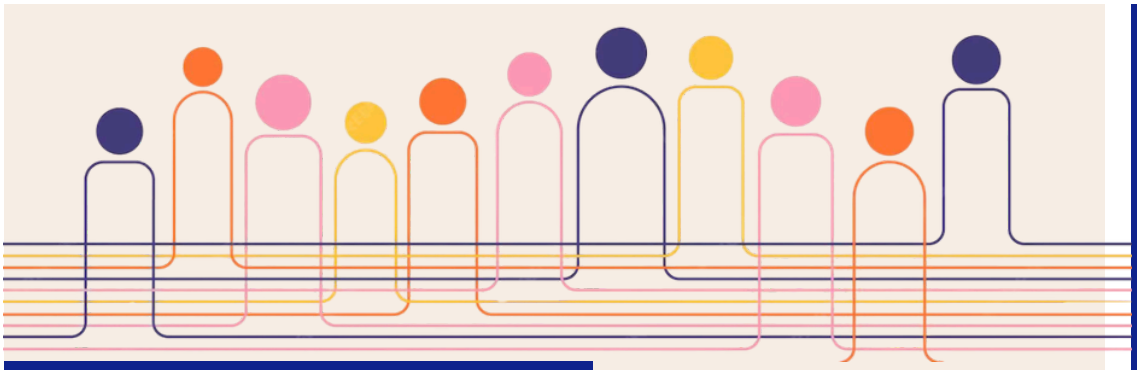
WELCOME TO OUR MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE IN AGED CARE



Welcome to the August edition

August brings Australia's largest Indigenous cultural gathering to Arnhem Land, a run of South Asian independence days, and Raksha Bandhan — a month rich with meaning for older people and staff from CALD backgrounds.

We also mark Dental Health Week, start preparing residents and staff for the change of season, and look at how conversations about cancer and illness differ across cultures ahead of Daffodil Day.

Throughout, we reflect on what it means to genuinely include everyone — Bukmak — in the way we plan and deliver care.

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 August, we encourage you to:
· Reflect on what 'Bukmak' — everyone — means for genuinely inclusive care
· Ask staff which cultural or religious dates matter to them, rather than assuming
· Approach conversations about illness and cancer with cultural humility
· Start gently preparing residents and staff for the change of season

Multicultural Aged Care (MAC)

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Multicultural
Aged Care

CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

Garma Festival — 31 July – 3 August

Australia's largest Indigenous cultural gathering is held each year at the Gulkula ceremonial site on Gumatj Country, about 40km from Nhulunbuy in North East Arnhem Land, and hosted by the Yothu Yindi Foundation. Now in its 26th year, Garma began as a small community gathering in 1999 and has grown into one of the most influential forums on the national calendar — Prime Ministers, Indigenous leaders, academics and community members all sit together on the red dirt to talk about the issues that matter most. The word 'Garma' itself describes a two-way learning process, a meeting place where freshwater and saltwater meet, and where Yolŋu and non-Indigenous Australians (balanda) come together as one. Each evening, accompanied by the yidaki (didgeridoo) and bilma (clapsticks), Yolŋu clans perform bunggul (traditional dance) and share manikay (song) and storytelling connected to their Country. This year's theme, Bukmak — meaning 'everyone' or 'all of us' — captures the idea that the future being discussed at Garma belongs to everyone, especially the next generation of children.

Activity ideas:

- Share the theme ‘Bukmak’ with staff and reflect together on what it means to genuinely include everyone in the way we plan and deliver care
- Play recordings of manikay (song) or bunggul (dance) footage where available, such as NITV or SBS coverage
- Invite an Acknowledgement of Country to open team meetings or handovers this week
- Talk with residents about their own experiences of Country, storytelling and intergenerational knowledge, wherever they come from





Source:https://yyf.com.au/garma-festival/





FEATURE: LISTENING ON COUNTRY

Reflections on Garma Festival and Cultural Safety

Every August, the conversation at Garma Festival ripples out well beyond Arnhem Land. Held on Gumatj Country at the Gulkula ceremonial site, Garma is Australia's largest Indigenous cultural gathering — now 26 years old. Unlike most national conversations, Garma isn't held in Canberra boardrooms; governments and organisations travel to Yolŋu Country, on Yolŋu terms, to listen.

This year's theme, Bukmak — meaning 'everyone' or 'all of us' — is a simple but pointed idea: that the future being discussed on the dance ground at Gulkula belongs to everyone, particularly the children who will inherit it. For aged care, cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders is built through the same things Garma is built on: two-way learning, shared decision-making, and genuine space for knowledge passed down through generations.

