



# A Practical Reference to Religious and Spiritual Diversity For Operational Police

3rd Edition

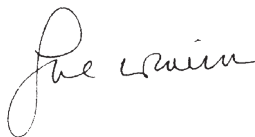
# Acknowledgements

This Reference has been developed by the Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA), together with police jurisdictions, religious representatives and community groups.

ANZPAA gratefully acknowledges the valuable assistance provided by all those who contributed advice and support in developing this valuable resource.

ANZPAA is committed to achieving excellence in Australia and New Zealand policing through the development of publications, policies and research on cross-jurisdictional policing initiatives. ANZPAA is a joint initiative of the Australian and New Zealand Police Ministers and Commissioners.

This Reference is based on a similar initiative of the former Australasian Police Multicultural Advisory Bureau (APMAB). The roles and functions of APMAB were absorbed into ANZPAA in October 2007.



**Sue Wilkinson**  
**Executive Director ANZPAA**

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# Foreword



As the Chair of ANZPAA's Board I am very pleased to introduce this edition of 'A Practical Reference to Religious and Spiritual Diversity for Operational Police' (3rd Edition, also known as 'The Reference').

This Reference provides an overview of nine religions and spiritualities:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- Bahá'í
- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism
- Māori
- Sikhism

It contains information directly related to police protocols such as: important dates; contact and interviewing; searches and detention; and death, bereavement and mourning.

Australian and New Zealand police are committed to meeting the needs of the religiously and spiritually diverse communities they serve. This edition is a culmination of effort and partnership between police and religious communities across Australia and New Zealand.

**Mal Hyde AO APM OSTJ LLB (Hons) MBA**  
**Commissioner South Australia Police**

## Purpose

The Reference is to provide police with a greater understanding of religious and spiritual diversity and to enhance services to the community.

This third edition has been enhanced, updated and further informed by the feedback received from police jurisdictions, religious communities, individuals and government agencies.

## Important Considerations for Use

This Reference provides general information only, and does not purport to represent every religion and spirituality within Australia and New Zealand. It provides a basic introduction to the nine largest religions and spiritualities in Australia and New Zealand. This Reference should only be used as a resource to assist police gain a basic understanding and awareness of the nine religions and spiritualities discussed.

This Reference has been prepared in a generic context for police throughout Australia and New Zealand, and procedures may differ at the local level. Police are encouraged to seek further, more detailed information and guidance regarding religion and spirituality from their jurisdictional multicultural units, relevant religious and spiritual leaders or other reliable sources (such as those listed in this Reference).

It should be recognised that religious and spiritual diversity is practised in accordance with established legislation and human rights provisions, and all people are free to follow any religion they choose. However, religious and spiritual practices and beliefs must comply with existing laws, as enacted by the relevant parliament.

The Reference has attempted to capture the consistent and common practices within each religion and spirituality. It is recognised that religious practices and beliefs can vary markedly within each religion and spirituality, as a result of individual interpretation, geographical upbringing, depth of belief and cultural influences.

This Reference is not intended as a cultural guide, however, in some cases it is very difficult to separate the cultural from the religious. Therefore, some references to cultural practices are made where appropriate. It is important to note that cultural and other influences may also affect the way in which a person practices their religion or spirituality. Consequently, in conjunction with relevant legislation and operating procedure, dialogue and open communication should continue to inform policing practice. Flexibility and awareness in applying an understanding of religious and spiritual considerations in a variety of operational contexts is important when using this Reference.

If you experience anything that is not included in, or is contrary to, this Reference, please advise ANZPAA at [secretariat@anzpaa.org.au](mailto:secretariat@anzpaa.org.au)



# Quick Reference

| Key Topics  | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  | Bahá'í  | Buddhism  | Christianity   |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| 13 Protocols for dealing with strangers   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Greeting:</b> Initially, same sex communication</li> <li>• <b>Silence:</b> Important part of communication</li> <li>• <b>Handshaking:</b> Not generally given</li> <li>• <b>Touching:</b> Usually viewed as inappropriate</li> <li>• <b>Eye contact:</b> Common to lower eyes to show respect</li> <li>• <b>Pointing:</b> Using the finger is seen as disrespectful</li> </ul>   | None  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Handshaking:</b> Not appropriate with monks or nuns</li> <li>• <b>Touching:</b> Not appropriate with monks or nuns</li> <li>• <b>The head:</b> Not appropriate to touch the head</li> </ul>   | None   |
| 18 Special considerations when approaching or entering a place of worship or person's house; or acknowledging or searching sacred objects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval from Traditional Owners, local elders and/or government authority</li> <li>• Follow local protocols (eg: men attending sacred men's sites)</li> <li>• Modest attire</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact guides</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact head monk or nun</li> <li>• Remove weapons where safe</li> <li>• Care when seated facing religious objects</li> <li>• Lift religious objects by base</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove weapons where safe</li> <li>• Modest attire</li> <li>• Care when touching the altar</li> </ul>   |
| 6 Special clothing, jewellery or ornaments  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ceremonial items during secret or sacred ceremonies</li> <li>• String sometimes worn by family members during bereavement</li> <li>• Care when touching</li> <li>• Standard protocols for searching and detention apply</li> </ul>  | No  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monks and nuns may have short/shaved hair, wear robes</li> <li>• Threaded beads (mala) sometimes carried</li> <li>• Care when touching</li> <li>• Standard protocols for searching and detention apply</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious leaders often wear robes/other religious clothing</li> <li>• Threaded beads (rosary beads) sometimes carried</li> <li>• Standard protocols for searching and detention apply</li> </ul> |
| 20-22 Death, bereavement and mourning   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional Aboriginal belief that death is caused by another person (no natural death)</li> <li>• Bereavement (sorry business) may take precedence over all else</li> <li>• <b>Marigeth</b> (in-laws) often announce a death amongst Torres Strait Islanders</li> <li>• Requesting to keep the deceased for a time to prepare is common in Aboriginal communities</li> <li>• Spending considerable time with the deceased is common in Torres Strait Island communities</li> <li>• Preference is not to have post mortems conducted unless required by law</li> <li>• Performing a smoking ceremony is common in Aboriginal communities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family members may wish to place a burial ring on the deceased</li> <li>• Preference is that the deceased is not be transported more than one hour's travelling distance</li> <li>• Cremation is forbidden</li> <li>• Burial is preferred to take place as soon as reasonably possible</li> <li>• Burial is preferred to take place within one hour's travelling distance</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact Buddhist monk or nun, and maintain a peaceful environment</li> <li>• Some may request that the body be left undisturbed for up to eight hours</li> <li>• Chinese, Tibetan and Vietnamese Buddhists would generally prefer to stay with the deceased</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some may want a priest or other clergy member to give 'last rites' (prayers)</li> </ul>   |



| Hindu   | Islam  | Judaism  | Māori  | Sikhism  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Handshaking:</b> Not appropriate with observant Hindus</li> <li>• <b>Eye contact:</b> Not appropriate in some traditions between males and females</li> <li>• <b>Hands:</b> Left hand not used for general interaction</li> <li>• <b>Pointing at people:</b> Usually viewed as disrespectful</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Handshaking:</b> Not appropriate between males and females with observant Muslims</li> <li>• <b>Hands:</b> Left hand not used for general interaction</li> <li>• <b>Eye contact:</b> Sustained contact often not appropriate</li> <li>• <b>Comforting:</b> Avoid physical contact</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Handshaking:</b> Not appropriate with many Orthodox Jews</li> <li>• <b>Physical contact:</b> Not appropriate with many Orthodox Jews</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Touching:</b> Not appropriate to touch the head</li> <li>• <b>Eye contact:</b> Minimal eye contact common</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Handshaking:</b> Sometimes viewed as inappropriate between males and females</li> <li>• <b>Touching:</b> Sometimes viewed as inappropriate between males and females</li> <li>• <b>The head:</b> Not appropriate to touch the head or turban</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove hats and shoes</li> <li>• Seek assistance when handling objects</li> <li>• Food offered</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact Imam of mosque</li> <li>• Modest attire</li> <li>• Remove shoes</li> <li>• Avoid walking in front of Muslims while praying</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact security at Synagogue</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove shoes</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact community leaders</li> <li>• Remove shoes</li> <li>• Care when touching the Sikh Holy Script</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Married Hindu women may wear a necklace (<b>mangalsutra</b>) or wedding bangles; and a marking over third eye (<b>bindi</b> or <b>pottu</b>)</li> <li>• Thread sometimes worn around body</li> <li>• Care when touching</li> <li>• Standard protocols for searching and detention apply</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muslim women may wear the following: headscarf (<b>Hijab</b>); face veil (<b>Niqab</b>); covering for the whole body (<b>Burqa</b>); and covering for the whole body thrown over the head (<b>Chador</b>)</li> <li>• Standard protocols for searching and detention apply</li> </ul>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orthodox men may dress in black, wear hats, and grow beards and earlocks</li> <li>• Orthodox women may wear wigs and long dresses</li> <li>• Jewish men often wear a skullcap (<b>kippah</b>)</li> <li>• Standard protocols for searching and detention apply</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green stone (<b>pounamu</b>) and/or bone necklaces sometimes worn</li> <li>• Standard protocols for searching and detention apply</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some Sikhs wear a turban</li> <li>• Some Sikhs wear 5 articles of faith (<b>Five Ks</b>): a small sacred sword (<b>Kirpan</b>); an iron bangle (<b>Kara</b>); a special undergarment (<b>Kachera</b>); a small wooden comb (<b>Kanga</b>); and uncut hair (<b>Keshas</b>)</li> <li>• Care when touching these; removal from the body is viewed as a severe punishment</li> <li>• Standard protocols for searching and detention apply</li> </ul>                        |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact the Hindu community</li> <li>• Place the deceased in a north-south direction with the head pointing towards the south</li> <li>• Some may prefer identification by a senior male relative</li> <li>• Preference is not to have post mortems conducted unless required by law</li> <li>• Hindus are usually cremated, except for children under three, who are buried</li> <li>• Cremation is preferred within 24 hours of death</li> <li>• Some may want the deceased to go home before cremation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burial is preferred within 24 hours of death</li> <li>• A mourning period of 40 days is generally observed by the family of the deceased</li> <li>• Preference is not to have post mortems conducted unless required by law</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact immediate family or a Rabbi, and the Jewish Burial Society (<b>Chevre Kadisha</b>)</li> <li>• Strict observance of religious practices in relation to death and burial</li> <li>• Preference that touching of the deceased is kept to a minimum, and the deceased is covered or screened</li> <li>• Preference that all body parts, including tissue and blood, be retrieved for burial with the body</li> <li>• Preference is not to have post mortems conducted unless required by law</li> <li>• Cremation is forbidden</li> <li>• Burial is preferred within 24 hours of death</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact members of the Māori community to allow for blessing of the area before the body is moved, particularly in the event of suicides</li> <li>• Preference that all body parts be kept together</li> <li>• Common for the community to gather around the <b>tūpāpaku</b> (deceased) so it is not left on its own at any stage</li> <li>• Pictures of the living should not be placed with the deceased</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact family of the deceased</li> <li>• Care when touching the deceased where the 5 Ks and/or turban are worn; preference is that the Five Ks are not removed from the deceased at the scene or during post mortem</li> <li>• Where the 5 Ks are removed, care should be taken to replace them</li> <li>• Sikhs are cremated, and cremation is preferred as soon as possible after death</li> <li>• Some may want the deceased to go home before cremation</li> </ul> |

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Spirituality

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Spirituality

There is not one single Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander religion or spirituality, but similar traits and threads, such as stories, ceremonies and values, are shared by all. Spirituality permeates all aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life. The roots of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality lie in a variety of traditions and experiences.

For most Aboriginal people, spiritual beliefs are derived from a sense of belonging to the land, the sea and nature. Aboriginal people see themselves as part of the natural world: they are part of the land and the land is part of them.

Integral to Aboriginal spirituality and belief systems is the Dreaming (sometimes known as Creation stories), which derives from stories of the earth's creation. The Dreaming is a complex network of knowledge, customary law and belief systems.

The Dreaming tells of Ancestor Spirits that emerged from the pre-existing formless and uninhabited earth, and were involved in specific events that shaped the creation of human, plant and animal life. As a result, the land, being the creation of the Ancestor Spirits, is regarded as sacred. The Creation stories carry with them the responsibility to preserve and respect the spirit of country and the life forms associated with it (often referred to as "caring for country").

In a similar manner, spirituality and identity for Torres Strait Islander people are derived from the Creation stories that feature the Tagai, or warrior, and are intrinsically linked to the land, sea and sky. As Torres Strait Islanders are traditionally seafaring people, the stories of the Tagai usually focus on the stars.

