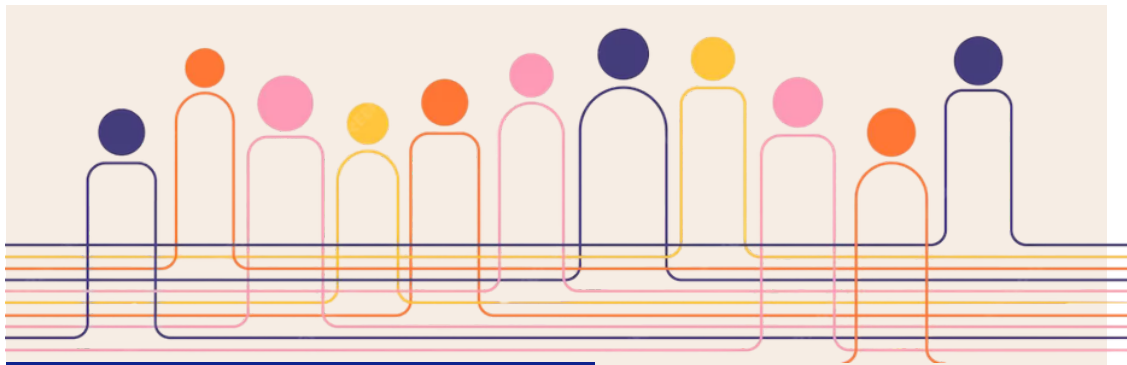


WELCOME TO OUR MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE IN AGED CARE



Welcome to the June edition

June marks the heart of winter in Australia — a time that invites us to slow down, reflect, and draw warmth from one another. For older people from CALD backgrounds, winter is deeply meaningful, shaped by cultural memories, traditional foods, and rituals of care.

This month we focus on grief and resilience within the workforce, the invisible weight carried by our multicultural carers, and the urgent call to protect older people from abuse and harm.

We mark Refugee Week 2026 — A Million Stories — and invite our community to share their experiences of courage, loss, and belonging.

Across cultures, winter has always guided what we eat, how we heal, and how we come together. Seasonal and culturally appropriate food is not merely a dietary preference — it is a cornerstone of wellbeing, dignity and culturally safe care.

This June, we encourage you to:

- Nourish with warmth — in food, in words, in presence
- Listen to stories that have never been told
- Stand firmly against elder abuse in all its forms
- Care for those who care

Together, we build a more compassionate and inclusive aged care sector.

Multicultural Aged Care (MAC)

IN THIS NEWSLETTER:

- A Snapshot of Cultural Celebrations in June
- Refugee Week 2026 – A Million Stories
- World Elder Abuse Awareness Day – Culturally Safe Communities
- Winter Across Cultures: Traditions, Cultural Comfort, Food & Connection
- Finding Balance: Yin and Yang and Wellbeing
- The Unspoken Grief of Care: Supporting Culturally Diverse Workforce
- Winter vaccinations
- Resource Spotlight - Multicultural calendar 2026
- Resource Spotlight - Library
- Your voice matters - More information!

How to Use This Newsletter:

- ✓ For frontline staff
- ✓ For managers
- ✓ For volunteers
- ✓ For community members

Subscribe here to receive our monthly newsletters:

<https://mac.org.au/contact/>



Multicultural
Aged Care

A SNAPSHOT OF CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

2 June – Italian Republic Day (Festa della Repubblica)

Commemorates Italy's transition to a republic in 1946. A day of national pride, community and reflection on freedom and democracy.

Activity Ideas:

- Share stories about Italy or Italian heritage
- Offer Italian-inspired foods — panettone, cannoli, pasta.
- Play traditional Italian music or opera



21 June – Winter Solstice

The shortest day and longest night of the year — observed across many cultures as a time of reflection, renewal and the returning of light.

Common Traditions May Include:

- Lighting candles, fires or lanterns
- Gathering with family for shared meals
- Reflection on the year and hopes for spring
- Indigenous Australian cultural observances connected to seasons

Activity Ideas:

- Create a simple candlelight reflection moment
- Share stories about winter across the world
- "What does the return of light mean in your culture?"
- Warm soup tasting or communal winter meal



A SNAPSHOT OF CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

29 June – Feast of Saints Peter & Paul

Celebrated by many Catholic and Orthodox Christian communities — particularly Greek, Italian, Lebanese and Eastern European communities.

