

South Australian Serbs

A perspective of the older community



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This resource has been produced by Resthaven Incorporated as part of:
**Connecting the Community:
Supporting the Serbian Community to Access Aged Care.**

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ABN 79 976 580 833

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Published by Resthaven Incorporated
PO Box 327
Unley, South Australia 5061
www.resthaven.asn.au

ISBN 978-0-9577487-4-3

CIP – Multicultural Issues; Social Services and Welfare; Gerontology and Geriatrics; Cultural Studies

1st Edition
June 2012

Acknowledgements

This resource has been produced by Resthaven Incorporated as part of the project:
'Connecting the Community: Supporting the Serbian Community to Access Aged Care'.
Funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing under the Community Partners Program.

Acknowledgement and thanks go to the advisory group.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2009, Resthaven initiated collaborative work with the Serbian community in metropolitan Adelaide, under the banner of the Community Partners Program.

The Community Partners Program, funded by the Department of Health and Ageing, supports a number of projects across Australia to work on improving access to aged care for older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Resthaven developed this publication to provide a perspective about Serbian people and their culture. It is based on the findings from our project and aims to serve as a guide for service providers to help them better understand the Serbian community in South Australia and assist them to deliver culturally appropriate services.

In addition, local Serbian groups, clubs and associations are listed, particularly those which support older Serbian people. A website list of bilingual resources that are currently available may assist service providers to better support Serbian older people and provide culturally appropriate care. Information is correct at the time of printing but is subject to change.

The opinions and information expressed in this document do not apply to all older Serbians. Each person's individuality should be respected and considered.

The information compiled in this report has been obtained by the following methods:

- research of existing literature;
- informal interviews with members of the Serbian community living in Adelaide;
- liaison with representatives of local Serbian organisations/clubs;
- review of data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).



LOCATION

Serbia is located in South Eastern Europe, on the Balkan Peninsula. It is bordered by Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia. Prior to independence, Serbia was a part of the former Republic of Yugoslavia.



BACKGROUND

Serbian ethnic identity is not defined purely by a place of birth; people who identify themselves as Serbian might have been born in Croatia or Bosnia Herzegovina, or elsewhere.

Serbian language can be recorded in either Cyrillic or Latin alphabets.

According to the 2006 data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), there were 328 South Australian residents aged over 65 who were born in Serbia. Of these, 42% spoke little or no English. The greatest concentration of Serbian people over 65 years of age can be found in the following metropolitan local government areas:

- Charles Sturt
- Port Adelaide Enfield
- Salisbury
- Marion
- Onkaparinga
- Norwood, Payneham and St Peters
- West Torrens

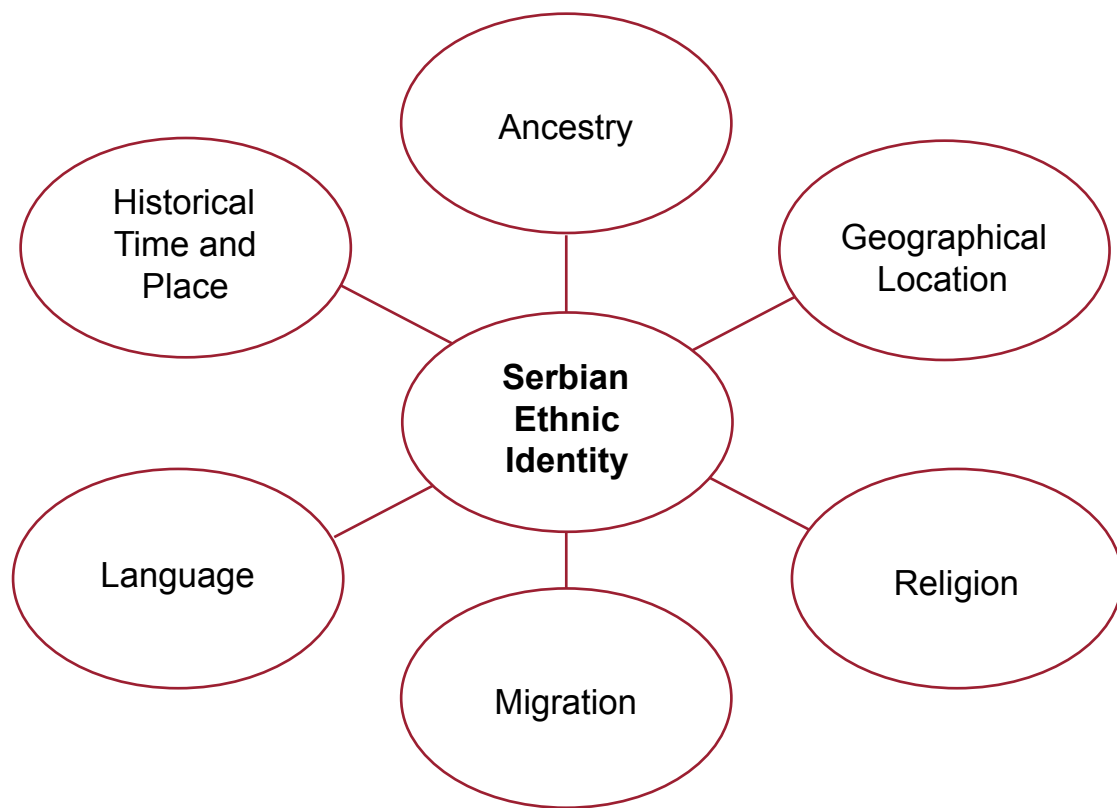
These statistics do not reflect all people who identify themselves as Serbian. Rather, the statistics reflect their place of birth, recorded as former Yugoslavia or Serbia and Montenegro.