This chapter contains general information on common practices and beliefs within Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander spirituality. It provides a basic introduction, and therefore may not reflect the practices or beliefs of some local communities.

## Overview

### 1. Are there any variations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spiritualities?

Spirituality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people takes many forms, and varies greatly between groups, communities and jurisdictions. Variations are based on a number of influences, such as affiliation with other religions, geographical environment (for example, rural or urban) and local community customs and practices.

### 2. Is there a day of the week that is important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spiritualities?

If from a traditional background, the local customs are many and varied.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are involved in other religions, and therefore regularly attend places of worship associated with these religions, on the associated dates of significance.

### 3. What are the key dates of significance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spiritualities in Australia and New Zealand?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people involved in other religions recognise the dates of significance of those particular religions. However, the key dates of significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spiritualities are:

- **26 January: Survival Day**, celebrating the survival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island cultures;
- **26 May: National Day of Healing (also known as ‘Sorry Day’)**, marking the anniversary of the tabling of the *Bringing Them Home Report* to the former HREOC in 1997;<sup>1</sup>
- **27 May to 3 June: National Reconciliation Week**, commemorating both the 1967 Referendum that gave citizenship and voting rights to Aboriginal people, and the 1992 Mabo High Court decision that recognised native title rights in Australia;
- **1 June: Coming of the Light Festival**, marking the introduction of Christianity to the Torres Strait in 1871; and

1 HREOC stands for the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, which has recently been renamed as the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC).

2 NAIDOC stands for the National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee.

## Overview *continued*

- **July: NAIDOC<sup>2</sup> Week**, celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture.

In addition, many local groups and communities have their own festivals, which often involve song and dance.

### 4. Is there anything that police should be aware of regarding these dates of significance?

Ceremonies and rituals take on many different forms, and are often secret and/or sacred. Attendance may be restricted to certain groups (for example, women). Most ceremonies practised in Aboriginal communities cannot be discussed fully due to their sensitive and sacred nature.

### 5. Do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spiritualities have any dietary requirements or restrictions?

An important part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality is a belief in totems. A totem is a physical object or animal that is adopted as a family or clan emblem. Totems have spiritual significance and represent links with ancestral beings. Where a person or community practices a belief in totems, they will avoid consuming or harming their totem (for example, goanna).

### 6. Do people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spiritualities practice their beliefs by wearing special clothing, jewellery or ornaments? If so, is this likely to impact on police?

Traditionally, items worn at ceremonies are deemed as special. As these items will generally be secret or sacred, they should not be touched.

The wearing of other clothing and jewellery is not common, and varies between groups, communities and jurisdictions.

In some communities, selected family members wear 'string' as part of the grieving process, following a person's death. This process can take a few weeks, and is completed in a specific, chronological sequence. The people wearing the string may be restricted from interaction with certain other people.

If an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is detained, standard protocols in your jurisdiction for operational safety and detention should be followed in regard to the removal of items.

## People

### 7. What is the role of spiritual leaders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spiritualities?

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are involved in other religions, and therefore use the titles of that religion when referring to religious leaders.

Traditional owners of the land are those people who “speak for the land”. It is important for police to identify the Traditional Owners when working with local communities. Traditional Owners are distinct from Elders (but may in some cases be the same).

The role of Elders varies between communities. In many communities, Elders are the custodians of traditional knowledge and customary law and are recognised and respected accordingly. Their duties may include guiding people, arbitrating disputes and, in consultation with other elders, making decisions on customary law and cultural matters, including punishment of offenders.

### 8. What is the role of family in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spiritualities?

The traditional structure of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander society is based on extended family groups that follow a kinship system. Within the kinship system, principles of reciprocity define the rights, obligations and responsibilities between individuals and within communities.

Additionally, the raising, care, education and discipline of children are the responsibility of everyone in the community, not just the biological parents.

Under the kinship system, it is common for Aboriginal people to observe avoidance relationships. In such cases, it is not acceptable for some people to make contact with, or be in close proximity to, certain others.

In some traditional communities, the kinship system and traditional law may be followed very closely. This includes strict rules regarding marriage.

The concept of shame is an extremely important and powerful part of Aboriginal life. Shame can be result from discomfort, embarrassment and a number of other factors. Within the kinship system, the concept of shame can have even greater significance, particularly where it results from blame.

## **People** continued

### **9. Does any part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community have a particular status in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spiritualities?**

Traditional Owners of the land and Elders are greatly respected within communities.

Under the kinship system, there are many 'important' people within a family structure. For example, an uncle may become the most important person in the life of a boy about to embark on his manhood ceremony.

Refer to Question 8 regarding the complexity of the kinship system and the relationships within it, and the concept of shame.

### **10. In a court of law, would a person of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality take an oath on the Bible, or an affirmation?**

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would take an oath or make an affirmation to the belief of the religion to which they are affiliated.

## **Police Contact and Interviewing**

### **11. Are there any dates of spiritual significance when members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spiritualities would prefer not to be approached by police if possible (e.g. for interview as a witness or suspect, or for attendance at court)?**

If the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island person follows other religions, the significant dates applying to that religion should be recognised, if possible.

In the case of traditional people, ceremonial times should be respected, if possible. These will vary between communities and regions. Some of the main ceremonies to be mindful of are birth, burial, death, initiation, mourning periods and women's meetings.

Refer to Questions 2-4 regarding dates of significance and associated practices.

### **12. Are there any spiritual reasons for persons of one sex to object to dealing with police of the opposite sex?**

Due to the sensitive nature of some topics, it is preferable for females to deal with female police officers, and males to deal with males.

The issue of kinship may in some cases override sensitivities regarding dealing with a person of the opposite sex, particularly where avoidance structures are relevant.

Refer to Question 8 regarding the kinship system and the relationships within it, and the concept of shame.

## Police Contact and Interviewing continued

### 13. Are there any protocols for greeting and interaction that police should be mindful of?

- **Greeting:** Initially, it may be preferable for men to communicate with men, and for women to communicate with women.
- **Silence:** Silence is an important part of communication between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people, and does not indicate that communication has broken down.
- **Handshakes:** These are not given in all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities, and it is important to follow the local lead.
- **Touching:** Physical contact when greeting people is usually viewed as inappropriate.
- **Eye contact:** It is common for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people to lower their eyes to show respect to older people or people in authority. Direct and prolonged eye contact can therefore be seen as intrusive or rude, and should be avoided.
- **Pointing:** Using the finger rather than the open hand to point may be seen as disrespectful. It is preferred that, if giving directions, a person uses their lips and movement of the head.

### 14. Are there any protocols in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spiritualities that specify which member of the family should speak to police during their inquiries?

This will vary from family to family and community to community. Families may nominate a spokesperson, whom they trust to articulate their interests.

Within a community, there may be a spokesperson who is visible and vocal, but this spokesperson may not be the person with decision-making authority. In a community forum, it is important for police to identify the person with authority, as his or her contribution to discussions will often constitute the final decision.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for the use of interpreters for interviewing and taking statements should be followed where language barriers exist.



## **Police Contact and Interviewing** *continued*

### **15. Are there any considerations relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spiritualities for police to speak with children?**

In some communities, extended family members such as uncles or aunts may be given special responsibility for a child (nominated spokesperson).

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction regarding the questioning of children should be followed, provided that the child is comfortable with the presence of the parent, guardian, or nominated spokesperson.

### **16. Police sometimes have to ask questions of a very personal nature (e.g. linked to a sexual assault). Is this likely to be a concern to members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spiritualities?**

For some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people, questions of a direct and particularly personal nature are deemed shameful. Refer to Question 8 regarding the concept of shame.

As knowledge within Aboriginal communities is often sex-specific and/or secret or sacred ('Women's Business' or 'Men's Business'), it would be appropriate to have a female police officer interview a female, and a male interview a male.

Refer to Question 18 regarding sacred sites and objects.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for interviewing and questioning should be followed.

### **17. On some occasions, police are required (by law) to obtain forensic samples from individuals for investigative purposes. Do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spiritualities have a view on providing samples?**

Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people may object to providing specimens or photographs, because they believe these could be used to endanger their wellbeing.

## Police Searches and Detention

18. Are there any special considerations police should consider when:

- **Approaching or entering a secret or sacred site or person's house?**

Indigenous sites can be secret or sacred. Little information is available regarding secret sites, as their location is known to only a few people, and they cannot be named.

The locations of sacred sites are often well known, but avoided. Police entering a sacred site should obtain the relevant approval from the Traditional Owners, local elders and/or government authority. If possible, Traditional Owners should accompany police onto the site, and local protocols should be followed, such as female police officers attending sacred women's sites, and male police officers attending sacred men's sites.

Police should respect the significance of the site. For example, modest attire is preferred.

- **Acknowledging or searching sacred objects?**

Sacred items, such as tjuringas in central Australia (various items that may be associated with stories and ceremonies), may be men's items only. As such, Aboriginal men will not discuss them with women, and will be hesitant to discuss them at all.

19. In the event that police need to conduct a search of a person, are there any special considerations they, if possible, should take into account?

Refer to Question 6 regarding the removal of clothing and jewellery.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for personal searches should be followed.

## Death, Bereavement and Mourning

20. Does death have a special meaning in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spiritualities?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality takes many forms, and therefore death may have very different meanings in different communities and regions.

According to traditional belief, death does not result from natural causes – someone is believed to be responsible for another person's death. A death in a community

## **Death, Bereavement and Mourning** *continued*

may lead to payback (physical punishment). The prevalence and manner of payback for death varies between communities and regions.

According to traditional belief, death is not feared – it is the time when a person's spirit is released to the Dreaming and returned to its sacred place in traditional country.

After death, a spirit is torn between wishing to return to the spirit world and wanting to stay with its kin. The time after death is a time of great danger for the living, who need to carry out a range of activities to ward off that danger.

### **21. Are there any special bereavement practices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spiritualities?**

Bereavement, known as 'sorry business' in many communities, is a very important part of Aboriginal culture. In some instances, the entire community will shut down for mourning, and 'sorry business' takes precedence over all other matters.

Where the term 'sorry business' is not used, death may be known as 'bad news' or 'sad news'.

In many communities, the dead person's name cannot be mentioned for some period of time, or until a member of a later generation is given the same name. For this period, a substitute 'mourning name' may be used, such as Kumanji.

As part of the bereavement process, some Aboriginal families may request to keep the deceased for a time to cut hair, remove clothing, and prepare them for the funeral and subsequent ceremonies.

Refer to Question 6 regarding the wearing of 'string' during mourning.

Police should be mindful of sensitivities in regard to images of deceased persons, such as photos and television depiction.

## Death, Bereavement and Mourning continued

22. In the event of death, are there special considerations that police should, if possible, take into account, in relation to:

- **Scene of death:** Refer to Question 21 regarding the practice of the family preparing the body.
- **Deceased (while still at the scene):** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Preparing to transport, and transporting, the deceased to the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Admitting the deceased to the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Preparing the deceased for a viewing:** For many Torres Strait Island people, viewing plays a very important role in the passing of the deceased into the next life and the resting of the soul. It is common for a large number of family members and friends to attend the morgue for viewings and spend considerable time with the body. As this is not always possible, sensitivity needs to be shown.
- **Confirming the deceased's identity:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Notifying the deceased's next of kin of the death:** Traditionally, Torres Strait Islanders use the protocol of 'Marigeth' to announce the death of a person to immediate family members. 'Marigeth' are the in-laws of the deceased person, and are responsible for consulting with doctors, arranging the burial and preparing the body of the deceased.
- **Conducting a post mortem:** The preference is not to have post mortems conducted unless required by law. Thus, efforts are often made to gain an exemption from post mortem requirements.
- **Releasing the deceased from the mortuary:** For many Aboriginal people, performing a smoking ceremony is common (although it is not practised in all areas, such as the Northern Peninsula Area of Queensland). The area where the person died and also their home will be 'smoked out', in order to drive out the spirit and remove the 'smell' or 'spiritual essence' of the dead.

## Resources regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spiritualities<sup>2</sup>

- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, at <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/>
- Queensland Government, at <http://www.atsip.qld.gov.au/everybodys-business/protocols-aboriginal/> and <http://www.atsip.qld.gov.au/everybodys-business/protocols-torres-strait-islander/>

In addition, there are many associations within each state and territory, such as:

- Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation, at <http://www.larrakia.com> (Northern Territory)
- Ngkarte Mikwekehne Community Inc., at <http://nmi.org.au/> (Northern Territory) lists some often used local terms

<sup>2</sup> Resources listed have been nominated by stakeholders as the most useful resources for their spirituality. ANZPAA does not endorse the information provided by these resources.



