

Cultural Diversity in Hobsons Bay



Hobsons Bay
CITY COUNCIL



Through its various functions, local governments play a major role in protecting, improving and promoting the health of its residents. As the closest level of government to the community, councils work to understand the populations they serve and ensure all residents are provided with an environment which allows everyone to equally achieve the best personal health and wellbeing possible. This research summary is one of 15 aimed at providing information about the social and environmental conditions that affect the health and wellbeing of Hobsons Bay residents.

Our health is determined by much more than genes and lifestyle decisions. It is determined by the circumstances in which we are born, grow, live, work and age. Ethnicity is strongly associated with almost every measure of health and wellbeing. Cultural diversity can have positive effects on our health and wellbeing, adding significantly to the culture and quality of our lifestyles and interactions between individuals and groups.

How does our culture, migration and settlement process affect our health and wellbeing?

- Culture in its broadest sense, refers to accepted ways of behaving within identifiable groups in society.
- Cultural diversity can have positive effects on our health and wellbeing, adding significantly to the culture and quality of our lifestyles and interactions between individuals and groups (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2012a).
- The health status of migrants can vary according to a range of factors, which include not only birthplace and fluency in English, but also the process of migration, stage in the life course, and whether the person is part of an established, emerging or refugee community (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2005).
- A number of factors associated with the migration and settlement process may contribute to health problems, particularly mental health problems (Queensland Health, 2001).
- The health and wellbeing of migrants and refugees can be affected by English language proficiency, past experience of trauma, lack of social and family support networks and change of traditional roles within the family, social isolation, loss of status (particularly in terms of employment), racism and discrimination (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2005).
- Primarily as a result of a lack of English language skills, people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds are more vulnerable to a range of issues including having a low socioeconomic status. In addition, lack of recognition of qualifications can lead to poor employment options and social isolation.
- Unemployment rates amongst those from CALD backgrounds are higher (8.2%) than those from English speaking countries, including those born in Australia (5.2%) (Department Education Employment Workplace Relations, 2012).

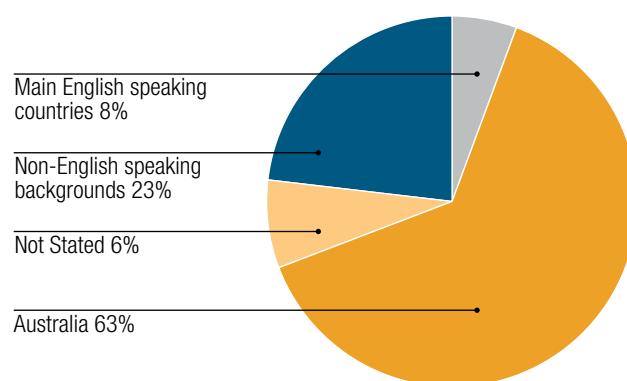


- CALD residents, particularly those who are newly arrived, are also more vulnerable to accessing inappropriate housing and food.
- A lack of acceptance by some parts of the community can also lead to race-based discrimination and to poor health and wellbeing including: anxiety, depression, poor self-esteem, and stress-related illness, unhealthy coping behaviours, such as dropping out of physical activity and community activities, smoking, misusing alcohol and drugs; restricted access to education, information, employment and social support; long-term social and material disadvantage; as well as lower rates of participation in sports, cultural and civic activities (VicHealth, 2009).

What do we know about cultural diversity in Hobsons Bay?

- Almost 31 per cent (25,839) of the Hobsons Bay population was born overseas, with residents coming from over 130 countries and speaking more than 100 different languages. This is lower than the North West Metropolitan Region (35%), but on par with Metropolitan Melbourne (31%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2012).
- Of those who were born overseas, 23.1 per cent are from non-English speaking backgrounds (ABS, 2012).

Birthplace



Source: ABS, 2012

- Neighbourhoods with the highest proportion of residents from non-English speaking countries include Laverton (40%), Altona North (36%) and Brooklyn (35%) (ABS, 2012).

