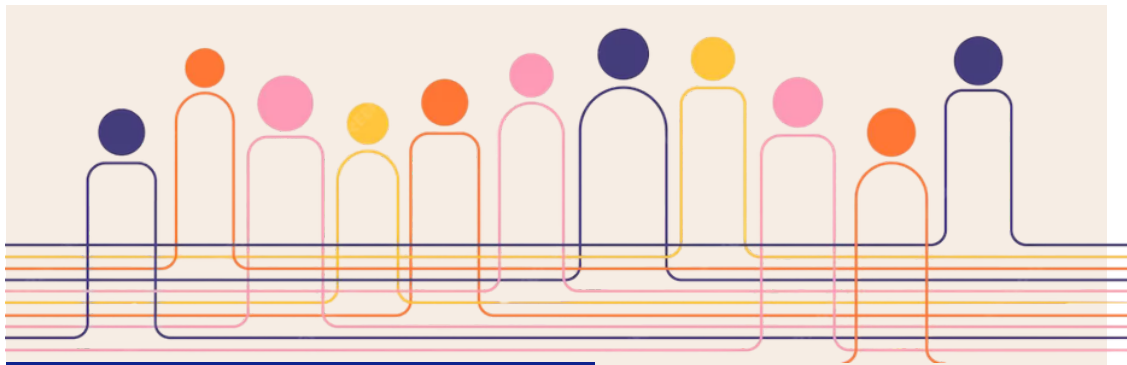


WELCOME TO OUR MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE IN AGED CARE



Welcome to the July edition

July marks the halfway point of the year — a natural moment to pause and check in with the people who make culturally safe, person-centred care possible: our workforce.

This edition looks at mid-year wellbeing, and at winter traditions of gathering and storytelling that mean so much to older people from CALD backgrounds.

We also mark NAIDOC Week (5–12 July), reflect on name days as a quiet marker of identity, and share highlights from MAC's National Symposium on Grief Management with a CALD Focus.

Cultural intelligence is not a compliance checkbox — it is what good, person-centred care looks like in practice. This month's toolkit includes practical resources for building that capability across your team.

This July, we encourage you to:

- Check in genuinely with staff at the year's halfway mark
- Approach NAIDOC Week with sincerity, not tokenism
- Invite residents to share memories of winter gatherings
- Ask, rather than assume, when supporting someone through grief

Multicultural Aged Care (MAC)

IN THIS NEWSLETTER:

- Wellbeing Focus — Mid-Year Check-In: Supporting Staff Wellbeing
- Reminiscence Feature — Gathering In: Winter, Storytelling and the Places We Came Together
- Practical Tool — NAIDOC Week Readiness Checklist for Providers
- A Snapshot of Cultural Celebrations — Bastille Day
- Cultural Tradition Spotlight — Celebrating Name Days
- Resource Spotlight — Why Cultural Intelligence Matters in Aged Care
- Feature Article — Grief Management with a CALD Focus: MAC National Symposium
- Mac Training Schedule
- Your Voice Matters & More Information

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Multicultural
Aged Care

WELLBEING FOCUS

Mid-Year Check-In: Supporting Staff Wellbeing

July marks the halfway point of the calendar year — a natural moment to pause, reflect, and check in with the people who make culturally safe, person-centred care possible: our workforce.

For many staff, the months since January have brought long shifts, winter illness, rostering pressures, and the steady emotional labour of aged care work. Mid-year is also a time when early enthusiasm and resolutions can quietly give way to fatigue, particularly for staff who are far from family, juggling study or second jobs, or supporting their own families through winter.

A genuine mid-year check-in is not a performance review. It is an opportunity for leaders to ask how people are really going, and for teams to reset before the second half of the year.

