

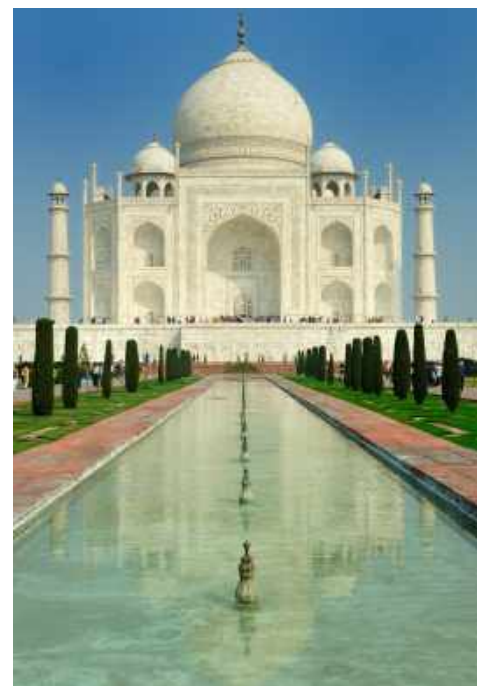
Cultural Profile

INDIA



Introduction

The Indian Cultural Profile is brought to you by Diversicare's Multicultural Advisory Service which is funded by the Department of Health. It is one of the many series of cultural profiles that have been produced. The aim of the profile is to assist service providers to meet the needs of their clients from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds in order to provide a culturally sensitive and responsive service.



This profile is intended to provide an insight into Indian culture. It is important to note that Indians who live in Australia were born in India and are also from an Indian diaspora (born in other countries such as Fiji, Malaysia, Mauritius, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom etc). Service providers need to consider that each individual is unique and have different needs and therefore service provision needs to be tailored according to peoples' needs. Another factor to be considered is that people may have migrated to Australia at different times and may adapt to Australian culture differently.

This profile provides useful information on various topics and other resources such as books, articles and services.

'This tip' provides useful information to indicate a 'tip' which you, as the caregiver of a person who was born in India or from the Indian diaspora, may find useful in your day-to-day support of that person.



Disclaimer

Diversicare offers this cultural profile as a resource and general guide only. Please take care to avoid stereotyping a person on the basis of their language, culture, or religion. There are many variations in beliefs and practices depending on personal circumstances.



Background

India is part of an ancient civilisation. India's history began with the emergence of the Indus Valley during the Bronze Age. After many centuries, there was the occupation of the Mughal empire. According to modern Indian history, the Europeans went to India in the 17th century and India was under the British rule for about 200 years. India gained independence in 1947 and Mohandas Gandhi (also known as Mahatma Gandhi) was instrumental in the process.

India is culturally and linguistically diverse with many different languages, religions, cultures and traditions. India is known for its rich culture, spirituality, performing and visual arts, literature, crafts and architecture. Yoga and Ayurveda originated in India about 5000 years ago.



The population of India is nearly 1.3 billion. India has 29 states and 6 union territories which are then subdivided into districts and further into smaller administrative divisions. New Delhi is the capital of Delhi as well as India. Every state has a capital city and each state has its own languages, dialects, culture and traditions.

Cultural Profile INDIA

Location

The Republic of India is located in South Asia. India is the world's largest democratic, 7th largest and second most populous country after China. It has the largest land size in the world. It borders the Indian Ocean on the south, Arabian Sea on the west, and the Bay of Bengal on the east. The borders include Pakistan to the north-west, People's Republic of China to the north, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Afghanistan, Bangladesh to the north-east and Sri Lanka and Mauritius to the south-east coast.



Landscape



India's landscape is diverse and is made up of cold mountain ranges, deserts, vast plains, hot and humid plateaus and wide sea shores and tropical islands. The Himalaya mountain range which is the world's highest mountain range forms India's north-eastern border. The republic of India spans about 3200 km from north to south and 3000 km from east to west and comprises a coastline of about 7500 miles.

