



NATIONAL POLICE ETHNIC ADVISORY BUREAU

A Practical Reference to Religious Diversity for Operational Police

An initiative of the National Police Ethnic Advisory Bureau



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The National Police Ethnic Advisory Bureau gratefully acknowledges the valuable assistance of police jurisdictions across Australia for providing those frequently asked questions which, until now, had gone largely unanswered.

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A Practical Reference to Religious Diversity for Operational Police produced in response to a growing trend within Australian Police Services to deliver culturally appropriate, customer orientated services to all Australians. It is also the culmination of effort and partnership between police and religious leaders across Australia.

The cultural diversity of Australia embraces many religions. Religiously determined behaviours pose a challenge to operational members who are expected to perform their duties with sensitivity to the community they serve. One of the stumbling blocks to the delivery of culturally sensitive services is a general lack of knowledge and awareness of different religious behaviours.

*In an endeavour to equip operational police with basic knowledge on this complex issue, the **National Police Ethnic Advisory Bureau** conducted a nationwide survey. The survey identified questions operational police have regarding religiously determined behaviours and their impact on policing.*

The idea for and subsequent development of this reference are testimony to the partnership that exists between police and religious communities. It demonstrates a concerted effort to promote acceptance and harmony within Australian society

As the title of the publication suggests, this is a practical reference for operational police on religious diversity in Australia. It specifically focuses on five non-Christian religions in Australia as identified by police members: Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish and Sikh.

The information is based on the questions generated by operational police and the responses have been developed by the respective religious leaders and communities.

One cautionary note is in order; the publication should be used as a resource only to assist police to gain basic awareness and understanding.

This publication should not be viewed as a definitive response to every situation. Generalisations and stereotypes are counterproductive to the aim of the publication since individuals differ, often greatly, even in supposedly homogeneous social worlds.

As such, police are encouraged to seek further information from either religious leaders or other reliable sources, such as the Multicultural Advisory Units within jurisdictions or similar police facilities.

The publication is divided into several sub-headings with questions and answers for easy reference. A brief overview of each religion is also provided.

In addition, a breakdown on the numbers of people in each of the religions is included on page 59.



Buddhist Faith



Buddhist Faith

Buddhism is a philosophy of life and was founded in north-east India on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, or Enlightened One. The Buddha was not a god and the philosophy of Buddhism does not entail any theistic world-view. The teachings of the Buddha are solely to liberate sentient beings from suffering.

The Buddha was the son of a ruler of a small kingdom and was born in 563BC near the present Indian-Nepal border. The young prince was raised in sheltered luxury until, at the age of 29, he renounced earthly attachments and embarked on a quest for peace and enlightenment.

The core of the Buddha's enlightenment was the realisation of the Four Noble Truths:

- 1. that there is suffering;*
- 2. that suffering has a cause;*
- 3. that suffering has an end;*
- 4. that there is a path that leads to the end of suffering.*

The Buddha saw that all phenomena in life are impermanent and that our attachment to the idea of a substantial and enduring self is an illusion which is the principle cause of suffering. Freedom from self liberates the heart from greed, hatred and delusion and opens the mind to wisdom and the heart to compassion and kindness.

An Overview

What are the key Buddhist festivals celebrated in Australia?

There are a number of auspicious festivals on the Buddhist calendar. On the full moon in May the main Buddhist date is *Vesak*, which is the date of the Buddha's birth, liberation and passing away.

What are the variations within Buddhism?

Buddhism today is divided into two major branches:

THERAVADA has its roots in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.

MAHAYANA has had its greatest impact in China, Japan, Tibet, Nepal, Mongolia, Korea, Taiwan, Bhutan as well as in India.

Many thousands of Australians from all cultures follow both traditions of Buddhism.

Does Buddhism forbid the eating of meat?

Not entirely, however, most ordained monks and nuns from China, Taiwan and Vietnam are vegetarian.

Whether to consume meat or not is left to the discretion of the individual, but followers of Buddhism may, at times, abstain from meat at certain periods of the year.

The reasons that a person may choose to become a vegetarian is due to the Buddhist belief that taking the life of any living creature is a negative action.

Are worship times important to Buddhists?

Early mornings and evenings are common times for Buddhists to practice meditation. This may include chanting, prostration and/or silent meditation.

Do Buddhists practice their beliefs by wearing special clothing, jewellery or ornaments?

Monks and nuns wear robes that vary in colour from maroon, saffron, grey, brown, yellow and black. The different coloured robes reflect the country of origin of the monastic tradition in which the individual takes his/her monastic vows. Monks and nuns may wear casual clothes at times, however, they generally wear their robes.

Monks and nuns wear their hair very short and, in many cases, shave their heads. Lay Buddhists may wear medallions, prayer beads around their wrists or necks and/or coloured string around their necks or wrists.

Do Buddhists have periods of fasting?

Monks and nuns and some lay people may have one meal a day which is the lunch meal. There are some practices that require some fasting but these are generally done during retreats.

What is the significance of bowing?

Bowing means paying homage, respect and honour to monks and nuns and other spiritual leaders. In some cultures, bowing to elders is a sign of respect.

Death and Related Issues

Is it true that Buddhists do not report a death in the family to police?

This is not true. Buddhists follow and adhere to State and Federal Laws.

In the case of death, what protocol should be observed?

It is best to leave the deceased in an undisturbed state for as long as possible.

It is advisable that a Buddhist monk or nun be contacted to perform the necessary death prayers.

How should a corpse be positioned and handled?

This depends on the culture and tradition of Buddhism with which the deceased was affiliated.

In Theravaden, the body can be handled in a respectful way immediately.

In the Mahayana tradition it is best to leave the body undisturbed for up to eight hours.

In both cases, a Buddhist monk should be called to perform the necessary death prayers.

Are next of kin required to remain with the deceased?

Chinese, Tibetan, Vietnamese and Western Buddhists would prefer to stay with the deceased. However, this is not obligatory.

Are there any special requirements regarding disposal of the corpse?

Buddhists can either be cremated or buried. There is no restriction as to who performs this task.

