

## MIGRANT INFORMATION CENTRE (Eastern Melbourne)

# Italian Cultural Profile

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

Italians are one of the most well established ethnic communities and one of the largest non-English speaking birthplace group in Australia, particularly in Victoria (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).

### Migration:

- The first arrival of Italians in Australia can be traced back to the 1850s during the gold rush.
- In 1885 a group of Italian migrants from northern Italy established a traditional Italian community called 'New Italy' in northern NSW.
- "Chain" migration was a significant trend among Italian migrants. In which people from a particular village, town or district in Italy followed one another to Australia.
- Post World War II many Italians migrated to Australia due to economic and political upheaval. Most Italian migrants who came after World War II came from Sicily, Calabria and Veneto and settled in metropolitan areas.

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

Local Government Area	Total Italian-born Population	55-64 years	65-74 years	75-84 years	85 years and over	Total number of Italian-born people aged 65 and over	People aged 65+ as a % of the Italian-born population
City of Boroondara	1,529	189	430	427	215	1,072	70%
City of Knox	1,088	262	319	240	84	643	59%
City of Manningham	3,175	436	1,068	998	409	2,475	78%
City of Maroondah	550	113	161	129	59	349	63%
City of Monash	2,643	392	708	855	369	1,932	73%
City of Whitehorse	1,437	192	434	463	196	1,093	76%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	901	166	297	224	104	625	69%
Eastern Region	11,323	1,750	3,417	3,336	1,436	8,189	72%

(ABS Census 2016)

- Victoria is home to the largest population of Italian-born people in Australia, with 70,527 people at the last census (ABS 2016).
- At the last census, the median age of the Italian-born population is 70 years compared to 37 years for the total Victorian population (Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion Division 2016).

## Language:

- Hundreds of dialects exist in Italy (for example Calabrese) however, 'formal' Italian is recognised by the majority of Italians in Australia. Some older or uneducated migrants may not be able to speak standard Italian.
- 18.2% of the Italian-born population in Victoria identified as speaking English 'not-well' and 1.5% spoke English 'not at all' (Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion Division 2016).
- 31.3% of the Italian-born population in Victoria assessed themselves as speaking English 'very well' and 30.0% as 'well' (Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion Division 2016).

## Religion:

- The Catholic Church plays a very important role within the Italian culture. 87.9% (62,018) of Italian-born people in Victoria identify as being Catholic (ABS 2016).
- Religion is a stronger influence with the elderly than the younger generation.

## Attitudes and Issues with Ageing:

- The Italian community is an ageing population.
- Traditionally, the family is responsible for looking after older parents and relatives. Italians are reluctant to utilise services available for the elderly and nursing home admissions are low.
- Language and cultural differences may cause generational issues to arise between older Italians and their Australian-born children and grandchildren.

## Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:

- In the Italian-born community people with a disability are rarely institutionalised.
- Mental illnesses tend to be stigmatised. Older Italian-born people are reluctant to access mental health services due to a lack of understanding of mental health issues.
- More often than not, Italian people with a disability and mental illness are cared for and protected by the family and community.

## Customs / Values:

- Many expectations and obligations in the Italian community are based on sibling status and gender roles. This is also related to the general belief that it is necessary to 'do one's duty'.
- The extended family structure is the traditional norm.
- Children are highly valued in the Italian community and are incorporated into most family activities.
- Food plays an important part in the Italian culture.

## Communication Styles:

- Italian-born people may display emotions openly, e.g. anger, despair and depression. Italians are generally highly expressive of joy, sadness and grief, both vocally and through body language.

## Naming Conventions:

- It is conventional to use titles, particularly with older Italians. Second generation Italians may not follow this convention.

## Health Beliefs and Practices:

- There is no cultural objection to taking western medicines, although some older Italian-born people may supplement this with their own home remedies.
- Some traditional health beliefs may still be practiced, i.e. belief in the 'evil eye', this is more prevalent for migrants from rural areas.
- Some older Italians may practice coining. This is used for a range of ailments and is usually performed on the forehead, the abdomen, on the base of the nose, between the eyes and on the neck, chest or back. This practice can result in bruises or marks, it is important not to mistake the resulting marks as a sign of abuse.
- Among older Italian migrant women, awareness of women's health issues tends to be poor, with low rates of women having a Pap test, breast examination or a mammogram, or even having heard of these screening measures. They may only seek services for serious illness, not for screening.

## Greetings:

English Greeting	Italian	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello (How are you?)	Ciao / Salve	CHI-OW / SALVE
Goodbye	Arrivederci	ARRI-VA-DER-CHI
Yes	Sì	SEE
No	No	NO
Thankyou	Grazie	GRATSEE

## Key Italian Festivals / Significant Dates:

- Liberation Day *25th of April*
- Republic / Constitution Day *2nd of June*
- St Anthony of Padua *13<sup>th</sup> of June*
- Festa del Redentore *3rd Sunday in July*
- Joust of the Quintana *1st Sunday in August*
- Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary *15th of August*
- Palio Del Golfo *2nd Sunday in August*
- St. Francis of Assisi *4th of October*
- All Saints Day *1st of November*
- Epiphany, Easter and Christmas are also celebrated.
- Many local towns also have a public holiday on the feast day of their patron saint.