What staff may be experiencing by mid-year

- Cumulative tiredness from winter rosters and increased illness across the team
- A sense that personal or cultural commitments have taken a back seat to work demands
- Reduced social contact during colder months, particularly for staff living alone or away from family
- Quiet burnout that hasn't yet been named or raised

How leaders can support a meaningful check-in

- Hold brief, individual conversations rather than relying solely on team meetings — ask open questions like “How has this year been for you so far?”
- Revisit flexibility around cultural and religious observances coming up in the second half of the year
- Acknowledge the contribution of culturally and linguistically diverse staff specifically
- Normalise saying “I’m finding this tough” without it being treated as underperformance

Caring for the wellbeing of a culturally diverse workforce is not separate from delivering culturally safe care — it is the foundation of it. A team that feels seen, valued and supported is far better placed to extend that same quality of care to older people.

GATHERING IN:

Winter, Storytelling and the Places We Came Together

Winter has a way of drawing people inward. Shorter days, quieter streets, and the cold itself have long been reasons — across almost every culture — to come together, to stay close, and to talk. Long before television or mobile phones, winter evenings were filled with something older: stories, songs, games, and the kind of conversation that only happens when there is nowhere else to be.

For many older people in aged care, these memories of winter gathering are among the most vivid and deeply held. Not necessarily grand occasions, but the ordinary ones — a particular chair by the fire, a grandmother's voice, a game played at the kitchen table, a song that only came out in the cold months.

Reminiscence work built around winter gathering traditions opens conversation about place, people and belonging — questions that resonate deeply for older people who may be far from the homes and landscapes where those memories were made.

How different cultures have gathered through winter:

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander	Italy & Southern Europe
Winter has long been a time for ceremony, storytelling and cultural knowledge sharing. Fire has been central — both practically and spiritually — as a place where Elders pass on language, law and story to younger generations.	The veglia — an evening gathering of neighbours and extended family around the fire — was a winter tradition in many rural communities. Stories, card games, local music and shared food were the substance of long evenings together.
China & East Asia	Ireland & Scotland
The Winter Solstice (Dongzhi) is a significant time for family reunion, honouring ancestors and sharing warmth. The idea that the family circle should be complete carries strong emotional weight.	The Celtic tradition of winter storytelling placed elders and storytellers at the centre of community. Stories were understood as a form of inheritance, passed on through the long dark months.
Lebanon & Middle East	Japan
Winter is a time for sahra — relaxed evening gatherings of family and friends, often involving coffee, sweets, music and conversation that stretches well into the night.	Kotatsu culture — gathering around a low heated table covered with a blanket — is a beloved winter ritual associated with closeness, warmth and family. A powerful memory for many Japanese-born older people.

GATHERING IN:

Winter, Storytelling and the Places We Came Together

Conversation starters for reminiscence sessions:

TRY ASKING RESIDENTS

"Where did your family gather in winter when you were young? What did that room look like?"

"Was there someone who told stories in your family or community? What do you remember about them?"

"Were there songs or music that came out only in the cold months?"

"What games did children play indoors where you grew up?"

"Who was always there at those gatherings? Is there someone you think about when winter comes?"

Activity ideas for aged care settings

Reminiscence Circle

Theme: "When we gathered" – residents share a memory of a winter evening from their childhood or earlier life.

Favourite Song Session

Residents and staff each nominate one song associated with winter or family gathering for a shared listening activity.

Storytelling Afternoon

Residents share a folk tale, family story or local legend from their background, with staff as attentive listeners.

A note for staff: Reminiscence is most effective when it is unhurried and genuinely curious. Not every resident will want to share, and some memories may carry loss as well as warmth – particularly for people who migrated as adults, or who have outlived the people they gathered with. Follow the resident's lead and remember that listening is itself a form of culturally safe care.



NAIDOC WEEK READINESS CHECKLIST FOR PROVIDERS

National NAIDOC Week 2026 will be held 5–12 July, with this year's official theme, "50 Years of Deadly," marking five decades of NAIDOC Week and honouring the Elders, organisers, artists and communities who have carried it forward.

For aged care providers, NAIDOC Week is an opportunity to engage meaningfully — not as a single symbolic gesture, but as part of an ongoing commitment to cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older people, families and staff. This checklist is designed to help services prepare thoughtfully and avoid tokenism.