Activity Ideas:

- Acknowledge the day with residents who observe it
- Offer a quiet prayer or reflection space
- Share cultural foods associated with the feast



Throughout June — Reconciliation NAIDOC Season

June opens with the end of National Reconciliation Week (27 May – 3 June) and leads toward NAIDOC Week in July. A meaningful time to continue building relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and reflect on shared histories.

Activity Ideas:

- Continue acknowledging Country at all gatherings
- Share First Nations art, music or stories
- Learn about local seasonal knowledge and winter practices
- Explore reconciliation resources with staff and residents

REFUGEE WEEK | 16–22 JUNE 2026

A Million Stories

Refugee Week is Australia's national week of awareness, appreciation and learning about the experiences of refugees.

This year's theme, A Million Stories, is a powerful call to listen, to witness, and to honour the extraordinary human journeys that have shaped communities across this country.

Many older people in aged care have lived experience of displacement, war, persecution, and rebuilding a life in a new land. Their stories of loss, resilience and hope are at the very heart of who they are.

Why Refugee Week Matters in Aged Care

For older people from refugee backgrounds, ageing can be layered with complexity:

- Trauma responses may intensify with cognitive decline or health vulnerability
 - Communication barriers can prevent people from accessing support
 - Cultural and family roles may have been profoundly disrupted by displacement
 - Mistrust of institutions may affect engagement with care services
 - Grief for what was lost — country, community, loved ones — can surface powerfully in later life
- Understanding these layers is essential to providing truly person-centred, trauma-informed and culturally safe care.

A Callout to Our Community — Share Your Story

This Refugee Week, MAC warmly invites clients, community members, staff and volunteers with lived experience of being a refugee or seeking asylum to share their story — in whatever way feels right.

You might share:

- A memory of the country you left, or the journey to Australia
- Something you are proud of in building your life here
- A message of hope, resilience, or belonging for others
- A cultural tradition or food from home that you have kept alive
- Something you wish people understood about the refugee experience

■ Email: macsa@mac.org.au

Stories may be shared in any language, in writing or voice recording.



A Million Stories
14–20 June 2026



refugeeweek.org.au | #RefugeeWeekAU

Hani (L), a former refugee from Somalia, with her longtime friend and supporter, Ravi (R).
Discover their stories at refugeeweek.org.au. Photo by Rusty Crawshaw.

REFUGEE WEEK | 16–22 JUNE 2026

A Million Stories

Supporting Older People with Refugee Backgrounds — Practical Approaches

Trauma-Informed Practice

- Approach all interactions with patience, warmth and cultural sensitivity
- Never pressure people to share their story — follow their lead
- Be aware that certain topics may trigger traumatic memories
- Build trust gradually through consistent, respectful care
- Work closely with bilingual staff and community leaders

Creating Space for Stories

- Ask gently: "Would you like to tell me about where you grew up?"
- Use photos, music or food as gentle prompts for reminiscence
- Involve families in care conversations about cultural background
- Connect people with cultural community organisations where possible
- Document cultural life story with the person's permission

Activity Ideas for Refugee Week

- Host a "A Million Stories" sharing circle
- Create a community story wall with messages or drawings
- Play music from different countries in your community
- Prepare or offer food from the cultural backgrounds of residents
- Invite a guest speaker from a refugee community organisation
- Share Refugee Week resources and local events
- Acknowledge Refugee Week in team meetings and briefings
- Display a simple acknowledgement of the diversity of stories in your community

For more information about Refugee Week 2026: www.refugeeweek.org.au

1 million+

Number of refugees that have arrived in Australia since 1947

178

Number of Refugee Welcome Zones

40

Years that Refugee Week has been celebrated in Australia



A Million Stories
14–20 June 2026



refugeeweek.org.au | #RefugeeWeekAU

Source: <https://www.refugeeweek.org.au/>

WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY:

Creating Culturally Safe Communities for Older People

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), observed globally on 15 June, calls on communities, governments and organisations to take a stand against the mistreatment of older people. In Australia, elder abuse affects an estimated one in six older people — making it one of the most significant human rights concerns of our time.