When trying to build an understanding of the Serbian culture, it helps to reflect on key events from history, which have influenced the national identity of this group. Serbian customs and traditions are often linked to significant events from the past.

Historical events in Serbia have contributed to the strong sense of national pride, desire for independence, and the preservation of Serbian culture.

Serbian history has been turbulent, and is characterised by the struggle for independence. The country has been subjected to conquest and occupation. For example, the battle of Kosovo in the 14th century, when the Turkish Empire defeated the Serbian forces, led to four centuries of Turkish domination over Serbia. This event is commemorated on Vidovan (St. Vitus Day) on the 28th of June each year.

MAJOR INFLUENCES ON SERBIAN ETHNIC IDENTITY



*Source: From Fighting To Freedom - Stories from Serbian Balkan War Refugees, 2009.
Authors: Svetlana King, Larry Owens, Neil Welch; Flinders University School of Education.*

COMING TO AUSTRALIA

Serbian migration to South Australia dates from the late 19th and early 20th century, when small numbers of immigrants arrived, many working as miners in Broken Hill. Post World War II, significant numbers of Serbians began to arrive as Displaced Persons, fleeing either the Nazi or Tito Communist regime. Many were obligated to serve a two year unskilled labour contract with the Australian Government on national construction projects. At that time, Serbians, Croatians, Slovenians and Macedonians were referred to as Yugoslavians, therefore no reliable records exist on the exact numbers of Serbians.

Further waves of Serbian migration occurred in the 1960s - 1970s through family sponsorship and skilled migration programs, and in the early 1990s, refugees fleeing the civil conflict.

The most recent migrants and refugees fleeing the Balkan War in the 1990s have experienced a different life and political circumstances in Communist Serbia than the Serbians that migrated to Australia after World War II.

RELIGION

Many Serbians feel a strong bond with the Serbian Orthodox Church. For these Serbian people, their association with the Church forms a significant aspect of cultural and ethnic identity. The Serbian people accepted Christianity in the 9th century. The Serbian Orthodox Church was founded in 1219, when Archbishop Sava was recognised by the Patriarch of Constantinople. During the long period of Turkish domination, loyalty to the Serbian Orthodox Church helped maintain a sense of national identity and belonging.

Since the breakup of the communist Yugoslavia in the 20th century, the Church has again enjoyed a strong revival.

A special occasion for many Serbian families is 'Slava Day'. It originated at the time of accepting the Christian Orthodox faith. On the day that a family was baptised, they took the Saint of that day as their patron and protector. This became a special festive day - 'Slava Day' - celebrated by the family over the generations. This is an occasion of particular significance to the Serbs. Its elements are: candle, bread, icon, sanctuary lamp and incense. The majority of Serbian clubs and organisations have their own Slava Day.

In Adelaide, there are two Serbian Orthodox Churches; located at Hindmarsh and Woodville Park. Both Serbian Orthodox Churches are vibrant centres of community life, offering social gatherings for older people, ethnic language schools, dances, concerts, fetes, and more.

