

Health care providers' handbook on  
**Hindu patients**



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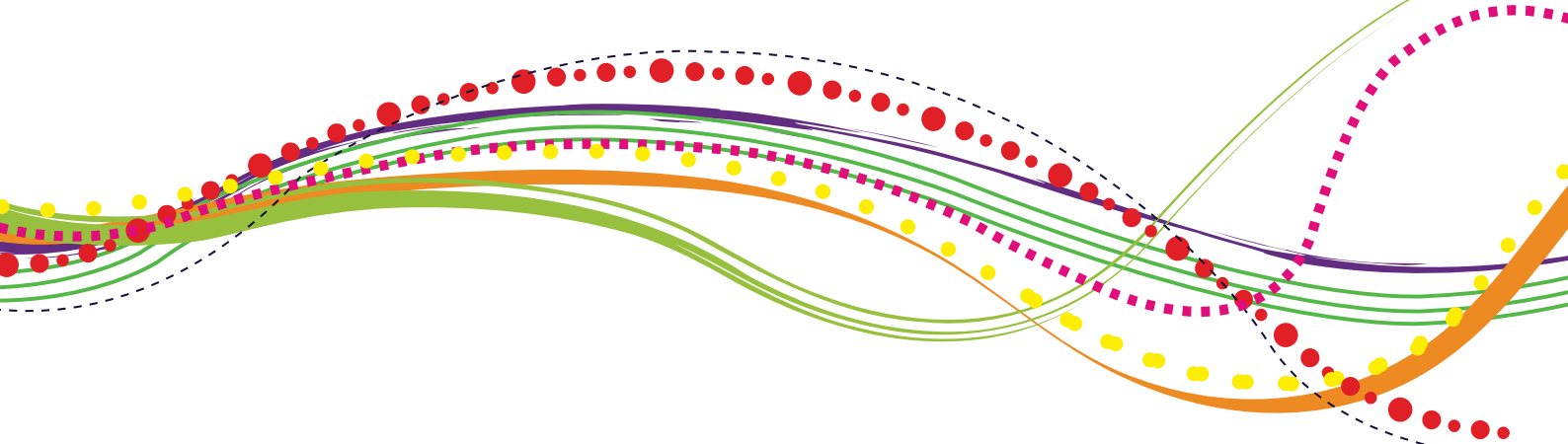
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**Suggested citation:**

Queensland Health. *Health Care Providers' Handbook on Hindu Patients*. Division of the Chief Health Officer, Queensland Health. Brisbane 2011.

Photography: Nadine Shaw of Nadine Shaw Photography



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## Preface

In 2010, Queensland Health and the Islamic Council of Queensland published the **Health Care Providers' Handbook on Muslim Patients (second edition)** as a quick-reference tool for health workers when caring for Muslim patients.

This handbook, the **Health Care Providers' Handbook on Hindu Patients**, covers a similar range of topics and aims to inform health care providers about the religious beliefs and practices of Hindu patients that can affect health care.

The handbook has three sections:

- Guidelines for health services
- Hindu beliefs affecting health care
- Additional resources

Each section provides practical advice and information for health care providers which is designed to answer some of the more common questions about Hindu patients and the religious practices of Hinduism that affect health care. The handbook also provides links to further information and contacts within the Hindu community of Queensland.

Health care providers work in an increasingly diverse environment. Those who display cross-cultural capabilities in their work use self-reflection, cultural understanding, contextual understanding, communication and collaboration to provide culturally appropriate, responsive and safe health care<sup>1</sup>. This handbook aims to support health care providers by building their knowledge of the needs of Hindu patients.

The **Health Care Providers' Handbook on Hindu Patients** was written under the guidance of an advisory committee comprising:

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Surendra Prasad (Federation of Indian Communities of Queensland)  
Jennifer Ryan (Mater Health Services)  
Sarva-Daman Singh (Indian Consulate in Brisbane)  
Krimesh Shukla (Princess Alexandra Hospital)

### Other resources

The **Health Care Providers' Handbook on Hindu Patients** forms part of the Queensland Health **Multicultural Clinical Support Resource** which provides ready-reference information on issues that affect health care provision to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The **Multicultural Clinical Support Resource** also contains the **Health Care Providers' Handbook on Sikh Patients** and the **Health Care Providers' Handbook on Muslim Patients**.

All resources are available on the Queensland Health website at [www.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural)

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<sup>1</sup>The Queensland Health Cross-Cultural Capabilities are: self-reflection, cultural understanding, context, communication and collaboration. Refer to [www.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/multicultural)



## Introduction

Queensland is a culturally and religiously diverse state – in 2006 nearly one in five Queenslanders (17.9 per cent) was born overseas, 7.8 per cent of the population spoke a language other than English at home, and more than 129,000 people followed a religion other than Christianity. Between 2001 and 2006, one of the fastest growing religions in Queensland was Hinduism. Figures from the 2006 census show there are more than 14,000 Hindus living in Queensland<sup>1</sup>. This figure is now likely to be higher as, between 2007–08 and 2009–10, permanent migration to Australia from Southern Asia, which includes India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal, was second only to permanent migration from Europe<sup>2</sup>.

The increasing cultural, linguistic and religious diversity in the Queensland population means that to be safe, health services need to be culturally appropriate and responsive. Research indicates a strong link between low cultural competence, and poor quality health outcomes and significant risks<sup>3</sup>.

### Personal level of adherence

Hinduism is the world's oldest living faith and third largest religion. It is practiced in many countries around the world, including by large populations in Southern and South East Asia, Europe, Africa, North America and Australia.

There is much diversity in the beliefs and practices of Hindus, with hundreds of diverse sects and no central doctrinal authority. As Hinduism grants individuals complete freedom to practice his or her religion as they choose, there are personal and cultural variations that make it difficult to provide definitive rules and regulations that apply to all Hindu patients. Because of these personal variations, it is important that health care providers consult the patient about their personal level of religious observance and practice.

However, Hindu patients should not be regarded as a 'special' group that require additional attention from health care providers. Due to the common Hindu beliefs of *karma* (the belief that every action has a consequence which is experienced in this or future lives) and reincarnation, Hindu patients may display acceptance of difficult circumstances and be inclined to comply with the instructions of health care providers.