Climate

India has a diverse and varied climate from tropical in the south to temperate and alpine in the North. There are four main seasons for most of the country: monsoon, summer, winter and withdrawal of the monsoons. Some parts of India in the Himalayan region have five seasons: spring, summer, monsoons, autumn and winter. Summer is between March and June in most parts of India. By early July, most of India receives rain from the monsoons. Winters start in November in northern India and late December in southern India.

Migration to Australia



Indians have been migrating to Australia for a long time. Initially, they arrived as unskilled workers – labourers and domestic workers brought in by the British Colonial government in India.

Later in the 19th century, more Indians arrived mostly as hawkers and agricultural labourers. They were also involved in gold-mining in Australia. They were made welcome because India was a British Colony then. In 1901 when the White Australian Policy was introduced, immigration from India was restricted

After 1947, there was an influx of Indians especially Anglo-Indians (mix between Anglo-Saxons and Indians) after India's independence in 1947, as many British people left India and came to Australia

From 1960 onwards more skilled people like Doctors, Teachers, Engineers, and Information Technology professionals started migrating to Australia. More recently the younger population of Indians - students have been coming to Australian Universities and TAFE colleges from India

Migration to Australia

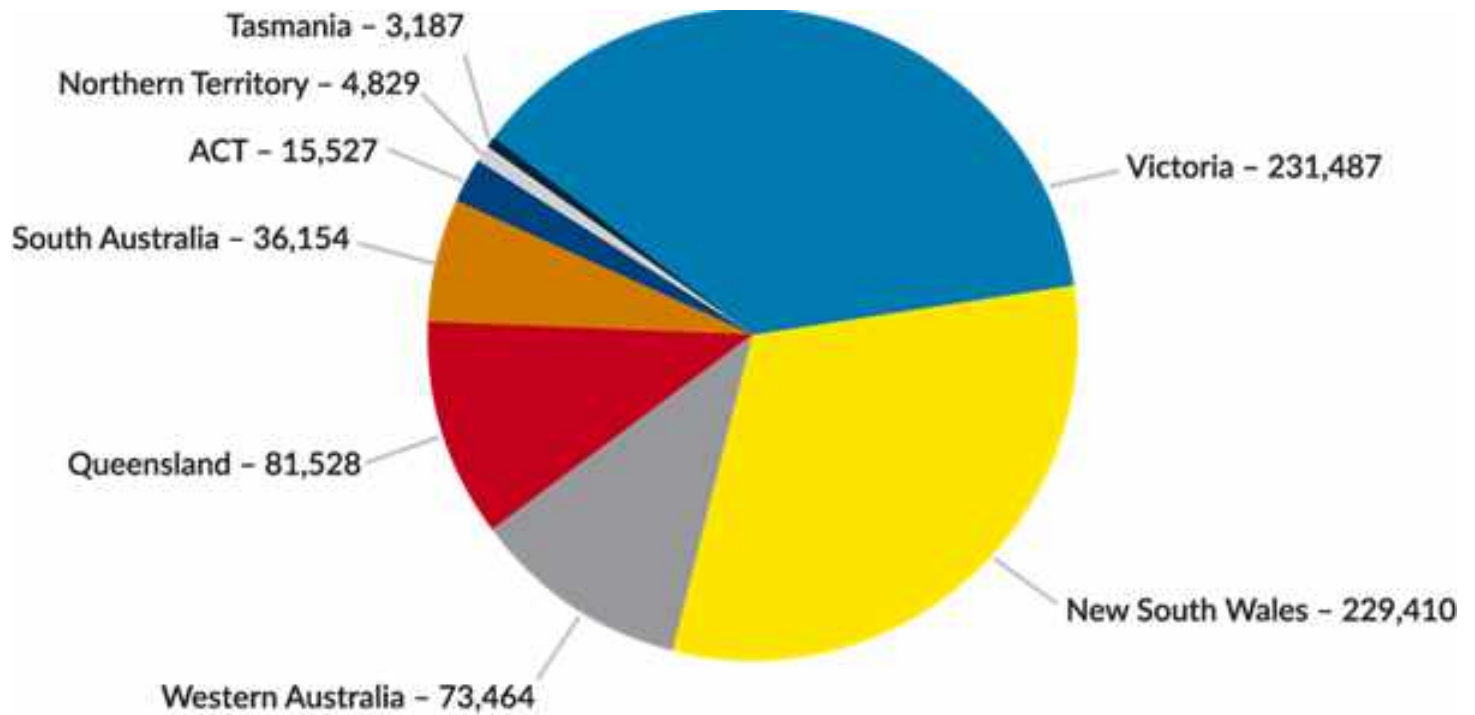
Indians form the third largest migrant community in Australia. They form 2.8% of the Australian population (www.abs.gov.au). In 2017-2018, India was the largest source of new permanent migrants (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020) and 619,164 have an Indian ancestry (2016 census).