Bahá'í

# Bahá'í

The Bahá'í religion (or faith) originated in the 1840s in Persia (now Iran).

Bahá'ís follow the teachings of Baha'u'llah (1817 - 1892), who is regarded as the most recent in a line of Messengers from God that stretches back beyond recorded time. These Messengers include Abraham, Moses, Krishna, Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus and Muhammad. The coming of Baha'u'llah was foretold by the Bab in his prophecy about "The Promised One". The Bab is the forerunner to Baha'u'llah.

Bahá'ís believe that all religions come from the same Divine Source, and respect all their founders equally as Messengers of God. Bahá'ís believe in the oneness of God, the oneness of religion and the oneness of humanity. They believe that humanity is one single race and the day has come for its unification in a global society. Principles vital to the achievement of a united world include the abandonment of all forms of prejudice, the elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty, the necessity of universal education and the encouragement of high moral standards in personal life.

Bahá'ís are called upon to uphold a very high standard of personal conduct and to be the well-wishers of all mankind.

Although it arose within a Muslim environment, the Bahá'í faith is not a denomination of Islam.

## Overview

### 1. Are there any variations of the Bahá'í faith?

No, there are no variations.

### 2. Is there a day of the week that is important for Bahá'ís?

No, however, Bahá'ís are obligated to pray every day.

### 3. What are the key dates of significance for the Bahá'í faith in Australia and New Zealand?

- **26 February - 1 March: Ayyam-i-ha**, the Intercalary Days reserved for charity, gift-giving and festivities.
- **2 - 20 March: Bahá'í fasting month**, Bahá'ís over the age of 15 do not eat or drink from sunrise to sunset.
- **21 March\*: Naw-Ruz**, the Bahá'í new year.
- **21 April\* - 2 May\*: Festival of Ridivan**, commemorating Baha'u'llah's declaration of his mission. The first, ninth and twelfth days (21 April, 29 April and 2 May) are regarded as particularly holy.



## Overview continued

- **23 May\*: Declaration of the Bab**, commemorates the Bab's declaration of his mission. The Bab is the forerunner to Baha'u'llah.
- **29 May\*: Ascension of Baha'u'llah**
- **9 July\*: Martyrdom of the Bab**
- **20 October\*: Birth of the Bab**
- **12 November\*: Birth of Baha'u'llah**
- **26 November: Day of the Covenant**, commemorating Bahá'u'lláh's appointment of his son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
- **28 November: Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá**

The Bahá'í calendar is solar, therefore dates of significance remain fixed.

In Bahá'í tradition, festival dates extend from sunset of one day, to sunset of the next day.

\*Bahá'ís are particularly encouraged to suspend work on these dates.

### 4. Is there anything that police should be aware of regarding these dates of significance?

Refer to Question 3 regarding the Bahá'í fasting month.

### 5. Does the Bahá'í religion have any dietary requirements or restrictions?

Bahá'ís are not permitted to consume alcohol or non-prescription medication.

Refer to Question 3 regarding the Bahá'í fasting month.

### 6. Do people of the Bahá'í faith practice their beliefs by wearing special clothing, jewellery or ornaments? If so, is this likely to impact on police?

No, people of the Bahá'í faith do not wear special clothing, jewellery or ornaments.

## People

### 7. What is the role of religious leaders in the Bahá'í faith?

There is no priesthood or clergy in the Bahá'í faith. The affairs of the Bahá'í community are the responsibility of elected councils at the local, national and international levels. In Australia, there are also regional councils. Authority lies in the institutions, not the individual members.

Experienced and knowledgeable members of the community can be appointed as advisers known as Counsellors, Auxiliary Board Members and Assistants, who may, under certain circumstances, provide counselling to individuals facing difficulties.

### 8. What is the role of family in the Bahá'í faith?

The family is viewed as the fundamental building block of society. A just social order must start from peaceful and just relations within the family. Accordingly, the establishment and maintenance of family unity is considered very important and the rights of all family members must be respected.

### 9. Does any part of the Bahá'í community have a particular status in the Bahá'í religion?

No, the Bahá'í faith states unequivocally that women and men are equal. All people are considered equal regardless of sex, age, race or religion.

### 10. In a court of law, would a Bahá'í take an oath on the Bible, or an affirmation?

It is preferable to take an oath on a Bahá'í book if possible, such as Kitab-i-Aqdas, the major book of Bahá'í law.

However, most Bahá'ís would take an oath on the Bible or an affirmation if required.

## Police Contact and Interviewing

### 11. Are there any dates of religious significance when Bahá'ís would prefer not to be approached by police if possible (e.g. for interview as a witness or suspect, or for attendance at court)?

Some Bahá'ís may prefer not to be approached on dates of significance.

Some Bahá'ís may prefer to be approached after sunset during the fasting month (2-20 March).

Refer to Questions 2-4 regarding dates of significance and associated practices.

**Police Contact and Interviewing** continued

**12. Are there any religious reasons for persons of one sex to object to dealing with police of the opposite sex?**

No, there are no religious reasons for a Bahá'í to object.

**13. Are there any protocols for greeting and interaction that police should be mindful of?**

No, there are no protocols for police to be mindful of.

**14. Are there any protocols in the Bahá'í faith that specify which member of the family should speak to police during their inquiries?**

No, Bahá'í teachings uphold equality of the sexes. This should be reflected in the family, with neither partner dominating the other.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for the use of interpreters for interviewing and taking statements should be followed where language barriers exist.

**15. Are there any considerations relating to the Bahá'í faith for police to speak with children?**

No, there are no religious considerations.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction regarding the questioning of children should be followed.

**16. Police sometimes have to ask questions of a very personal nature (e.g. linked to a sexual assault). Is this likely to be a concern to Bahá'ís?**

Some Bahá'ís may wish to have a family member or other support person present.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for interviewing and questioning should be followed.

**17. On some occasions, police are required (by law) to obtain forensic samples from individuals for investigative purposes. Does the Bahá'í faith have a view on providing samples?**

No, there are no religious considerations.

## Police Searches and Detention

18. Are there any special considerations police should consider when:

- **Approaching or entering a place of worship or person's house?**

There is one Bahá'í House of Worship in Australia and New Zealand. It is located in Sydney. There are, however, many Bahá'í Centres where Bahá'ís meet to pray, meditate and read throughout Australia and New Zealand. Approach to the House of Worship and Bahá'í Centres should be respectful.

Permission should be sought from the guides on duty prior to entering or searching the House of Worship, if possible.

- **Acknowledging or searching sacred objects?**

The Bahá'í faith has no sacred sites in Australia or New Zealand, and does not worship objects or statues.

19. In the event that police need to conduct a search of a person, are there any special considerations they, if possible, should take into account?

No, there are no special considerations.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for personal searches should be followed.

## Death, Bereavement and Mourning

20. Does death have a special meaning in the Bahá'í faith?

Death is a natural part of human life that marks a transition of the soul from one world to another.

21. Are there any special bereavement practices for the Bahá'í faith?

Family members may wish to place a burial ring on the hand of the deceased.

Cremation is forbidden and the body must be buried in a coffin. Burial is to take place as soon as reasonably possible after death, and preferably within one hour's travelling distance from the city limits of the place of death.

Bahá'ís object to embalming.

## Death, Bereavement and Mourning continued

22. In the event of death, are there special considerations that police should, if possible, take into account, in relation to:

- **Scene of death:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Deceased (while still at the scene):** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Preparing to transport, and transporting, the deceased to the mortuary:**  
It would be preferred that the body not be transported more than one hour's travelling distance from the place of death (or the city limits of the place of death), if possible. As this is not always possible, sensitivity needs to be shown.
- **Admitting the deceased to the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Preparing the deceased for a viewing:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Confirming the deceased's identity:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Notifying the deceased's next of kin of the death:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Conducting a post mortem:** The preference is to not have post mortems conducted unless required by law.
- **Releasing the deceased from the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.

## Resources regarding the Bahá'í faith<sup>4</sup>

- Australian Bahá'í website, at [www.bahai.org.au](http://www.bahai.org.au)
- Australian National Bahá'í Office, on (61 2) 9998 9222
- International Bahá'í website, at [www.bahai.org](http://www.bahai.org)
- New Zealand Bahá'í website, at [www.bahai.org.nz](http://www.bahai.org.nz)
- New Zealand Bahá'í Office, on (64 9) 837 4866

<sup>4</sup> Resources listed have been nominated by stakeholders as the most useful resources for their religion. ANZPAA does not endorse the information provided by these resources.

# Buddhism

# Buddhism

Buddhism can be called a religion or spirituality. It was founded in north-eastern India based 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. All of the many teachings of the Buddha centre on a set of truths about reality known together as 'The Four Noble Truths':

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

Buddhism teaches that to be a truly balanced individual, a person must develop both wisdom and compassion. It is believed that freeing the mind from prejudices and preconceived ideas, developing awareness and having an uncluttered and tranquil mind all assist in cultivating wisdom.

Buddhists believe that there is a close connection between ethical behaviour and wisdom.

Buddhists try to live by a moral code based on a principle of non-harm.

## Overview

### 1. Are there any variations of Buddhism?

Buddhism today is divided into three major branches, or traditions:

- **Mahayana** (found in China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam). Mahayana Buddhism emphasises the individual search for liberation from the cycle of samsara (birth, death, rebirth, etc). Selflessness (the Bodhisattva) is seen as the ideal way to live.
- **Theravada** (Southern School from Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka and Thailand). Theravada Buddhism focuses primarily on meditation and concentration as vital elements of the way to enlightenment.
- **Vajrayana** (found in Bhutan, Mongolia and Tibet). Vajrayana Buddhism combines the essential teachings of Mahayana Buddhism with Tantric and Shamanic, and material from an ancient Tibetan religion called Bon. The Dalai Lama is the leader of Vajrayana.

### 2. Is there a day of the week that is important for Buddhism?

No, however, early mornings and evenings are common times for Buddhists to practice meditation.

## Overview continued

### 3. What are the key dates of significance for Buddhism in Australia and New Zealand?

There are a number of dates of significance on the Buddhist calendar. The key dates are:

- **February - May: Vesak/Wesak (traditionally, the full moon in May)**, commemorating the Buddha's birth, liberation and passing away. The dates vary between communities.
- **Approximately from the full moon of July to the full moon of October: Vassa/Vassavassa**, the Rains Retreat.
- **Approximately between January and April: New Year**, the dates vary between communities.

Most dates of significance are based on a lunar calendar, and therefore the dates change from year to year. The dates and the spelling of festival names also vary between cultural groups.

### 4. Is there anything that police should be aware of regarding these dates of significance?

During celebrations, temples or places of worship will have large gatherings.

### 5. Does Buddhism have any dietary requirements or restrictions?

Many Buddhists are vegetarian, particularly ordained monks and nuns from China, Taiwan and Vietnam. The decision to consume meat or not is left to the discretion of the individual, and arises from a respect for life in all its forms.

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

Buddhists avoid the consumption of alcohol.

### 6. Do Buddhists practice their beliefs by wearing special clothing, jewellery or ornaments? If so, is this likely to impact on police?

Buddhist monks and nuns often have short or shaved hair and wear robes that vary in colour from maroon, saffron, grey, brown, yellow and black. Monks, nuns and some lay Buddhists might wear or carry threaded beads, called a mala.

If a Buddhist is detained, standard protocols in your jurisdiction for operational safety and detention should be followed in regard to the removal of items.



## People

### 7. What is the role of religious leaders in Buddhism?

In English, monks and nuns are usually referred to as 'Venerable', although other titles may be used, such as Ajahn, Ani, Bhante, Geshe, Khenpo, Lama, Roshi, Sifu, SuCo, Sunim and Thay.

The basic role of the spiritual leader is to teach, to instruct monastic members and to act as an example.

### 8. What is the role of family in Buddhism?

The family is of the highest importance. Parents are seen as the Buddha within the home. Elders generally are accorded the highest esteem and respect, while the extended family is also of great importance.

### 9. Does any part of the Buddhist community have a particular status in Buddhism?

Women and men have an equal status in Buddhist faith. Monks and nuns are treated with great respect.

### 10. In a court of law, would a Buddhist take an oath on the Bible, or an affirmation?

Buddhists would not take an oath on the Bible.

Buddhists would take an affirmation.

## Police Contact and Interviewing

### 11. Are there any dates of religious significance when Buddhists would prefer not to be approached by police if possible (e.g. for interview as a witness or suspect, or for attendance at court)?

It is preferable that the dates of Vesak/Wesak (the Buddha's birthday) and New Year's days of the various cultural calendars be avoided, if possible.

In addition, if the individual is in a reclusive retreat, it is preferable that contact be delayed until the retreat has been completed, if possible.