Why this matters in aged care

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can experience the aged care system very differently to non-Indigenous Australians — shaped by history, distance from Country, family and kinship structures, and past experiences with institutions. Many older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are also 'stolen generations' survivors or their descendants, which can shape trust in formal care systems in ways that are easy for services to overlook. August is a moment to pause and ask honestly how well our own services are meeting that need — not only in policy, but in daily practice.

Small actions this month

- Open team meetings or shift handovers with an Acknowledgement of Country
- Ask whether any residents would like support to reconnect with Country, family or community

Share NITV or SBS Garma coverage with staff as a short, informal learning moment

- Revisit cultural safety training available through the MAC Library and Micro-Learning Sessions
- If your service has a Reconciliation Action Plan, use this month to check in on progress against it, not just acknowledge it exists

Ask an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff member or Elder-in-residence, if you have one, how they'd like this month recognised — rather than deciding on their behalf

'Bukmak' means everyone — a reminder that inclusion means bringing everyone into the circle, not just those already at the table.

SOUTH ASIAN

Independence Days — 14 to 19 August

Pakistan observes Independence Day on 14 August, commemorating the end of British rule and the creation of Pakistan as an independent state at midnight on 14–15 August 1947. India marks its Independence Day on 15 August, commemorating the same 1947 transfer of power and the end of some 200 years of British rule. Afghanistan's Independence Day on 19 August commemorates the 1919 Anglo-Afghan Treaty, through which Afghanistan gained full independence in its foreign affairs.

Pakistan — 14 August	India — 15 August
Commemorates the end of British rule and the creation of Pakistan as an independent state at midnight on 14–15 August 1947 — a date also considered spiritually significant that year.	Commemorates the 1947 transfer of power and the end of some 200 years of British rule, following a long, largely non-violent independence movement.
Afghanistan — 19 August	**A note on Partition**
Commemorates the 1919 Anglo-Afghan Treaty, through which Afghanistan gained full independence in its foreign affairs from British influence.	For many families, this run of dates carries pride in nationhood, but also complicated memories — follow residents' lead rather than assuming a celebratory tone.
Activity ideas	**More activity ideas**
Ask residents and staff if they'd like to share a memory, flag, song or dish connected to home — let them choose what and how much to share.	Display national colours or flags across the week, and consider a shared morning tea featuring dishes from Pakistan, India and Afghanistan — framed around connection, not comparison.

RAKSHA BANDHAN

28 August — The Bond Between Siblings

About the festival:

Raksha Bandhan, also known as Rakhi, is a Hindu festival celebrating the protective bond between siblings. In Sanskrit, 'raksha' means protection and 'bandhan' means bond. On the day, sisters tie a rakhi (a sacred thread) around their brothers' wrists, and brothers promise to protect and care for their sisters — though in many families today the thread is exchanged between anyone who shares that kind of unconditional bond. The date follows the Hindu lunar calendar and falls on the full moon of Shravana; in 2026 that's Friday 28 August. It centres exactly the kind of mutual protection, loyalty and family duty that underpins so much of what residents value about family visits and connection.

Activity ideas for aged care settings

Invite residents to share stories about siblings, or anyone who has protected or cared for them across their life.	**Provide simple craft materials for a rakhi-inspired bracelet-making activity, for residents and staff to make and exchange.**	**Where possible, support residents to connect with family by phone or video on the day, and discuss what 'protection and care' looks like across cultures.**

A note for staff: Raksha Bandhan centres exactly the kind of mutual protection, loyalty and family duty that underpins so much of what residents value about family visits and connection. Pair the day with a broader discussion on what care and protection looks like across the different cultures represented in your service.



THE MOUTH-BODY CONNECTION
DENTAL HEALTH WEEK — 3 TO 9 AUGUST

Dental Health Week is the Australian Dental Association's biggest oral health campaign of the year. This year's theme, 'Back to the Dentist!', focuses on young Australians aged 18–25 — but the campaign's core message applies just as much at the other end of life. Oral health is often overlooked in aged care, yet it has a direct, well-documented impact on residents' overall health, comfort and quality of life.

Around 53% of Australians aged 65 and over live with periodontal (gum) disease, and roughly 1 in 5 have lost all their natural teeth. Poor oral health is strongly linked to aspiration pneumonia, malnutrition, cardiovascular disease and cognitive decline — for cardiovascular disease and cognitive decline in older residents.