Residents from non-English speaking countries

Suburb	Percentage
Laverton	39%
Altona North	36%
Brooklyn	35%
Altona Meadows	29%
Seabrook	25%
Spotswood – South Kingsville	20%
Altona – Seaholme	19%
Newport West	16%
Williamstown North – Rifle Range	12%
Williamstown	11%
Newport East	11%

Source: ABS, 2012



- Hobsons Bay residents who have arrived in Australia since 2006 make up 21 per cent of the total overseas born population in Hobsons Bay. Since 2006, Hobsons Bay has welcomed close to 5,400 residents, primarily from India (22%), China (12%) and the United Kingdom (6%) (Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), 2012b).
- Just over half (52%) of residents who arrived in Australia between 2006 and 2011 came through the skilled migrant visa category, compared to 14 per cent via the Humanitarian and 34 per cent via Family visa categories. All tend to be younger migrants, usually aged under 44 years (DIAC, 2012b).
- On the other hand, residents who arrived prior to 1980 are mainly aged between 50 and 59 years (ABS, 2012).
- Hobsons Bay residents from non-English speaking origins are primarily from India, Italy, Vietnam, Malta and Greece. Between 2006 to 2011, the number of people born in India has risen from 0.9 per cent to 2.8 per cent (an increase of over 1600 people) (ABS, 2012).
- Just over 29 per cent of Hobsons Bay residents speak a language other than English at home. The most common language spoken is Arabic which is spoken by 3.6 per cent of the population (higher than the rate for Metropolitan Melbourne 1.6%). Other common languages are Italian (3.3%), Greek (3.0%), Vietnamese (2%), Maltese (1.6%) and Macedonian (1.4%) (ABS, 2012).
- The most marked changes since 2006 are a decline in the number of people who speak Italian (296 fewer people), and a large increase in those who speak Punjabi (779 more people) (ABS, 2012).
- Just over 49,000 residents (or 58.7%) are Christian which is slightly higher than for Metropolitan Melbourne (55.8%). The other most common non-Christian faiths in Hobsons Bay include Islam (4.7%) and Buddhism (2.7%) (ABS, 2012).
- Those with no religion have increased from 18.5 per cent in 2006 to 22 per cent in 2011. This equates to a rise of just over 3,400 residents (ABS, 2012).

What government policies relate to multiculturalism?

Commonwealth

- The Commonwealth Government's policy *The People of Australia* aims to further strengthen the Government's multicultural strategies and programs.
- The Australian Multicultural Advisory Council (AMAC) provides the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship with advice on issues of social cohesion; overcoming intolerance and racism; social and economic benefits of diversity; and social and civic participation.
- The *National Anti-Racism Strategy 2012-2015*, focuses on five key priority areas: schools and higher education, the media, government service provision, workplaces, and the internet.



State

- The Victorian Government's main response is delivered through the legislative framework of the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*. The Act establishes key principles to foster a common understanding of cultural diversity. The Act also recognises the positive effect of cultural diversity on social, cultural and economic life in Victoria.
- Operating under the Multicultural Victoria Act 2011, the *Victorian Multicultural Commission* is an independent statutory authority that provides advice to the Victorian Government on the development of legislative and policy frameworks and the delivery of services to CALD communities.
- Other Victorian legislation that supports protects and advances multiculturalism includes the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* and the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.
- The Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship is responsible for implementing Victorian Government multicultural policy and program, with a focus on the settlement of newly arrived immigrants.