Before NAIDOC Week

- ☐ Confirm whether any residents, families or staff identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and ask how they would like the week acknowledged
- ☐ Check for local NAIDOC Week events or ceremonies your service could attend or support
- ☐ Identify a local Aboriginal-owned business, artist or Elder who could be engaged respectfully (and paid appropriately)
- ☐ Brief staff on the 2026 theme, "50 Years of Deadly," and its significance
- ☐ Review whether your current Acknowledgement of Country is accurate and specific to the Country your service operates on

During NAIDOC Week

- ☐ Begin gatherings or activities with a genuine Acknowledgement of Country
- ☐ Offer First Nations-led content — books, music, art or storytelling sourced from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices
- ☐ Create space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and residents to participate on their own terms
- ☐ Display the official NAIDOC Week artwork or theme materials in shared spaces
- ☐ Offer a yarning circle or informal storytelling session for interested residents

Embedding it beyond the week

- ☐ Reflect on how Standard 1 (dignity, choice and cultural safety) is being met for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older people every day, not just during NAIDOC Week
- ☐ Review care planning processes to ensure cultural identity and connection to Country are recorded and respected
- ☐ Identify one ongoing action — a training session, a resource, a relationship with a local community organisation — that continues after the week ends.

A note on practice: NAIDOC Week is most meaningful when it strengthens relationships that already exist, or genuinely begins new ones — rather than standing in for cultural safety the rest of the year. The goal is sincerity, not perfection.

BASTILLE DAY: LA FÊTE NATIONALE

14 JULY - FRANCE



Bastille Day, or La Fête Nationale, commemorates the storming of the Bastille fortress in 1789 and is widely celebrated as France's national day. It marks themes of liberty, unity and national pride, and is one of the most recognisable cultural dates in the French calendar.

For residents with French heritage, Bastille Day can be a meaningful opportunity for connection to language, music and memory — even for those who have lived in Australia for decades.

Common traditions may include

- Fireworks displays and public celebrations across French cities, particularly in Paris
- The Bastille Day military parade along the Champs-Élysées
- Community gatherings, music and dancing (bals populaires)
- Sharing French food and wine with family and friends

Activity ideas (aged care friendly)

- Play French music — chanson, accordion or contemporary French artists — during an afternoon gathering
- Offer a simple French-inspired afternoon tea: madeleines, a light cheese platter, or coffee and pastries
- Display French flag colours or simple decorations in a shared space
- Invite residents with French heritage to share memories of celebrations from their childhood or family life
- Show short video footage of the Bastille Day parade or fireworks for residents who enjoy watching cultural broadcasts

A small, genuine gesture — a familiar song, a French phrase, a shared pastry — can mean a great deal to a resident who rarely has the chance to connect with this part of their identity.

CULTURAL TRADITION SPOTLIGHT

Celebrating Name Days: A Tradition Worth Remembering

In many European, particularly Catholic and Orthodox Christian, communities, a person's name day (fête, onomastico, imieniny, Namenstag) is celebrated alongside — or sometimes instead of — their birthday. The tradition assigns a feast day to each saint's name on the religious calendar, and individuals celebrate on the day matching their own first name.

For residents from countries such as France, Greece, Poland, Italy, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and parts of Scandinavia, name days can be a cherished and often overlooked part of their cultural identity — one that may have faded from daily life in Australia but remains a strong memory.

Why this matters in aged care

- Name days were often celebrated more publicly than birthdays in some cultures, marked with visits, small gifts, or shared meals
- For residents who no longer celebrate their name day, simply being asked about it can be a meaningful and unexpected gesture of recognition
- It offers a gentle, low-effort way to mark identity and individuality, particularly for residents whose birthdays may not be well documented or who are reluctant to draw attention to birthdays due to age

Activity ideas

- Ask residents (or families, on intake) whether they observe a name day, and note the date if they'd like it acknowledged
- Look up a resident's patron saint together as a simple, light-hearted research activity
- Mark name days on a shared calendar alongside birthdays, with a small acknowledgement such as a card or a shared morning tea
- Invite staff from relevant cultural backgrounds to explain how name days were celebrated in their own family or community
- Use the occasion as a reminiscence prompt: "Did your family celebrate name days? What happened on yours?"