Daily Oral Care

□ Treat daily oral hygiene checks as seriously as other core cares, particularly for residents with dementia or swallowing difficulties

□ Label dentures clearly and involve residents in their own care wherever possible, to preserve dignity

□ Use an interpreter, not guesswork, if a resident reports mouth pain but has limited English

On Admission & Ongoing

□ Ask new residents (and family, where helpful) about oral hygiene history, denture use, and any cultural or religious practices around oral care

□ Consider that some residents may use a miswak rather than a toothbrush, or have preferences around oral care during fasting periods such as Ramadan

Service-Wide

□ Flag any resident who hasn't seen a dentist recently — regular check-ups matter as much at 85 as they do at 18

□ Use Dental Health Week as a prompt to review your service's oral care protocols and staff training, not just residents' individual care

A cultural lens:

Access to dental care in Australia has never been equitable, and CALD communities often carry the compounding effects of cost, language and limited access to culturally matched providers. Some residents may have grown up using a miswak rather than a toothbrush — a resident's oral hygiene history and preferences are worth understanding individually, the same as any other aspect of their care.

DAFFODIL DAY

20 AUGUST — AUSTRALIA



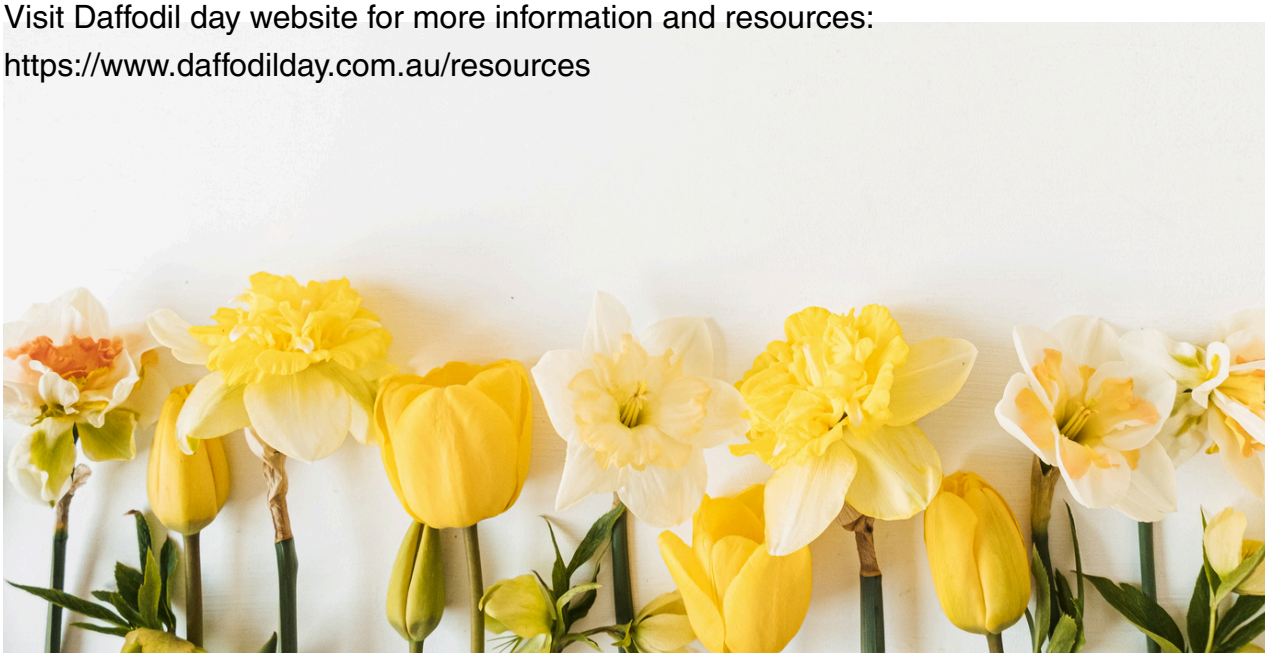
Daffodil Day is Cancer Council's most iconic fundraising and awareness campaign, held annually across Australia — this year marking 40 years since the first Daffodil Day in 1986. In that time, five-year cancer survival rates in Australia have risen from around 46% to 72%, funded in large part by community campaigns like this one.
For aged care services, Daffodil Day is a gentle prompt to talk about health, loss, hope and remembrance — while being mindful that different cultural and religious backgrounds bring very different traditions around discussing illness and end-of-life openly.

Why it matters: Around 1 in 2 Australians will be diagnosed with cancer by age 85, so the day touches almost every family and workplace.

