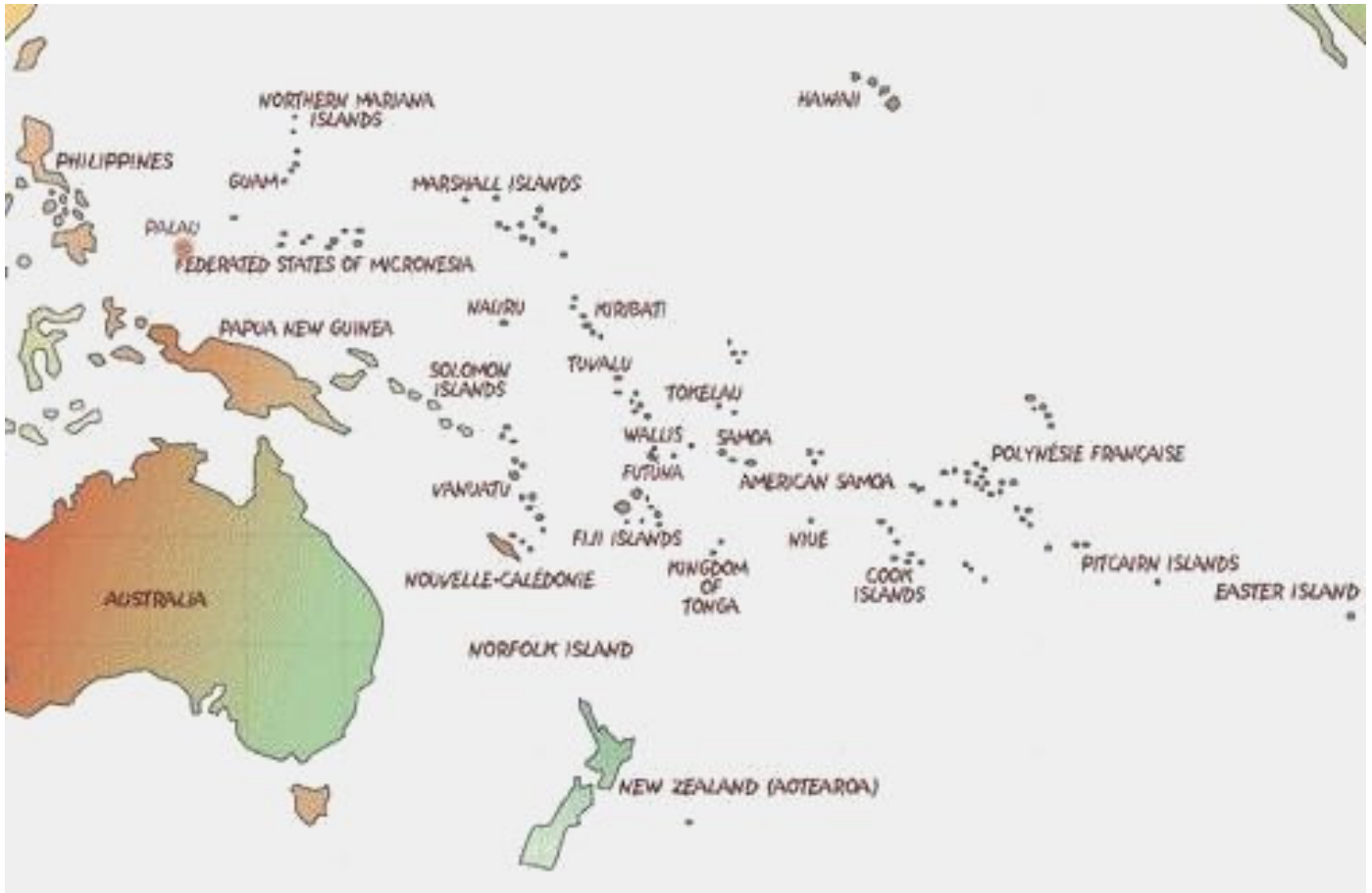


# ***Fijian Culture Profile***

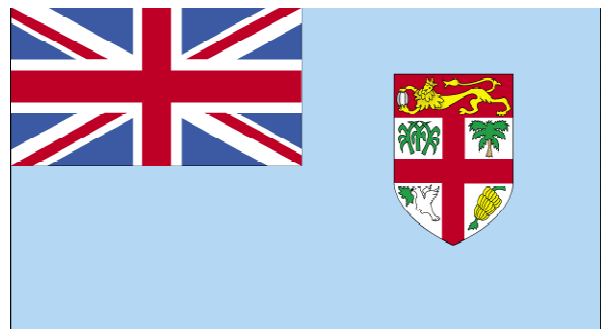


***An initiative of  
Community Partners Program***

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Published 2006 by:  
Diversicare  
P O Box 881  
Castletown, Hyde Park Queensland 4812  
Phone: 07 4728 7293

## **Fijian Culture Profile**



Thanks is given to the following people:

Esala Teleni

and to all those persons who have provided comment about this profile.

### **Disclaimers**

This profile is a synthesis of information from a range of sources believed to be reliable. Diversicare gives no warranty that the said base sources are correct, and accepts no responsibility for any resultant errors contained herein or for decision and actions taken as a result and any damage.

Please note there may be costs associated with some of the resources and services listed in this profile.

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# INTRODUCTION

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This profile of the Fiji culture community is one of the projects undertaken by the Community Partners Program (CPP). The Community Partners Program aims to promote and facilitate increased and sustained access to aged care support services by culturally and linguistically diverse communities with significant aged care needs.

Funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, the project in Queensland is managed by Diversicare under the auspice of the Ethnic Communities Council of Qld Inc.

Population trends within Australia are increasingly characterised by a diversity of people, languages and culture. Coupled with this trend is an ageing population, also with a rich diversity of languages and cultures.

It is not surprising then, that residential aged care service providers are faced with increasing demands for culturally responsive facilities and care.

This profile aims to assist by enhancing:

- staff knowledge of the cultural and linguistically diverse needs of persons from a Fijian background. It also seeks to facilitate the professional competence and development of staff in the provision of culturally inclusive care; and
- the organisation's compliance with the Residential Care Standards and National Aged Care Standards as they pertain to the issue of cultural and linguistic needs.