Name days are a small but genuine way to demonstrate that a resident's culture and identity are seen and valued — not only during major calendar celebrations, but in the everyday details that matter to them personally.

WHY CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE MATTERS IN AGED CARE - and the Tools That Make It Easier

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is not a compliance checkbox. It is a practical capability — the ability to understand, respect and respond to the cultural backgrounds, values and lived experiences of the people in your care and on your team. In aged care, where culture shapes how older people understand illness, communicate pain, make decisions, eat, pray, grieve and connect, CQ is at the heart of quality care.

More than half of Australia's aged care workforce was born overseas. Many of the older people supported by aged care services come from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, with languages, beliefs and traditions that differ significantly from the mainstream. When care workers lack the tools or confidence to navigate cultural difference, the result is not neutral — it leads to misunderstanding, missed needs, reduced dignity and, in some cases, real harm.

The good news is that building CQ does not require years of study or a comprehensive overhaul of service systems. It starts with the right resources, used consistently, and supported by leaders who take cultural safety seriously.

Why CQ matters: the Quality Standards

STANDARD 1	STANDARD 6	STANDARD 7
The Individual (Consumer dignity, choice and cultural safety) — this is the primary home for CQ. It explicitly requires providers to respect identity, culture, diversity, and to deliver culturally safe care, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and LGBTIQ+ elders this standard expects care to ensure cultural safety and respect for identity	Food and Nutrition — relevant given your catering/menu work: cultural preferences and special diets are respected as part of food, hydration, and the dining experience.	The Residential Community — cultural safety and connection extend into community/belonging, including cultural safety training, language access, and LGBTIQ+ inclusive care

WHY CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE MATTERS IN AGED CARE - and the Tools That Make It Easier

The MAC toolkit: resources designed for practice

Micro-Learning Sessions Flexible, bite-sized sessions for busy workplaces — completed live or self-paced. Grounded in real practice experience from MAC's trainers. → Click here to access	Culture, Values & Attitudes Webinar Series Structured series on how culture shapes values and behaviours in care delivery. Aligned with the Quality Standards and Diversity Framework. → Click here to access
CQ Wellness Checklist Practical checklist for reflecting on cultural identity, person-led decision-making, family partnership and strengths-based practice across assessment and daily support. → Download the checklist	Wellness & Reablement Evidence Checklist (CALD Lens) Audit-ready checklist for CALD CHSP providers, clearly mapped to Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 of the Strengthened Quality Standards. → Read more on our website
MindCare — Educator & Participant Resources Co-designed dementia prevention and brain health education for CALD communities. In-language slide packs, facilitator guides and participant handouts. → Find out more about MindCare	MAC Multicultural Calendar 2026 Essential planning tool mapping key cultural and religious dates across the year, supporting providers to plan rosters, activities and communications with cultural awareness built in. → Download the Calendar 2026

Where to start

If your service is early in this work, the Multicultural Calendar and CQ Wellness Checklist are two straightforward starting points — they require no technical expertise and can be applied immediately in planning and care delivery. For services ready to go deeper, the Micro-Learning Sessions and webinar series offer structured capability building that can be integrated into existing team learning.

Cultural intelligence grows through practice, reflection and leadership. These resources are designed to make that growth practical, accessible and grounded in the realities of aged care work.

For more information contact MAC: 08 8241 9900 · macsa@mac.org.au · www.mac.org.au

GRIEF MANAGEMENT WITH A CALD FOCUS

Reflections from the MAC National Symposium

On 23 June 2026, Multicultural Aged Care(MAC) hosted its National Symposium on Grief Management with a CALD Focus — a three-hour program bringing together researchers, clinicians, theologians, community leaders, and people with lived experience from across Australia.

"We share a collective responsibility to ensure that care is not only clinically excellent, but also culturally responsive. So that every individual and every family experience dignity, understanding and respect at the most vulnerable moments of their lives."

— Maria Johns, CEO, Multicultural Aged Care

Grief is universal. Grieving is personal.