Indians in Australia were either born in India or in other countries also known as the Indian diaspora (migrated from other countries such as Fiji, Malaysia, Mauritius, Singapore, South Africa and Sri Lanka).

The largest Indian Australian population is in Victoria followed by New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, ACT, Northern Territory and Tasmania



INDIAN ANCESTRY BY AUSTRALIAN STATE



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (AU). 2016 Census. Canberra AU: The Commonwealth of Australia; 2016



Values

Indian people are generally modest, polite and humble. They are also modest in their dressing. They are proud and private and tend not to discuss their problems. Most of them are also generous, hospitable and helpful, always willing to help anyone in need. It is also common for them to offer food and drinks to visitors including service providers.

Tip: It is important for service providers to build rapport so Indian clients would discuss care needs with them comfortably. It is also polite to accept food and drinks.

Family is considered important to Indians. The Indian family structure is usually an extended structure with grandparents, parents and children. Older people are highly respected. There is a hierarchy of family roles in terms of importance – grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, uncles, aunties, siblings etc. Usually the grandparents look after the grandchildren when their adult children work.

Tip: It is important for service providers to know that members of the family maybe involved in the decision making processes of the care recipient.



Respect is an important value in Indian culture. Children are taught from a very young age to respect older people. Younger family members are expected and tend to care for their older relatives eventually when they are sick.

Communication

Language

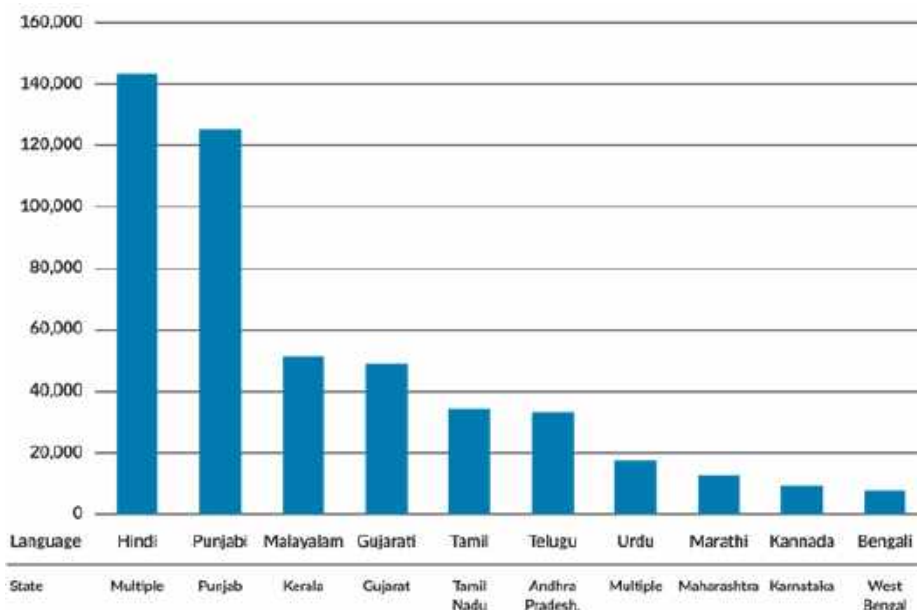


“The Constitution of India recognizes 23 official languages, spoken in different parts of the country, and two official classical languages, Sanskrit and Tamil”.

Hindi and English are the main languages of the central government of India. Each state has an official language and many dialects are also spoken.