For older people from CALD backgrounds, the risks are often compounded — and barriers to accessing help can be profound. Creating culturally safe communities means ensuring every older person, regardless of language or background, is protected, respected and empowered.

What is Elder Abuse?

Elder abuse is any act — or failure to act — within a relationship of trust that causes harm to an older person:

- **Physical abuse** — hitting, restraining, inappropriate medication
- **Psychological/emotional abuse** — threats, humiliation, isolation, control
- **Financial abuse** — misusing money, property or assets
- **Sexual abuse** — any non-consensual sexual act or behaviour
- **Neglect** — failing to provide adequate care, food or social contact
- **Social abuse** — restricting access to family, friends or community

Abuse most often occurs within existing relationships — family members, carers, or friends.

CALD-Specific Risk Factors and Barriers

- **Language barriers** — difficulty understanding rights, services, or reporting pathways
- **Dependency on family** — cultural expectations of family care can mask or enable abuse
- **Financial dependency** — pension or assets managed by others without oversight
- **Fear of authorities** — past experience of government or police may create mistrust
- **Cultural shame** — stigma around admitting family conflict or abuse
- **Social isolation** — limited English, reduced mobility or small social networks
- **Lack of awareness** — not knowing what constitutes abuse, or that help exists

Creating Culturally Safe Communities — What We Can All Do

For Aged Care Providers

Train staff to recognise signs of elder abuse across cultural contexts

- Create private, culturally safe opportunities for older people to speak about concerns
- Use professional interpreters — never rely on family for sensitive conversations
- Include elder abuse awareness in intake, assessment and care planning
- Know and follow mandatory reporting requirements
- Provide information about rights and reporting in community languages

For Community Members

Learn the signs of elder abuse and know how to raise concerns

- Check in regularly on isolated older people in your community
- Challenge cultural norms that silence or shame victims of abuse
- Support older people to understand their rights and available services
- Create environments where older people feel safe, valued and heard
- Speak up — silence enables abuse to continue

WINTER ACROSS CULTURES:

Traditions, Cultural Comfort Food & Connection

Winter is more than a season — it is a feeling, a rhythm, a cultural memory. Across the world, communities respond to the cold with warmth: warmth of food, warmth of togetherness, and warmth of ritual. For older people from CALD backgrounds, winter carries deep personal and cultural meaning — memories of home, family kitchens, and the comfort of familiar flavours.

In aged care settings, recognising and honouring winter traditions is essential to person-centred, culturally safe care.

Food is never just sustenance — it is identity, memory, and belonging.



■ Warmth Around the World

Every culture has developed winter foods that nourish both body and spirit:

- **Greek & Mediterranean:** Fasolada (bean soup), lamb stifado, avgolemono — slow-cooked dishes shared around the family table.
- **Chinese & East Asian:** Hot pot, congee with ginger, bone broths and warming teas with goji berries and dates to restore Qi.
- **Vietnamese:** Pho — aromatic beef broth with star anise and cinnamon — deeply comforting in cooler months.
- **Italian:** Ribollita (Tuscan bread soup), minestrone, polenta with slow-braised meats.
- **Indian & South Asian:** Dal tadka, haleem — spices like turmeric, ginger and cumin generate warmth.
- **Middle Eastern:** Harira soup, slow-cooked lamb with chickpeas, warm spiced lentils.
- **Eastern European:** Bigos (hunter's stew), borscht - dishes built for long, hard winters.
- **Filipino:** Sinigang (tamarind soup), bulalo (bone marrow broth).
- **African:** Egusi soup, groundnut stew — warming, protein-rich community meals.

Why Winter Food Matters in Aged Care

For older people from CALD backgrounds, familiar winter foods can be profoundly restorative. Culturally familiar food:

- Supports emotional wellbeing and reduces anxiety
- Stimulates appetite and improves nutritional intake
- Triggers positive memory and cognitive engagement
- Affirms cultural identity and sense of belonging
- Strengthens the therapeutic carer-client relationship

■ Seasonal Eating Wisdom

Winter: Root vegetables, legumes, grains, hearty greens, warming spices.

Summer: Leafy greens, fresh fruits, salads, lighter proteins, cooling foods.

Eating seasonally aligns the body with the natural world - supporting immunity, digestion and energy. This ancient wisdom is now endorsed by contemporary nutritional science and directly applicable to aged care food planning.