Refer to Questions 2-4 regarding dates of significance and associated practices.

### 12. Are there any religious reasons for persons of one sex to object to dealing with police of the opposite sex?

No, there are no religious reasons for people to object, however, there may be cultural reasons.

## Police Contact and Interviewing continued

13. Are there any protocols for greeting and interaction that police should be mindful of?

- **Handshaking:** Shaking the hand of a monk or a nun is not appropriate, but is generally accepted with lay Buddhists. The more common greeting for Buddhists is to place both hands in a praying position, followed by a gentle bow.
- **Touching:** Buddhist monks and nuns are generally guarded with members of the opposite sex, and avoid direct physical contact. Some lay Buddhists may also prefer not to be touched by a person of the opposite sex. Touching the head of any person is seen as impolite and should be avoided.

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

No, there are no religious protocols regarding who should be spoken to.

Some Asian cultures traditionally view the father as the head of the family. However, this is not normally a concern for Buddhists families, particularly where other family members are more fluent in English.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for the use of interpreters for interviewing and taking statements should be followed where language barriers exist.

15. Are there any considerations relating to Buddhism for police to speak with children?

No, there are no religious considerations.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction regarding the questioning of children should be followed.

16. Police sometimes have to ask questions of a very personal nature (e.g. linked to a sexual assault). Is this likely to be a concern to Buddhists?

If a monk or nun is the subject of police inquiry, it is preferred, if possible, that police ask whether they wish the head monk or nun of their temple or association to be informed of the incident, or to be present during the interview.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for interviewing and questioning should be followed.

## **Police Contact and Interviewing** *continued*

17. On some occasions, police are required (by law) to obtain forensic samples from individuals for investigative purposes. Does Buddhism have a view on providing samples?

No, there are no religious considerations. However, there may be cultural considerations.

## **Police Searches and Detention**

18. Are there any special considerations police should consider when:

- **Approaching or entering a place of worship or person's house?**

The head monk or nun should be informed before a temple or praying hall is searched, if possible.

Prior to entering a place of worship, shoes and hats should be removed, if possible. Consideration should also be given to the removal of weapons. However, operational safety requirements should prevail.

When sitting in a shrine room or temple, having the soles of one's feet pointing towards a Buddha image or statue, or other religious object, should be avoided.

A shrine room (sometimes an altar in a specific room) can be located in a home or in a temple.

- **Acknowledging or searching sacred objects?**

Religious objects should be lifted or held by the base, not by the head. The head or top of the object should not be touched.

19. In the event that police need to conduct a search of a person, are there any special considerations they, if possible, should take into account?

Refer to Question 6 regarding the removal of clothing and jewellery.

In the event of searching a monk or nun, it is preferable that the individual opens their own robes, not the police officer. Hands should be washed before conducting the search, or clean gloves used. Garments should be handled with care and should not be placed on the ground.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for personal searches should be followed.

## Death, Bereavement and Mourning

### 20. Does death have a special meaning in Buddhism?

While death is seen as inevitable, it is also a moment of great transition from one life to another. The final moment of consciousness is viewed as very important, and Buddhists believe it should be as peaceful and free from fear and disturbances as possible.

Buddhists will generally wish to have access to spiritual leaders and family in their final moments.

### 21. Are there any special bereavement practices for Buddhism?

There are no specific religious practices, however, there may be cultural practices that differ between the communities.

### 22. In the event of death, are there special considerations that police should, if possible, take into account, in relation to:

- **Scene of death:** It is advisable that a Buddhist monk or nun be contacted, and that a peaceful environment be maintained. Some Buddhists may request that peaceful or ceremonial music be played continuously near the deceased, until it is released for the funeral.
- **Deceased (while still at the scene):** Some Buddhists may request that the body be left undisturbed for up to eight hours. Depending on circumstances and operational requirements, this may not always be possible, and sensitivity needs to be shown.
- **Preparing to transport, and transporting, the deceased to the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Admitting the deceased to the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Preparing the deceased for a viewing:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Confirming the deceased's identity:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Notifying the deceased's next of kin of the death:** Chinese, Tibetan and Vietnamese Buddhists would generally prefer to stay with the body.
- **Conducting a post mortem:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Releasing the deceased from the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.

### Resources regarding Buddhism<sup>5</sup>

- Buddhnet, at [www.buddhanet.net](http://www.buddhanet.net)
- Buddhist Council of Queensland, at [www.buddhistcouncilofqueensland.org](http://www.buddhistcouncilofqueensland.org)
- Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils, at [www.buddhistcouncil.org.au](http://www.buddhistcouncil.org.au)

<sup>5</sup> Resources listed have been nominated by stakeholders as the most useful resources for their religion. ANZPAA does not endorse the information provided by these resources.

# Christianity

# Christianity

Christianity is one of the monotheistic (one god) religions (or faiths) in the Abrahamic tradition, which includes Islam and Judaism. Christianity takes its name from its ‘founder’ Jesus Christ, who lived approximately 2000 years ago in Palestine. Jesus was a Jewish man whom Christians believe was born to fulfil the prophecies in the Old Testament of the Bible. The prophecies tell of the birth of a Saviour for the people of Israel.

Central to the Christian faith is the Holy Trinity – God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Son of God, fully divine and fully human.

The Christian Scriptures comprise the Old and New Testaments. These are collections of sacred writings; the Old Testament consists of Scriptures shared with the Jewish faith, and the New Testament records the gospel or ‘good news’ concerning Jesus.

## Overview

### 1. Are there any variations of Christianity?

Broadly speaking, Christianity is divided into two major groupings:

- **Eastern Christianity:** There are many Churches within Eastern Christianity, such as the Orthodox Churches. These Churches share a common faith and worship, and originate mainly from Africa, Eastern and Southern Europe and the Middle East. These branches of Eastern Christianity are closely aligned with cultural or ethnic groups (e.g. Greek, Macedonian).
- **Western Christianity:** There are many Churches within Western Christianity, such as the Roman Catholic Church (under the authority of the Pope), the Anglican Church, the Uniting Church and Pentecostal Churches.

There are a number of additional groups that may, or may not, be viewed as Christian denominations, such as:

- Christian Scientists
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons)
- Jehovah’s Witnesses

All churches contain within them liberal and conservative views. They may also give priority to different aspects of the faith.

## Overview continued

### 2. Is there a day of the week that is important for Christianity?

Sunday is the main day of worship for most Christians, although Seventh Day Adventists worship on Saturday.

### 3. What are the key dates of significance for Christianity in Australia and New Zealand?

- **December 25: Christmas**, the celebration of Jesus' birth.
- **March/April: Easter – Good Friday and Easter Sunday**, which are preceded by Holy Week, and commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The dates of Christian festivals are based on both the lunar and solar calendars. Christmas is based on the solar calendar and celebrated on the 25th December every year. Easter is based on a lunar calendar, and is therefore celebrated on different dates each year.

In Eastern Christianity, Easter and Christmas are at similar times of the year to Western Christianity, but generally not identical.

### 4. Is there anything that police should be aware of regarding these dates of significance?

During celebrations, churches will have large gatherings.

Street processions occur in a number of communities to celebrate a variety of festivals, such as the lead up to Easter and particular Saints' days.

### 5. Does Christianity have any dietary requirements or restrictions?

Some Christians will follow different dietary procedures during the six week period prior to Easter (season of Lent). This may include fasting, avoiding meat, or avoiding other foods.

Orthodox Christians may also fast before other events and celebrations.

Some Christians do not eat meat on Fridays.

Seventh Day Adventists follow a diet similar to the Jewish kosher diet<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Refer to Judaism Question 5 for the definition of kosher meat.

## Overview continued

### 6. Do Christians practice their beliefs by wearing special clothing, jewellery or ornaments? If so, is this likely to impact on police?

Religious leaders often wear robes or other religious clothing. Some Christians may carry rosary beads (a long string of beads) or other ornaments.

If a Christian is detained, standard protocols in your jurisdiction for operational safety and detention should be followed in regard to the removal of items.

## People

### 7. What is the role of religious leaders in Christianity?

Most churches appoint specially ordained leaders (often known collectively as clergy), referred to variously as ministers, pastors or priests. Some churches ordain women but most do not. It is appropriate to refer to Catholic and Orthodox priests and many Anglican clergy as 'Father'. The terms 'Reverend' and 'Pastor' are also used.

Informality is common these days, so, if in doubt, it is appropriate to ask the clergy member what he or she prefers.

The role of religious leaders is to teach, to administer the sacraments and to care for the pastoral needs of church members and adherents.

### 8. What is the role of family in Christianity?

The family is seen as the basic unit of society.

### 9. Does any part of the Christian community have a particular status in Christianity?

No, all parts of the community are seen as equal.

### 10. In a court of law, would a Christian take an oath on the Bible, or an affirmation?

Christians from most traditions would expect to take an oath on the Bible.

## Police Contact and Interviewing

### 11. Are there any dates of religious significance when Christians would prefer not to be approached by police if possible (e.g. for interview as a witness or suspect, or for attendance at court)?

Some Christians may prefer that the dates listed in Question 4 be avoided, if possible.

Refer to Questions 2-4 regarding dates of significance and associated practices.



## **Police Contact and Interviewing** continued

**12. Are there any religious reasons for persons of one sex to object to dealing with police of the opposite sex?**

No, there are no religious reasons to object, however, there may be cultural reasons.

**13. Are there any protocols for greeting and interaction that police should be mindful of?**

No, there are no protocols for police to be mindful of.

**14. Are there any protocols in Christianity that specify which member of the family should speak to police during their inquiries?**

No, although some Christian families, such as those from Orthodox traditions, may view the male as the head of the family.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for the use of interpreters for interviewing and taking statements should be followed where language barriers exist.

**15. Are there any considerations relating to Christianity for police to speak with children?**

No, there are no religious considerations.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction regarding the questioning of children should be followed.

**16. Police sometimes have to ask questions of a very personal nature (e.g. linked to a sexual assault). Is this likely to be a concern to Christians?**

No, there are no religious concerns.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for interviewing and questioning should be followed.

**17. On some occasions, police are required (by law) to obtain forensic samples from individuals for investigative purposes. Does Christianity have a view on providing samples?**

No, there are no religious considerations.

Jehovah's Witnesses will not permit blood transfusions. They would, however, be unlikely to object to a blood sample being taken for investigative purposes.

## Police Searches and Detention

18. Are there any special considerations police should consider when:

- **Approaching or entering a place of worship or person's house?**

Modest attire should be worn, and hats should be removed before entering a place of worship.

Prior to entering a place of worship, consideration should be given to the removal of weapons. However, operational safety requirements should prevail.

- **Acknowledging or searching sacred objects?**

The altar, or holy table, (and the area surrounding it) should be treated with respect.

19. In the event that police need to conduct a search of a person, are there any special considerations they, if possible, should take into account?

Refer to Question 6 regarding the removal of clothing, jewellery or ornaments.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for personal searches should be followed.

## Death, Bereavement and Mourning

20. Does death have a special meaning in Christianity?

Christians believe in life after death and see death as the commencement of a new relationship with God.

21. Are there any special bereavement practices for Christianity?

Bereavement practices vary between Christian denominations; seek advice.

22. In the event of death, are there special considerations that police should, if possible, take into account, in relation to:

- **Scene of death:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Deceased (while still at the scene):** Some Christians may want a priest or other clergy member to give 'last rites' (prayers) over the body.
- **Preparing to transport, and transporting, the deceased to the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Admitting the deceased to the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Preparing the deceased for a viewing:** No known issues; seek advice.

## Death, Bereavement and Mourning continued

- **Confirming the deceased's identity:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Notifying the deceased's next of kin of the death:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Conducting a post mortem:** There are no prescribed Christian considerations for handling a deceased person, however there may be cultural expectations in this regard.
- **Releasing the deceased from the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.

## Resources regarding Christianity<sup>7</sup>

- National Council of Churches in Australia, at [http://www.ncca.org.au/about\\_us/memberchurches](http://www.ncca.org.au/about_us/memberchurches)
- Police chaplains are willing to assist with inquiries about religious issues related to operational policing or dialogue with various faiths. Hospital chaplains may also be of assistance
- State or national websites of the major denominations usually list local church congregations and contacts.

<sup>7</sup> Resources listed have been nominated by stakeholders as the most useful resources for their religion. ANZPAA does not endorse the information provided by these resources.

# Hinduism

# Hinduism

Hinduism is sometimes referred to as Sanatana Dharma, the eternal religion, a religion without beginning or end. Hinduism has monotheistic (one God) as well as polytheistic (many Gods) elements: the one Ultimate Reality or Supreme Being (Brahman) also exists simultaneously in the deities of the Creator (Brahma), the Sustainer (Vishnu) and the Destroyer (Shiva).