Gender Roles and Family

Are there any protocols in Buddhism that specify which member of the family should speak to police during police inquiries?

In some Asian cultures, both male and female police should speak to the male head of the family or the eldest son. In the Sri Lankan community there is no such restriction.

What is the status of women in Buddhism?

Women have an equal status in Buddhist faith.

Women may feel inhibited discussing incidents of a sexual nature with police. What can be done to alleviate this situation?

A female officer should be available for women reporting such details. Some Buddhist women would prefer to be accompanied by a trusted relative or friend when making such reports. They should be allowed to do so.

Physical Contact and Other Sensitivities

What are the protocols for handshaking, physical proximity and touching when dealing with strangers?

The more common greeting gesture for Buddhists is to place both hands in a praying position, then bow gently. However, some sects have their hands folded over the heart in greeting. Hand shaking with lay people is permitted. Other touching depends on the same-sex interchange.

Never touch a monk or nun on the head.

Are blood samples, body fluids and other specimens, photographs and prints allowed to be taken by police?

While Buddhists are not prevented from supplying any of the above, there may be cultural restrictions against the provision of these.

Should shoes be removed before entering a Buddhist household?

In general, shoes should be removed prior to entering a shrine room or rooms used by a family. The family rooms are considered to be slightly less sacred than the shrine room.

Shoes are considered to bring negativity, dirt and uncleanness into the rooms from the outside world. In an emergency shoes may be left on, however, if unsure, it is good practice to ask.

Why is eye contact a sensitive issue and is this due to cultural or religious reasons?

Eye contact or lack of eye contact is largely a cultural practice. In an Asian context, direct eye contact means confrontation.

However, due to religious reasons, monks and nuns from Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma and Vietnam may not look directly at a member of the opposite sex.

Religious Practices and Policing

Are there any religious/cultural practices which may influence the way people interact with police?

In some Asian cultures people speak to police in a very reserved and hesitant manner and this may be due to their previous experiences with police and authorities in their countries of origin.

Police may facilitate communication by adopting an open and non-threatening manner when questioning individuals.

If a monk or nun is the subject of police inquiry, it is important to ask whether they wish the head monk of their temple or association to be informed of the incident. Their decision should be respected.

Would a Buddhist refuse to take the oath on the Bible in a court of law ?

As the Bible holds no significance for Buddhists an alternative oath would be preferred.

Are there any religious days that would conflict with court dates?

Vesak, the Buddha's birthday and the various Asian cultural calendars New Year's days might conflict with court dates.

If the court date, however, falls on these days and there is no other option, the individual would appear in court.

What do police need to know about particular feast days or religious ceremonies?

If police attend an incident during a religious ceremony it would be appreciated if they could wait until the ceremony has finished.

On feast days, if a puja is being performed, the above also applies. Generally, it is advisable to treat all situations with due respect.

What is the role of religious leaders in Buddhism?

Monks, nuns and some lay spiritual leaders are highly regarded by their communities and it is advisable that police contact these leaders in cases such as domestic violence, community protests and/or demonstrations.

How should police approach a Buddhist temple?

The head monk or nun should be informed before a temple or praying hall is searched. Police should be accompanied by a responsible member of the place throughout the operation, particularly when statues and religious objects are to be disturbed.

When entering a shrine room, hats and shoes should be removed and, if possible, weapons should not be carried.

How do religious teachings affect the delivery of police services?

In general, the guiding philosophy for all Buddhists is to avoid harmful actions.

When an incident occurs, however, it would be worthwhile for police to seek advice and information from the monks or nuns of the temple to which the individual is associated.

How should police acknowledge a shrine, statue or deity in a person's house or temple? How should religious objects be searched ?

It is recommended that statues, pictures, the shrine and other religious objects be treated with respect and reverence.

Police should explain clearly and fully the purpose of their actions if they intend to search religious objects and apologise for any offence that this may cause.

Buddhist statues should be lifted or held by the base and never by the head or top of the object.

Are there any dates of religious significance when police should not approach an individual for an interview?

Vesak, the Buddha's birthday, is the one date to be avoided.

It is necessary to consult the various Asian calendars for this date as it varies from culture to culture.

In addition, if the individual is in reclusive retreat, contact with that individual should be delayed until such time that the retreat has been completed.



Hindu Faith



Hindu Faith

Hinduism has evolved in different ways by different communities in India over thousands of years, making it one of the oldest living religions in the world.

Hindus believe that their religion is without beginning or end and that it is a continuous process, even preceding the existence of our earth and the many other worlds beyond.

Hinduism has numerous schools of thought, but has no founder, no central creed and no central administration or hierarchy of ministers.

It advocates the principles of non-violence, reincarnation and tolerance of difference within itself and of other religions. Underlying the many and varied expressions of Hinduism is a central belief in Karma, the law of cause and effect and reincarnation.

Hindus accept that there may be many manifestations of the one universal god.

Hindu religious belief and cultural life go hand-in-hand and, as such, there are many daily customs and rituals which remain important to a Hindu in Australia.

An Overview

What are the key Hindu festivals celebrated in Australia?

There are Hindu festivals almost every month. They are based on the Lunar Calendar and, hence, the dates vary from year to year.

The main festivals observed in Australia are:

Thaipusam	January
Sivarathiri	March (whole night vigil)
Hindu New Year	April
Krishna Jeyanthi	September
Navarathiri	September/October (10 day festival)
Deepavali	October/November

What are the variations within Hinduism?

All Hindus have common fundamentals. The variations in practice are largely based on where Hindus have come from.

For example, Hindus of North Indian origin would have certain practices which are not followed by Hindus from Sri Lanka. Some variations are also due to the different interpretation of philosophies and Scriptures by different Gurus (religious leaders). Thus, the ISKON (Hare Krishna) movement has certain practices which are not followed by the majority of Hindus.

Does Hinduism forbid the eating of meat?

Hindus believe in the interdependence of life and will not eat any food that has involved the taking of life. Consequently, most Hindus are vegetarians, especially women.