Culturally Appropriate Food as the Foundation of Nutritional Care

Culturally appropriate food is the essential precursor to all nutritional and dietary advice in aged care, health care and community settings. Before any clinical dietary intervention, providers must understand:

- What foods hold cultural, religious or spiritual meaning
- Dietary laws (halal, kosher, Hindu vegetarianism, Buddhist practices)
- Preferred textures, flavours, cooking methods and meal times
- Foods associated with healing, comfort or celebration in winter
- The role of family in food preparation and shared mealtimes
- Seasonal and traditional food knowledge from the person's culture

A dietary plan that ignores cultural food preferences is not person-centred care — it is a missed opportunity for dignity, connection and therapeutic nourishment.

■ Practical Ideas — Residents & Clients

- Ask about favourite winter soups or dishes from their home country
- Offer warm cultural beverages: chai, herbal teas, congee, warm broth
 - Host a "winter warmers" shared meal featuring community recipes
- Create a winter recipe booklet with resident contributions
- Offer root vegetable-based meals honouring nutrition and cultural familiarity

For Teams & Managers

- Review menus seasonally to reflect winter nutritional needs and cultural preferences
- Consult families and community about meaningful winter foods
- Train kitchen and care staff on the cultural significance of food
- Include food preferences in care planning conversations
- Celebrate winter cultural food days in your activity program

"Food is our common ground, a universal experience." In aged care, culturally meaningful food is also our most powerful act of respect.



FINDING BALANCE:

The Importance of Yin and Yang and Wellbeing

The concept of Yin and Yang is one of the oldest and most enduring frameworks for understanding health and wellbeing in Chinese and broader East and Southeast Asian cultures. Far from being merely a philosophical symbol, it represents a deeply practical guide to living in balance with oneself, with others, and with the natural world.

At its heart, Yin and Yang describes the interplay of opposites: dark and light, cold and warm, rest and activity. True health arises when these forces are in balance.

Understanding Yin and Yang

YIN	YANG
Cool, cold	Warm, hot
Rest, stillness	Activity, movement
Night, winter	Day, summer
Inward, reflective	Outward, expressive
Nourishing, restorative	Energising, stimulating
Listening, receiving	Speaking, giving



Winter as a Yin Season

In traditional Chinese medicine, winter is the most Yin season — a time to turn inward, conserve energy, rest deeply, and nourish with warming, grounding foods.

- Encourage rest and gentle movement rather than strenuous activity
- Provide warm, nourishing foods that support Qi (life energy)
- Create calm, peaceful environments that support reflection
- Honour the need for connection and storytelling

Yin and Yang in Food

Warming Yang Foods for Winter:

- Ginger, garlic, onions, leeks
- Walnuts, chestnuts, black sesame
- Lamb, chicken, bone broths
- Cinnamon, star anise, cloves, black pepper
- Cooked root vegetables — sweet potato, yam, carrot

Cooling Yin Foods (reduce in winter):

- Raw salads, cold fruits, cucumber, tofu, cold beverages



FINDING BALANCE:

The Importance of Yin and Yang and Wellbeing

Yin and Yang in Aged Care Practice

Balancing Care Approaches

- **Activity & Rest:** Balance stimulating activities with quiet, restorative time
- **Social & Solitary:** Honour the need for community connection AND private reflection
- **Warmth & Calm:** Create environments that are physically warm and emotionally soothing

Supporting CALD Older People

- Acknowledge cultural health frameworks alongside Western medicine
- Respect traditional healing practices, herbal teas, and dietary customs
- Engage with cultural health beliefs with curiosity and respect
- Consult families as partners in understanding cultural approaches to health

Activity Ideas — Exploring Balance in Winter

- Gentle seated movement or Tai Chi adapted exercises
- Guided breathing or mindfulness sessions
- Warm herbal tea tasting with discussion of cultural meanings
- "What do you do in winter to stay well in your culture?"
- "What foods or drinks bring you comfort in the cold?"
- "What does rest and balance mean to you?"
- Share the concept of Yin and Yang in a team meeting
- Reflect on the balance in your own practice and self-care
- Explore how seasonal awareness can inform care planning

"Balance is not something you find — it's something you create." The philosophy of Yin and Yang reminds us that true wellbeing comes from honouring the whole person — their body, their culture, their season of life.