Activity ideas (aged care friendly)

• Wear or display daffodils around the service, mindful that some residents may find the day emotionally significant
• Offer a quiet space or moment of reflection for residents who wish to remember someone they've lost to cancer
• Check in genuinely with staff who may be supporting their own family's experience of illness this year
• Consider a small fundraising activity — a morning tea or daffodil sale — as a low-key, optional way to take part

Visit Daffodil day website for more information and resources:
https://www.daffodilday.com.au/resources



TALKING ABOUT CANCER

Why Disclosure Isn't One-Size-Fits-All

Daffodil Day is best known as Cancer Council's fundraising day, but for aged care it's a prompt to look honestly at how differently cancer and end-of-life are discussed across cultures.

Why disclosure isn't one-size-fits-all

In much of mainstream Western medicine, direct disclosure to the patient is treated as the default — the person is told their diagnosis, prognosis and options, and makes their own decisions. But this isn't a universal expectation. In many cultural traditions, illness — particularly a serious or terminal diagnosis — is understood as something the family carries together, and it's the family, not necessarily the individual, who is expected to receive and manage difficult news. Some families will ask staff not to use the word 'cancer' directly with their relative, preferring softer language, or asking that prognosis be discussed with them first. Key message: "Words like 'palliative', 'hospice' or even 'cancer' may not translate simply, or may carry heavier connotations in some languages than in English."

This can create real tension with Australian norms around patient autonomy and informed consent. There's no single right answer — the aim isn't to override family wishes or to override the person's own right to know, but to have an honest, early conversation with both the resident and their family about what information they each want, and how they want it handled, before a crisis forces the issue.

Advance care planning across cultures

Research from Flinders University's palliative care team has found that older CALD adults are less likely to complete formal advance care planning documents, and more likely to seek life-sustaining treatment, than the broader population. Some see advance care plans as intrusive, or as sitting uneasily with a family's sense of caring responsibility — planning for death can feel like giving up, or like taking a decision away from the family that should remain theirs. Residential aged care itself is also viewed differently across cultures: many CALD families strongly prefer to care for a relative at home and see permanent residential care as a last resort, which can shape how end-of-life conversations are approached even after a person has moved into care.

None of this means advance care planning conversations should be avoided with CALD residents and families — if anything, it means they need more time, more patience, and often a different starting point. A conversation framed around 'what matters most to you and your family' tends to land better than a form-filling exercise framed around legal documentation.

TALKING ABOUT CANCER

Resources and practical guidance

Good translated resources already exist and are worth having on hand for these conversations:

SA Health — Advance Care Directive Information Statement
The official South Australian ACD Information Statement, translated into Arabic, Dari, Dinka, Greek, Italian, Khmer, Nepali, Persian, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Swahili, Vietnamese and both Chinese scripts — useful to give residents and families alongside any conversation about a directive.
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/conditions/end+of+life+care/advance+care+directives/create+my+advance+care+directive/information+statement+-+advance+care+directive

Advance Care Planning Australia — in your language
Free advance care planning brochures and guidance in 19 community languages, plus a national advisory line (1300 208 582) that can help arrange an interpreter for the conversation itself.
www.advancecareplanning.org.au/understand-advance-care-planning/advance-care-planning-in-your-language

Practical guidance for staff	• Ask the resident and family early — separately if appropriate — what information they want, and who they want it shared with. • Always use a qualified interpreter for serious diagnosis or end-of-life conversations, never a family member • Avoid assuming pain or distress are expressed the same way across cultures — some minimise visible distress out of respect • Frame advance care planning around values and wishes first, and documentation second • Be aware that words like ‘palliative’, ‘hospice’ or ‘cancer’ may carry heavier connotations in some languages • Loop in MAC’s cultural liaison or interpreter services early, rather than after a difficult conversation has gone poorly

TALKING ABOUT CANCER

Progress, and Where to Go for Support

Progress — and work still to do

It's worth acknowledging how much has shifted. Bilingual cancer information, CALD-specific support services, community health workers and advocates, and campaigns like Daffodil Day itself have all helped open conversations that were once far more hidden. Many CALD communities have become noticeably more willing to talk about a cancer diagnosis openly, seek early screening, and engage with mainstream services than in previous generations — change that community leaders, health workers and families themselves have driven, often over many years.

But the disparities outlined above show this progress is uneven, not finished. Later-stage diagnosis, lower screening participation, and gaps in culturally matched support are still real for many CALD residents and families. Daffodil Day is a fitting moment to recognise the ground that's been gained — and a reminder that genuinely equitable cancer care across cultures is still a work in progress, one honest conversation at a time.

