvale & Canterbury Rd Forest Hill 3131 Ph: 9803 2580

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