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.

Underlying the many and varied expressions of Hinduism is a central belief in Karma (the law of cause and effect) and reincarnation.

The sacred writings, the Four Vedas, are considered to be divine in origin. They are believed to be the direct transmission of God's word, and not delivered through a Prophet.

A Hindu is enjoined to seek personal purification on the path to self realisation through one or more of four paths:

- Ritualistic worship, chanting of prayers, devotional surrender to a higher ideal;
- Service;
- Yoga and meditation; and
- Inquiry (know thyself).

## Overview

### 1. Are there any variations of Hinduism?

All Hindus have common fundamentals. Variations in practice are largely based on the individual's cultural background, geographical environment, and which god is worshipped.

Due to these influences, it can be difficult to separate religious beliefs and practices from cultural beliefs and practices.

### 2. Is there a day of the week that is important for Hinduism?

The day of the week varies, depending on which god is worshipped. However, Hindus are encouraged to pray at dawn and dusk every day.

Often, Hindus will wash thoroughly and change their clothes before praying.

## Overview continued

### 3. What are the key dates of significance for Hinduism in Australia and New Zealand?

There are Hindu festivals almost every month, although the names and dates of the festivals vary between communities. The main festivals observed in Australia and New Zealand are:

- **February/March: Sivarathiri**, a whole night vigil.
- **March/April: Holi** (celebration of fertility and harvest), **Hindu New Year** and **Ram Naumi/Ram Navami** (celebration of the birth of Lord Rama, the incarnation of the god Vishnu).
- **August: Krishna Janmashtami/Krishna Jayanti**, marking the birth of the god Krishna.
- **August/September: Ganesha Chaturthi/Ganesh Chaturthi/Vinayaka Chaturthi**, celebrating the birthday of the elephant-headed deity Ganesha/Ganesh.
- **September/October: Navarathiri/Navrati**, a 10 day festival celebrating the Goddess Durga.
- **October/November: Deepavali/Diwali (Festival of Lights)**, celebrating the victory of good over evil.

There are a number of other festivals that are specific to particular regions and cultures.

Hindu festivals are based on the Lunar Calendar, and therefore the dates vary from year to year.

### 4. Is there anything that police should be aware of regarding these dates of significance?

The priest conducting the religious ceremonies, subject to weather conditions, is often topless (male). The main male participant may also be similarly attired.

A small open fire plays an important part in many religious ceremonies, and fireworks and sparklers are often used.

Alcohol is not permitted.

## Overview *continued*

### 5. Does Hinduism have any dietary requirements or restrictions?

Hindus believe in the interdependence of life and, consequently, most Hindus are vegetarians. Those who eat meat will not eat beef or beef products. Vegetarians would prefer to use separate dishes and utensils for vegetarian and non-vegetarian foods.

However, in Australia and New Zealand, many Hindus are vegetarians only on Hindu festivals, eating fish and meat (not beef) on other days of the year.

Observant<sup>8</sup> Hindus and most vegetarians are unlikely to consume alcoholic drinks.

### 6. Do Hindu people practice their beliefs by wearing special clothing, jewellery or ornaments? If so, is this likely to impact on police?

Most married women wear a bindi or pottu (a round marking over the third eye, or the area on the forehead between the brows).

Upon marriage, Hindu women put on a necklace (called mangalsutra or tali) or glass wedding bangles, which are not removed until the husband's death. Breaking or removing the necklace or wedding bangles before this time is considered an extremely bad omen.

Some Hindus wear a thin thread around their bodies, which passes diagonally across the body from the shoulder to about waist height.

If a Hindu is detained, standard protocols in your jurisdiction for operational safety and detention should be followed in regard to the removal of items.

## People

### 7. What is the role of religious leaders in Hinduism?

Spiritual leaders (gurus) study the Hindu scriptures and impart their knowledge to the lay people.

Priests at temples advise on religious ceremonies.

<sup>8</sup> The term 'observant' refers to those followers of a religion who observe their religious beliefs and practices very closely, regardless of which variation of the religion they follow. Alternative terms may include traditional, devout or strict.

## People continued

### 8. What is the role of family in Hinduism?

The family is considered the basic unit of society. Vital kinship links extend beyond the nuclear family to include all generations as well as brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts and their families.

Both males and females have special responsibilities within a traditional Hindu family. The eldest brother in a family has additional responsibilities to those of his siblings.

### 9. Does any part of the Hindu community have a particular status in Hinduism?

In Hindu society, there is a great respect for older family members.

### 10. In a court of law, would a Hindu person take an oath on the Bible, or an affirmation?

Hindus would not take an oath on the Bible.

Instead, Hindus would take an oath on a Hindu religious book, such as the Vedas or the Bhagawat Gita, or an affirmation.

## Police Contact and Interviewing

### 11. Are there any dates of religious significance when Hindus would prefer not to be approached by police if possible (e.g. for interview as a witness or suspect, or for attendance at court)?

It is preferable not to approach a person of Hindu faith on the festival days, if possible.

It is preferable not to approach a temple priest prior to or during the performance of rituals, if possible.

Refer to Questions 2-4 regarding dates of significance and associated practices.

### 12. Are there any religious reasons for persons of one sex to object to dealing with police of the opposite sex?

Some Hindus avoid public contact between men and women.



## Police Contact and Interviewing *continued*

13. Are there any protocols for greeting and interaction that police should be mindful of?

- **Handshaking:** Some observant Hindus do not approve of handshaking with strangers, particularly members of the opposite sex. An alternative greeting is to clasp the hands or place both hands in a praying position, or bow.
- **Eye contact:** In some traditions, full eye contact between males and females is discouraged, as it is seen as bold.
- **Hands:** The left hand should not be used to offer objects to others, and fingers should not be pointed directly at people.

14. Are there any protocols in Hinduism that specify which member of the family should speak to police during their inquiries?

In traditional Hindu families, the senior male of the household would expect to speak to police during their inquiries.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for the use of interpreters for interviewing and taking statements should be followed where language barriers exist.

15. Are there any considerations relating to Hinduism for police to speak with children?

No, there are no religious considerations.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction regarding the questioning of children should be followed.

16. Police sometimes have to ask questions of a very personal nature (e.g. linked to a sexual assault). Is this likely to be a concern to Hindus?

Traditionally, family elders have been expected to resolve personal problems, such as issues within the family.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for interviewing and questioning should be followed.

## Police Contact and Interviewing continued

17. On some occasions, police are required (by law) to obtain forensic samples from individuals for investigative purposes. Does Hinduism have a view on providing samples?

There are generally no religious considerations. Some variations of Hinduism may object to providing blood samples, as blood can be seen as sacred, dangerous or transformative.

There may be cultural reasons for people to be reluctant to provide some samples, such as the belief that hair and finger nails are a source of potential exploitation.

## Police Searches and Detention

18. Are there any special considerations police should consider when:

- **Approaching or entering a place of worship or person's house?**

Shoes and hats should be removed before entering temple buildings or prayer rooms, if possible.

It is a religious duty to offer food and drink to visitors to Hindu households. It is preferable that these offerings be accepted (even in token form), as to reject them can be seen as a sign of distrust.

- **Acknowledging or searching sacred objects?**

Sacred objects in Hinduism are treated with great reverence. Assistance should be sought from the householder or the spiritual leader before searches are conducted, if possible.

19. In the event that police need to conduct a search of a person, are there any special considerations they, if possible, should take into account?

If searching or restraining a married woman, care should be taken not to break her wedding jewellery.

If searching a Hindu wearing a thread across her or his body, care should be taken not to break the thread.

Refer to Question 6 regarding the removal of jewellery and ornaments.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for personal searches should be followed.

## Death, Bereavement and Mourning

### 20. Does death have a special meaning in Hinduism?

Hindus accept death as an inevitable part of life. This acceptance is based on a belief in rebirth or reincarnation. Death is regarded as a point of transition, in which there is a decaying of the body but a continuum of spirit.

### 21. Are there any special bereavement practices for Hinduism?

Hindus are usually cremated, except for children under three, who are buried. Ideally, the cremation should occur within 24 hours of death.

A Hindu family will usually want the deceased to go home before cremation. The family may want to retain the ashes for future spiritual ceremonies or to scatter in a place of spiritual significance, such as the River Ganges.

### 22. In the event of death, are there special considerations that police should, if possible, take into account, in relation to:

- **Scene of death:** The Hindu community should be contacted immediately, if possible. Most Hindu communities in Australia and New Zealand have contracted specific undertaking firms that will coordinate the funeral requirements.
- **Deceased (while still at the scene):** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Preparing to transport, and transporting, the deceased to the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Admitting the deceased to the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Preparing the deceased for a viewing:** The body should be placed in a north-south direction with the head pointing towards the south. As this is not always possible, sensitivity needs to be shown.
- **Confirming the deceased's identity:** Identification would normally be confirmed by a senior male relative, if possible.
- **Notifying the deceased's next of kin of the death:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Conducting a post mortem:** Post mortems are considered objectionable and disrespectful to the dead. The preference is to not have post mortems conducted unless required by law.
- **Releasing the deceased from the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.

## Resources regarding Hinduism<sup>9</sup>

- Hindu Council of Australia, at [www.hinducouncil.com.au](http://www.hinducouncil.com.au)

<sup>9</sup> Resources listed have been nominated by stakeholders as the most useful resources for their religion. ANZPAA does not endorse the information provided by these resources.

Islam

# Islam

Islam is one of the three monotheistic (one God) religions in the Abrahamic tradition, which includes Christianity and Judaism. Islam was founded in Arabia and is based on the teachings of the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet Muhammad, who was the last and final prophet of God (Allah) to come to Earth. Muslims believe that the Qur'an is a record of the exact words revealed by God through the Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad. The Qur'an contains a complete code of life for the individual and society.

Five duties, known as the Five Pillars of Islam, are regarded as central to the life of the Islamic community. The Five Pillars are:

- The profession of faith: "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his Prophet (sometimes "a messenger of Allah" is said in place of "his Prophet")";
- Five daily prayers;
- Payment of zakat (alms to the poor);
- Fasting during the month of Ramadan; and
- Making a pilgrimage to Mecca.

## Overview

### 1. Are there any variations of Islam?

The fundamental belief of all Muslims is the oneness of God, the prophethood of Muhammad and the Qur'an. There are, however, two main variations within Islam, which reflect cultural, political and theological differences:

- **Shi'a:** Shi'as are predominantly from Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. Shi'a leadership is chosen from the descendants of Muhammad.
- **Sunni:** Sunni Muslims come from many countries, including Indonesia, Lebanon, Pakistan and Turkey. Sunni leaders are elected.

Variations in practice also reflect individual interpretations of Islam, the individual's cultural background and geographical environment.

Due to these influences, it can be difficult to separate religious beliefs and practices from cultural beliefs and practices.

## Overview continued

### 2. Is there a day of the week that is important for Islam?

Fridays are important to Muslims.

On all days of the week, Muslims pray five times during the day and night; in the early morning, midday, afternoon, after sunset and at night. Prior to each prayer, many Muslims perform a ritual wash of their bodies.

### 3. What are the key dates of significance for Islam in Australia and New Zealand?

- **Ramadan:** the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, signifying the month that Muhammad received the first revelation from God. During this month, Muslims fast for 29 to 30 days from sunrise until sunset. The fast includes abstention from eating, drinking, smoking and having sexual relations.
- **Eid-ul-Fitr:** signifying the end of Ramadan.
- **Eid-ul-Adha:** the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar, signifying the completion of the Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia) and commemorating Abraham's sacrifice of a sheep.

Muslim dates of significance are based on the Islamic lunar calendar, and therefore the dates vary from year to year.

### 4. Is there anything that police should be aware of regarding these dates of significance?

During festivals, special prayers are at times held in local parks and other large areas, in order to accommodate the large number of attendees. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims conduct extra prayers each evening after the standard night prayers. This results in people praying in mosques or in local community centres at late hours of the night.

### 5. Does Islam have any dietary requirements or restrictions?

Islam forbids the consumption of alcohol, including foods and sauces that have been prepared with alcohol. The eating of pork and pork by-products is also forbidden. Meat and animal by-products (for example, bread, dairy and gelatine) must be halal (halal means 'permissible', and, in relation to meat, means that the animal must be killed in a particular manner, in the name of God). Kosher food is allowed by many Muslims.<sup>10</sup>

Refer to Question 3 regarding the fasting month of Ramadan.

<sup>10</sup> For a definition of kosher meat, refer to Question 5 of the Judaism chapter.