Where to go for support

MAC's June National Symposium on grief management with a CALD focus remains available to revisit through the MAC Symposium Series recordings. The MAC Library also holds resources on culturally responsive palliative and end-of-life care — ask Nellie for recommendations. Good translated resources are also available for advance care planning conversations.

"Where possible, staff can support family conversations by offering interpreter services early and checking in gently — follow up doesn't have to be formal, and small gestures of care are remembered."

Helpful resources

MAC Symposium Series recordings – mac.org.au
Advance Care Planning Australia – in your language
SA Health – Advance Care Directive Information Statement

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY IN OUR WORKFORCE
Recognising the People Who Deliver Our Care

Aged care in South Australia is held up by staff from an extraordinary range of cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds, many of whom have migrated here themselves and built careers around caring for other people's parents and grandparents while their own families are sometimes on the other side of the world.

August's calendar makes this especially visible: Garma Festival, the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, three South Asian independence days, and Raksha Bandhan all fall in the same month. For many staff, these aren't abstract dates — they're family occasions they may be missing, or quietly marking alone, while at work caring for someone else's family.

When cultural celebrations are recognised in the workplace — even in small ways — it builds staff wellbeing, strengthens teamwork, and creates a genuine sense of belonging, without compromising continuity of care.

Practical Ideas for Managers

ASK, DON'T ASSUME	ACKNOWLEDGE IT	OFFER FLEXIBILITY
Ask staff directly which cultural or religious dates matter to them — don't rely on guesswork from names or appearance.	Use handover or team huddles to acknowledge a significant day, even briefly — a sentence of recognition costs nothing and is remembered.	Where rostering allows, offer flexibility around key cultural or religious dates, the same way it's offered for Christmas or Easter.

"People give more of themselves to workplaces where their whole identity is welcome — not just the parts that are convenient."

A note on balance

Recognising cultural celebrations works best when it sits alongside — not in competition with — safe staffing and continuity of care. Small, consistent gestures usually build more trust than large one-off events, and they're also far more sustainable for busy teams to maintain month after month.

It's also worth remembering that not every staff member wants to be the designated spokesperson for their culture. Offering the opportunity to share is different from expecting it — the goal is genuine choice, not obligation.

WELLBEING FEATURE: PREPARING FOR SPRING
Gently Easing into the Change of Season

With spring only weeks away, August is a good time to start gently preparing residents and staff for the change of season. Shorter recovery from winter illness, longer daylight, and the promise of warmer days ahead can all support mood and motivation — but the transition itself can also be unsettling for some older people, particularly those who associate spring with anniversaries or the loss of loved ones who passed at this time of year.

For CALD communities in particular, the change of season can carry cultural weight well beyond the weather. Many cultures mark the shift from winter to spring with festivals of renewal, cleansing or new beginnings — worth keeping in mind as an entry point for reminiscence and connection over the coming weeks.

Ideas for the Coming Weeks

FOR RESIDENTS	FOR STAFF	A CULTURAL LENS
• Introduce lighter, brighter activities and outdoor time as weather allows • Revisit care plans for residents affected by seasonal mood changes over winter • Use the change of season as a gentle prompt for reminiscence — favourite spring memories or festivals from home • Check in with residents who may find the timing of spring emotionally significant, without assuming why	• Acknowledge that winter rosters and illness season can leave teams tired — check in genuinely, not just as a formality • Encourage use of MAC's wellbeing resources as the pace of the year picks up again • Flag CQ Series and Symposium dates early so staff can plan ahead • Revisit the Power of Pause and Reset Practices — small daily resets remain useful well beyond winter	Many CALD cultures mark the shift from winter to spring with festivals of renewal, cleansing or new beginnings — a gentle, culturally grounded entry point for reminiscence and connection over the coming weeks.

BUILD YOUR OWN CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE
Training and Resources for August

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
MAC CQ Series & Training Schedule The full calendar of upcoming Cultural Intelligence training sessions, including this month's CQ Series session on 5 August. → mac.org.au/training-schedule	Building Bridges: Cultivating Cultural Intelligence A PICAC SA webinar series on strategies for inclusive, culturally appropriate care — covering cross-cultural communication and the MAC 4As Model. → mac.org.au/webinars/building-bridges
MAC Library This month's picks support First Nations and South Asian cultural contexts, plus culturally responsive dementia and palliative care resources. → Ask Nellie for a copy or borrowing link	**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

MAC TRAINING SCHEDULE

August - December 2026

Date	Session	Format	Audience
Wed 2 Sep	MAC CoP Palliative Care Network Meeting	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
Thurs 12 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 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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