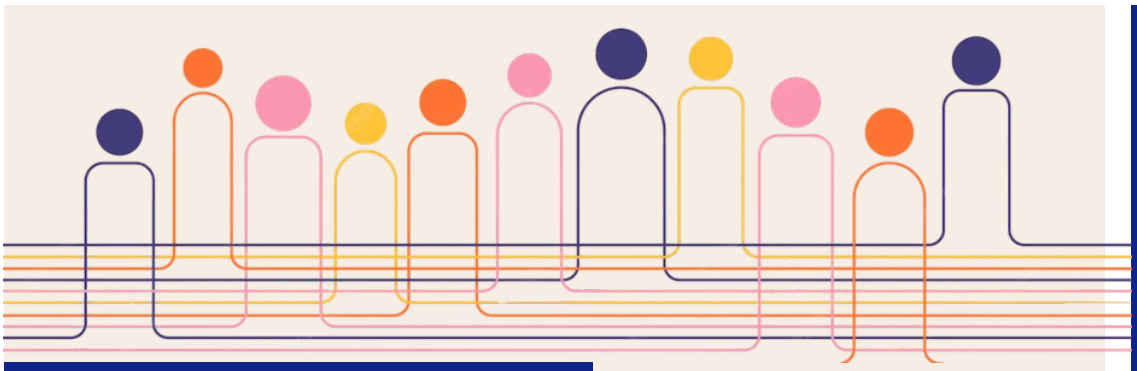
WELCOME TO OUR MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE IN AGED CARE



Welcome to the September edition

This month brings together two threads that matter deeply in aged care: cultural belonging and emotional wellbeing.

September is home to some of the year's most significant cultural and religious observances — Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur for Jewish communities, Ganesh Chaturthi for Hindu communities, the Mid-Autumn Festival celebrated across Chinese, Vietnamese and other East and Southeast Asian communities, and Malaysia Day.

It's also home to R U OK? Day, World Alzheimer's Month and Australian Citizenship Day — each, in its own way, about connection and belonging.

In this edition, we look at these occasions not just as dates on a calendar, but through a CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) lens — exploring what they mean for older people's dignity and wellbeing, for how we support mental health and dementia care across cultures, and for the diverse workforce that makes aged care what it is.

IN THIS NEWSLETTER:

- Welcome to the September edition
- A snapshot of cultural celebrations — September 2026
- Why September's celebrations matter to older people
- R U OK? Day through a CALD lens
- Culturally responsive dementia care — World Alzheimer's Month
- Belonging and identity — Australian Citizenship Day
- MAC Training schedule
- Resource spotlight
- Your voice matters

How to Use This Newsletter:

✔️ For frontline staff
✔️ For managers
✔️ For volunteers
✔️ For community members

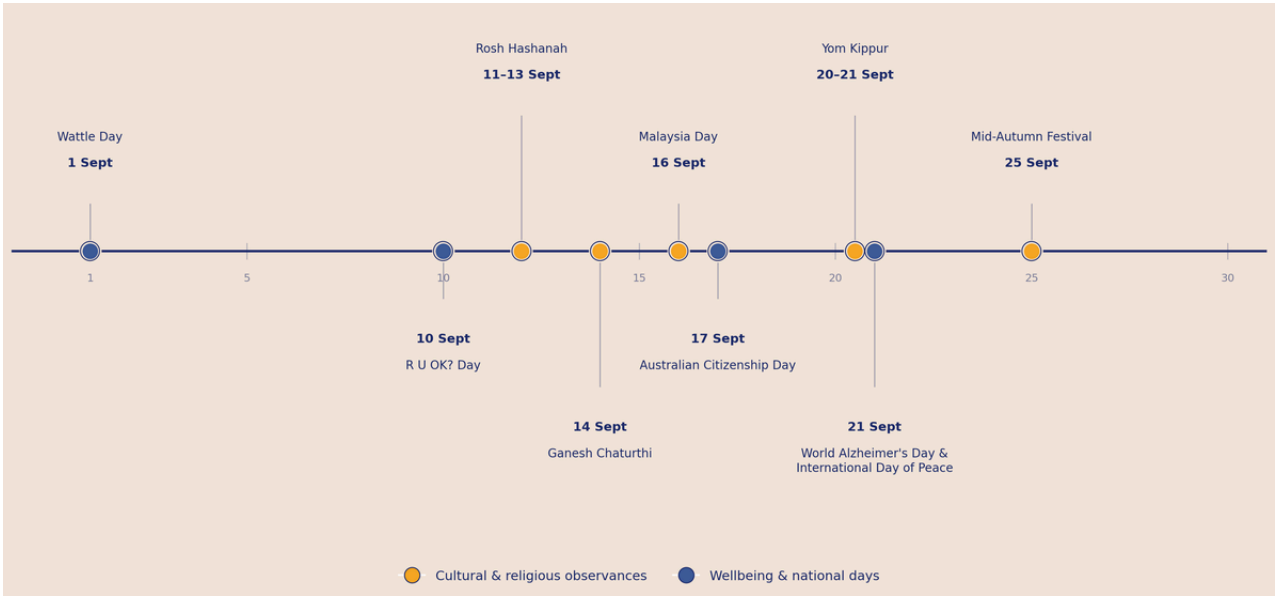
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Multicultural
Aged Care