## Overview continued

6. Do Muslims practice their beliefs by wearing special clothing, jewellery or ornaments? If so, is this likely to impact on police?

The Islamic dress code requires men and women to dress modestly, and to cover certain parts of the body (known as Awrah).

Some Muslim women may wear one or more of the following articles of clothing:

- **Hijab:** headscarf
- **Niqab:** face veil
- **Burqa:** all in one, loosely draped covering for the whole body
- **Chador:** full-length semicircle of fabric, which is thrown over the head. It has no hand openings or closures but is held shut by the hands or by wrapping the ends around the waist.

Muslim women may remove their face covering if required, although many consider it a very serious matter to do so.

If a Muslim is detained, standard protocols in your jurisdiction for operational safety and detention should be followed in regard to the removal of items.

## People

7. What is the role of religious leaders in Islam?

There is no official religious hierarchy in Islam.

Religious leaders are called Imams, although there are translations of the title in other languages.

The Imam is a respected person in the Muslim community and is generally appointed at each mosque. Imams lead the five daily prayers in the mosque, and have extensive knowledge of the Islamic faith.

8. What is the role of family in Islam?

Family is very important in Islam, including extended family. A strong bond between parents and children is always maintained. Muslim children are not expected to move out of their parents' home until they are married.

Islamic teachings stress the importance of caring for parents, especially as they become older.



**People** continued

9. Does any part of the Islamic community have a particular status in Islam?

Islam considers all humans equal regardless of sex, race, nationality, religion, social status or education level.

The rights and responsibilities of a woman are equal to those of a man but are not necessarily identical.

10. In a court of law, would a Muslim take an oath on the Bible, or an affirmation?

A Muslim would take an oath on the Qur'an, or an affirmation.

**Police Contact and Interviewing**

11. Are there any dates of religious significance when Muslims would prefer not to be approached by police if possible (e.g. for interview as a witness or suspect, or for attendance at court)?

It may be preferable to conduct interviews after sunset on days of fasting.

It would be preferable not to approach a person of Islamic faith during religious ceremonies and prayers, if possible.

Refer to Questions 2-4 regarding dates of significance and associated practices.

12. Are there any religious reasons for persons of one sex to object to dealing with police of the opposite sex?

For many Muslims, it is preferable that they not be placed with a person of the opposite sex in a secluded location, such as an interview room or cell.

Muslim women may request the presence of a family member during an interview.

## Police Contact and Interviewing *continued*

13. Are there any protocols for greeting and interaction that police should be mindful of?

**Handshaking:** Observant<sup>11</sup> Muslims will not shake the hand of a person of the opposite sex, unless that person is immediately related to her or him.

**Hands:** For some Muslims, there is a separation of functions of the hands. The left hand is used for the removal of dirt and for cleaning, and should not be used to perform functions such as waving, eating, or handling/offering items.

**Eye contact:** In Islam, both males and females are advised to lower their gaze. Muslims will therefore often avoid sustained eye contact.

**Comforting:** Comforting of Muslim men and women should avoid physical contact.

14. Are there any protocols in Islam that specify which member of the family should speak to police during their inquiries?

In observant families, the senior male of the household would expect to speak to police during their inquiries, particularly where the police officers are male.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for the use of interpreters for interviewing and taking statements should be followed where language barriers exist.

15. Are there any considerations relating to Islam for police to speak with children?

No, there are no religious considerations.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction regarding the questioning of children should be followed.

16. Police sometimes have to ask questions of a very personal nature (e.g. linked to a sexual assault). Is this likely to be a concern to Muslims?

Refer to Question 12 regarding seclusion with a member of the opposite sex.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for interviewing and questioning should be followed.

<sup>11</sup> The term 'observant' refers to those followers of a religion who observe their religious beliefs and practices very closely, regardless of which variation of the religion they follow. Alternative terms may include traditional, devout or strict.

### **Police Contact and Interviewing** continued

17. On some occasions, police are required (by law) to obtain forensic samples from individuals for investigative purposes. Does Islam have a view on providing samples?

No, there are no religious considerations.

### **Police Searches and Detention**

18. Are there any special considerations police should consider when:

- **Approaching or entering a place of worship or person's house?**

It is preferable that the Imam of the mosque be contacted on arrival, if possible.

Dress should be conservative, with pants or a skirt covering the knees, and sleeves covering the shoulders.

In addition, shoes should be removed prior to entering any areas of a mosque where prostration (kneeling in a prone position) occurs. Some mosques may request removal of shoes prior to entering the building. Some Muslim households may also request removal of shoes prior to entering the home.

While a Muslim is praying, avoid walking in front of her or him.

Some Muslims consider dogs to be unclean. Searches of mosques, Muslim homes and offices should therefore have regard for this consideration, and avoid the use of dogs where possible.

- **Acknowledging or searching sacred objects?**

There are no icons or statues in Islam.

19. In the event that police need to conduct a search of a person, are there any special considerations they, if possible, should take into account?

Refer to Question 6 regarding the removal of clothing.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for personal searches should be followed.

## Death, Bereavement and Mourning

### 20. Does death have a special meaning in Islam?

Muslims believe in life after death, and view death as the transition from this life to the next.

### 21. Are there any special bereavement practices for Islam?

Muslims prefer to bury the deceased within 24 hours of death, where possible, as they believe the body and soul of the deceased must be returned to the Creator (God) as soon as possible.

A mourning period of 40 days is generally observed by the family of the deceased, with relatives and community members visiting the family frequently in the first three days.

22. In the event of death, are there special considerations that police should, if possible, take into account, in relation to:

**Scene of death:** The body should be covered at all times until burial.

**Deceased (while still at the scene):** No known issues; seek advice.

**Preparing to transport, and transporting, the deceased to the mortuary:** No known issues, seek advice.

**Admitting the deceased to the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.

**Preparing the deceased for a viewing:** No known issues; seek advice.

**Confirming the deceased's identity:** Identification should be conducted by immediate family members only, if possible.

**Notifying the deceased's next of kin of the death:** No known issues; seek advice.

**Conducting a post mortem:** Post mortems are considered objectionable and therefore the preference is to not have post mortems conducted unless required by law.

**Releasing the deceased from the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.

## Resources regarding Islam<sup>12</sup>

- Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, at [www.afic.com.au](http://www.afic.com.au)
- Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria Inc., at [www.islamicwomenswelfare.org.au](http://www.islamicwomenswelfare.org.au)
- Islamicity, at [www.islamicity.com](http://www.islamicity.com)

<sup>12</sup> Resources listed have been nominated by stakeholders as the most useful resources for their religion. ANZPAA does not endorse the information provided by these resources.

# Judaism

# Judaism

Judaism is one of the world's oldest religious traditions. It is the oldest of the monotheistic faiths in the Abrahamic tradition, which includes Christianity and Islam. The central principle of the monotheistic faiths is the belief in one God: the all-knowing, all-powerful and ever-present creator of the universe.

The same God who created the world revealed himself to Jewish people at Mount Sinai. The content of that revelation is the Torah (revealed instruction), which contains the five books of Moses.

## Overview

### 1. Are there any variations of Judaism?

In Judaism, the main variations are Liberal, Orthodox and Progressive.

Orthodox synagogues have separate seating for male and female congregants; the women sit upstairs or behind a mechitzah (partition).

Liberal and Progressive congregations permit women rabbis and allow men and women to sit together.

Variations in practice also reflect individual interpretations of Judaism, the individual's cultural background and geographical environment.

### 2. Is there a day of the week that is important for Judaism?

In Jewish tradition, the Sabbath (the seventh day) is Saturday. Like all Jewish festivals, it extends from sunset to sunset – that is from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday.

Orthodox Jews pray three times a day, every day - morning, afternoon and evening.

### 3. What are the key dates of significance for Judaism in Australia and New Zealand?

The cycle of Jewish dates of significance is a combination of the biblical and the historic. The main festivals are:

- **February/March: The Feast of Lots (Purim)**, commemorating the survival of Jewish people living in Persia.
- **March/April: Passover (Pesach)**, an 8 day festival that commemorates the Jewish exodus from Egypt.
- **May/June: Pentecost (Shavuot)**, a two day celebration.
- **September/October: New Year (Rosh Hashanah)**, the first day of the “Days of Awe” period, which commemorates God's creation of the world.

## Overview continued

- **September/October: Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)**, a day of fasting that falls ten days after Rosh Hashanah. This is the most sacred and solemn day of the Jewish year.
- **October: Tabernacles (Succot)**, an eight day festival.
- **December: Chanukah/Hanukkah** (also known as the “Festival of Lights”) is celebrated over eight successive days.

Jewish dates of significance are based on a lunar calendar and fall on different dates each year.

4. Is there anything that police should be aware of regarding these dates of significance?

Jewish festivals and days of mourning have their own specific rituals and traditions, such as the lighting of bonfires and the drinking of alcohol.

Orthodox and observant Jews refrain from using technology (e.g. electricity and machinery) on the Sabbath and most dates of significance.

Some Jewish communities organise their own security at community events, synagogues and dates of significance.

5. Does Judaism have any dietary requirements or restrictions?

Judaism requires that only ritually slaughtered (kosher) meat be eaten. Pork is not permitted. Only fish that have both fins and scales are permitted to be eaten (shellfish are prohibited).

Observant<sup>13</sup> Jews do not mix meat and dairy products, and use separate crockery for each.

Some festivals require specific dietary restrictions, for example, fasting at Yom Kippur.

<sup>13</sup> The term 'observant' refers to those followers of a religion who observe their religious beliefs and practices very closely, regardless of which variation of the religion they follow. Alternative terms may include traditional, devout or strict.



## Overview continued

6. Do Jewish people practice their beliefs by wearing special clothing, jewellery or ornaments? If so, is this likely to impact on police?

Orthodox men often dress in black, wear hats, and grow beards and earlocks (long curls of hair). Orthodox women often wear wigs and long dresses.

Jewish men often wear a kippah (skullcap) when inside a synagogue. Some Orthodox and observant men wear a kippah at all times. The kippah is fastened to the head.

If a Jewish person is detained, standard protocols in your jurisdiction for operational safety and detention should be followed in regard to the removal of items.

## People

7. What is the role of religious leaders in Judaism?

Religious leaders are called Rabbis. Rabbis are teachers, not anointed priests, whose authority comes from study and learning. The role of a Rabbi is to teach, guide, counsel and administer religious duties to their community.

8. What is the role of family in Judaism?

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

9. Does any part of the Jewish community have a particular status in Judaism?

Although it is the presence of ten men that allows a formal prayer service to take place, women have an equal status and critical role in Jewish life. A person's 'Jewishness' is determined through the matriarchal line.

10. In a court of law, would a Jewish person take an oath on the Bible, or an affirmation?

Preferably, Jewish people would take an affirmation rather than take an oath. Where an oath is taken, Jewish people would take an oath on the Old Testament of the Bible rather than the New Testament, as Judaism does not use the New Testament in its worship.

## Police Contact and Interviewing

11. Are there any dates of religious significance when Jewish people would prefer not to be approached by police if possible (e.g. for interview as a witness or suspect, or for attendance at court)?

It would be preferable not to approach a Jewish person during the Sabbath or on dates of significance, if possible.

Refer to Questions 2-4 regarding dates of significance and associated practices.

## Police Contact and Interviewing continued

12. Are there any religious reasons for persons of one sex to object to dealing with police of the opposite sex?

Very few Jewish people would object to talking to a member of the opposite sex, however, there may be some individuals who would prefer to deal with a member of the same sex.

13. Are there any protocols for greeting and interaction that police should be mindful of?

**Handshaking:** Many Orthodox Jews will not shake the hand of a person of the opposite sex, if that person is not immediately related to her or him.

**Physical Contact:** Many Orthodox Jews will avoid physical contact with members of the opposite sex, if that person is not immediately related to her or him.

14. Are there any protocols in Judaism that specify which member of the family should speak to police during their inquiries?

No, there are no religious considerations.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for the use of interpreters for interviewing and taking statements should be followed where language barriers exist.

15. Are there any considerations relating to Judaism for police to speak with children?

No, there are no religious considerations.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction regarding the questioning of children should be followed.

16. Police sometimes have to ask questions of a very personal nature (e.g. linked to a sexual assault). Is this likely to be a concern to Jewish people?

Refer to Question 12 regarding interviewing members of the opposite sex.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for interviewing and questioning should be followed.

17. On some occasions, police are required (by law) to obtain forensic samples from individuals for investigative purposes. Does Judaism have a view on providing samples?

There are generally no religious considerations regarding blood samples, most body fluids, hair specimens, photographs or fingerprints.