Hinduism forbids the eating of beef. This is because the cow is held to be sacred and, generally, taking of another life to feed oneself is considered to be unreligious. However, in Australia many Hindus are vegetarians only on Hindu festivals, eating fish and meat (not beef) on other days.

There is also a prohibition on eating any food that has been prepared with utensils and cooking implements previously used in the cooking of beef. Some Hindus may relax these food restrictions although they are likely to be observant of not eating beef.

Are worship times important to Hindus?

Hindus are encouraged to pray at dawn and dusk, but the actual time is not critical. Worship at Temples are between 6.30am and 8.00am and 7.00pm and 8.30pm.

Hindus worship both individually and communally. Most Hindus pray at least once a day, at sunrise. They must wash thoroughly and change their clothes before praying.

Do Hindus practice their beliefs by wearing special jewellery, clothing or ornaments?

A Hindu woman puts on glass wedding bangles on her marriage and they are not removed unless the husband dies when the widow ceremoniously shatters them. Breaking or removing wedding bangles is considered an extremely bad omen and will greatly distress a Hindu woman. It is often impossible to remove wedding bangles without breaking them.

Married women also wear a thali (which looks like a nugget) on a chain at all times. This is also removed only when the husband dies. They also wear a red dot on their forehead.

Some Hindus wear a thread around their bodies. It passes diagonally across the body from the shoulder to about waist height. It is put on at an important religious ceremony and should never be removed. Men of one Hindu sect, Swami Narayan, may wear a bead necklace.

Traditional clothing is worn when participating in worship or religious festivals. Some Hindus (men and women) wear a religious talisman on a chain, as protection from evil action by others.

Do Hindus have periods of fasting?

Fasting is common among Hindus, especially widows and elderly women. The effects of long fasting on fluid balances and pain relieving drugs need to be explained to dying and seriously ill patients.

Normally Hindus fast for a day's duration, however, sometimes a vow is taken to fast for a specific number of days.

Death and Related Issues

What is the meaning of death in the Hindu faith?

Hindus accept death as an inevitable part of life. This acceptance is based on a belief in rebirth or reincarnation. There is a decaying of the body but a continuum of spirit. Death signifies that the soul leaves the human body. The body is cremated (returned to dust) as soon as practicable. Hindus see death not as a denial but an assertion of the spirit, however, on a practical level, personal loss is still deeply felt.

A dying Hindu will want the presence of his/her family for comfort and to recite the Hindu Scriptures. Patients may call for a Hindu priest to assist with their acts of worship and help them accept the death philosophically. If the patient is an elderly person he/she will want the presence of the eldest son for he is the one who will conduct the funeral service.

Hindus are usually cremated, except for children under three who are buried. Ideally the cremation should be within 24 hours of death, however, laws in some Australian States and Territories prevent cremation within this time period.

Are there any special requirements regarding autopsies?

Autopsies are considered extremely objectionable and deeply disrespectful to the dead and his/her family. This issue must be handled with sensitivity and explained carefully to the family.

The preference is not to have autopsies unless required by law.

Who would be most likely to undertake identification of the corpse?

Where the dead person is the head of the family, the spouse or eldest child (if adult) is normally contacted first and he/she would also decide on any restrictions regarding who will see or handle the body.

Do family members stay with the body?

A Hindu family will usually want the body to go home at some stage before cremation – usually between the funeral parlour and the crematorium.

At home the family will sing hymns and recite Scriptures. During the funeral they may light a candle and walk around the body, placing the candle on the chest of the deceased. This symbolises cremation as it would have been in their homeland (in India, the dead are cremated on a funeral pyre, lit by the eldest son).

When lying in state (for viewing) the body should be placed in a north-south direction with the head pointing towards the south. The family will want the ashes for future spiritual ceremonies or to scatter in a place of spiritual significance like the River Ganges.

What are the bereavement practices for a Hindu family?

There is usually a time of isolation and segregation after the funeral with the chief mourners going into retirement. Grief is expressed openly with physical gestures, the holding of hands and embraces. These physical comforts are considered important for those remaining.

Gender Roles and Family

What is the role of the family in Hinduism?

The family plays a very important role within Hinduism. The father or, in his absence, the mother, is expected to deal with external parties in formal interactions.

The hierarchy generally is as follows:

Father (Head of family)

Mother (Wife)

Grandparents (Parent of the head of the family)

Eldest child

Subsequent children

Where an aunt or uncle is present, he/she may take precedence over the children.

What is the status of women in the Hindu religion?

Women are generally protected but, otherwise, are treated equally. Hindu women would usually prefer to have a male relative with them when dealing with police officers.

Physical Contact and Other Sensitivities

Does the Hindu religion allow physical contact, such as handshaking when dealing with strangers?

Orthodox Hindus avoid all physical contact with strangers especially with members the opposite sex. Hindus in Australia do not object to formal handshakes.

What is the Hindu view on providing blood samples, body fluids and other specimens, photographs, prints etc for investigative purposes?

None.

Should shoes be removed before entering a Hindu household?

Footwear that is worn outside the house is not normally worn inside the house. No footwear is worn in the prayer room or near the altar. This is for reasons of cleanliness and also to reduce negative vibrations coming into the prayer room.

Religious Practices and Policing

Are there any religious/cultural beliefs that may influence the way people interact with police?

From a cultural perspective, Hindus do not like to discuss family problems with outsiders, including the police. Family elders are expected to resolve issues within the family.

Would a Hindu refuse to take the oath on the Bible in a court of law?

Yes. While Hindus respect the practice of other religions, the Bible does not have any special significance to them.

What do police need to know about particular feast days/ religious ceremonies?

Hindus would not attend court on Holy Days, especially the Hindu New Year, Navarathiri and Deepavali. Dates for religious feasts and ceremonies are based on the Lunar Calendar and astronomical computations and thus the dates vary from year to year.

The priest conducting the religious ceremonies, subject to weather conditions, is often topless (male). The main male participant may also be required to be similarly attired. A small open fire plays an important part in many religious ceremonies. Only vegetarian food is served during religious ceremonies and no alcohol is allowed.