The profile provides useful information about a range of topics, resources including books, articles, audio-video aids, services, and so on.



This symbol is used to indicate a 'tip', which **YOU**, as the caregiver of a person who was born in Fiji, may find useful in your day-to-day support of that person.

In an effort to maintain the accuracy of this profile and improve its contents, for all stakeholders, we encourage readers to complete the feedback form on the last page to inform us of any inaccuracies or other resources available. It is considered that this feedback will assist us maintain a user relevant and quality resource.

Yours Sincerely

Margaret Hess  
Director

Dearne Mayer  
CPP Project Officer

# BACKGROUND

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## Migration Experience

Fiji is a small group of islands in the South Pacific Ocean, about two-thirds of the way from Hawaii to New Zealand, with a land area of approximately 18,270 square kilometers.



Fijians have been in Australia since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century 585 Fiji-born persons lived in Australia, the majority of whom were Europeans. In the late 1960's there was a significant increase of Fijian migration because of the opportunity of improved employment, wages and welfare services. By 1986 there were 14,749 Fiji-born people living in Australia, which increased to 30,149 in 1991. (Source: DIMIA Fiji Community Information Summary, 2003)

## Australian Statistics

At 2001 census, 44,040 Fijian-born persons had settled in Australia (a 19% increase from 1996) with Queensland being the second largest population (7,550) behind New South Wales (27,080).

Of the total Fiji-born population in Australia (2001 Census):

- 5.4% are aged over 65 years;
- 48.9% have an occupational or educational qualification, which

is higher than the Australian-born population at 46%;

- 44.9% were employed in a skilled occupation; 33.9% in semi-skilled and 21.2% in unskilled jobs;
- Females comprised 53.3% and males 46.7%; and
- Their ancestry includes Indian (57%), Fijian (17%) and Indian-Fijian (4%).

## Customs in everyday life

### Greetings

Normally a handshake and saying "bula" (hello) is the traditional greeting. For close friends or family members a hug may be appropriate. A polite way of addressing a group of men or women is to say "kemuni".