A SNAPSHOT OF CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

September 2026 at a Glance

Date	Observance	Community	Category
1 Sept	Wattle Day	Australia-wide	National
10 Sept	R U OK? Day	Australia-wide	National
11–13 Sept	Rosh Hashanah	Jewish	Cultural
14 Sept	Ganesh Chaturthi	Hindu	Cultural
16 Sept	Malaysia Day	Malaysian	Cultural
17 Sept	Australian Citizenship Day	Australia-wide	National
20–21 Sept	Yom Kippur	Jewish	Cultural
21 Sept	World Alzheimer's Day & International Day of Peace	Global	National
25 Sept	Mid-Autumn Festival	Chinese, Vietnamese, East/SE Asian	Cultural





A SNAPSHOT OF CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

11–13 September – Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year)



Rosh Hashanah marks the beginning of the Jewish High Holy Days, a time of reflection, renewal and hope for the year ahead.

Common traditions may include:
•Attending synagogue services
•Sharing apples dipped in honey, symbolising hope for a sweet new year
•Blowing the shofar (ram's horn)
•Reflecting on the past year and setting intentions for the one ahead

Activity ideas:
•A simple “apple and honey” tasting for residents and staff who observe
•Sharing the story and symbolism of the shofar
•Discussion prompts such as “What does a fresh start mean to you?”



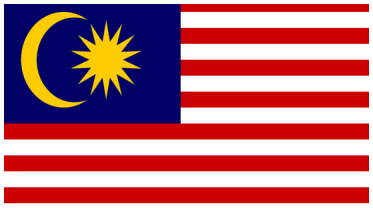
14 September – Ganesh Chaturthi (Hindu)

Ganesh Chaturthi celebrates the birth of Lord Ganesh, remover of obstacles and bringer of good fortune, and is one of the most joyfully celebrated festivals in Hindu communities.

Common traditions may include:
•Home and temple prayers (puja)
•Sharing modak, a sweet dumpling said to be Ganesh's favourite treat
•Music, colour and community gatherings

Activity ideas:
•Modak or a similar sweet tasting (mindful of dietary needs)
•Sharing the story of Ganesh and what he represents
•A short discussion on symbols of good fortune across different cultures

A SNAPSHOT OF CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS



16 September – Malaysia Day

Malaysia Day marks the formation of Malaysia in 1963 and is a moment of pride for staff and residents with Malaysian heritage.

Activity ideas:

•A short “did you know” trivia about Malaysia's cultures, languages and cuisines

•Inviting staff with Malaysian backgrounds to share a favourite dish or memory.

Did you know?

Malaysia has given Australia — and South Australia in particular — some well-known public figures. Senator Penny Wong, Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, was born in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. Former SA MP Jing Lee was born in Malaysia and moved to Adelaide at age 13. And MasterChef Australia favourites Poh Ling Yeow (born in Ipoh) and Adam Liaw (born in Penang) were both born in Malaysia and grew up in Adelaide.



20–21 September – Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)

The most solemn day in the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur follows the Ten Days of Repentance that begin at Rosh Hashanah. It is marked by fasting, prayer and reflection.