What is the role of religious leaders in Hinduism?

Priests at temples advise only on religious ceremonies. Leaders of the local Hindu community are mainly concerned with the management of religious facilities. Depending on individual personalities they may be able to assist police in certain circumstances. Spiritual leaders (gurus) provide guidance on spiritual matters.

How should police approach a Hindu Temple?

If a ceremony is in progress police should try to avoid causing confusion. They should always take off their shoes before entering Temple buildings.

Police should not touch shrines or statues.



Islamic Faith



Islamic Faith

Islam was founded in Arabia and is based on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammed. One who practices Islam is a Muslim. A Muslim follows the Qur'an, the written revelation brought by Muhammed.

A belief in only one God, unitary and omnipotent is central to Islam. According to Islam, God has four fundamental functions: creation, sustenance, guidance and judgment. The ultimate purpose of humanity is to be in the "service of God", to worship him alone and to construct an ethical social order

Islam teaches that, because of humanity's moral weakness, God sent prophets to teach both individuals and nations ~~cat~~ moral and spiritual behaviour. All prophets are human, but they are the most perfect exemplars for humanity. Muslims believe that Muhammed was the final Prophet and that the Qur'an is the final and most nearly perfect revelation of God.

Five duties, known as the Five Pillars of Islam, are regarded as central to the life of the Islamic community. The first duty is the profession of faith: "There is no God but Allah and Muhammed is his Prophet". The second duty is that of the five daily prayers. The third duty of a Muslim is to pay zakat (alms to the poor). The fourth duty is the fast of the month of Ramadan. The fifth duty is the pilgrimage to Mecca.

An Overview

What are the key Islamic festivals celebrated in Australia?

There are two main festivals in Islam.

The first festival is **Eid-ul-Fitr-Ramazan Bayram** which signifies the end of the month of fasting called "Ramadan".

The second is the **Eid-ul-Adha-Kurban Bayram** which signifies the commemoration of the sacrificing of a sheep by the prophet Ibrahim (Abraham). A Muslim sacrifices a sheep and shares it with poor people and friends on that day.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic Lunar Calendar when the prophet Muhammed received the first revelation of the Qur'an from God. During this month Muslims fast for 29 to 30 days from dawn until sunset and abstain from eating, drinking, smoking and having sexual relations. Ramadan is a month of piety and self-discipline.

What are the variations within Islam?

The fundamental belief of all Muslims is the oneness of God, the prophethood of Muhammed and the Qur'an (the only Holy book for Muslims around the world).

There are, however, two main sects in Islam: the **Sunni** and the **Shee'a**.

The difference between the two sects is that the Sunni's elect their leaders amongst those who are pious and able to do the job effectively, whilst the Shee'a's insist that their leader must be a descendent of the prophet's family.

Are worship times important to Muslims?

Muslims pray five times during the day and night; in the morning, midday, afternoon, after sunset and at night.

They are daily obligatory prayers performed by all adults and it is necessary to take ablutions before prayer to be personally clean and to have a clean area where prayer is performed.

Muslims direct themselves during prayer to face towards Ka'ba, the grand Mosque in Mekka. Prayers are congregational and are to be offered in a mosque but they may be offered individually if a person cannot be present with a congregation. A formal public call to prayer is made from a minaret of the mosque.

Why is Friday an important day for Muslims?

Friday is the day in which Muslims pray the weekly assigned (or legislated) special congregational prayer and a sermon is delivered by the Imam in the mosque. Muslims are obliged very strongly to attend Friday prayer.

Death and Related Issues

What are the protocols for handling dead bodies and who should be initially contacted?

If a Muslim dies in hospital, staff are requested to move the body into a separate room and call the family of the deceased. There is no need for hospital staff to wash the body but it is important to cover it fully with a white sheet, especially if the deceased is a woman.

Are there special requirements regarding autopsies?

In cases where accidents have been the cause of death, Muslims allow autopsies to be carried out, but in general, it is to be avoided.

Why does the body have to be buried within 24 hours?

The deceased is buried as quickly as possible following death. This is prescribed in Islam and also helps to relieve the tension that family and friends experience while waiting for the burial.

Who would be most likely to identify the deceased?

Identification of the body should be done strictly by immediate family members.

Gender Roles and Family

Are there any religious reasons for men to refuse to deal with police women or shake their hands on introduction?

It is not permitted in Islam for a male to shake the hand of a female who is not immediately related to him, and vice versa. Immediately related members include wife, mother, daughter, sister, aunt, niece, husband, father, son, brother, uncle, nephew etc.

How can resistance by males to being interviewed by police women be overcome?

The most effective way to overcome this issue is to have female police interview females and male police interview males.

Does Islam allow talking to strangers of the opposite sex?

It is, sometimes, permitted to casually talk to strangers of the opposite sex but it is not permitted to sit together in a secluded environment. While in emergency situations this may be overruled, it is preferred if it can be avoided.

A male officer should avoid speaking to a Muslim woman without her husband being present.

What is the status of women in Islam?

A woman in Islam is as vital as any other man and she is not inferior to him. The rights and responsibilities of a woman are equal to those of a man but are not necessarily identical.

What are the religious protocols when photographing Muslim women especially married women?

A woman may be photographed. However, it would be advisable if her husband or an immediate relative is present.

Can women remove their veil or face covering?

Women are permitted to remove their face covering, but should not remove the veil which covers their hair and body. Women's hands may also be uncovered.

Why do some Muslim women wear the hijab (head dress)?

A Muslim woman wears a head dress called hijab so as not to display her charms or expose her physical attractions to strangers. The veil can save her soul from weakness, her mind from indulgence, her eyes from lustful looks and her personality from demoralisation. A woman naturally possesses less physical strength than a man and Islam is most concerned with the integrity of a woman to safeguard her morals and chastity and to protect her character and personality. A Muslim woman chooses to protect herself this way according to Islamic religion.

Women may feel inhibited discussing incidents of a sexual nature with police. What can be done to alleviate this situation?

A female officer should be available for women reporting such details and interviews should be conducted privately.