Local Government

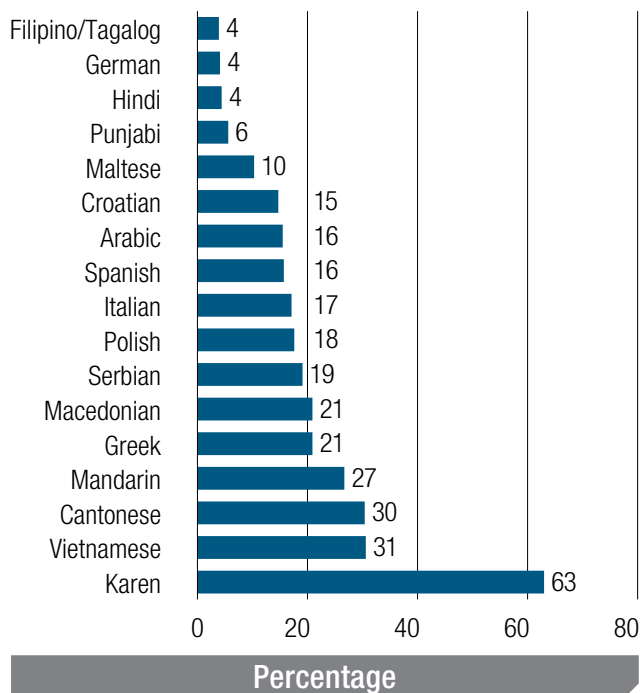
- Local government plays an important role in responding to diversity in local communities by initiating activities for and engaging with multicultural groups and ethnic communities.
- The Hobsons Bay City Council *Multicultural Policy 2012-2015* demonstrates the Council's commitment to providing fair and equitable access to services and information for all residents, regardless of their cultural, linguistic and religious background.
- The Council also resources a Multicultural Advisory Group (MAG) which comprises leaders of key local CALD communities. The purpose of the MAG is to advise the Council on issues and barriers affecting people from CALD backgrounds who work, live or study in Hobsons Bay.

What are the major issues for CALD residents in Hobsons Bay?

- Language is a major barrier for people migrating to Australia. Close to 23 per cent of residents in Hobsons Bay who speak another language, speak English not well or not at all (ABS, 2012).
- Those who are newly arrived (particularly people migrating through the humanitarian visa program) often have low rates of English language proficiency. However, low language proficiency is also evident across the entire overseas born population and women are generally less proficient than men.



Low English language proficiency



Source: ABS, 2012

- It is therefore essential that information is provided in appropriate languages.
- Through the Council's consultations in developing its *Multicultural Policy 2012-2015*, residents and stakeholders identified the following priority issues for CALD communities in Hobsons Bay:
 - culturally and linguistically appropriate aged care support for the elderly

- settlement support for newly arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants
- language and communication issues
- address racism and family violence.
- According to a VicHealth survey (2012) of Hobsons Bay residents, 56 per cent feel that multiculturalism has strengthened the community, higher than the Victorian rate of 51 per cent. However, this suggests a significant proportion of the population are not certain of multiculturalism. At its worst, this lack of acceptance can lead to racist attitudes and the outcome is evidenced by other VicHealth research (2012b) which found that nearly two-thirds of those surveyed had experienced racism in the previous 12 months.



References

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) Census 2011 Data
Department Education Employment Workplace Relations (2012) North Western Melbourne Priority Employment Area; Labour Market Research and Analysis Branch October 2012
Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2012a), Multicultural Australia: The Way Forward (viewed Dec 2012) <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/multicultural/issues97/macpape5.htm>
Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2012b), Settlement Database
National Health and Medical Research Council (2005) Cultural Competency in Health; A guide for policy, partnerships and participation
Queensland Health (2001) Social Determinants of Health – the Role of Public Health Services.
VicHealth (2009) Building on Our Strengths: A Framework to Reduce Race Based Discrimination and Support Diversity in Victoria
VicHealth (2012) Indicators Survey 2011 Results
VicHealth (2012) Mental Health Impacts of Racial Discrimination in Victorian Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities Experiences of Racism Survey: A Summary

Every care has been taken to ensure the information in this document is correct. However Hobsons Bay City Council does not accept any liability to any person or organisation for the information (or the use of the information) in this document. Please note that there is the potential for minor revisions of data in this report. Please check the online version at www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au for any amendments.

For further information contact:

Social Planning and Development Unit,
Hobsons Bay City Council, PO Box 21, Altona 3018.

Telephone: **(03) 9932 1000**

NRS: 133 677 / quote (03) 9932 1000

Email: customerservice@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au

Website: **www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au**