Serbian Orthodox Christmas is celebrated according to the Julian calendar and falls on 7th January. Again, it is a uniquely Serbian occasion. There is no Christmas tree. Instead, oak branches are brought home and burnt as an offering.

New Year's Eve is celebrated on the 13th January each year.

Other significant dates include St. Sava Day (27th January), and St Vitius Day (28th of June).

While the Serbian Orthodox faith is important to many older Serbs and the most common religion affiliated to Serbian people, many Serbian people may have no, or different, spiritual beliefs. This must be considered on an individual basis.



FOOD AND DIET

The cuisine of Serbia is influenced by its Balkan neighbours. Traditional food includes soups, stews, smoked meats, minced meat (cevapcici and meatballs), stuffed vegetables (peppers and cabbage) and kebabs. A dish of mixed grilled meat is an old favourite. Fish is used in chowders and is grilled and fried. Bread and side salads are eaten with starters and main courses. Salads are made from a variety of fresh and pickled vegetables, such as beans, cucumbers, onions, peppers, tomatoes and sauerkraut. Fruit and nuts are used in desserts, such as strudels, pancakes and pastries. Food is usually flavoured with pepper, ground paprika and parsley.

In Serbia, most people eat three meals daily; breakfast, lunch and dinner, with lunch being the largest, in the Mediterranean fashion. In Australia, some people may have adapted to the custom of having the main meal later, at the end of the day, but many older Serbian people may still prefer a substantial meal at lunch time.

As food and drink are important components of the Serbian culture, it is important that service providers are aware of the dietary preferences and customs of Serbian clients, such as fasting periods, (related to religious occasions) and culturally appropriate dishes and beverages (eg Serbian style coffee).

FAMILY VALUES

Family honour and pride is an important part of the Serbian society. It may mean a reluctance to talk about illness, increasing frailty and a need of support and assistance.

Older people are valued and respected. There are expectations that the family will be available to provide care and support in old age. Family may feel an obligation to do so and guilt if they are not able to.

The concept of a 'stranger' (such as a support worker) coming to a person's home to provide the care that is expected of the family is difficult to accept for many. A strong consideration is also given to how this would be viewed and judged by the rest of the community.

Decisions about the older person's care, treatment and wellbeing may quite often be made in consultation with the immediate family.

COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

The Serbian community is characterised by their pride, independence, resourcefulness and generosity, but it may take a little time to gain their trust.

In general, Serbs have a very direct, no-nonsense style of communication. A handshake is an accepted form of greeting for both males and females. When addressing an unfamiliar person, the title 'Mr' or 'Mrs', followed by a surname, is an appropriate form of address.

Many older Serbs may require language support. It is recommended that professional interpreters are engaged to facilitate effective communication. When booking an interpreter, ensure that they are of the appropriate cultural background. For example, a Serbian-speaking Croatian interpreter may not be appropriate. If in doubt, ask the person for their preferences.

HEALTH

Older Serbians often have an expectation that family will provide care and support when they become sick and frail.

The role of health practitioners is highly regarded, and medication is considered a vital part of treatment. When discussing illness, care, and treatment, sensitivity to family roles in decision making is required.

Mental health issues are not easily understood or discussed. There is a high likelihood of stigma associated with mental illness. This can influence any understanding or admission of issues associated with dementia. Culturally appropriate information about dementia is needed to increase awareness and to support clients and their families.

Heavy smoking is a common habit among Serbian people, associated with social situations and reaching maturity, particularly among males.

The more recent migrants and refugees from Serbia may have more complex health needs, due to the war, and related lack of health care. They may present with symptoms associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other mental health issues due to traumatic experiences.

AGEING AND AGED CARE

For the Serbian community, the social services and support provided in the 1990's and early 2000, centred around supporting the settlement issues of newly arrived Serbian refugees. Many of these resettlement support services have now ceased. While the established Serbian clubs have developed some basic aged care supports for their older members, there is minimal culturally appropriate community aged care specifically available to older Serbian people.

The two church-based pensioners clubs provide a weekly meal and social activities. The only Home and Community Care (HACC) funded aged care support program is available from the Community Centre of Serbia and Montenegro, which offers the following services: information and referral, weekly seniors lunches, centre based group activities, information sessions, volunteer support, and language assistance.