THE UNSPOKEN GRIEF OF CARE:

Supporting Culturally Diverse Workforce

Aged care work is one of the most meaningful — and most emotionally demanding — forms of human service. Workers witness life at its most vulnerable. They hold hands in final hours. They are often the most constant presence in an older person's life. And yet the emotional weight they carry is rarely named, rarely supported, and rarely understood.

For workers from CALD backgrounds — who make up a significant proportion of Australia's aged care workforce — this weight is compounded. They carry not only the grief of their clients and residents, but often their own untold stories of migration, displacement, family separation, and loss.

The Hidden Layers

Workers may experience:

- Accumulated grief: Regular exposure to death and dying, with limited debrief or support
- Cultural dissonance: Navigating between their own cultural values and the Australian system
- Language isolation: Feeling unable to fully express emotional distress in a second language
- Discrimination and invisibility: Feeling undervalued or stereotyped by accent or appearance
- Family grief from afar: Mourning loved ones overseas, unable to attend funerals or mourning rituals
- Survivor's guilt: Among workers who fled persecution — the weight of "why did I survive?"

What Leaders & Organisations Can Do

Practical Steps:

- Create regular opportunities for meaningful debrief after difficult events
- Ask staff individually: "How are you really going?"
- Acknowledge cultural grief events — when a staff member loses someone overseas, honour that loss
- Provide access to EAP services with culturally competent counsellors where possible
- Ensure cultural mourning practices are respected and accommodated in rostering
- Name grief as normal in this work — reduce the stigma of emotional vulnerability
- Offer peer support structures — buddy systems, cultural community connections
- Include staff wellbeing as a standing item in supervision and team meetings



THE UNSPOKEN GRIEF OF CARE:

Supporting Culturally Diverse Workforce

Cultural Approaches to Grief

Collective mourning:

Many cultures grieve communally. Individual counselling may not fit everyone.

Spiritual frameworks:

Death is understood through religious belief — prayer, ritual, the afterlife — central to healing.

Food as comfort:

In many cultures, community responds to grief through bringing food and sharing meals.

Time and expression:

Some cultures observe extended mourning; others grieve privately. Neither is wrong.

Role expectations:

Cultural expectations around strength or stoicism may create barriers to seeking support.

Language of grief:

Words for grief and loss may not translate directly — creating additional isolation for workers in a second language.

"We cannot pour from an empty cup. Caring for those who care is not a luxury — it is the foundation of quality aged care."

Resources for Workforce Wellbeing

- Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) — accessible to all staff
- Beyond Blue: beyondblue.org.au — mental health support
- Lifeline — 13 11 14 — 24-hour crisis support
- Palliative Care Australia — palliativecare.org.au
- Local multicultural community organisations for peer connection
- MAC [Micro-Learning Sessions on Cultural Intelligence and Wellbeing](#)



MAC National Symposium - Grief Management with a CALD Focus

We're pleased to announce our upcoming MAC National Symposium on 23 June, focusing on mental health, wellbeing, and grief management. Click the link below for more details:

[MAC National Symposium – Grief Management](#)

In the meantime, you can explore recordings from our previous symposium series:

[MAC Symposium Series Recordings](#)

We look forward to having you join us for another meaningful and insightful event.

WINTER VACCINATIONS

Vaccination is the best preparation.

Keeping your immunisations up to date helps you stay healthy during winter.

Influenza (flu) and COVID-19 viruses change over time, and older people have a higher risk of getting very sick. RSV also causes serious respiratory illness in older people.

Getting vaccinated against these viruses can help protect you and reduce your risk of serious illness and ending up in hospital.

Influenza (flu) vaccine

Influenza viruses and vaccines change every year, which is why we recommend annual vaccination.

If you're 65 years and over, get your annual flu vaccine from April. This helps protect you during the peak flu season from June to September.

Your flu vaccine works best in the first 3 to 4 months after vaccination.

Speak to your healthcare professional and book your vaccination today.

[Find a vaccination provider](#)

COVID-19 vaccine

Regular COVID-19 vaccinations are the best way to protect you from serious illness, hospitalisation and even death.

Your primary course is the first time you receive a COVID-19 vaccine. After this we recommend:

- Adults aged 65 to 74 – a dose every 12 months.
- Adults aged 75 and over – a dose every 6 months.

