

## Culture and Customs

Arabic speaking people like nothing better than to have their visitors enjoy food at their home.

Food plays an important part in bringing people together. For Arab people food is an expression of hospitality to neighbours, friends and family.

## Foods

- Each Arabic region and country has its own traditions, some preferring heavily spiced foods while and some prefer certain vegetables or grains.
- Arabic foods reflect the richness and diversity of Middle Eastern culture and are very popular in Australia transcending cultural barriers.
- Muslims are not allowed to eat pork meat or by products or the meat of animals of prey. Other meat is eaten if it is *halal* (slaughtered according to Islamic law).
- Muslims are prohibited from drinking alcohol.
- The most commonly used meat is *lamb*, while eggplant, cauliflower, zucchini and spinach are the main vegetables.
- Beans, wheat and rice are staple grains used for flour and mixed with meat and vegetables.
- Olive oil, garlic and lemon are used as dressings.
- Nuts are eaten raw and roasted and make up part of sweet pastries often eaten by Arabic speaking people.

There are many popular Arab dishes such as:

- *Pita* or *Lebanese bread dipped in hummus* is one of the most popular dishes.
- *Falafel*, a burger like pate made from chick peas, onion, potato and flour eaten with bread.
- Salads are also very popular and include *Tabouleh*, which is a mixture chopped parsley tomato, coriander, mint and of *burgal* (crushed wheat) mixed with lemon and olive oil.

*Traditional Dress* is part of Arabic heritage and depends on the country of origin as these all differ. Costumes are often worn on festive occasions.

A *popular game* played by many older Arab men is called *tawle* (*backgammon*).

## Attitude to Aged Care

Older Arabic speaking people expect to be cared for by their children. There is a great deal of reluctance to enter into residential care which is generally viewed as inappropriate for them as it represents isolation from their family.

## Attitude to sickness

It is usual that illness is attributed to the will of God and thus a fatalistic attitude may be adopted.

Muslim elderly women do not allow a male carer to care for them.

Generally any medical procedure is acceptable especially if it is prescribed by a Medical Practitioner. Individual women may prefer to be treated by a practitioner of the same gender.

**Death** is viewed as the will of God and how it is handled must be treated with a great deal of respect. There are specific ceremonies and services practiced by Arabic speaking people, both Christian and Muslim people. For Muslims it is appropriate to contact the family and the Muslim Imam to identify the arrangements and practices that should be conducted.

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## ARABIC SPEAKING COMMUNITIES ON THE GOLD COAST

**Community Partners Program  
(CPP)**

# Arabic Speaking Communities

## The Gold Coast Community

### Geographic Distribution

There are around 1,773 Arabic speaking people living in the Gold Coast Region.

The main Gold Coast Arabic speaking communities comprise of people born in Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq. They are dispersed along the coastal strip from north to south mainly in Surfers Paradise and throughout the suburbs of Southport Labrador, Mermaid Waters/ Clear Island Waters, Nerang, Robina, Benowa, Broadbeach Waters and Ashmore.

### Arabic-speaking Australians

- Arabic speaking communities make up some of the more established non-English-speaking groups in Australia.
- Arabic is the fourth most spoken language at home in Australia.
- People from Lebanon were some of the first arrivals to Australia and the first Lebanese migrant landed in Australia in 1876.
- Since the 1960s people from over 22 Arabic countries have settled in Australia.
- Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq and Syria are the most common countries of origin of Arabic speaking Australians.

At the 2001 Census:

- 71,349 Lebanese-born Australians and 89,021 had a Lebanese born parent;
- 33,432 Egyptian born Australians and a further 10,296 had an Egyptian born parent; and
- 24,832 Iraqi-born and 6,710 Syrian-born Australians.

(Source: Community Information Summaries DIMA)

- In Australia about 209,372 Australians speak Arabic at home which makes up around 1.1% of the Australian population.
- Around 162,283 Australians were born in the 22 Arab League nations (0.8% of Australia's population) and about 120,000 Australians have a parent born in an Arab country.

### Who Are Arabic-speaking Communities?

Arabic-Speaking communities comprise of people who may identify with one or more of the following:

- Born in an Arabic speaking country where Arabic is the official language.
- Have ancestral link to the Arab World.
- Speak Arabic but may identify as non-Arabs (Armenian, Assyrian, Kurdish, Chaldean).

Arabic speaking Australians are very diverse and may have arrived from the following countries:

Algeria	Bahrain	Comoros
Djibouti	Egypt	Iraq
Jordan	Kuwait	Lebanon
Libya	Mauritania	Morocco
Oman	Palestine	Qatar
Saudi Arabia	Somalia	Syria,
Sudan	Tunisia	Yemen
UAE (United Arab Emirates)		

### Age

Arabic speaking communities are relatively younger compared to the Australian population although in some groups the population is ageing and have a high number of people aged over 55 years.

(Source: A Social Profile of Older People in Gold Coast City, 2004)

### Language

The main language is Arabic, although Arabic is spoken in dialects depending on the country of origin. Of those aged 55 years and over who spoke Arabic at home, around 28.5% spoke English not well or not at all.

### Religion

It is widely misconceived that all Arabs in Australia are Muslim. Although Islam is the official religion of Arabic speaking countries the majority of Arabic speaking Australians are Christian.

It is estimated that around 28% of Australian Muslims were born in the Middle East but in Queensland the majority are from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, South Africa and Fiji. (Source: 2001 ABS Census)

- Muslims believe in one God, Allah, and that God revealed the religion of Islam through Mohammad, believed to be the direct descendent of Abraham and the last prophet.
- The *Qur'an* is the Holy Book of Muslims which contains many stories that are familiar to Christians and Jews.
- Muslims are required to pray five times a day toward the *Ka'ba*, in Mecca.
- Every year during the month of *Ramadhan*, Muslims must fast for 30 days from food and drink from sunrise to sunset. It is believed that fasting allows people to become aware of the plight of the poor and develops discipline and willpower. The elderly and people who are ill do not have to fast.
- Muslim women wear the *hijab* to cover their hair, arms and legs as part of religious practice.