In Australia, the main languages spoken by the Indian community are English, Hindi, Punjabi, Malayalam, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Marathi, Kannada, and Bengali. 93.3 % of the Indian Australians speak English well

INDIAN LANGUAGES SPOKEN IN AUSTRALIA



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (AU). 2016 Census. Canberra AU: The Commonwealth of Australia; 2016.

It may be not be appropriate to ask direct or personal questions and do expect a pause before a question is answered

Tip: If your client is assessed to have inadequate English, professional interpreters need to be engaged. Please check the language spoken by the client before engaging Interpreters.

Non-verbal behaviour forms an important part of communication amongst Indians. Therefore it is important to observe the person when communicating with them or you might miss some important information they are trying to communicate

Gestures

Gestures are used a lot and have meanings. For example: Indian people do not say 'no' directly so they tend to nod their heads from side to side (in a figure of eight movement) which is mostly mistaken for a 'no' but it means 'yes' or acknowledgment. This is specific to people who were born in India.

The following video demonstrates the 'Indian head wobble'

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=eJ0SuD_ulVk

There are also other gestures to be considered

- It is rude to point or snap your fingers at someone
- It is rude to beckon someone to come using your index finger



Customs

Greetings

The traditional greeting for Indians is to put both their palms together in a prayer position and hold them close to the chest and greet with a slight bow. The greeting literally means 'bowing to you' and a spiritual meaning of "the divine and self is same in you and me". People usually say 'Namaste' which is derived from the Sanskrit language or 'Vanakkam' in the Tamil language or different words in their own language.

Traditionally there is no shaking of hands or hugging especially with members of the opposite gender (now some people have adapted and tend to shake hands).



Addressing Others

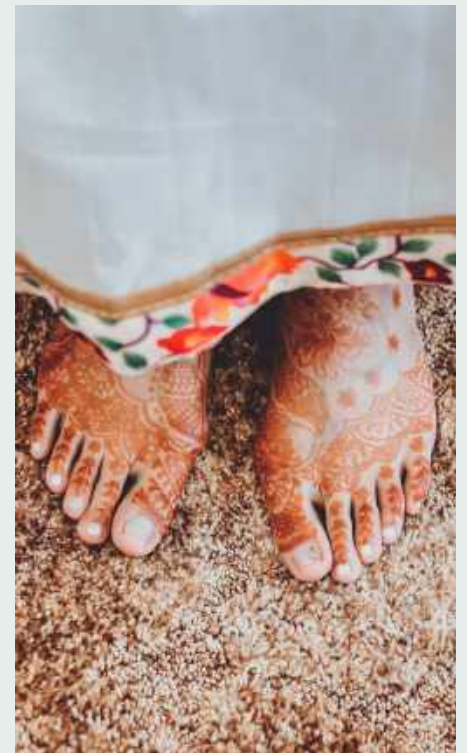
Indians are quite formal and tend to address others by using the formal prefix – Mr, Mrs, Dr, etc. It is considered rude for younger people to address older people by their first names. Even if people are not related, younger people address older people as ‘Aunty’, ‘Uncle’, ‘Sir’ and ‘Madam’ in their own language.

Cultural Taboos and Prohibitions

There are many taboos and prohibitions practised by Indians; some examples are:



- Do not give or receive food or things with left hand
- Do not wear shoes when entering someone's home or place of worship
- Generally do not make eye contact
- Feet should not come into contact with another person or their possessions
- Pointing your feet at someone especially an older person is considered rude



Religion and Worship

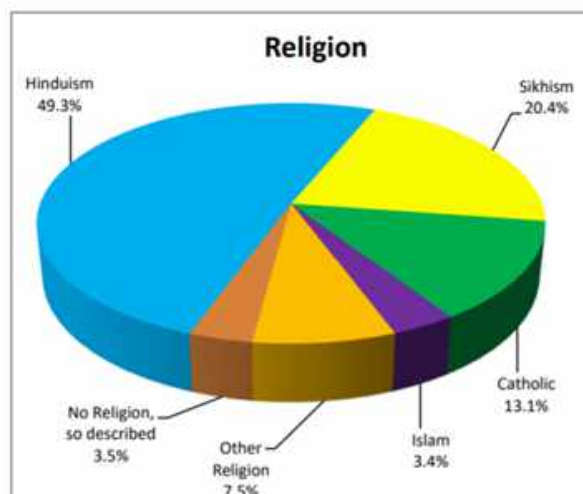
Religion is considered important and forms a big part of their life for most Indians.