The Serbian community has access to culturally specific residential aged care. Pennwood Village (located at Pennington) and Pennwood Green (located at Oakden) are owned and managed by the Serbian Community Welfare Association of SA Inc. These facilities offer a priority of access for Serbian older people. They also cater for a number of culturally diverse groups, predominantly people of eastern and southern European backgrounds. These facilities offer a multicultural environment with a strong Serbian-specific character, a significant proportion of staff who speak Serbian, culturally appropriate food, activities and entertainment. Regular Serbian cultural celebrations and events are held. They are open to and enjoyed by the broader Serbian community.

While the existence and availability of Pennwood Village and Pennwood Green is well known throughout the community and offers good residential care options, there seems to be little knowledge and understanding of the wide range of aged care services available to support Serbian people living independently in the community.

KEY ORGANISATIONS AND GROUPS

The three most prominent centres of community life for Serbian people in Adelaide are the two Orthodox Serbian Churches of Saint Sava, one located in Hindmarsh, the other in Woodville Park, and the Community Centre of Serbia and Montenegro, located at Croydon Park. All three centres offer a range of community activities for all ages, including senior activities and meals at each centre on Thursday.

SERBIAN AGED CARE CONTACT LIST

Seniors Clubs

Serbian Senior Citizens Club Hindmarsh

Located at the Church Hall
3 Mary Street
HINDMARSH SA 5007
8341 6369

Serbian Australian Pensioners Club

Located at the Church Hall
675 Port Road
WOODVILLE PARK SA 5011

Community Centre of Serbia and Montenegro of S.A. Inc.

117 Regency Road
CROYDON PARK S.A. 5008
P.O. Box 308
WELLAND SA 5007
8340 1772
scg@nodus.net.au

Key Organisations

Serbian Community of S.A. Inc.

P.O. Box 479
HINDMARSH SA 5007
8346 3580

Serbian Orthodox Church of St Sava

675 Port Road
WOODVILLE PARK SA 5011
8445 6716

Serbian Orthodox Church of St Sava

3 Mary Street
HINDMARSH SA 5007
8346 3277

SERBIAN COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Serbian Community of South Australia Inc. Members

Serbian Orthodox Church of St Sava
Hindmarsh, SA

Serbian Pensioners Club Inc
Hindmarsh, SA

White City Woodville Soccer Club
Woodville West, SA

Serbian Sunday School
St Sava
Hindmarsh, SA

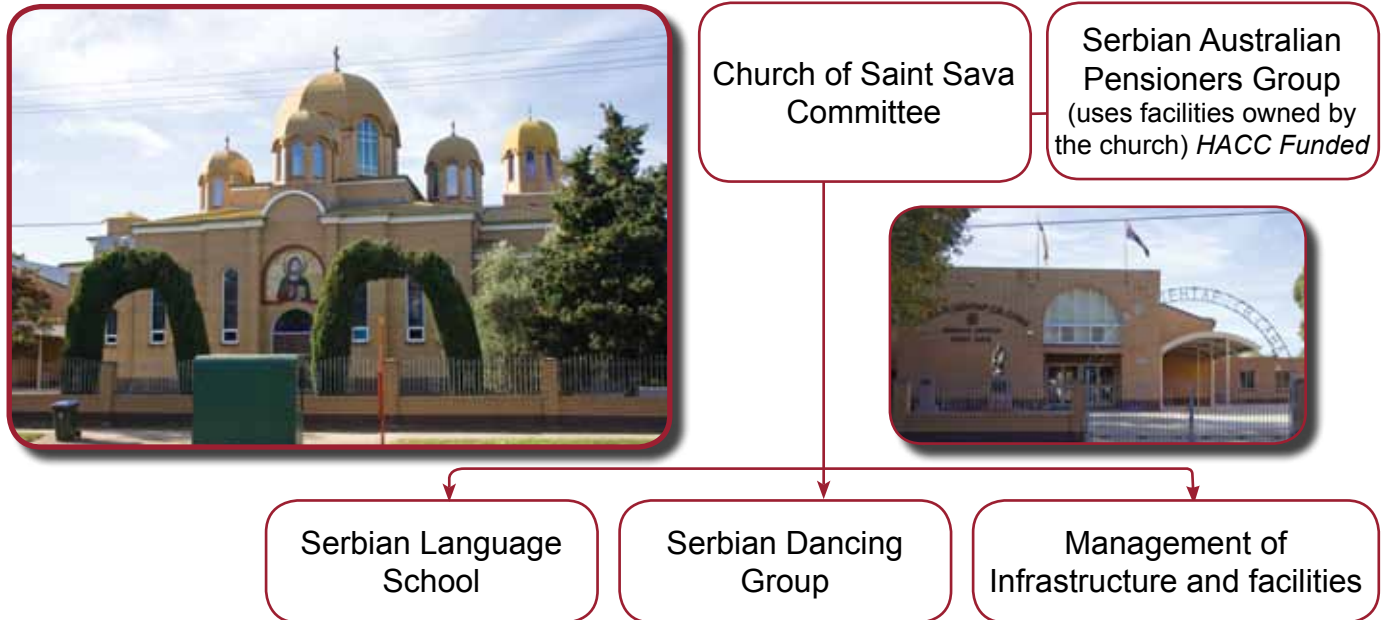
Serbian Folkloric Group,
Ravna Gora
Hindmarsh, SA