### Attire

Traditionally Fijian attire is conservative, with sulus (wrap arounds) worn by Fijians. Women traditionally wear sulus that cover their legs.

### Taboos

It is important NOT to touch a Fiji-born person on the head as to do so is considered an insult. If you do need to touch a Fijian's head it is vital you explain why and excuse yourself for having to touch their head.

It is also inappropriate to walk in front of someone (especially if you are standing and they are sitting down), but if you accidentally do so, it is important you lower yourself to their height and say "tu lou" (excuse me).

# FAMILY

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## Family structure

Traditionally, several generations live in the same house, with men sleeping in separate areas to women, unless they are married.

The Fijian culture is one of sharing and obligation. Those Fijians who are employed are expected to share their resources with both older and younger relatives, especially parents and grandparents.

Today obligation towards family is still very strong, even for those Fijians away from their home and working in the city.

### **Attitudes to residential care**

Placing relatives in nursing homes is rare for Fijians, although Indo-Fijians do reside in nursing homes in Fiji.

Traditionally older Fijians are cared for by their extended family and to place a Fijian in a nursing home would isolate them resulting in them pining away.



If you need help to provide culturally appropriate care, the assistance of the PICAC Project Officer is available free of charge to your agency or the resident. This service is restricted to the greater metropolitan Brisbane and Townsville. For more information on PICAC contact Diversicare on 07- 38491099.

## **PERSONAL HYGIENE**

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The routines and preferences surrounding the following personal hygiene activities greatly impact on the person's sense of self, pride, dignity and confidence.

### **Bathing**

It is important for a Fiji-born person to have same gender carer if they need assistance with bathing or dressing. If no male carer is available for a Fiji-born man, then an older, mature woman would be acceptable, but NOT a young woman.

### **Dress**

Dress traditionally in Fiji is modest and conservative, with sulus (wrap arounds which resembles a skirt) with women wearing sulus that cover their legs. Fiji-born men rarely wear trousers.



It is important each person's preferences in their dress, bathing, grooming etc are established as part of their care or support plan.

## **PENSIONS**

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For the past 30 or so year there has been a National Providence Fund in Fiji for retirement.

Australia may have reciprocal arrangements in place with Fiji regarding the payment of pensions.

If such an agreement is in place, the Australian Government supplements that payment if it falls below the level of the Australian pension. Problems with Centrelink can arise for the person if he/she fails to notify Centrelink of any increase in the foreign pension amount. In this situation the Australian supplement is reduced according to the increase amount. Failure to notify Centrelink can result in a debt and fine being imposed by Centrelink.



For information on claiming a pension from another country, call Centrelink on 13 1673.

## **LEISURE AND RECREATION**

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Fijians enjoy frequent interaction with others and story telling is a great recreational activity.

Many women like weaving pandanus leaf mats for floor coverings, dining mats and sleeping mats etc.



The above information can assist in developing diversional therapy activities eg weaving or tending small box of vegetables kept in a communal area or cooking. However, YOU need to check with each individual his or her preferences in regard to the above.

## Pattern to day

Traditionally the day starts with breakfast and children leaving for school. Women remain at home doing cooking, make mats, and other domestic chores. Men go to their plantations and gardens or go fishing. Time is not the ruler of life and there is no time pressure.

## Social groups

One social group meets in the Townsville and Thuringowa area:



Townsville Fijian Association  
President: Rabai Apenisa  
Phone: 4799 9818

## Radio

Townsville's community radio, 4TTT 103.9FM, has a Fijian program each Sunday from 2pm to 3pm.



Further information or program details can be obtained from 4TTT Phone 4721 5333.

SBS radio programming can be downloaded from their website by going to the following address:

[www.sbs.com.au/radio/](http://www.sbs.com.au/radio/)

then use the "Choose a language" drop down box from the right side of the screen radio schedule" on the left side of the screen to select Fijian and you can download various broadcasts in Fijian.



Check your radio program guide or the website for local listening times as they may change in rural areas or across time zones.