VR
Vandana Rathore
Programs Manager,
MAC

Vandana opened the presentations with a lens drawn from Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and Emotional Intelligence (EQ) frameworks. Before we can understand a person's grief, we need to understand the person — their culture, their migration story, their relationships, their values, and the unique complexity that makes their experience unlike anyone else's.

She introduced the concept of *diversity within diversity* — no two people from the same cultural background will grieve in exactly the same way. She invited participants to carry three questions into every conversation:

- What assumptions am I bringing?
- What am I learning?
- What matters most to this person, right now?

Key message: *"Understanding grief is not about memorising cultural facts — it is about understanding people."*



GRIEF MANAGEMENT WITH A CALD FOCUS

Reflections from the MAC National Symposium

Faith, ritual, and the Greek Orthodox experience of loss

FM Father Michael Saromatis <i>Priest, St Basil's Homes SA</i>	Father Michael spoke of grief as the wound of love — not a failure of faith, but a sacred expression of it. Drawing on 14 years of ministry and eight years alongside aged care residents, he described how for Greek Orthodox communities, grief is not carried alone — it moves through family, parish, kitchen table, ceremony, and the prayers of the broader community. He reflected on practices aged care services may not always understand: the call for the priest in the final hours, the gathering of extended family and godparents, the 40-day memorial service, ongoing cemetery visits, and the preparation of Koliva (boiled wheat) as an act of theology and love. <i>Ask about faith early: "Would you like us to contact your priest? Are there prayers or religious practices that are important to you?" — Ask early, not when death is moments away.</i>
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Evidence, frameworks and culturally responsive practice

CH Christopher Hall AM <i>CEO, Grief Australia</i>	Christopher challenged familiar frameworks: the Kübler-Ross five-stage model has no empirical support as a linear sequence, and clinical criteria for prolonged grief disorder were validated almost exclusively on Western populations. He outlined three frameworks that travel well across cultures — meaning reconstruction, continuing bonds, and the dual process model — and explored disenfranchised grief, a particular risk for CALD communities. Five evidence-based principles for practice with CALD communities: 1. Ask rather than assume — approach each person with genuine curiosity 2. Support rituals and spirituality as central resources, not peripheral concerns 3. Address language directly — do not assume comfort from functional communication 4. Adapt frameworks thoughtfully — do not abandon them 5. Address systemic barriers — cultural safety must be built into service design, not added on
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GRIEF MANAGEMENT WITH A CALD FOCUS

Reflections from the MAC National Symposium

Palliative care resources for CALD communities

CH Dr Olivia Farrer Senior Research Fellow, CareSearch & Pally Aged, Flinders University	Through four case studies, Dr Farrer illustrated how grief manifests differently depending on background and the nature of loss: • An 84-year-old Vietnamese man withdrawing from staff — anticipatory grief expressed through silence • A Middle Eastern family choosing not to disclose a terminal diagnosis — protective, culturally informed grief • A former teacher with dementia becoming agitated during personal care — identity grief expressed through behaviour, not words • A husband placing his wife into residential care — guilt, role grief, and a changed sense of identity
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Conversations from the heart: lived experience

The symposium closed with a panel featuring Anna Howard, CEO of Murray Mallee Aged Care Group, and Cecilia Chiolero, PICAC NT Manager at COTA NT, both of whom spoke with openness and courage about their personal experiences of grief, loss, and the intersection of culture and care.

"Follow up. It doesn't have to be formal. A card, a note, a small thing. People don't expect you forever, but in those quiet months when everyone else has moved on — it matters."

— Cecilia Chiolero, PICAC NT Manager, COTA NT

"Don't underestimate the bonds that form. Staff grieve too. Make space for that."