Common traditions may include:

•A full day of fasting (where health allows)

•Extended prayer services

•Reflection on forgiveness and renewal

Practice considerations:

•Be mindful that fasting may affect energy levels or scheduling needs

•Offer flexibility and quiet space for staff or residents observing

A SNAPSHOT OF CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

25 September – Mid-Autumn Festival



Also known as the Moon Festival, this is one of the most widely celebrated occasions across Chinese, Vietnamese and other East and Southeast Asian communities, marking the full moon, family reunion and gratitude for the harvest.

Common traditions may include:
·Sharing mooncakes with family and friends
·Lantern displays and lantern walks
·Moon-gazing and storytelling (including the legend of Chang'e)



Activity ideas:
·Mooncake tasting (mindful of dietary and sugar considerations)
·A simple lantern-making craft session
·Storytelling session sharing the Mid-Autumn legend



WHY SEPTEMBER'S CELEBRATIONS MATTER TO OLDER PEOPLE

September's cultural calendar — spanning Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Ganesh Chaturthi and the Mid-Autumn Festival — is a reminder that supporting cultural celebration is not a “nice to have” in aged care. It is a core part of delivering dignified, person-centred and culturally safe care to older people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Dignity and Cultural Identity

For an older Jewish resident, hearing the shofar or sharing apples and honey at Rosh Hashanah may connect them to a lifetime of family gatherings. For an older Chinese or Vietnamese resident, a mooncake at the Mid-Autumn Festival may carry the memory of generations of family reunions under the same full moon. These moments allow older people to maintain connection to their identity, heritage, language, faith and life story — affirming personal dignity and recognising the whole person, not just their care needs.

This aligns with Aged Care Standard 1, which requires that older people are treated with respect and recognition of identity, and receive care that is culturally safe.

Choice and Self-Determination

Not every older person who identifies with a culture or faith will want to observe every occasion in the same way — or at all. Enabling access to cultural events, traditional food and religious observances (such as fasting arrangements around Yom Kippur, or quiet space for prayer) empowers older people to remain active decision-makers in their daily lives, in line with Standard 1's expectation that care is guided by the older person's own preferences and choices.



WHY SEPTEMBER'S CELEBRATIONS MATTER TO OLDER PEOPLE

Emotional Wellbeing and Belonging

For many older CALD Australians — particularly those who migrated as adults or arrived as refugees — cultural celebrations provide continuity, emotional security and a sense of belonging. A familiar festival, food or prayer can reduce social isolation and strengthen a sense of connection to community, even for residents who may be far from extended family.

Culturally Safe Practice

Recognising September's observances — even briefly, through a shared food tasting, a quiet reflection space, or simply asking a resident how they'd like a date acknowledged — demonstrates cultural safety in action. It builds trust between services, older people and families, and reflects the MAC Diversity Framework's principle of embedding cultural intelligence and inclusive practice across everyday service delivery.

A Simple Starting Point

Staff don't need to be experts in Judaism, Hinduism or East Asian traditions to get this right. A good starting point is simply asking:

> *"Is there a date this month that matters to you, and is there something small we could do to mark it together?"*



R U OK? DAY - 10 SEPTEMBER 2026
THROUGH A CALD LENS

R U OK? Day reminds us of the power of a simple, genuine conversation. But in a workforce and resident population as culturally diverse as aged care's, how that conversation is asked — and how it lands — can differ significantly across cultures.

Why This Matters in Aged Care

More than half of Australia's aged care workforce was born overseas, and many residents are from CALD backgrounds too. A “one script fits all” approach to checking in risks missing signs of distress in people whose culture shapes how — or whether — they talk about how they're feeling.