## Newspapers

Several Fijian newspapers, including Fiji Live, Fiji Sun, Fiji Times and UNDP Suva, can be downloaded from the website:

<http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/fiji.htm>



If the person can't use a computer, don't forget you can access the internet and load these newspapers and print all or some pages which can then be given to the person to read at their leisure.

## Books

Every council library in Queensland borrows from the Queensland State Library. The State Library itself has Fijian resources, which your local library can arrange to borrow for a small fee.



You can do a search of the State Library resources (which will list the resource, type of resource and call number) by going to the following web address:

<http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/find/cat>

You can search the Townsville City Council or Thuringowa City Council library catalogue at the following website for books, videos and DVD's on various Fijian subjects:

<http://www.townsville.qld.gov.au/libraries/spyus.asp>

<http://library.thuringowa.qld.gov.au/>

## Music

There is a selection of music from Fiji available at The African Bazaar shop in Flinders Street Mall, Townsville, phone 4771 2172.



Establish each individual's preferences and check whether family members can assist in finding Fijian language books, videos, DVD, music etc.

## For more information

Refer to Diversicare's Cultural Diversity Resource Directory (2004) for more detailed information about sources and other options.

## RELIGION

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## Profile

Of the total Fiji-born population in Australia the major religions are:

- Hinduism (45%);
- Islam (13%); and
- Western Catholic (10%).

(Source: Fijian Community Information Summary, DIMIA, 2003)



The majority of indigenous Fijians in Fiji are Methodists and Sunday is an important day for the family to gather together and attend church. There is no work or play for Methodists on Sundays.

Remember there can be a difference between nominating a particular religion, to practicing that religion in his/her everyday life (or whether all or only some rituals/practices within that religion are observed). Equally, just because a person when young did not practice or observe their religion doesn't mean as the person ages he/she might.



YOU need to establish each person's religious preferences and link him/her into a local minister of that religion or to their clan/tribe, if they so desire.

### Important days

Festivity	Month / Date	Customary practices
New Year	January 1 <sup>st</sup>	A huge celebration and one of the most enjoyable days, especially for older people. This is a day for 'Sui' which involves throwing of water or powder on others in fun..
Good Friday		A day of reverence, and attendance at church.
Easter Sunday		Attending church is important.
Independence Day	Second Monday of October	Fiji became independent in 1970, after nearly a century as a British colony. Locally this may be celebrated with a feast, in larger cities, especially in NSW, Queensland and Victoria there are functions with dancing and feasts.
Christmas Day	December 25 <sup>th</sup>	A time for family to come together, attend church, followed by a feast and exchanging of gifts.



The above listing is not intended to be exhaustive; rather it lists the major shared 'special days', you should check with the person or his/her family if there are other special days, which is important to that person.

## FOOD AND DIET

The Fijian diet consists of taro, cassava, leafy vegetables, tropical fruits (papaws, mangoes, pineapples, bananas), seafood, chicken, pork and beef. Since the introduction of tinned foods, soft drinks, chocolates, etc the diet in Fiji is changing.

Steaming, boiling, baking or roasting can prepare the above foods. Many dishes are also prepared in lolo (coconut milk).

It is common for men to eat first, followed by the women and lastly the children.

For large feasts men prepare the lovo, which is a fire, made in a pit in the ground lined with stones. When the stones are hot the food is buried in the pit and left for a couple of hours to cook.

Kava (or yaqona) is a traditional drink made from the root of Piper methysticum (a type of pepper plant) and there are certain protocols to be followed at a kava ceremony with the order of serving depending on the status of those present.

### Meals

**Breakfast** often consists of tea, bread and perhaps cassava left over from the evening before.

**Lunch** may not be eaten at all.

**Dinner** is largest meal of the day. All types of vegetables, meats, fruits, fish and breads are eaten with the exception of cheeses, which most Fiji-born people are not used to consuming.



It is important to establish each person's food preferences, cooking style (eg fried versus poached), quantity, timing of



meals and recorded on their care plan.

## Food Sources

The following shops in Townsville stock some Fijian foods:



The Asian Supermarket  
Shop 3/116 Charters Towers  
Road  
Hermit Park Qld 4812  
Phone 07 4772 3997

Jeannie's Corner Store  
39 Dearness Street  
Garbutt Qld 4818  
Phone 07 4779 5170

## HEALTH

### Illness & perception of health professionals

It is common for Fiji-born people to tell good friends or family if they are in pain, but not if a stranger is present.