## Police Searches and Detention

18. Are there any special considerations police should consider when:

- **Approaching or entering a place of worship or person's house?**

Refer to Question 4 regarding internal security at synagogues. On most Sabbath days, initial contact should be made with security staff, where present, and if possible.

If the visit does not take place on the Sabbath or dates of significance, it would be preferable if contact were made with the administrative office of the synagogue prior to entry, if possible.

- **Acknowledging or searching sacred objects?**

No, there are no religious considerations.

19. In the event that police need to conduct a search of a person, are there any special considerations they, if possible, should take into account?

Refer to Question 6 regarding the removal of clothing, jewellery or ornaments.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for personal searches should be followed.

## Death, Bereavement and Mourning

20. Does death have a special meaning in Judaism?

Death is regarded as the separation of the body and soul. Jewish tradition requires that the body be 'watched' at all times until burial.

While many Jewish people may not observe all religious practices in their life, they and/or their families generally require strict observance of religious practices in relation to death and burial.

21. Are there any special bereavement practices in Judaism?

Judaism does not permit cremation. Jewish people prefer to bury the deceased as soon as possible after death, preferably within 24 hours.

In Judaism, the mourning period generally involves three stages – in the first week, mourners refrain from work and other usual tasks, and stay at home to receive visiting family and friends; in the first month, light hearted activities are avoided; and during the first year, mourners refrain from attending celebrations or entertainment where music is played.

## Death, Bereavement and Mourning continued

22. In the event of death, are there special considerations that police should, if possible, take into account, in relation to:

- **Scene of death:** Immediate family or a Rabbi, and the Jewish Burial Society (Chevra Kadisha)<sup>14</sup> should be contacted as soon as possible. At all stages, it would be preferable if touching of the body is kept to a minimum. As this is not always possible, sensitivity needs to be shown.
- **Deceased (while still at the scene):** If possible, the body should be covered or screened from view. All body parts, including tissue and blood, should be retrieved by the Burial Society for burial with the body.
- **Preparing to transport, and transporting, the deceased to the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Admitting the deceased to the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Preparing the deceased for a viewing:** Viewing is not encouraged in the Jewish religion and is rarely required.
- **Confirming the deceased's identity:** Identity should be confirmed by the closest family members, if possible.
- **Notifying the deceased's next of kin of the death:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Conducting a post mortem:** Post mortems are considered objectionable and, as such, the preference is to not have post mortems conducted unless required by law. Where a post mortem is conducted, it is preferred that, where possible, there is minimal interference with the body. It is also preferred that all body parts, including tissue and blood, are retrieved for burial with the body.
- **Releasing the deceased from the mortuary:** Wherever possible, the Jewish Burial Society carries out the holy task of preparing the body for burial.

## Resources regarding Judaism

- Jewish Community Council of Victoria, at <http://www.jccv.org.au/index.asp>
- Organisation of Rabbis Australasia
- Rabbinical Council of New South Wales
- Rabbinical Council of Victoria

<sup>14</sup> The Chevra Kadisha is an organisation of Jewish people that assists in preparing a body for burial in accordance with Jewish tradition.

# Māori Spirituality

# Māori Spirituality

The Māori worldview is of a three-tiered, inter-related structure made up of the Realm of Ultimate Reality (the gods), the Realm of the Human, and the Realm of the Dead. This worldview binds Māori society together as a functional whole, producing an holistic view of life. Mauri (life force), mana (power, authority), tapu (sacred, prohibition, restrictions) and noa (common, ordinary things, free from tapu) are the essence of Māori religion.

Traditionally for Māori, all things have a type of soul or life force (mauri), which creates strong spiritual ties to the land. Many Māori do not see their existence as something separate or opposed to the world around them. Birds, fish, plants, rocks, the moon and mist - all living and natural things are genealogically linked to people.

Mana (power, authority) is recognised in many things including people, land, nature and man-made objects. Touching objects or beings containing mana by non-authorised people or objects can cause the mana and the tapu of the object to be lost.

The history of the Māori world is the history of ancestors or genealogy (whakapapa). Māori identity is found in belonging to a tribal group. Whakapapa is recounted in a complex and rich tradition of mythology, legend, narrative, ritual, song, names and the arts. The supernatural and the superhuman feature prominently in many of these ancient explanations.

## Overview

### 1. Are there any variations of Māori spirituality?

Spirituality for Māori takes many forms, and varies greatly between communities.

Variations are based on a number of influences, such as affiliation with other religions, geographical environment (for example, rural or urban), and iwi (local community or tribe) customs and practices.

### 2. Is there a day of the week that is important for Māori spirituality?

No, however, karakia (prayer or incantation) can occur many times a day, such as at the beginning and end of the day; before eating food; and at events of significance.

Many Māori are involved in other religions, and therefore regularly attend places of worship associated with these religions, on the associated dates of significance.

## Overview continued

### 3. What are the key dates of significance for Māori spirituality in Australia and New Zealand?

Māori involved in other religions celebrate the dates of significance important to that particular religion. However, there are a number of festivals celebrated that are seen as particularly important to Māori spirituality. Many local groups, communities and iwi (tribes) have their own festivals involving song, dance, sport and ceremony. Such festivals or celebrations can include:

- **Kapa Haka:** or traditional Māori performing arts - often performed at local, regional and national festivals.
- **Matariki, Māori New Year:** Festivities differ between communities, but Matariki is, for most, a celebration that marks the beginning of the plentiful season. It is a time for feasting, entertainment and ceremony.

### 4. Is there anything that police should be aware of regarding these dates of significance?

Traditional Māori may consider ceremonial times to be sacred. Such ceremonies could include birth, tangi (funeral and grieving practices), periods of mourning, cultural ceremonies and other marae-based activities (a marae is a traditional meeting place).

### 5. Does Māori spirituality have any dietary requirements or restrictions?

No, there are no spiritual dietary requirements.

There are a number of protocols that may apply to the handling of food and food related items. For example, karakia (prayer or incantation) is often said before eating food; it is preferable that food is not passed over or kept near a person's head; and it is preferable to refrain from sitting on tables on which food is served.

### 6. Do people of Māori spirituality practice their beliefs by wearing special clothing, jewellery or ornaments? If so, is this likely to impact on police?

The wearing of pounamu (green stone) and/or bone necklaces is common practice among Māori. The green stone represents the Māori spirit that exists beyond death. The carvings on bone necklaces have many different spiritual meanings. It is preferable that the necklaces not be removed.

If a Māori is detained, standard protocols in your jurisdiction in your jurisdiction for operational safety and detention should be followed in regard to the removal of items.

## People

### 7. What is the role of spiritual leaders in Māori spirituality?

Spiritual leaders are called tohunga and have specific detailed knowledge of Māori spirituality and culture.

Tohunga play a very important role in a range of Māori forua. Tohunga will often attend to sick people, officiate at the opening of buildings and apply and remove tapu (sacred, prohibition, restrictions) where required. They tend to be highly respected members of the Māori community.

### 8. What is the role of family in Māori spirituality?

Historically and today, whānau (family) plays an important role in Māori life. Māori tradition links individuals and families intricately with the land and each other. The whānau is based on extensive kinship ties and provides an environment within which certain responsibilities and obligations are maintained. Individuals are traditionally dependent on the whānau for support and sustenance.

Children are not just the concern of the biological parents but the entire whānau community. The raising, care, education and discipline of children are the responsibility of everyone: female, male, old and young.

### 9. Does any part of the Māori community have a particular status in Māori spirituality?

People considered as rangatira (of chiefly quality) are treated with great respect.

### 10. In a court of law, would a person of Māori spirituality take an oath on the Bible, or an affirmation?

As many Māori are Christian, many Māori would take an oath on the Bible. Otherwise, Māori would take an oath or make an affirmation to the belief of the religion to which they are affiliated.

## Police Contact and Interviewing

### 11. Are there any dates of spiritual significance when people of Māori spirituality would prefer not to be approached by police if possible (e.g. for interview as a witness or suspect, or for attendance at court)?

Refer to Questions 2-4 regarding dates of significance and associated practices.



## Police Contact and Interviewing continued

12. Are there any spiritual reasons for persons of one sex to object to dealing with police of the opposite sex?

No, there are no spiritual reasons to object.

13. Are there any protocols for greeting and interaction that police should be mindful of?

- **Touching:** The head is considered tapu (sacred) and should not be touched.
- **Eye contact:** Minimal eye contact should be maintained.

14. Are there any protocols in Māori spirituality that specify which member of the family should speak to police during their inquiries?

No, there are no specific protocols. If in doubt, seek local advice.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for the use of interpreters for interviewing and taking statements should be followed where language barriers exist.

15. Are there any considerations relating to Māori spirituality for police to speak with children?

No, there are no spiritual considerations.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction regarding the questioning of children should be followed.

16. Police sometimes have to ask questions of a very personal nature (e.g. linked to a sexual assault). Is this likely to be a concern to people of Māori spirituality?

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for interviewing and questioning should be followed.

17. On some occasions, police are required (by law) to obtain forensic samples from individuals for investigative purposes. Does Māori spirituality have a view on providing samples?

The head is considered tapu (sacred), and therefore care should be taken when taking samples from the mouth or any other part of the head.

Traditional Māori may object to the provision of blood samples, as blood is considered to be highly tapu in the traditional Māori worldview.

Traditional Māori may object to providing photos, nails or hair, as they believe these could be used to endanger their wellbeing.

## Police Searches and Detention

18. Are there any special considerations police should consider when:

- **Approaching or entering a place of worship or person's house?**

Shoes should be removed before entering a home or wharehenui (traditional Māori tribal meeting place).

- **Acknowledging or searching sacred objects?**

No, there are no religious considerations.

19. In the event that police need to conduct a search of a person, are there any special considerations they, if possible, should take into account?

Refer to Question 6 regarding the removal of jewellery.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for personal searches should be followed. Care should be taken in regard to searching and touching the head.

## Death, Bereavement and Mourning

20. Does death have a special meaning in Māori spirituality?

It is believed that the spirit does not leave the vicinity of the body until the body is buried.

A deceased is usually returned to their whānau (family) to carry out the tangi (funeral rites). As part of this process, the dead are usually then taken to a marae (a traditional meeting place). It is believed that at the marae, the recently deceased are released to the care of the long deceased.

Whakanoa (ritual cleansing) is also needed at various stages following death, such as when the person has passed, when the deceased leaves the premises, and for those that were involved.

21. Are there any special bereavement practices for Māori spirituality?

Māori believe the tūpāpaku (the deceased) should not be left on its own at any stage after death. People will gather to take the tūpāpaku from the funeral home to the place of burial. Whānau (family) and friends may come and go from this place, or they may remain until after the actual burial.

Pictures of the living should not be placed with the deceased.

Speeches, weeping, wailing and song by whānau (family) and friends are common. Waiata tangi (laments for the dead) mourn and praise the person who has died,

## Death, Bereavement and Mourning continued

sending the wairua (the spirit or soul) on its journey north to Te Rerenga Wairua (Cape Reinga). There, the spirit is believed to pause before descending to the ocean floor, after the funeral rituals are completed.

### 22. In the event of death, are there special requirements police should be aware of in relation to:

- **Scene of death:** It is preferable that members of the Māori community are contacted immediately to allow for arrangements to be made for a karakia (prayers) to be performed, to bless the area before the body is moved. This is especially the case in the event of suicides. As this is not always possible, sensitivity needs to be shown.
- **Deceased (while still at the scene):** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Preparing to transport, and transporting, the deceased to the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Admitting the deceased to the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Preparing the deceased for a viewing:** If possible, a receptacle of water should be placed nearby so that Māori can whakanoa (cleanse) themselves when leaving the presence of the deceased.
- **Confirming the deceased's identity:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Notifying the deceased's next of kin of the death:** If possible, notification should be conducted face-to-face.
- **Conducting a post mortem:** It is preferable that the deceased's remains be kept together, if possible. As this is not always possible, sensitivity needs to be shown.
- **Releasing the deceased from the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.

### Resources regarding Māori spirituality<sup>16</sup>

- Maori.org.nz, at <http://www.maori.org.nz/>
- Maori in Oz, at [www.maori-in-oz.com](http://www.maori-in-oz.com)

<sup>16</sup> Resources listed have been nominated by stakeholders as the most useful resources for their spirituality. ANZPAA does not endorse the information provided by these resources.

# Sikhism

# Sikhism

The Sikh religion was founded by Guru Nanak, born in Pakistan in 1469. Guru Nanak was succeeded by nine Gurus, the last of whom proclaimed Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Holy Scripture, as the eternal Guru and ultimate spiritual authority of the Sikhs.

Sikhs believe in One God and the equality of all humanity, regardless of sex, race or ethnicity. Sikhs do not believe in idol worship or rituals.