Hinduism is considered as one of the oldest religions which originated during the emergence of Indus Valley during the Bronze Age. According to the 2011 Indian census, most of the Indian population in India are Hindus (79.8%) while there are other religions such as Islam (14.2%), Christianity, (2.3%), Sikhism (1.7%), Buddhism (0.7%), Jainism (0.37%) and Zoroastrianism (0.06%),

According to the 2016 Census, in Australia most of the Indian population follow Hinduism (49.3%), followed by Sikhism (20.4%), Catholicism (13.1%), Islam (3.4%), others (7.5%) and no religion (3.5%)

Reading of the sacred texts is also part of worship. Hindus read the Bhagavad Gita

In Australia, there are temples, Gurdwaras, Mosques and Churches for the Indian population:



Rituals

Rituals are a very important part of Indian society.

Rituals are performed for important milestones and events such as before and after birth, death, marriage, puberty, house warming, worship, and others

There are meanings behind every ritual. Some of these rituals are very elaborate with lots of food and people at the functions.

There are different rituals for different religious groups



Cultural Days of Significance

India is a secular nation and there are many celebrations of festivals. Some of them are Holi, Diwali or Deepavali, Ganesh Chaturthi, Tamil New Year, Durga Pooja, Eid, Vesak day and Christmas.

In Australia some of the main celebrations for Indians are Diwali or Deepavali (Festival of lights), Tamil New Year, 'Onam', Holi, Eid, Vesak Day and Christmas.

Significant Indian festivals celebrated in Australia

Festival	Date	Religion	Significance
Ponggal	January 14	Hinduism	Harvest festival This is a harvest festival honouring the sun and rain gods. A traditional dish of new harvest of rice, milk and jiggery which is meant to boil over as the name signifies is prepared and offered to the Gods, cows and family members.
Holi	March	Hinduism	People place coloured powder on each other's forehead and embrace each other.
Tamil New Year	April	Hinduism	Falls on the first day of the Tamil month on April 14 of every year on the Gregorian calendar.
Easter	April	Christianity	Principal festival of the Christian church, which celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day after his Crucifixion
Baisakhi	April 13	Sikhism	Celebration of the 10th Guru Gobind Singh's birthday
Ramadan	9th month of the Islamic Calendar	Islam	During this time, Muslims fast between dawn and sunset. It is a time of prayers and reflection
Eid Al-Fitr	After Ramadan (10th month in the Islamic calendar)	Islam	Celebration of the end of Ramadan. Muslims celebrate by prayers, family visits and giving charity.
Vesak Day	May	Buddhism	Celebration of the Buddha's birthday
Vinayagar Chaturthi	August	Hinduism	This festival marks the birthday of Lord Ganesh, one of the main Hindu deities.
Onam	September	Hinduism	Celebrated by people from Kerala over 10 days with food, new clothes and visits to temples and to peoples' homes
Dussehra	October/November	Hinduism/ Sikhism	Dussehra symbolises the triumph of good over evil. It is celebrated just before Diwali
Diwali/Deepavali	October/November	Hinduism	Also known as festival of lights. It signifies triumph over evil. Oil lamps are lit to welcome 'Lakshmi', goddess of wealth into their homes for prosperity
Christmas	December 25	Christianity	Christian festival celebrating the birth of Jesus.

Food/Diet

Food is important in Indian culture as it reflects identity and connects people.

It is prepared and served elaborately for every function – for all celebrations – birth, weddings, funerals, prayers and festivals.

Indian food is influenced by religion and traditions.

Indian cuisine reflects a 8000 year history with diverse flavours and cuisines due to the interaction of the various cultures. Later Mughal, British and Portugese cultures also influenced the diverse Indian cuisine.

Indian food varies from region to region. The same food could be prepared differently in different regions using a variety of spices unique to the regions in India.