Serbian Radio Adelaide
5EBI FM

Circle of Serbian Sisters Queen
Maria, Hindmarsh, SA

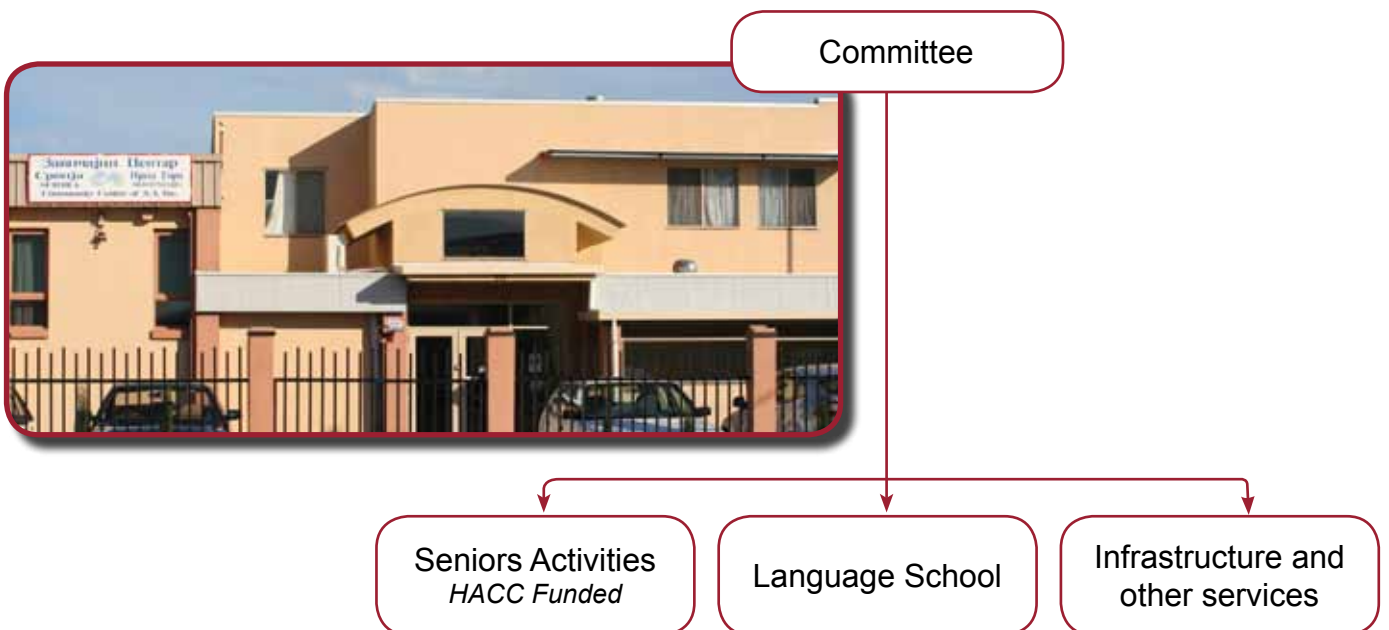
SERBIAN COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Church of Saint Sava, Woodville Park



Organisational structure of the Church of Saint Sava Community, Woodville Park, SA

Community Centre of Serbia and Montenegro, Croydon Park



Organisational structure of the Community Centre of Serbia and Montenegro Inc, Croydon Park, SA

Church of Saint Sava, Hindmarsh

Associated with Serbian Community of South Australia Inc.