How does Islam impact on the family?

Islam fosters a strongly united family and members of the family usually remain together for a long time. The eldest son is usually in charge of the family in the absence of the father.

In cases of domestic violence, it is advisable for police to keep the family united and not to remove children, especially young girls, from the family home. The worst thing that could happen to a Muslim family would be to have their young boy or girl taken from them and placed in a refuge, this is particularly important when it comes to young girls.

Are there any restrictions when speaking with children?

It is preferable to speak to children in the presence of their parents.

Physical Contact and Other Sensitivities

What is appropriate behaviour when comforting a Muslim woman?

Comforting Islamic women should not involve touching and it is preferable to provide comfort by kind words in the presence of others. Close proximity to a Muslim woman by strangers is prohibited.

Religious Practices and Policing

Are there any dates of religious significance which police should be made aware?

There are no dates in particular, however, if police want to interview someone during fasting days, it may be preferable to do so after sunset.

How do religious teachings affect the delivery of police services?

The Islamic religion requests its followers to be law-abiding citizens and individuals should co-operate with police.

However, in incidents such as domestic violence, police need to have an understanding of the traditions, ways of life and habits of Muslims.

Muslims may employ different methods to resolve problems, particularly in cases where authorities advise that children be separated from their families.

Would a Muslim refuse to take the oath on the Bible in a court of law?

A Muslim should only take an oath on the Qur'an in a court of law.

What is the role of the religious leaders in Islam?

The Imam is a respected person in the Muslim community and leads the five daily prayers in the mosque.

He has extensive knowledge of the Islamic faith. The Imam (Hojah in Turkish) would greatly appreciate for police to consult him on matters of domestic violence. He can assist in providing appropriate explanations and assistance to police thus avoiding potentially negative situations by fragmenting the family unit.

How should police approach a mosque?

Police are welcome to call on any mosque and work together with the Imam of that mosque to ensure that, through co-operation, better results are achieved.

Shoes must be removed to keep the mosque clean as part of the Muslim prayer ritual is to lie prostrate on the floor. Removal of shoes is not necessary in those areas of the mosque where there is no carpet, that is, where prostration is not performed.



Jewish Faith



Jewish Faith

Judaism is one of the world's oldest religious traditions. Jewish people believe that a single, transcendent God created the universe and continues providentially to govern it.

The same God who created the world revealed himself to the Israelites at Mount Sinai. The content of that revelation is the Torah (revealed instruction), God's will for humankind is expressed in the Commandments.

A second major concept in Judaism is that of the covenant, or contractual agreement between God and the Jewish people. They would acknowledge God, agreeing to obey his law; God, in turn, would acknowledge Israelites as his particular people.

The study of the Torah is considered an act of worship in rabbinic Judaism. The Torah is read liturgically each Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, which is spent in prayer, study, rest and family feasting. In the course of a year, the entire Torah will be read on Sabbath and festival days.

An Overview

What are the key Jewish festivals in Australia?

The cycle of Jewish festivals are a combination of the biblical and the historic.

There are those which are described in the Bible including **Rosh Hashanah** (the New Year), **Yom Kippur** (the Day of Atonement), **Sukkot** (Tabernacles) and **Shavuot** (Pentecost).

There are also festivals that celebrate historic events such as **Pesach** (Passover) which commemorates the Jewish Exodus from Egypt, **Purim** (the Feast of Lots) which celebrates Jewish survival when the Persian King Ahasuerus and his Jewish wife Esther foiled a plot to kill all Jews, and the post-biblical **Channukah** (the Festival of Lights) this marks the Jewish victory over the Seleucid monarch who tried to eliminate Jewish worship from Israel.

There are also days of mourning which mark dark events in Jewish history such as the **Tish b'Av** which commemorates the day on which both the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem were destroyed.

All these festivals and days of mourning have their own rituals and traditions, most including synagogue worship and family gatherings. Some require Jews to fast, especially on **Yom Kippur**, the most solemn day of the Jewish religious calendar.

Two of the more colourful festivals which may require police attention because in areas where Jews are concentrated celebration tends to spill out into the streets, are **Simchat Torah** and **Purim**.

What are the variations within Judaism?

An Orthodox service is conducted by the rabbi who, in Jewish tradition, is a teacher not an anointed priest and whose authority comes from his learning rather than a consecrating "laying of hands". He is assisted by a chazan (cantor), usually distinguished for his singing voice, and lay members of the congregation who participate in the service and are honoured by being "called up" to the reading of the Torah. As few modern Jews can in fact read the poetic Hebrew of the Torah, particularly in the ancient singing style, the portion is in fact read by the cantor and the honoured member of the congregation reads blessings before and after the reading.

Liberal and Progressive congregations permit women rabbis and cantors and encourage women to read from the Torah. These congregations also use a mixed choir whereas Orthodox synagogues permit male choirs only.

Men and women congregants in an **Orthodox** synagogue are separated; the women sit upstairs or behind a mechitzah (partition), which is sometimes merely a grill through which they can see the service, but in the most rigorous Orthodox congregations is a true barrier.

In Liberal and Progressive synagogues men and women sit together.

Why do Jewish people want Saturday free instead of Sunday?

The fifth of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20: 8-10) is the commandment to 'remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy. On that day thou shalt do no work'.

In Jewish tradition the **Sabbath** – the seventh day – is Saturday and like all Jewish festivals, extends from sunset to sunset – that is from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday.

Are worship times important for Jewish people?

The most Orthodox Jews pray three times a day, morning, afternoon, and evening on weekdays.

However, most manage to fit these prayer times into their normal work schedule and do not require special consideration when working or participating in general society.

However, Sabbath and Festival observance does require special arrangements and consideration and usually requires abstinence from work and usual routine.

Why do Jewish men cover their heads?

In Australia the vast majority of Jews look and dress like other Australians with the only exception that some observant men wear a **kippah** (skullcap) at all times. Jewish texts associate the wearing of headgear with the concept of reverence (to God) and respect.

Death and Related Issues

Are there any protocols in the Jewish faith for handling the deceased?