The Sikh way of life is based on:

- Nam Japna: Remember God's name with every breath;
- Kirat Karni: Work and earn by the sweat of the brow, live a family way of life and practise truthfulness and honesty in all dealings;
- Vand Ke Chakna: Share and live as an inspiration and support to the whole community; and
- Control of Kaam (desire), Krodh (anger), Lobh (greed), Moh (attachment) and Hankar (pride).

Sikhs believe that reincarnation is for those who do not attain attachment to God during the human life cycle.

Baptised or initiated Sikhs (known as Amritdhari Sikhs) wear the Five Kakaras (called the Five Ks) to symbolise their faith. These are discussed at Question 6.

## Overview

### 1. Are there any variations of Sikhism?

Essentially, all Sikhs share the same fundamental beliefs, although there are subtle variations within Sikhism.

Variations in practice may reflect individual interpretations of Sikhism as well as different levels of commitment.

### 2. Is there a day of the week that is important for Sikhism?

There is no specific day of the week that is important for Sikhs. A Sikh can worship at any time of the day or night, but the expected prayer times are sunrise, sunset, and prior to going to bed at night.

## Overview continued

### 3. What are the key dates of significance for Sikhism in Australia and New Zealand?

There are almost 20 main Sikh Gurpurbs (festivals) in a calendar year, including the celebration of the birthdays of the 10 Sikh Gurus. The key festivals are:

- **5 January: Guru Gobind Singh Birthday (Tenth Guru)**
- **14 April: Besahki/Visakhi,**<sup>17</sup> to commemorate the initiation of the five first Sikhs in their current form.
- **November: Guru Nanak Dev Birthday (First Guru)**

Most festivals, such as Besahki/Visakhi, are based on the solar calendar. Three festivals, including the Guru Nanak Dev Birthday, are based on the lunar calendar, and therefore their dates change from year to year.

### 4. Is there anything that police should be aware of regarding these dates of significance?

Special events are usually celebrated with the continuous reading of the Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh Holy Scripture), which usually takes 48 hours.

For some celebrations, Sikh congregations may go out in loud celebratory processions. Processions are led by five Sikhs called the Panj Piara/Panj Piaré (the beloved five). The Panj Piara/Panj Piaré carry a long kirpan (ceremonial sword)<sup>18</sup> of approximately one metre in length. In some communities, these processions may require a road closure permit.

In other festivals, Sikhs may use firecrackers or fireworks, or perform Sikh martial arts, called Gatka.

<sup>17</sup> Please note that there are many variations to the spelling of festival names, particularly Besahki/Visakhi, due to the translations from numerous languages.

<sup>18</sup> Weapons provisions, exemptions and processes may differ between jurisdictions.

## Overview continued

### 5. Does Sikhism have any dietary requirements or restrictions?

Some Sikhs are strict vegetarians and do not eat fish, meat, eggs or by-products. Non-vegetarian Sikhs may not eat beef, and will not eat halal<sup>19</sup> or kosher<sup>20</sup> meat. Meat slaughtered with a single blow is preferred.

Tobacco and other intoxicants are strictly prohibited.

### 6. Do Sikhs practice their beliefs by wearing special clothing, jewellery or ornaments? If so, is this likely to impact on police?

Sikh males wear a turban of any colour or shape. Sikh women may wear a turban or cover their head with a cloth or scarf. It is considered offensive to touch the turban of a Sikh without asking her or his permission.

If a Sikh is asked to remove her or his turban, it is preferred, if possible, that she or he be given a private room and mirror with which to remove, and later restore, the turban.

Initiated or baptised (Amritdhari) Sikhs always wears the Five Ks, or articles of faith:

- **Kachera:** a special undergarment, signifying restraint, dignity and faithfulness;
- **Kanga:** a small wooden comb to comb one's hair;
- **Kara:** an iron bangle that symbolises the universe wherein everyone is equal;
- **Keshas:** hair, which must not be cut from the body. Keshas signify the faith of a Sikh that the human form is the perfect creation of God. Refer to Question 17 regarding hair samples; and
- **Kirpan:** a small sacred sword placed in a sheath and worn in a shoulder strap, signifying a Sikh's commitment to fight against tyranny. Kirpans worn in this manner are usually approximately 6 inches long, but ceremonial kirpans may be a few metres long.

It is strongly preferred that an Amritdhari Sikh not be asked to separate any of the Five Ks from her or his body. The removal of any of the Five Ks is seen as a severe punishment.

If a Sikh is detained, standard protocols in your jurisdiction for operational safety and detention should be followed in regard to the removal of items. Additionally, aviation security does not permit the carriage of sharp objects (prohibited items) on aeroplanes, and therefore kirpans are required to be placed in the individual's checked luggage.

## People

### 7. What is the role of spiritual leaders in Sikhism?

Sikhs do not have a priestly class. A person referred to as a 'Granthi' usually performs the religious ceremonies in the Gurdwara (place of worship). Both women and men can conduct services and read the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh Holy Scripture).

### 8. What is the role of family in Sikhism?

The family is held in the highest regard within the Sikh community. 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 her or his views are strongly considered when making decisions on family matters. This is also the case for the person who is second in line.

### 9. Does any part of the Sikh community have a particular status in Sikhism?

Sikh women have equal status with men in all spheres of life.

Refer to Question 8 regarding family elders.

### 10. In a court of law, would a Sikh take an oath on the Bible, or an affirmation?

Most Sikhs would prefer to take an affirmation.

Some Sikhs may take an oath on the Gutka (Sikh daily prayer book). If so, the relevant protocol should be followed.

Observant<sup>21</sup> Sikhs will not take an oath on any religious book, including the Gutka.

<sup>19</sup> Refer to Islam Question 5 for the definition of halal meat.

<sup>20</sup> Refer to Judaism Question 5 for the definition of kosher meat.

<sup>21</sup> The term 'observant' refers to those followers of a religion who observe their religious beliefs and practices very closely, regardless of which variation of the religion they follow. Alternative terms may include traditional, devout or strict.



## Police Contact and Interviewing

11. Are there any dates of religious significance when Sikhs would prefer not to be approached by police if possible (e.g. for interview as a witness or suspect, or for attendance at court)?

It would be preferred that a Sikh not be approached while performing religious duties during the Gurburbs (festivals), or while conducting daily prayer, if possible.

In addition, it would be preferred that a Sikh in the process of reading the Sikh Holy Scripture not be disturbed.

Refer to Questions 2-4 regarding dates of significance and associated practices.

12. Are there any religious reasons for persons of one sex to object to dealing with police of the opposite sex?

There are no religious reasons for a person to object to dealing with a member of the opposite sex, however, there may be cultural reasons.

13. Are there any protocols for greeting and interaction that police should be mindful of?

- **Handshaking:** Sikh males normally shake hands with other males. Some Sikh females may prefer to greet a male with folded hands.
- **Touching:** Touching a person of the opposite sex may be seen as offensive.
- **The head:** The head and turban are sacred to Sikhs, and they should not be touched.

14. Are there any protocols in Sikhism that specify which member of the family should speak to police during their inquiries?

Generally, the oldest member of the family or the person who speaks the most fluent English will assist.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for the use of interpreters for interviewing and taking statements should be followed where language barriers exist.

15. Are there any religious considerations relating to Sikhism for police to speak with children?

No, there are no religious considerations.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction regarding the questioning of children should be followed.

## **Police Contact and Interviewing** continued

**16. Police sometimes have to ask questions of a very personal nature (e.g. linked to a sexual assault). Is this likely to be a concern to Sikhs?**

Sexual misconduct, by either a male or female, is considered a serious transgression in the Sikh faith.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for interviewing and questioning should be followed.

**17. On some occasions, police are required (by law) to obtain forensic samples from individuals for investigative purposes. Does Sikhism have a view on providing samples?**

There are no religious considerations to providing samples, however, a Sikh would not allow the cutting of any hair for a hair sample. In the instance that a hair sample is required, plucking may be acceptable.

Refer to Question 6 regarding the significance of hair.

## **Police Searches and Detention**

**18. Are there any special considerations police should consider when:**

- **Approaching or entering a place of worship or person's house?**

It would be preferred if police consulted with community leaders prior to approaching or entering a Gurdwara, and the search be conducted in the presence of the community leaders, if possible.

Shoes should be removed before entering the Gurdwara. At all times, it is preferred that the head be covered with a piece of cloth or handkerchief. Smoking, consumption of drugs, alcohol and meat are considered taboo, and a person entering the Gurdwara should not have these products on their person.

Shoes should be removed before entering a room of a house where the Sikh Holy Scripture is placed. Some Sikhs may request that shoes be removed before entering a house.

- **Acknowledging or searching sacred objects?**

Sikhs do not have altars or shrines.

The Sikh Holy Scripture (including Gutkas, or prayer books) must be given the highest respect. They should be touched only after washing hands, if possible.

## Police Searches and Detention continued

19. In the event that police need to conduct a search of a person, are there any special considerations they, if possible, should take into account?

Refer to Question 6 regarding the touching or removal of turbans and the Five Ks.

Standard protocols in your jurisdiction for personal searches should be followed.

## Death, Bereavement and Mourning

20. Does death have a special meaning in Sikhism?

Death is seen as liberation from the body and the materialistic world. Death marks a transition towards the timeless God, (akal chalna) or to the realm of truth (sach khand), or that it has become complete (pura).

21. Are there any special bereavement practices for Sikhism?

For many Sikhs, cremation should occur as soon as possible after death. This often results in a sense of urgency regarding funeral arrangements.

For some Sikhs, the deceased may be prepared by a funeral director to be sent to the family's homeland for cremation. In such cases, the families may not require the same level of urgency. Sensitivity should be shown when discussing the family's requirements.

Access to the body should be provided to the nearest family member a few hours prior to cremation, in order that it can be washed, dressed and have the appropriate religious prayers recited over it.

Elders and close associates may wear white, the colour of mourning.

22. In the event of death, are there special considerations that police should, if possible, take into account, in relation to:

- **Scene of death:** The family of the deceased should be contacted immediately. In cases where the turban or any of the Five Ks have come off the deceased, all attempts should be made to place the items with the deceased. If possible, the Five Ks should not be removed from the body. As this is not always possible, sensitivity needs to be shown. Refer to Question 6 for more information regarding turbans and the Five Ks.
- **Deceased (while still at the scene):** The body should be covered with a clean sheet.

## Death, Bereavement and Mourning continued

- **Preparing to transport, and transporting, the deceased to the mortuary:** The family may wish to say a prayer, or travel with the deceased to the morgue.
- **Admitting the deceased to the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Preparing the deceased for a viewing:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Confirming the deceased's identity:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Notifying the deceased's next of kin of the death:** No known issues; seek advice.
- **Conducting a post mortem:** There are no religious reasons to object to a post mortem, however, there may be cultural reasons. Refer to Question 6 for more information regarding touching turbans and the Five Ks. As this is not always possible, sensitivity needs to be shown.
- **Releasing the deceased from the mortuary:** No known issues; seek advice.

## Resources regarding Sikhism<sup>23</sup>

- Sikhism, at [www.sikhism.com](http://www.sikhism.com)
- Sikh Interfaith Council of Victoria, at [www.sikhinterfaithvic.org.au](http://www.sikhinterfaithvic.org.au)
- Sikhnet, at [www.sikhnet.com](http://www.sikhnet.com)

<sup>23</sup> Resources listed have been nominated by stakeholders as the most useful resources for their religion. ANZPAA does not endorse the information provided by these resources.







# Statistics

| Religion or Spirituality         | Australian population | New Zealand population |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Bahá'í                           | 12,341                | 2,772                  |
| Buddhism                         | 418,756               | 52,362                 |
| Christian                        | 12,685,836            | 2,027,418              |
| Hinduism                         | 148,127               | 64,392                 |
| Islam                            | 340,389               | 36,072                 |
| Judaism                          | 88,834                | 6,858                  |
| Sikhism                          | 26,429                | 9,507                  |
| <b>Total national population</b> | <b>19,855,288</b>     | <b>4,027,947</b>       |

| Ethnicity <sup>24</sup>               | Australian population | New Zealand population |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander | 455,028               | –                      |
| Māori                                 | 92,911                | 565,329                |
| <b>Total national population</b>      | <b>19,855,288</b>     | <b>4,027,947</b>       |

## Sources:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Census
- Statistics New Zealand, 2006 Census

<sup>24</sup> The statistics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Māori spiritualities are based on census data regarding ethnicity rather than religious affiliation. This is because many Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori people identify their primary religion as one of the major religions such as Christianity. As such, it is not possible to determine from religious affiliation data the numbers of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori people who also practice their traditional spirituality.



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