

LIFE AFTER RETIREMENT

Analysis of a survey

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Living Alone

- In Australia, in the past 25 years there has been a sharp increase in the proportion of those living alone who are aged 80 and older - from 9 per cent to 15 per cent of those living alone.
- Widowhood is the main cause of living alone for women in their 70s and men and women in their 80s.

[*The Age*, 3 March 2015]

Table 1: Number of Maltese aged 65 years and over in Australia

<i>Age bracket</i>	<i>Number</i>
• 65-79	15,643
• 80+	3,553
• Total:	19,196

- *Review of Australian Research on Older People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds. March 2015.(www.fecca.org.au)*

Maltese speakers in Australia

Census 2011

<i>Age</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
60-74	6214	6471
75+	2653	3256
Total	8867	9727
% 75+	29.9%	33.5%

Table 2: Some characteristics of Maltese aged 65+ in Australia

- Needed assistance: 21.1%
- Not speak English well or at all 10.1%
- Live alone: 20.2%
- Own home outright 77.9%

[Data from: *Review of Australian Research on Older People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds*. March 2015. (www.fecca.org.au).

Table 3: Top 10 Culturally and Linguistically diverse (CALD) background (CALD) aged 65+

<i>State</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>% of CALD</i>	<i>Rank</i>
NSW	7,732	3.5	7 th
Vic	8,910	4.3	5 th

Note:

- The vast majority of elderly Maltese live in Victoria and NSW.
- About 4% of all aged CALD persons in Australia are Maltese .
- Maltese have a relatively high proportion of elderly (rank 5th- 7th)

Review of Australian Research on Older People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds. March 2015.(www.fecca.org.au)

Social Life among the elderly

- As one grows older, several issues affect the social and private life of individuals.
- The period of retirement has now expanded to constitute almost one-third of one's full lifespan.
- The quality of life varies tremendously, in association with reduced income and increased physical as well as emotional challenges.

Survey

This is an ongoing survey

- Aim:
 - Participation in social life;
 - Use of Maltese language media;
 - Need for assistance in the home;
 - Mobility;
 - Quality of daily existence.

Demographic changes

- Most Maltese arrived in Australia in the 1950s and 60s: Most respondents have been in Australia for 50 or 60 years,
- Up to a third were aged 70+ (some were even 90+).

Availability of Services

- Most were aware of services provided by the Maltese Community Council of Victoria. More men than women were aware of the services provided.
- There is still, however, a number of persons that do not seem to know about these services.

Communications

- How easy is it to communicate with these persons?
- About 60 per cent of women and 40 per cent of men stated that they listened to Maltese radio,
- While there are a number of community radios in Victoria, SBS radio was the one most frequently listened to,
- There are now no Maltese newspapers published in Australia. There are however, several newsletters. Unfortunately readership of newsletters etc is very restricted, especially among the elderly,
- Undoubtedly, radio is the best way to communicate with this section of the population.

Home help and other social needs

- Perhaps the most important question was meant to assess whether persons in this age group were in need of special assistance,
- 25 per cent of males and 35 per cent of females mentioned that they had used home help or other services from local councils or other bodies.
- On the other hand, 60% of females (but only 17% of males) had recourse to help from family members.

The role of Maltese Clubs and Associations

- Maltese associations and clubs offer an important venue for socialising and meeting other Maltese,
- Just under two-thirds of males but only a quarter of females stated that they belonged to a Maltese organisation.
- It is often the case that when one stops driving a car, one does not attend many functions some distance away from home. This is particularly the case with females.

Issues related to possible isolation

- In a place like Australia, the car plays a very important role, and lack of the ability to drive a car can lead to isolation.
 - Only 30% of women could drive a car (compared to nearly 60% of males).
- Do they socialise with friends? Several admitted to having friends, (often Maltese). However some admitted they had none: one 90-year old complained: "They are all dead!".
- How often do they leave their house for their socialising or entertainment? Fully one-fifth of females stated that they did not, whereas few males stated that this was problem,
- Another question enquired whether they had any hobbies. Most admitted to having hobbies, most commonly gardening and television, but also dining out, and particularly for males, time on computer.

Some Conclusions -1

- The number of Malta-born persons in Victoria is now just over 20,000, which is reducing with every census at a rate of about 5% every five years.
- Seeing that the majority of Maltese persons in this cohort are aging rapidly, this reduction in numbers is bound to accelerate rapidly in the coming years.
- The first generation migrants who left these islands in the 1950s and 60s have now all reached retirement age.
- Retirement is a stage of life which requires certain preparations, which are not often available within our community. Preparing for retirement is a must!

Some Conclusions -2

- Isolation is a common predicament of old age,
- As long as the individual is mobile and free of any serious health issues, problems associated with isolation are less likely,
- The fact that several respondents replied that they have a reasonably number of hobbies ,including socialising with friends, would help to prevent isolation,
- Being capable for driving a car is a major issue in preventing isolation,
- There is a need to ensure that responsible bodies are aware of who is at risk of isolation. This is not always easy because of lack of available communications.

Conclusions -3

Communications

- Maltese radio is without any doubt the best way to communicate with Maltese in Australia;
- Various clubs and associations produce regular Newsletters, but their circulation is relatively limited;
- It is also pleasing to see that the majority of elderly Maltese still enjoy watching the television program prepared on a twice-weekly basis by the PBS in Malta;
- It might be worth emphasizing that radio and TV (limited as it is) are the only way of keeping the Maltese language alive, as it changes over the years (and particularly at the current rate!).

Conclusions -4

The role of clubs and associations

- These have served a very important role, particularly in the early days.
- However, the number of persons of this age group, who regularly frequent Maltese clubs has diminished considerably.
- This is partly due to the fact that these elderly persons are finding it more difficult to travel, particularly at night and in winter, and prefer to stay at home and watch television.
- I believe, however, that such associations still serve an important role in our society, at least for those who make use of them.

Conclusions -5

Value of such studies

- It is regretted that studies of this nature among Maltese of the Diaspora have been rare.
- Unless such studies are done, it is impossible to gauge the needs of our citizens living abroad.
- It is the policy of governments overseas to wean settlers away from ethno-specific services, and encourage them to use generic services within the community, as a cost-cutting measure,
- However, Maltese do not lose their culture with advancing age. It is much more likely that they lose their use of English, and become more and more dependent on their original Maltese language, and therefore on services provided by Maltese speakers.