After death, the body must be carefully and reverently prepared for burial by the Jewish Burial Society, called the **Chevra Kadisha** – the Holy Brotherhood.

The body is washed and immersed in a body of water called a mikvah and then dried. The body is wrapped in a shroud and is then placed in a plain pine coffin. Burial is to take place promptly and generally is carried out within 24 hours.

The mourning period involves three stages – **the first week** the mourners refrain from work and usual tasks and remain at home to be visited and comforted by family and friends; **the first month** is also observed by avoiding light hearted activities; and during **the first year** some mourners refrain from attending celebrations or entertainment where music is played.

When advising of the death of a family member, there is no particular relative to be contacted. However, Jewish tradition requires haste in making funeral arrangements and relatives are advised immediately so that burial can take place promptly.

With regard to identification of the body, closest family members should be contacted and then the Jewish Burial Society.

Are autopsies permitted in the Jewish faith?

There is a strong belief in the Jewish tradition in the sacredness of the human being and the dignity of the human spirit. For this reason, autopsy – or the desecration of the body – is not permitted in Jewish law. Thus, efforts are often made to gain an exemption from autopsy requirements.

Do family members need to stay with the body?

Jewish traditions requires that the body be 'watched' at all times as the soul, it is believed, does not leave until the burial. Thus, once the Burial Society becomes involved, arrangements will be made to have it accompanied at all times.

This need not be done by relatives often well-respected community members take this role on voluntarily.

Gender Roles and Family

What is the role of the family in Judaism?

The family is the cornerstone of Jewish life and marriage and parenthood are strong expectations in Jewish families.

Although it is incumbent upon males to pray and it is the presence of 10 men that allows a formal prayer service to take place, women have a critical role in Jewish life.

What is the status of women in Judaism?

Jewishness of a person is determined through the matriarchal line, that is, if one's mother is Jewish, then one is considered to be Jewish. This ascribes importance to the woman in Judaism. Education of children and the maintenance of traditions and rituals also is the responsibility of the wife and mother in families.

Are there any restriction on police speaking with children?

No, although, as in most family situations, young children should be sensitively treated and given the opportunity to be accompanied by a family member or trusted advocate.

Physical Contact and Other Sensitivities

Are there any restrictions in Judaism regarding physical contact such as handshaking when dealing with strangers?

Physical contact between men (as in handshaking) is appropriate and acceptable but ultra-orthodox men will not deal with women, often finding it unacceptable to negotiate or converse with them.

Thus, when dealing with such individuals (often dressed in black, with beards, earlocks and large hats) it would be preferable that a male police officer is involved. Conversely, where ultra-orthodox Jewish women require police contact, it may be advisable to allocate a female police officer.

The women referred to here would be those who wear wigs out of modesty and have long dresses.

What is the Jewish view on providing blood samples, body fluids and other specimens, photographs, prints etc for investigative purposes?

Under normal circumstances there would be no grounds for a Jewish person to refuse to provide blood samples, body fluids (other than the one exception detailed below) hair specimens, photographs or finger prints based on any Jewish religious objections, if such material is required and taken in accordance with valid civil and legal stipulations.

The only exception would be regarding a request for a male to provide a semen sample. Jewish law severely prohibits the procurement of any such sample other than in the context of aiding conception. A Jewish man faced with a request for a semen sample would therefore be required to discuss the circumstances of the case with a Rabbi, a recognised authority on Jewish law, in order to obtain a ruling as to whether he is allowed to comply with this request.

Religious Practices and Policing

Are there any dates of religious significance when police should not approach an individual for an interview or to attend court hearings?

Wherever possible, police should not approach traditional Jews on the **Sabbath or Holy Days** , unless the matter is one of life and death. Such matters override even Jewish law.

The most sacred Holy Days are **Day of Atonement** (Yom Kippur) observed usually in September, and the **Jewish New Year** or **Rosh Hashanah** .

If any of the Jewish Holy Days conflicted with a court date, an orthodox Jewish person could not attend. In most cases, there can be a negotiated compromise in such situations, involving postponement or adjournment of proceedings.

What is the role of religious leaders in Judaism?

The communal leader in Judaism is the **Rabbi**, who is a teacher and not an appointed priest, whose authority comes from learning rather than a consecrating 'laying on of hands'.

Most Jewish people are associated with a particular community or Synagogue and would thus have a Rabbi with whom they have a relationship. They would likely wish to have contact in a stressful or critical situation.

It would be appropriate to involve such a Rabbi in certain cases, however, police should check with the family whether this is acceptable to them.

How should police approach a Synagogue?

It would be appropriate to try to make contact with the administrative office of the Synagogue firstly to explain the police presence and obtain support for the visit. This can be done if the visit does not take place on the Sabbath.

At most Sabbath services internal security is present at Synagogue premises and initial contact can be made with this person who can then notify the Rabbi, Congregation, President etc.

How do Jewish religious teachings affect the delivery of police services?

The simple answer is that no Jewish law goes against Australian civil law or cultural practice. By ancient tradition, 'the law of the country is law'.

There are cases, however, where Jewish law can conflict with civil law and solutions have to be found to resolve these issues. For example, autopsies are, as a rule, not permitted for Jews unless they are required for legal reasons or to advance medical science. Jewish graves are supposed to be left untouched forever, so when authorities speak as they do periodically about re-using graves, this would be of concern to Jews.

One of the prohibitions about work on the Sabbath includes writing, so it is impossible for observant Jews to cast a vote on the Sabbath. As voting is compulsory, this could present a problem but, in most cases, Jews are able to register their votes early and are encouraged to do so.

Jews who divorce in civil courts are also required to divorce in the Jewish court and require a bill of Jewish divorce (gett) before they can remarry in a Synagogue. There have been cases of a husband refusing to grant his wife a gett, so chaining her to an unwanted marriage. Until recently, Rabbinic courts have been unable to force the granting of a gett as they once could when Jews lived in small, close-knit communities and the offender would be ostracised until he complied. Now the Rabbinic and Civil courts have come to an agreement in some jurisdictions where a civil judge can enforce the granting of a gett as part of the civil divorce and property settlement.

