



# Culture & Identity

## City of Port Phillip Health Profiles

Port Phillip is enriched by the presence of people from diverse cultural backgrounds. We are home to people from over 163 different birthplaces, with our residents speaking 114 different languages. This diversity is one of our greatest strengths.

### What is culture and cultural richness?

"**Culture**" is the entire way of life shared by a group of people. **Cultural richness** includes diversity in anything that has to do with how people live: music, art, recreation, religion or beliefs, languages, dress, traditions, stories and folklore, ways of organisation, ways of interacting with the environment and attitudes toward other groups of people.

Cultural richness exists at different scales, from individual identities to groups and societies—local, regional, national and global. Cultural landscapes are continually changing due to migration, globalisation, and modernisation. All of these factors impact forces of cooperation and conflict among communities (National Geographic Society, 2016).

### Who resides in Port Phillip?

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census survey conducted in 2016:

- In the five-year period from 2011 to 2016 Port Phillip's overseas arrivals doubled in number compared to the previous five-year period. An increase from 4,906 (between 2006 and 2010) to 10,500 (between 2011 and 2016), the largest recorded increase in overseas arrivals Census data in over fifty years.
- A higher proportion of our population was born overseas when compared with the Victorian average. 31.4 per cent of residents were born overseas compared with 28.3 per cent in Victoria. 51.8 per cent of residents have at least one parent who was born overseas.
- Between 2011 and 2016, the number of people residing in Port Phillip who were born overseas increased by 11.7 per cent. The largest proportion were aged between 25 and 39 years old.
- In 2016, the largest proportion of new arrivals were born in the United Kingdom (18.2 per cent) followed by New Zealand (10.6 per cent), India (9.1 per cent), China (7.1 per cent) and Ireland (5.9 per cent).



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- 20.5 per cent of Port Phillip residents spoke a language other than English at home with the top three languages spoken being Greek, Mandarin and Italian.
- Port Phillip has a small Indigenous community with 392 people identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, representing 0.4 per cent of the population. The local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is diverse and is made up of Boon Wurrung Traditional Owners, Aboriginal people from regional Victoria, Torres Strait Islander peoples from Queensland and from all states and territories of Australia.
- Settlement data during the period of 01/01/2011 and 04/10/2020 indicates that the majority of people migrating to Port Phillip are entering via a skilled visa (9,178 people), less on a family visa (3,211 people) and very few on a humanitarian visa (107 people) (Department of Home Affairs, 2020).

Other data sources indicate that:

- 2,709 international students reside in Port Phillip, which is lower when compared to two of our surrounding municipalities of Glen Eira and Stonnington (3,967 and 5,003 respectively) (Department of Education and Training, 2020).
- The 2016 ABS Census reported that 4.2 per cent of couples residing in Port Phillip are same sex, the second highest municipality rate in Victoria.
- 85 per cent of residents believe that Port Phillip is a welcoming place for everyone. Men and younger residents perceive the city as more welcoming with people over the age of 65 and women rating it lower (Local Government Victoria, 2020).

### Valuing cultural diversity: Why is it important?

- Valuing cultural diversity is critical to achieving social cohesion. This involves building shared values, reducing inequalities and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges and that they are members of the same community (Markus & Dharmalingam, 2008). A cohesive society, which values how diverse groups of people live, is fundamental to health at the individual and community levels.
- Building a culture that values diversity is pivotal in preventing the emergence of various types of discrimination, such as racial discrimination. As indicated in the Mental Health Profile, discrimination is associated with stress, anxiety, and depression.
- People from diverse cultural backgrounds consistently have higher levels, and greater numbers, of socially determined risk factors for mental health problems, including social isolation and racism (Mental Health in Multicultural Australia, 2014).
- There is substantial evidence that in Victoria, race-based discrimination makes children susceptible to anxiety, depression, and psychological distress (Priest et al. 2013) while Aboriginal Australians exposed to incidents of race-based discrimination were more likely to



suffer from psychological distress, and the extent of the distress was worsened by more exposure (Ferdinand, Paradies, & Kelaher, 2013).

While there is inadequate data to indicate the levels of social cohesion, or alternatively, discrimination existing in Port Phillip, it is clear that:

- Cultural identification is an important factor in determining health and wellbeing.
- Recognising and valuing the distinct identities and cultures of varying groups residing in Port Phillip is vitally important for the health and wellbeing of all residents and in particular Aboriginal Australians.
- Port Phillip is a culturally rich municipality. If emphasis is placed on proactively supporting social cohesion and reducing discrimination, the negative impacts of a fragmented community are likely to be avoided.

### COVID-19 Impact

COVID-19 has disproportionately affected disadvantaged and culturally and linguistically diverse communities (Grills & Butcher, 2020).

- Victorian data has shown that COVID-19 hotspots are located in low socioeconomic suburbs that are culturally and linguistically diverse and have large recent immigrant communities.
- Limited disaggregated data on ethnicity or socioeconomic status have been released.

An online survey administered by the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria found that ethnic and multicultural groups reported:

- Unemployment, financial wellbeing, and social isolation as the top three areas of concern for the future resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Mental Health was fourth.
- Difficulties in accessing updated, official information in different languages, in a timely manner (Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria).

With over 2,700 international students residing in Port Phillip, the following issues were identified by Council staff:

- International students required access to local emergency food provision and housing arrangements
- Employment and social isolation were reported as the top two issues.

### What is Council's role?

Under the Local Government Act, Council is mandated to promote the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district. Council can build respect and trust the local community and encourage cultural identification by:



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- Advocating for the needs of diverse groups and work in partnership to develop opportunities and recommendations to inform input to decision-making by all citizens
- Providing spaces for people from diverse cultural backgrounds to build social connections and identify
- Responding to diverse community needs and tackling the disadvantage, stigma and discrimination that affect health and wellbeing
- Promoting positive community relationships and providing services and advice to assist people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Celebrating the varying cultures which comprise the City of Port Phillip through supporting arts, food and cultural events and festivals.
- Continuing to contribute to a national reconciliation movement and acknowledging the contribution of the Boon Wurrung Traditional owners and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

### Who are our partners?

- Local multicultural organisations
- Local culturally and linguistically specific welfare services
- Ethnic Community Council of Victoria
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health organisation
- The Torch Aboriginal Arts Organisation
- Victorian Multi Cultural Commission
- Municipal Association of Victoria
- AMES Australia
- Migrant Resource Centres

### What may change over the next five years?

- Reduced social cohesion may occur due to growing social and economic disparities existing between groups residing within Port Phillip
- Limitations on international movement due to the global pandemic may mean overseas-born residents will have diminished social contacts.



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