Understanding Cultural Differences in Expressing Distress

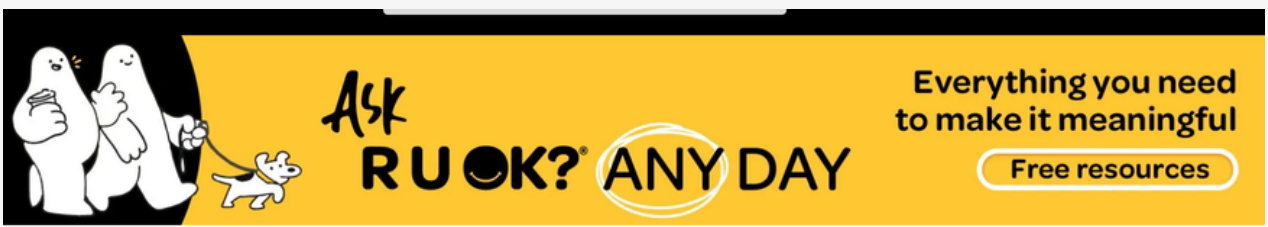
In some cultures, openly discussing feelings or mental health can be uncommon, discouraged, or even carry stigma. Some staff and residents may express distress through physical symptoms, silence, changes in appetite or behaviour, rather than words. Others may feel that raising a personal concern with someone senior to them, or outside close family, is inappropriate.
This doesn't mean someone doesn't need support — it means the invitation to talk may need to look different.

Supporting Staff as Well as Residents

R U OK? Day is as much about checking in on colleagues as residents. Staff who have migrated, who work far from family, or who are navigating a new culture and language on top of the demands of aged care work, can carry pressures that aren't always visible. A genuine “how are you going?” from a manager or peer — asked with cultural awareness, not assumption — can make a real difference.

Moving Forward

A good check-in isn't about getting the “right” answer in one conversation — it's about consistently showing someone they're seen, in a way that respects who they are and how their culture shapes the way they connect.



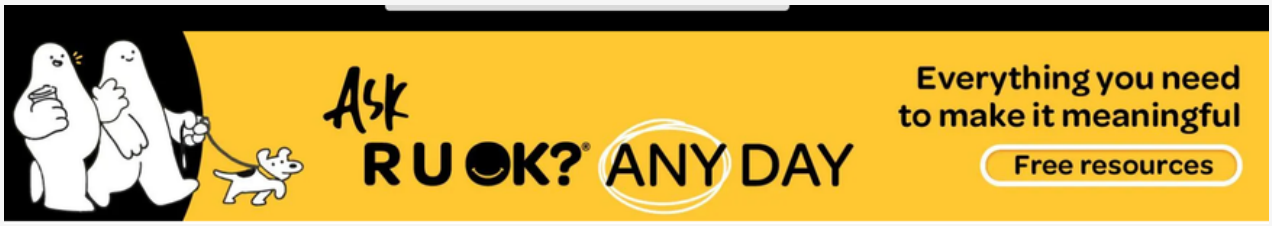
R U OK? DAY
THROUGH A CALD LENS

R U OK? Day: Generic vs. Culturally Aware Check-Ins

Situation	Generic approach	Culturally aware approach
Asking the question	"Are you depressed?"	"How are you travelling lately?"
Silence in response	Assume they're fine	Recognise stoicism or privacy around emotion may be cultural, not avoidance
Language barrier	Rely on gestures or guesswork	Involve a trusted interpreter or bilingual colleague
No answer straight away	Move on	Follow up gently in a later, unhurried conversation
Reading distress	Look for verbal cues only	Watch for physical symptoms and behaviour change too
Who should help	Assume the service should step in	Respect that some cultures look to family/community first, while keeping support available

R U OK? offers a range of free, practical resources to help start meaningful conversations. Their community hub includes the "4 conversation steps" alongside tailored guides for different groups — including sports clubs, workplaces, rural and regional communities, and more. For CALD communities, R U OK? provides **translated materials in over a dozen languages**, including Simplified and Traditional Chinese, Vietnamese, Greek, Arabic, Korean, Hindi, Italian, Punjabi, Persian, Spanish and more, helping ensure the conversation is accessible regardless of language background.

For older Australians specifically, the "Your Natter Matters" program offers a free conversation guide, activity book, and "Conversation Bingo," with translated versions available in Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Greek and Arabic — a great fit for reaching seniors who may be experiencing isolation.



CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE DEMENTIA CARE

A CALD LENS FOR WORLD ALZHEIMER'S MONTH

September is World Alzheimer's Month, with World Alzheimer's Day falling on 21 September. Dementia affects people across all cultures — but how it is understood, discussed, diagnosed and supported can vary widely, and this has real implications for care.