Generally decisions to seek medical assistance are individually based, with some Fiji-born people actively seeking help, while others from more traditional areas in Fiji not asking for help until a trusting relationship is established.

Fiji-born people accept medication and pain relief, if the health professional clearly tells the person it will benefit him/her.

Instructions of health professionals will be followed if the health professional has developed a trusting relationship with the resident.

## DEATH AND DYING

### Palliative Care

As to who informs the Fiji-born resident of a diagnosis, depends on the individual. Generally for an aged Fiji-born person who has not become very westernised, it would be appropriate for their son or daughter, or other older close relative to tell the person. This 'buffering' of the impact of the news is very important, both to the person, and to his/her family.

It is a family decision on how the body should be prepared. Traditionally the family would dress and prepare the body. The same people in the family are given the task to dress and prepare any deceased relatives.

Traditionally Fiji-born people do not cremate their loved ones. However, funeral practice for Fiji-born Hindus is cremation.

## LANGUAGE

The languages of Fiji are English (official), Fijian and Hindustani. Of the total Fiji-born population in Australia, Hindustani was the main language spoken at home for 17,984 persons (54%).

In addition, of the 33,060 Fiji-born persons who spoke a language other than English at home, 94.7% spoke English very well or well and 4.1% spoke English not well or not at all. (Source: Fiji Community Information Summary, DIMIA, 2003)



YOU need to be aware that just because a person could once speak English, does not mean a) they necessarily spoke it fluently or extensively OR b) they have retained these skills as he/she aged OR c) that it is their preferred language as speaking English can be tiring to the elderly.

A variety of language guides (including Fijian) targeted at health and everyday activities is available at a cost from:

HENDRIKA (**HE**alth **aND** **R**apport Interactive **K**ommunication **A**id)

P O Box 326, Beaudesert, Qld, 4285  
Phone (07) 55446606

## KEY WORDS

Many Pacific Island languages' pronunciations lean towards a drawl whereby there are few acute sounds. Pronunciation advice: (bold typed letters should be stressed).

a = <b>u</b> in <b>but</b>	h = <b>h</b> in <b>hot</b>
ai = <b>ai</b> in <b>ail</b>	k = <b>c</b> in <b>copy ng =</b>
ay = <b>ay</b> in <b>may</b>	<b>ng</b> in <b>sing</b>
b = <b>b</b> in <b>bat</b>	o = <b>o</b> in <b>top</b> OR
c = th in <b>throw</b>	o = aw as in <b>craw</b>
ch = <b>ch</b> in <b>chair</b>	oo = <b>oo</b> in <b>book</b>

d = nd in <b>and</b> e = e in <b>met</b> ee = ee in <b>meet</b>	ow = <b>ow</b> in <b>cow</b> th = <b>th</b> in <b>there</b> y = y in <b>yes</b>
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<b>Greetings</b>	<b>Fijian words</b>	Phonetic ( <b>bold</b> = where to place emphasis)
Hello	bula	m <b>bo</b> ola
Good morning	yadra vinaka	
Yes	io	ee-o
No	sega	<b>s</b> enga
Please	mada	<b>m</b> ada
Thank you	vinaka	vee <b>n</b> aka
My name is ...	o yau o ...	o yow o ...
Good bye	ni sa moce	nee sa <b>mgw</b> the

<b>Conditions</b>		
Hot	katakata	kata-kata
Cold	batabata	mbata-mbata
Loud	rorogo levu	ror <b>o</b> ngo <b>l</b> evoo
More	levu	<b>l</b> evoo
Less	lailai	lail <b>a</b> i
Hungry	viakana	veea-kana
Thirsty	viagunu	veea-ng <b>oo</b> noo
Wet	suasua	
Big	levu	<b>l</b> evoo
Little	lailai	<b>l</b> ailai