Circle of Serbian Sisters
Queen Maria

Serbian Sunday School
St Sava

Serbian Pensioners Club Inc

Serbian Folkloric Group

Serbian Community Welfare of SA Inc.



Penwood Village
(low care residential facility)
Pennington



Penwood Green
(high care residential facility)
Oakden

Serbian Community Welfare of South Australia Inc. aged care facilities

LINKS TO SERBIAN RESOURCES

Name of the Organisation	Description	Internet Link
Agedcare Alternatives	General aged care information	www.agedcarealternatives.net.au
Aged Care Australia - Dept of Health and Ageing	Aged Care Information	www.agedcareaustralia.gov.au
Aged rights Advocacy Centre	Rights for older people	www.sa.agedrights.asn.au
Alzheimer's Australia	Fact sheets for people with dementia and their carers	www.alzheimers.org.au/understanding-dementia/serbian.aspx
Cancer Council SA	Serbian translations	www.cancersa.org.au/asp/search_rl_lang.aspx?ddlLanguage=DocSerbian
Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing	Options in Aged Care booklet	www.culturaldiversity.com.au/options-in-aged-care
Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing	Residents Handbook	www.culturaldiversity.com.au/resident-handbook
Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing	Glossary of Serbian aged care terminology	www.culturaldiversity.com.au/resources/multilingual-resources/index.php?option=com_glossary&view=page&language=serbian&Itemid=124
Centrelink	Information about payments and Centrelink services	www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/languages/sr.htm
City of Charles Sturt Library	Serbian language books, CDs and DVDs	lib.charlessturt.sa.gov.au/ipac20/ipac.jsp?session=1C991D560U953.5370&profile=ccs&menu=search&submenu=subtab14&ts=1299115608968#focus
City of Charles Sturt Library	Read Serbian newspapers on line	www.charlessturt.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=480
Continece Foundation of Australia	Serbian continence fact sheets list and order form	www.continece.org.au/resources.php?language=Serbian&submitted=Search
Department of Health and Ageing	Serbian language publications on ageing and aged care	www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-publicat-serbian-index.htm
Department of Health and Ageing	Medi List in Serbian	www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/44786E5597796C00CA256F1900100B90/\$File/Medi-List-SERBIAN.pdf
Department of Human Services, Victoria	Various health and aged care fact sheets	www.healthtranslations.vic.gov.au/
Eastern Health	Multilingual cue cards	www.easternhealth.org.au/services/interpreting.aspx

Name of the Organisation	Description	Internet Link
Health and Aged Care Resource Centre	Various health and aged care fact sheets	www.haaa.com.au/multilingual_aged_care_publications.aspx
Multicultural Aged Care	Serbian resources available for loan	www.mac.org.au/library.html
Transcultural Mental Health Centre	Multilingual Mental Health Centre Resources	www.dhi.health.nsw.gov.au/Transcultural-Mental-Health-Centre/TMH-Resources/default.aspx
Multicultural Palliative Care Guidelines (including Serbian)		www.palliativecare.org.au/Portals/46/Multicultural%20palliative%20care%20guidelines.pdf
NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service	Various health and aged care fact sheets	www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au/languages/Serbian.html
NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service	Physical activity for older people	www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au/publication_pdfs/5920/BHC-5920-SCC.pdf
Palliative Care Australia	Serbian translations	www.palliativecare.org.au/Default.aspx?tabid=2116
Pennwood Village	Low care residential facility	http://pennwood.org.au/
Queensland Government	Various health and aged care fact sheets	www.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural/public/serbian.asp#agedcare
Queensland Health	Diabetes information in Serbian	www.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural/public/serbian.asp#Diabetes
Queensland Health	Falls prevention flyer	www.health.qld.gov.au/hacc/docs/pdf/fallfly-serb.pdf
Quit SA	Anti smoking poster in Serbian	www.quitnow.gov.au/internet/quitnow/publishing.nsf/Content/ntc-2009-2013-content/print/\$File/HEALTH0018_SERBIAN_LR.pdf
Resthaven	Serbian Resources	www.resthaven.asn.au/about/publications.html#multicultural
Serbian Community of SA		http://serbiancommunitysa.com/
Serbian Orthodox Church of Saint Sava Hindmarsh		http://sveti-sava.org/test/content/view/18/53/
Serbian Orthodox Church of Saint Sava Woodville		http://spscocadelaide.org/
Seniors Information Service	Information Service	www.seniors.asn.au