Why Culture Matters in Dementia Care

Dementia can bring a phenomenon known as "language regression," where a person who has spoken English for decades gradually reverts to their first language as the disease progresses. A resident who has not needed an interpreter in years may suddenly need one again. Care that isn't prepared for this can leave a person unable to communicate their needs, comfort or distress — not because of memory loss alone, but because the wrong language is being used to reach them.

Culturally Responsive Dementia Care

Common challenge for CALD residents/families	Culturally responsive approach
Language regression to a first language	Prioritise first-language conversation, music and comfort phrases
Stigma around a dementia diagnosis	Approach gently, avoid clinical labels, involve trusted family members
Family feels sole cultural responsibility to care	Introduce shared support respectfully, alongside cultural expectations
Diagnostic tools built for Western, English-speaking contexts	Use in-language or interpreter-supported assessment
Unfamiliar environment increases distress or confusion	Use familiar food, music, religious items and family photos as anchors

Supporting Families Through the Journey

For many CALD families, a dementia diagnosis can bring grief, confusion about the health system, and pressure to manage everything internally. A culturally safe approach means walking alongside families — not replacing their role, but making it easier for them to accept support without feeling they've failed a cultural or family obligation.

Resource Spotlight: MindCare

MindCare is a three-year national research project working to reduce dementia risk in culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Rather than relying only on clinicians, MindCare trains community educators to deliver bite-sized, engaging education — including animated stories, short films and reflective activities — in Vietnamese, Hindi, Greek and Arabic. MAC is proud to be one of the partner organisations helping bring this program to community. Click here to find more about MindCare.

BELONGING AND IDENTITY:

WHAT AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP DAY MEANS IN AGED CARE



Australian Citizenship Day, held each 17 September, marks the moment thousands of Australians each year formally commit to this country — often after years, sometimes decades, of building a life here. For much of the aged care workforce, this day carries personal weight.

A Workforce Shaped by Migration

Australia's aged care sector is one of the most culturally diverse workforces in the country. Many staff members are migrants themselves — some who became citizens years ago, some newly arrived on visas, and some still on the pathway to citizenship. Each of these staff members brings language skills, cultural knowledge and lived experience of migration that directly strengthens the sector's ability to connect with older CALD Australians.

Dual Identity, Not Divided Identity

Becoming an Australian citizen doesn't mean leaving another identity behind. For many staff, citizenship sits alongside — not in place of — a strong connection to their culture of origin, language and traditions. Recognising this dual identity, rather than expecting staff to "choose" one culture over another, is part of building a genuinely inclusive workplace.

Why This Matters for Workforce Culture

Acknowledging days like this — through a simple morning tea, a "did you know" fact, or by inviting staff to share their own journey — signals that an organisation values the whole person behind the uniform, not just their role. This kind of recognition has been shown to support staff wellbeing, retention and a genuine sense of belonging at work, which in turn supports more consistent, higher-quality care for residents.

A Small Way to Mark It

You don't need a large event to make this meaningful. Even asking a simple, respectful question in a team meeting — "Is there anyone who'd like to share what becoming a citizen, or what Australia becoming home, has meant to them?" — can open a valuable and connecting conversation.

MAC TRAINING SCHEDULE

September - December 2026

Date	Session	Format	Audience
Wed 23 Sep	MAC CQ Series Sessions: Beyond good intentions: Moving from cultural awareness to cultural humility	Virtual	All aged care staff
Wed 7 Oct	MAC CQ Series Sessions: Culture and Choices: Advance Care Planning	Virtual	All aged care staff
Wed 4 Nov	MAC Culture in Ageing (CiA) Workshop: Culture and Safety (more details to be confirmed)	Virtual	Lifestyle Coordinators & Diversional Therapists
Thurs 12 Nov	MAC CQ Series Sessions: A Taste of Culture: Food, Identity and Care	Virtual	All aged care staff
Wed 25 Nov	MAC National Symposium- From Rights to Practice: Creating Cultural Safety Across Diversity in Aged Care	Virtual	Open to all — providers, workforce, community
Fri 4 Dec	MAC CQ Series Sessions: : Culture, Connection and Mental Wellbeing	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

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT
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

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 iIdeas:

- 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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