<b>Emotional states</b>		
Happy	marau	mar-o
Sad	rarawa	rara <b>w</b> a
Tired	oca	<b>o</b> tha
Good	vinaka	vee <b>n</b> aka
Bad	ca	tha
Love	veidomani	vayndo-manee
Sick	tauvimate	towvee-mate
Well	bula vinaka	

<b>Body</b>	<b>Yago</b>	
Leg	yava	<b>y</b> ava
Foot	yava	<b>y</b> ava
Toes	qaqalo ni yava	ngganggalo nee yava
Arm	liga	<b>l</b> eega
Hand	liga	<b>l</b> eega
Fingers	iqaqalo-niliga	eengga-nggalo- <b>l</b> eega
Face	mata	mata
Head	ulu	<b>oo</b> loo
Tooth	bati	mbate <b>e</b>
Throat	iti lotilo	eetee lote <b>e</b> lo
Hair	drau ni ulu	ndrow nee <b>oo</b> loo
Eye	mata	mata
Chest	sere	<b>s</b> ere

Stomach	kete	kete
Bladder	kato ni suasua	kato nee sooa-sooa

<b>Directions</b>		
Right	matau	matow
Left	mawi	mawee
To come	lako mai	lako mai
To go	lako	lako
Sit	tiko	cheeko
Lie down	davo	ndavo
Outside	tautuba	towtoomba

<b>Activities</b>		
Television	retio yaloyalo se tivi	reteeo yalo-yalo se teevee
Radio	walesi	walesee
Telephone	talevoni	tale-vonee
Knitting	tali wa	ale wa
Church	vale ni lotu	

<b>Rooms</b>		
Bed	imocemoce	eemothe-mothe
Bedroom	rumu ni moce	roomoo nee mothe
Toilet	valelailai	vale-lailai
Dining room	rumu ni kana	roomoo nee kana
Table	teveli	tevelle
Chair	idabedabe	eeda-mbenda-mbe

<b>Clothing</b>	<b>Isulu</b>	
Dress	vinivo	veeneevo
Skirt	liku	
Trousers	tarausese	tarow-sese
Underpants	isuluiloma	eesooloo-eeloma
Shirt	sote	sote
Cardigans	siqiliti ni katakata	seenggee-leetee nee kata-kata
Hat	isala	eesala
Glasses	matailoilo	matailo-eelo
Pyjamas	sulu ni moce	sooloo nee mothe
Sock	sitokini	seeto-keenee
Shoe	ivava	eevava

<b>Drinks</b>		
Tea	ti	tee
Coffee	kofi	kofee
Beer	bia	mbee-a
Wine	waini	wainee
Water	wai	wai
Juice	wai nimoli	wai neemolee
Milk	sucu	soothoo
Sugar	suka	sooka

<b>Special occasions</b>		
Birthday	siganisu	seega-neesoo

Christmas	siganisucu	□ enega-neesoothoo
Easter	paseka	paseka
New year	yabaki vou	yabakee vo-oo
<b>Meals</b>	<b>Gauna ni kana</b>	
Breakfast	katalau	katalow
Lunch	vakasigalevu	vaka-seenga-levoo
Dinner	vakayakavi	vakaya-kavee
Snack	snack	snek

<b>Food</b>	<b>Kakana</b>	Kakana
Bread	madrai	madrai
Toast	tosi	tosee
Butter	bata	mbata
Jam	jamu	chamoo
Cake	keke	keke
Biscuit	biskete	<b>Bees</b> kete
Meat	lewe ni pulumakau	
Chicken	toa	to-a
Fish	ika	<b>eeka</b>
Fruit	vuanikau	
Vegetables	draunikau	
Salt	masima	maseema
Pepper	pepa	pepa

<b>Utensils</b>		
Knife	isele	eesele
Fork	icula	eethoola
Spoon	itaki	eetakee
Glass	bilo iloilo	mbeelo eelo-eelo
Cup	bilo	mbeelo
Plate	veleti	velett
Bowl	boulu	mbo-ooloo

<b>Personal activities / items</b>		
Bath (ie to take a bath)	sisili	seeseeli
deodorant	vakaboi	vakamboi
Electric razor	itoro	eetoro
Comb	iseru	eeseroo
Talcum	pouta	po-oota
Toothbrush	barasi ni bati	mbarasee nee mbatee
Wheelchair	dabedabe qiqi	ndambe-ndambe