## Local services and activities useful for Italian-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**

### **CO.AS.IT. Italian Assistance Association**

Address: Level 1, 189 Faraday Street, Carlton, 3053

Ph: 9349 9000

Email: [coasit@coasit.com.au](mailto:coasit@coasit.com.au)

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

Provides aged care services (Home Care Packages, Social Support Groups, Respite Care for Carers, Volunteer Visitation Program and Access and Support Program) and information regarding services to the Italian community.

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

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

### **Shire of Yarra Ranges – Social Support**

Address: Wandin Senior Citizens Centre, Warburton Highway, Wandin, Vic 3139

Ph: 1300 368 333

Provides a wide range of social and recreational activities for the older Italian community.

## **Senior Citizens Groups**

For more information please contact local councils or the Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne) on 9275 6905.

Name of the Club	LGA	Venue	Time / Day
Associazione Amica Pensionati Italiani di Hawthorn	<b>Boroondara</b>	Hawthorn Peppercorn Club 584 Glenferrie Road Hawthorn, Vic 3122	Friday 1:00pm – 5:00pm
Kew - Camberwell - Hawthorn	<b>Boroondara</b>	Room 3, Kew Library Charles Street, Kew 3101 Tel: 9278 4440	Tuesday (Kew) 2.00pm – 5.00pm Thursday (Camberwell, 405 Camberwell Rd) 1.30pm – 4.30pm

<b>Name of the Club</b>	<b>LGA</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Time / Day</b>
Knox Italian Senior Citizens' Centre	<b>Knox</b>	99 Karoo Road Rowville, Vic 3178	Thursday 1:00pm – 5:00pm
Knox Indoor bocce	<b>Knox</b>	Italian Community Club Inc. 99 Karoo Road Rowville 3178 Tel: 9764 2868	Thursday 2.00pm – 5.00pm
Doncaster Italian Senior Citizens Group	<b>Manningham</b>	284 Thompsons Road Lower Templestowe, Vic 3107	Every weekday 8.30am – 2.30pm
Circolo Italiano Anziani di Bulleen	<b>Manningham</b>	Veneto Social Club 191 Bulleen Road, Bulleen 3105 Tel: 0415 849134 (Dorina di Marzio)	Thursday 1.00pm – 4.00pm
Doncaster Templestowe	<b>Manningham</b>	City of Manningham Function Centre, 284 Thompson Road, Lower Templestowe 3107 Tel: 9840 9333	Monday 10.00am – 5.00pm
Croydon	<b>Maroondah</b>	Football Pavilion, Croydon Park, Hewish Road, Croydon 3131	Wednesday 10.00am – 4.30pm
Oakleigh - Clayton	<b>Monash</b>	Clayton Hall Clayton Road Clayton 3168 Tel: 9548 9206	Monday & Wednesday 12.30pm – 4.30pm
Waverley	<b>Monash</b>	Ashwood Hall Electra Avenue Ashwood 3147 Tel: 9807 6502	Wednesday 1.00pm – 4.00pm
Burwood East (Whitehorse Club) Indoor bocce	<b>Whitehorse</b>	The Whitehorse Club 298-336 Burwood Hwy East Burwood 3151 Tel: 9887 9968	Thursday 10.00am – 3.00pm
Nunawading - Box Hill	<b>Whitehorse</b>	Community Room Shopping Centre, Springfield Road & Williams Street Blackburn 3130 Tel: 9878 4162	Friday 9.30am – 3.30pm
Lilydale Indoor bocce	<b>Yarra Ranges</b>	Lilydale International Club Maroondah Highway Lilydale 3140 Tel: 9735 0555	Monday 12.45pm – 4.30pm

## References:

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- Collins, J., Mondello, L., Brehencey, J. & Childs, T., 2001, *Cosmopolitan Melbourne: Explore the World in One City*, Big Box Publishing Pty Ltd, pp.94-108.
- Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services ACT, 2003, *The Cultural Dictionary*, viewed 1 March 2010, <[http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/5282/Cultural\\_Dictionary.pdf](http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/5282/Cultural_Dictionary.pdf)>, pp. 93-94.
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- Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), 2008, *Seniors from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds*, Demography on the 50 years plus Victorian population from the 2006 census, Victoria, Australia.
- The State of Queensland (Queensland Health), 2003, *Italians: A Guide for Health Professionals*, viewed 1 March 2010, <[http://www.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural/health\\_workers/italian.pdf](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural/health_workers/italian.pdf)>.
- Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2008, *The Italy-Born Community in Victoria*, Fact Sheet No. A-34, viewed 1 March 2010, < <http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/images/stories/pdf/italyfs-24apr08.pdf>>.