Speak to your healthcare professional and book your vaccination today.

[Find a vaccination provider](#)

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine

RSV can cause serious respiratory illness in older people.

Vaccination is a safe and effective way to protect against this virus.

If you are 75 years or over, you can get a free RSV vaccine from 15 May 2026 to protect you in the cooler months, when most RSV cases occur.

Speak to your healthcare professional and book your vaccinations today.

[Find a vaccination provider](#)

Eligibility for free vaccines

All vaccines listed on the National Immunisation Program (NIP) Schedule are free but your health professional may charge a fee.

To get vaccines under the NIP, you need to have a Medicare card. Information on how to get a Medicare card is available from Services Australia.

State and territory governments also fund some vaccines. Speak to your healthcare professional or contact the health department in your state or territory.

[Click here for more information](#)

Source: Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

MULTICULTURAL CALENDAR 2026

Multicultural Calendar 2026



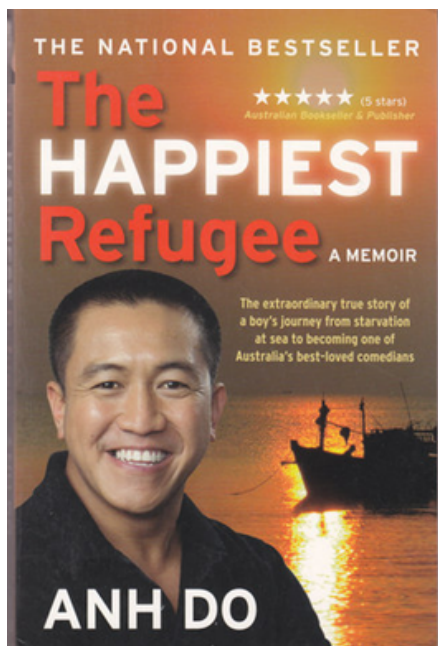
Introducing the Multicultural Calendar, your essential tool for embracing diversity and inclusion year-round! This comprehensive calendar is a vibrant tapestry of dates, celebrating various Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) events throughout the year. It's designed for anyone working with CALD and multicultural communities, as well as anyone interested in broadening their cultural horizons.

[Download our Multicultural Calendar 2026 here](#)

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

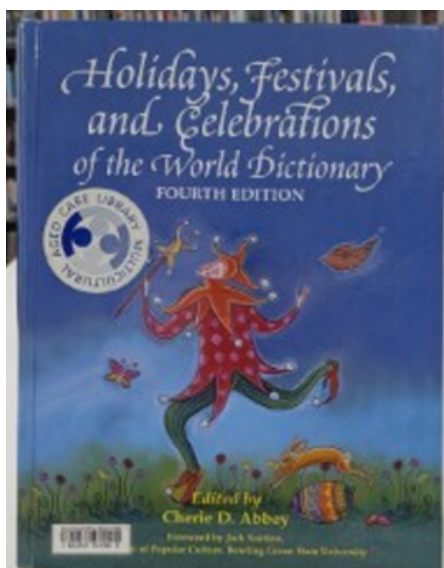
MAC LIBRARY

To access our library or borrow our books, [click here](#)



The happiest refugee by Anh Do – Book review, by Multicultural Aged Care Librarian

The happiest refugee is a heartfelt and uplifting memoir in which Anh Do share his family's journey from Vietnam to Australia. With humour, honesty, and warmth, this memorable read speaks to the strength of family, the importance of hope, and the value of understanding one another's stories, making it a wonderful choice for readers who enjoy books that build empathy and celebrate community.



Holidays, festivals, and celebrations of the world dictionary. Edited by Cherie D. Abbey

Summary: A comprehensive dictionary that describes more than 3,000 holidays and festivals celebrated around the world. Features both secular and religious events from many different cultures, countries, and ethnic groups. Includes contact information for events; multiple appendices with background information on world holidays; extensive bibliography and multiple indexes.

YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

We'd love to hear from you! Share your family traditions, favourite recipes, or special cultural stories so we can feature them in next month's edition.

📧 Callout for ideas:

- Tell us how your family celebrates!
- Share your recipe or story for next month's edition.
- Email us at macsa@mac.org.au with your ideas.

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