In North India, together with spices, usually dairy products, nuts and raisins are added to the food due to the influence of the Middle East, Portugese, and Europe with the spice trade.

In South India, lots of spices and herbs are used.

Rice is the staple food in the south and leavened breads such as 'roti', 'chapatti' and 'naan' are common in North, Central and other parts of India.

Traditionally Indians especially Hindus are vegetarians. Those who do eat meat do not eat beef as the cow is considered sacred as it helps them to plough the land for food. Muslim people and some Hindus do not eat pork.

Health and Wellbeing

Daily routines



Worship is important and is part of a daily ritual. Nearly every Indian household will have a prayer room in their home and it is usually kept neat and tidy. Usually, only family members are allowed to enter the prayer room and strictly no footwear is allowed.

As prayers are conducted daily, the house is cleaned every day before prayers.



Yoga, meditation, and contemplation are also part of daily routine and life for most Indian people.

Tip: Service Providers should check with the family or care recipient whether they could clean the prayer room. It is best to consult family when doing the individual care plan.



Health and Wellbeing

Personal Hygiene

Cleanliness and hygiene form an important part of Indian people's lives, hence the cleaning of the house every day.

Homes are usually kept tidy and this is one of the reasons why footwear is not allowed in the house.

Spring cleaning is done before festivals and auspicious events.

Indian people also tend to brush their teeth, then have a shower before prayers every day and also before going to temple. They would prefer a shower instead of a bath

If someone attended a funeral, that person is expected to have a shower immediately after entering their home and before touching anything or anyone with the belief of cleansing of the impurities.



Attitudes to Medical Care and Illness

Attitudes to Illness



Traditionally Indian people tend to rely on Ayurveda which is a form of traditional treatment originated in India. It is an alternative medicine system which involves herbs and includes massage, yoga and meditation as part of the treatment meant to achieve a holistic mind and body balance. However these days, western medicine is also widely accepted.

Hindus and Buddhists believe in Karma (the law of cause and effect) and reincarnation (rebirth). They believe that their actions from past life could affect their current and future lives which could have an impact on decisions about their health care and treatment.

Attitudes and beliefs towards aged care

The family tends to take care of the elderly as it is an obligation and duty impressed upon the younger members of the family since young

It is not common to send older people to residential care facilities. Sending elderly members to aged care or nursing homes is frowned upon

Indians usually do not utilise aged care services or do not have many aged care homes in India. However, in Australia, some families use aged care services especially when their adult children are working.



Tip: Service providers who provide home care services are seen as strangers. To develop trust, strong rapport has to be established with the individual who is receiving care and their family.

Palliative Care, death and dying

Palliative care is mainly provided at home by family members. Hindu, Sikh, Christian and Muslim Indians have their own rituals. People are rarely sent to the hospice to be cared for.

Many Hindus believe that destiny determines their life and may not wish for treatment to prolong life during this stage

Usually the dying person is not told about a terminal illness diagnosis.

There are many rituals around death and dying:
Before death – If a person is at their end of life and is in a hospice or hospital, family members are summoned and rituals are performed especially by the eldest son such as feeding milk or holy water to the dying person (Hindu ritual). Sometimes a priest/Imam/Pastor is summoned to sing holy hymns.

After death – the body is cleansed and many rituals are performed. The favourite clothes and things of the deceased are placed on the body. Immediate family members perform funeral rites.



[change images](#)

Traditionally widows usually wear white attire after the death of the husband. They also do not adorn the 'bindi' (red dot on the forehead). However, that practice has evolved and has been adapted to individual's preferences.

Cremation is common in many Indian cultures.





Muslim families might invite Imams to read the verses of their holy book – the Qur'an to the dying person. They tend to bury the body on the same day.

Usually babies and priests or saints who are believed to have attained 'moksha' (liberation of the soul) are buried.



After cremation, the ashes are scattered in the holy rivers such as the Ganges in India. In other parts of the world, they scatter them in the rivers.

There is usually a mourning period which ranges from 16 to 40 days.



Living in Australia/Pensions

Pensions

The Agreement between India and Australia was signed on 1 January 2016.