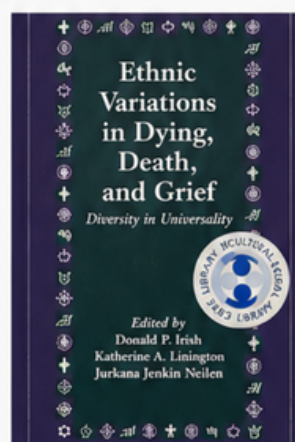
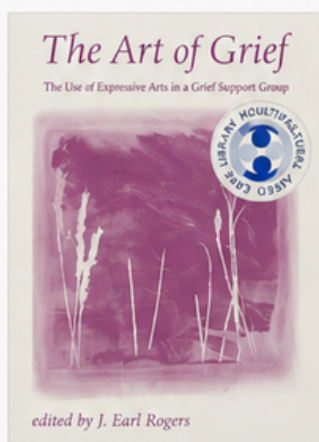
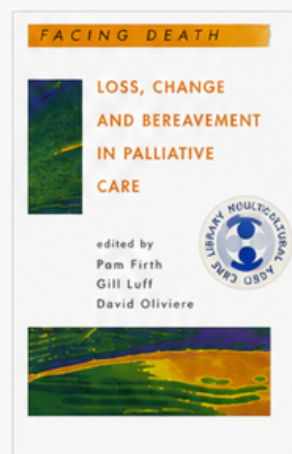
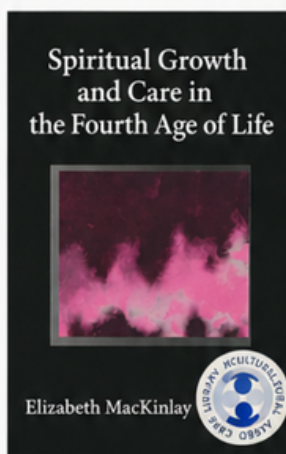
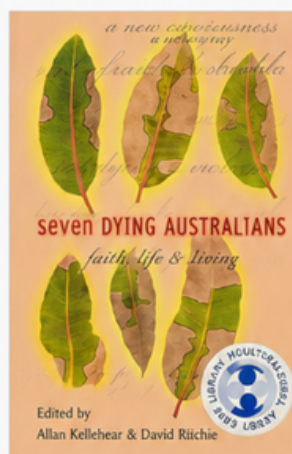
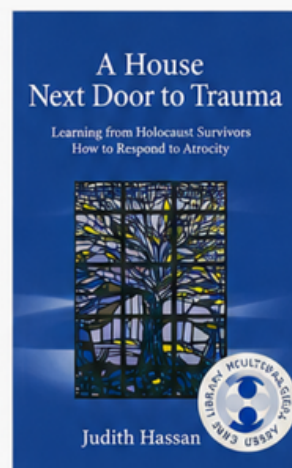
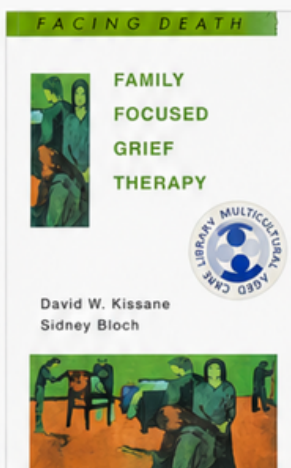
— Anna Howard, CEO, Murray Mallee Aged Care Group

Access the symposium

- [Full symposium recording](#)
- [Download Speaker Presentations](#)

Grief Management with a CALD Focus

Grief, Trauma & Bereavement Resources



MULTICULTURAL AGED CARE LIBRARY

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MAC TRAINING SCHEDULE

August - December 2026

Date	Session	Format	Audience
Wed 5 Aug	MAC CQ Series Sessions	Virtual	All aged care staff
Thu 10 Sep	MAC CiA Workshop	Virtual	Lifestyle Coordinators & Diversional Therapists
Wed 23 Sep	MAC CQ Series Sessions	Virtual	All aged care staff
Wed 7 Oct	MAC CQ Series Sessions	Virtual	All aged care staff
Wed 4 Nov	MAC CiA Workshop	Virtual	Lifestyle Coordinators & Diversional Therapists
Wed 11 Nov	MAC CQ Series Sessions	Virtual	All aged care staff
Wed 25 Nov	MAC National Symposium	Virtual	Open to all – providers,
Fri 4 Dec	MAC CQ Series Sessions	Virtual	All aged care staff

Tailored training is also available to meet the specific needs of your organisation and workforce.

[View full schedule & register here](#)

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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