From time to time, kosher killing of animals becomes an issue as it is alleged that the practice is inhumane and States have threatened to ban it. Usually Jews are able to argue against such bans because the body of evidence in studies here and overseas has shown that kosher ritual killing is, in fact, humane and does not cause undue suffering to the animal.

In most cases where Australian law, custom or regulation conflicts or has the potential to conflict with Jewish law, custom or regulation, solutions are worked out with the appropriate Jewish and non-Jewish authorities.

Would a Jewish person refuse to take an oath on the Bible in a court of law?

Most Jewish people would take an oath on the Old Testament, and may request that this is provided rather than a copy of the New Testament, as Judaism does not use this text in its worship.



Sikh Faith



Sikh Faith

The word Sikh means disciple or student. A Sikh is a person who believes in One God and the teachings of the Ten Gurus, enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Holy Book, and has faith in Sikh baptism (Amrit).

The Sikh religion was founded by Guru Nanak, born in 1469AD in the village Talwandi, now called Nankana Sahib, near Lahore (Pakistan). Guru Nanak and the nine Gurus who succeeded him set an example of living spiritually while taking an active part in the secular world.

The tenth and last Guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708 AD) initiated the Sikh Baptism ceremony in 1699 AD. Shortly before passing away, the Guru ordained that Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Holy Scripture would be the ultimate spiritual authority for the Sikhs.

Sikhism stresses the unity, truth and creativity of a personal God and urges union with him through meditation and surrender to his will.

Sikhs do not believe in idol worship or rituals and gods and goddesses are considered non-entities. The religion consists of practical living, rendering service to humanity and engendering tolerance and brotherly love towards all.

An Overview

What are the key Sikh festivals in Australia?

There are almost 20 main Sikh festivals, called Gurburbs, in a calendar year and include the following:

- The birthdays of the ten Sikh Gurus. The birthdays of the first Guru Nanak and the tenth Guru Gobind Singh are particularly significant for Sikhs.
- The celebration of the five Sikhs baptised by the tenth Guru Gobind Singh. This is known as advent day of Khalsa, i.e. 'Vaisakhi'.
- The martyrdom days of the fifth Guru Arjan Dev and the ninth Guru Tegh Bahader.
- The first time that the present Guru of the Sikhs (the Holy script-Sri Guru Granth Sahib) was placed in the Golden Temple Amritsar, India, in 1604 and the day when he was ordained as Guru by the tenth master at the time of his departure in 1708.
- Commemoration of the five-day period when Guru Gobind Singh's two sons were killed in the battle at Chamkaur and his other two sons were bricked alive in Sarhand, India (Shahidi Mela).
- The day when the sixth Guru Hargobind Sahib reached Amritsar (religious centre) after his release from the fort of Gavalior, known as Bandi Shore Day. It falls on the same day as Dewali, the Hindu Festival of Lights.
- The 6th June when Indian Forces attacked the Golden Temple Amritsar in 1984.

Are worship times important to Sikhs?

A Sikh can worship at any time of the day or night but the expected prayer times are before sunrise and sunset and prior to going to bed at night.

If possible, a Sikh should perform morning and evening prayers in a quiet place, but generally a Sikh should meditate on the Name of God by reciting His name (the Magnificent Lord, Waheguru) even while working.

Do Sikhs practice their beliefs by wearing special jewellery and clothing?

A male Sikh must start wearing a turban as soon as he is able to tie it.

A baptized Sikh (known as Amritdhari Sikh) always wears the five K's:

KIRPAN – a small sized sword placed in a shoulder belt;

KARA – an iron bangle;

KACHERA – special underwear;

KANGA – a small wooden comb to comb his/her hair;

and a Sikh must not cut KESHAS (hair) from his/her body.

Each of the five K's has a special religious significance for Sikhs:

KESHAS signify the faith of a Sikh that the human form is the perfect creation of God. We must not act against His will by cutting hair and we should always accept the actions of God gladly.

KIRPAN signifies that a Sikh is not a coward and that he/she would fight against tyranny.

KACHERA signifies that a Sikh must not commit adultery.

KARA symbolises the universe wherein everyone is equal.

An Amritdhari Sikh must not be asked to separate any of the Five K's from his/her body. The cutting of hair or abandoning the wearing of the turban should not even be suggested to a Sikh as these form an important part of the Sikh faith.

The name of a male Sikh ends with Singh (which means lion) and that of a female ends with Kaur (which means lioness or princess).

Death and Related Issues

What are the protocols for handling the deceased?

There are no specific protocols for the handling of a corpse except that it must be given due respect.

The body should be handed over to the nearest family member a few hours prior to cremation. This should allow sufficient time for the corpse to be washed, dressed and to have the appropriate religious prayers recited over it.

Cremation occurs with family members in attendance and the ashes must be handed to the nearest family member to be later disposed as per the Sikh faith.

Are autopsies permitted in the Sikh faith?

There are no prohibitions regarding autopsies in the Sikh faith, however, in the case of a baptised or Amritdhari Sikh, the small sword, the special underwear, the small wooden comb in the hair and the hair itself must not be removed from the body to perform the autopsy.

Gender Roles and Family

What is the role that the family plays in the Sikh faith?

Whether living together or not, Sikh family members must look after each other in time of need. The eldest person in the family is bestowed the appropriate respect and his/her views are strongly considered when making decisions on family matters.

This is also the case for the person who is second in line, either the eldest woman or the eldest son/daughter. The eldest son in the family has the responsibility of care for the family in the absence of his father.

Adultery, by either a male or female Sikh, is taken very seriously and is not tolerated. Divorce amongst Sikhs is very rare.

With regard to domestic violence or problems with youth, it must be remembered that taking a Sikh female, minor or otherwise, from the family is seen as a very serious action and, if possible, should be avoided at all costs.

Generally, Sikhs follow an arranged marriage system. Therefore any family disputes or domestic violence can be better resolved by discussing these issues internally with family elders.

What is the status of women in the Sikh faith?