“For Australia, the Agreement covers Age Pension. For India, the Agreement covers the old age and survivor’s pensions and permanent total disability pension”. (Source: Australian Government, Department of Social Services)

For more information and eligibility for pension contact:

Services Australia (Centrelink)

Phone: 136240

Website: www.servicesaustralia.gov.au



Indian Community Contacts in Australia

Federation of Indian Communities of Queensland

PO Box 157, Spring Hill, Qld, 4004

Phone: 0412 031 301

Email: president@ficq.org.au

Website: <https://www.ficq.org.au/>

Hindu Society of Queensland Inc.

Gayatri Mandir - Sunday from 8:00am to 11:00am

178 Lyndhurst Road, Boondall Qld

President: Ravi Sharma

Mobile: 0419 732 558

Indian Senior Citizen Association Committee Brisbane Qld Australia

President: Mr Bir Sahai

Phone: (07) 3344 4715

Secretary: Mrs Prabha Mishra

Phone: (07) 3890 1363

Treasurer: Mr Hari Prasad

Phone: (07) 3209 5174

Tamil Association Qld Inc.

President: Dr. K. K. Nava

Phone: (07) 3711 5363

Email: nahila99@optusnet.com.au

Website: <http://tamilqld.org/word/>

Varnam Cultural Society (Qld)

Address: Springfield Lakes

Queensland 4300

Phone: 0431 433 889

Email: varnamqld@gmail.com



Other organisations

<https://www.cyjma.qld.gov.au/multicultural-affairs/multicultural-communities/queensland-multicultural-resource-directory/search-directory>

https://www.mycommunitydirectory.com.au/Queensland/Cairns/Cultural_and_Migrant_Services/General_Cultural_Groups/5106/104922/Tamil_Association_Queensland_Inc

Places of Worship

Hindu Temples

Shree Laxminarayan Mandir Temple

46 Daymar Street, Burbank Qld

Website: www.laxminarayan.com.au/

Sri Selva Vinayakar Koyil(Ganesha Temple)

Mt Lindesay Highway, South Maclean Qld

Website: www.sriselvavinayakar.org/index.htm

Newsletter:

www.sriselvavinayakar.org/Newsletter.htm

Hindu Society of Gayatri Mandir

178 Lyndhurst Rd, Boondall Qld

Website: www.indiantimes.com.au

Brisbane Hare Krishna Temple

465 Seventeen Mile Rocks, Qld

Website: www.iskcon.org.au/

North Queensland Hindu Temple/ Community

3 Benton Court, Douglas, Qld, 4814

Email: nqhctsv@gmail.com



Sikh Temples/Gurdwaras

Brisbane Sikh Temple

2679 Logan Rd, Eight Mile Plains QLD 4113

<https://brisbanesikh temple.org.au/>

Guru Nanak Sikh Temple Brisbane

16 Rosemary St, Inala QLD 4077

Singh Sabha Temple Brisbane

101 Lemke Rd, Taigum QLD 4018

Gurudwara Sahib Gold Coast

5 Palings Ct, Nerang QLD 4211

Gordonvale Sikh Temple

71255 Bruce Hwy, Gordonvale QLD 4865

Hours: Open 24 hours



Mosques in Brisbane

<https://allianzassistancehealth.com.au/en/brisbane/mosques/>

Churches in Brisbane

<https://www.96five.com/church/>

<https://brisbanecatholic.org.au/parishes-mass-times/browse-mass-centres/>

<https://www.qb.org.au/find-a-church/>

<https://www.brisbane-australia.com/brisbane-religion.html>



Radio Stations (State and National)

Radio program in your language:

www.sbs.com.au/radio/

4EB Brisbane Ethnic Community Radio

<https://www.4eb.org.au/>

4EB Radio 98.1 FM

93.3FM (SBS Brisbane radio)

Broadcasting in Tamil

1701 AM Radio Brisvaani

24 hours, 7 days live webcast for Indian communities

Radio Haanji - Australia Best Indian Radio Station

1/203 William St, St Albans VIC 3021

Hours: Open 24 hours

Australian Tamil Broadcasting Corporation (ATBC)



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