<b>Relations</b>		
Father	tama-qu	tama-nggoo
Mother	tina-qu	teena-nggoo
Mr	saka	saka
Mrs	saka	saka
Grandfather	tuka-qu	tooka-nggoo
Grandmother	bu-bu	mboo- mboo
Husband	wati-qu	watee-nggoo

Wife	wati-qu	watee-nggoo
Son	tagane	tagane
Daughter	yalewa	yalewa
Child	gone	ngone

# Additional resources

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## Diversicare Resources

Cultural Diversity Resource Directory for Residential and Community Care Agencies, 2005. Lists all known resources under chapter headings of – Communication, Cultural background, Health and Personal Care, Lifestyle, Legal, Management, Resources. Phone Margaret Hess, Director, Diversicare for these resources on 07-38491099

## Useful Websites

### Western Australia

[www.health.wa.gov.au/mau/](http://www.health.wa.gov.au/mau/)

### New South Wales

[www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au/health-public-affairs/mhcs/resources/index.html#top](http://www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au/health-public-affairs/mhcs/resources/index.html#top)

### Victoria

[www.healthtranslations.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcv2.nsf/CategoryDoc/PresentCategory?Open](http://www.healthtranslations.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcv2.nsf/CategoryDoc/PresentCategory?Open)

### Federal Government

[www.ageing.health.gov.au/publicat/multilin.htm](http://www.ageing.health.gov.au/publicat/multilin.htm)  
[www.ageing.health.gov.au/publicat/pubindex.htm](http://www.ageing.health.gov.au/publicat/pubindex.htm)

### Cross Cultural Health Program (USA)

[www.xculture.org/resource/order/index.cfm?Category=Articles](http://www.xculture.org/resource/order/index.cfm?Category=Articles)

### Centre for Culture Ethnicity and Health - Video Catalogue

[http://www.ceh.org.au/video\\_catalogue.htm](http://www.ceh.org.au/video_catalogue.htm)

### Alzheimers Australia

[www.alzheimers.org.au/content.cfm?categoryid=14](http://www.alzheimers.org.au/content.cfm?categoryid=14)

### Alzheimer's Australia NSW

[www.alzheimers.org.au](http://www.alzheimers.org.au)

### Queensland Health – Multicultural Health Publications

[www.health.qld.gov.au/publications/restopicmaster.asp?Rec=40&frmHealthTopic=MulticulturalHealth](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/publications/restopicmaster.asp?Rec=40&frmHealthTopic=MulticulturalHealth)

### Queensland Transcultural Mental Health Centre

[www.health.qld.gov.au/pahospital/qtmhc/multilingual\\_resources.asp](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/pahospital/qtmhc/multilingual_resources.asp)

### Cancer Foundation

<http://www.cancerindex.org/clinks13.htm>

### Nutrition Australia

[www.nutritionaustralia.org](http://www.nutritionaustralia.org)

## Information Lines

Aged and Community Care Information Line:  
1800 500 853  
Carelink: 1800 052 222

## Libraries

### *Organisations must be registered to borrow*

Diversicare Phone: (07) 3846 1099  
Blue Care Phone: (07) 3377 3327  
St Lukes Nursing Service Phone: (07) 3421 2846  
Queensland Transcultural Mental Health Centre Phone: (07) 3240 2833  
HACC Resource Unit Phone: (07) 3350 8653  
Alzheimers Association Phone: (07) 3857 4043

## Correction / Addition Form

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Please complete the following page if you are aware of either incorrect details or you know of additional resources that should be included.

### Correction

Listed item	Correction
Title: Page:	

### Additional Resources / contact

Contact details	Description of resource
Title: Publisher: Address:  Phone: Website:	(include whether Person contact, Book, tool, video, article, course)

### Send this form:

Post	Fax
<b>Diversicare P O Box 5199 West End Qld 4101</b>	<b>Attention: Margaret Hess Diversicare FAX: 38461107</b>

Thank you for your assistance in keeping this document current.