Sikh women have equal status and are regarded as a significant part of the Sikh community.

A woman receives utmost reverence for her role in the family and society and is considered to have the same soul as man. She has an equal right to grow spiritually and to attend religious congregations and recite divine hymns in the Gurdwara (Sikh Temple). She is also eligible to participate and perform all ceremonies including Baptism.

Sikh women do not put on a veil but the wearing of clothes which expose the body is considered dishonourable.

When interviewing Sikh women police officers should be aware that touching could be viewed as unpleasant and offensive.

Some women have inhibitions reporting details of a sexual nature to police. How can this be alleviated?

Sexual misconduct, by either a male or female, is not taken lightly in the Sikh faith. A female would be reticent to report or discuss details of a sexual nature.

It is important, therefore, to gain the confidence of the female by making sure that her name is not made public and that questioning is conducted in privacy, away from family members.

Police need to keep investigations as private as possible so as not to inflict further shame on the female.

When speaking with family members who should police contact initially? Are there any protocols when speaking with women and children?

The head of the family, usually the husband or eldest son, should be contacted first. But in the case of Sikh females, the mother would be the most suitable person to be contacted.

It would be more appropriate for a female police officer to speak to a female Sikh, however, if the situation permits, it is preferable for a married woman to be interviewed in the presence of her husband or eldest person in the family.

There are no restrictions when speaking with children, but in the case of Sikh girls special care needs to be taken. Interviews should be kept short and to the point. Generally speaking, Sikh girls are shy and will only talk in the presence of a family member.

Physical Contact and Other Sensitivities

Are there any restrictions in the Sikh faith regarding physical contact, such as handshaking, comforting etc?

Only family members can touch a Sikh woman even when she is grieving over a death. Touching a Sikh woman by a male who is not a close family member is not approved.

There is no such restriction in Sikh faith with regard to handshaking. Sikh males normally handshake with other males, but in the case of Sikh females the preferred way is to greet a male with folded hands and vice versa.

Is it necessary to remove shoes when entering a Sikh house or Gurdwara (place of worship)?

Shoes must be removed before entering the Sikh congregation place called Gurdwara. The same stands true if the Sikh Holy Script is placed in a room of a house. It is a sign of respect and part of the religious tradition. During religious ceremonies the covering of the head with a piece of cloth or handkerchief is common practice.

Removal of shoes before entering a house is up to the individual and is usually done for reasons of hygiene and cleanliness.

Does the Sikh faith prevent a person from providing blood samples, body fluids and other specimens, photographs and prints required by police?

The Sikh faith has no restrictions preventing a Sikh from providing the above, however, providing photographs of females to police is considered a serious matter.

Religious Practices and Policing

Are there any dates of religious significance when police should not approach a person for an interview?

There are no such dates of religious significance when police cannot contact a Sikh for an interview except when the Sikh is involved in performing religious duties during the above Gurburbs (festivals) or is busy in his daily prayer. When a Sikh is in the process of reading the Sikh Holy Script, which normally takes around 50 hours, known as Akhand Path, he should not be disturbed.

What is the role of religious leaders in the Sikh faith?

The role of Sikh priests is very limited. They perform religious functions and sing the hymns from the Holy Script. In urgent circumstances, when a Sikh priest is unavailable, any capable Sikh can perform these duties. It would be better to seek the assistance of a community leader in cases of domestic violence, protests etc. All the local Gurdwaras have elected volunteers who are considered community leaders.

Would a Sikh refuse to take an oath on the Bible in a Court of Law?

Yes, a Sikh can refuse to take an oath on the Bible as this is not recognised as the Sikh's religious book. It is more appropriate to ask a Sikh to take an oath on a part of the sacred hymns (daily prayers written in a small manual called Gutka).

PROTOCOL FOR SIKH TAKING AN OATH ON THE GUTKA

- The Gutka, once taken from a Sikh religious Centre, must be kept wrapped in a neat cloth. The Gutka must be kept in a clean uncontaminated environment (free from alcoholic drinks and tobacco products) and at a level where no one touches it without first washing his/her hands and must not be left on a seat.
- The person holding the Gutka must not have tobacco or alcohol in his/her possession.

- The person taking the oath should be provided with an opportunity to wash his/her hands; taking off his/her shoes; wear a small cloth (Patka) to cover his/her head if not wearing a turban.
- The person should hold the Gutka in both hands while the oath is being administered.

How can religious objects such as altars, shrines etc. be searched by police without causing undue stress and/or offence?

In the Sikh faith there are no statues or altars. Sikhs would be offended if their congregation place Gurdwara is searched by police without first consulting community leaders and the search should be conducted in the presence of the community leaders.

A person other than a Sikh may touch the Sikh Holy Script (including Gutkas) after washing his/her hands and covering his/her head and showing total respect.

What protocol needs to be followed in cases of body searches?

It is an offence to touch the turban of Sikh without asking his permission.

How can the practice of wearing religious objects and clothing impact on police operations?

An Amritdhari Sikh (a baptised Sikh) wears the Five K's (religious symbols).

A Sikh who has cut his/her hair or trimmed his beard cannot be an Amritdhari Sikh.

If the situation permits, an Amritdhari Sikh should be given a single cell and she/he must not be forced to get rid of or remove any of the Five K's. There is not a single case known in the world where a baptised Sikh might have tried to use the small-sized sword to harm him/herself.

Amritdhari Sikhs would object to the temporary removal of any of the Five K's while in police custody or detention.



Religion by Australian States and Territories

	Buddhism	Hinduism	Islam	Judaism	Sikhism
Aust. Capital Territory	3,874	1,872	2,466	505	44
New South Wales	81,908	35,576	102,288	32,652	5,886
Northern Territory	1,520	387	768	146	190
Queensland	18,153	6,550	9,421	4,506	1,427
South Australia	11,386	2,095	4,798	1,164	636
Tasmania	1,014	444	807	167	54
Victoria	62,784	16,708	67,047	35,963	2,978
Western Australia	18,536	3,643	12,583	4,702	802
Total	199,812	67,279	200,885	79,805	12,017

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996 Census