

## Culture and Communication



### Communicating Across Cultures

by Julie Fraser

**W**elcome to the eighth edition of our newsletter.

It is becoming increasingly evident that our workforce is growing more and more culturally diverse. Understanding and embracing cultural diversity supports a more inclusive work practice. Thus the focus for this edition is Culture and Communication.

Service providers need to understand the complex consequences of different communication methods that impact culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) consumers. Culture constantly influences how people communicate. Anthropologist Edward T. Hall, the founder of intercultural communication studies, explains in his book *The Silent Languages*, that much of human communication is unexamined and therefore often taken for granted.

Edward T. Hall explains this in what he termed high and low context cultures. Each culture learns rules about behaviour which is hidden and unwritten and known only to them. This affects verbal and non-verbal communication when interacting with CALD consumers. Basically, we follow our rules and believe our rule is the only and right way. As a result, much is taken for granted which is not apparent to people who have different rules. Given the increase in CALD population it is important for service providers to gain an insight into high and low context cultures to better equip their consumers. Please contact your local MAS Officers to organise a cross cultural workshop.

**We provide training on:**

**Multiple Ways People are Diverse**

Explores the key concepts and characteristics of diversity using the Diversity Conceptual Model.

**Older People Culture and Trauma**

Develops strategies to support older CALD consumers who have experienced trauma.

**Culture and Mental Health**

Increases understanding of how migration experiences influence holistic care.

**Culture, Health and Wellbeing**

Explores how culture influences perception on health and wellbeing in maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

**Cultural Awareness**

Explores the meaning of culture and how it affects perceptions, assumptions and worldviews.

**Cross Cultural Communication**

Develops strategies for effective cross-cultural communication.

**Culturally Inclusive Services**

Explores the need for culturally inclusive services by reviewing workplace practices and services.

# Multicultural Advisory Service

Quarterly Newsletter  
March 2017

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### Harmony Day 2017

By Annalise Webb

Harmony Day is a celebration of Australia's rich and vibrant cultural diversity – a day of cultural celebration for everyone who calls Australia home, from our First People through to our newest arrivals. Multiculturalism is an integral part of our national identity and has enriched Australia.

Harmony Day's date of 21 March was chosen to coincide with the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Orange is the colour chosen to represent Harmony Day as it signifies social communication and mutual respect. The message of Harmony Day is **'everyone belongs'**.

Celebrating Harmony Day can be as simple as attending a local celebration or you can host your own workplace or community event. Visit the Harmony Day [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#) for more information on what's on in your community or more ideas for activities.

Some suggestions:

- ◆ Host a multicultural lunch or morning tea where everyone brings a plate of food from their cultural background; or an Orange Morning Tea where everyone brings a plate of orange coloured food and dresses in orange. You can choose to add a donation box for a local charity such as a refugee support group, Indigenous or Multicultural playgroup.
- ◆ Put up a map of the world on a wall and give everyone a pin or sticker with their name. Ask people to put the pin where their parents were born through the course of the day and meet up at the map later for coffee and an interesting conversation.
- ◆ Talk about language:
- ◆ Choose a language other than English and identify words from that language that are also used in English - e.g. faux pas, kamikaze.



### Patterns of Cultural Differences in Our Communication Style

By Bushra Aman

*It's not our difference that divides us.  
It's our ability to recognise, accept, and celebrate those differences.*

Audre Lorde

**W**hen people communicate across cultures there are likely to be some misunderstandings.

If we are aware of different communication styles and patterns, we will be more open to communicate and respond accordingly.

Below are some patterns of cultural differences:

1. **Different communication styles**  
People communicate across cultures in a variety of ways. These can be similar or different even within cultures. It is important to understand that in some cultures non-verbal communication is as important as verbal communication. For example, in some countries "yes" might mean "maybe" or "I will consider it".
2. **Different attitudes towards conflict**  
In some cultures the best way to solve the conflict is to have a meeting and discuss the matter face-to-face. On the contrary, in some other cultures people will avoid conflict and the best way will be written exchange of emails or letters.
3. **Different approaches to complete tasks**  
People pursue their tasks differently. In some cultures it's important to develop rapport first
4. **Differences in value systems**  
People tend to give importance to different values across cultures. For example, in some cultures when someone says, "Be here at 8 o'clock", they expect you to be there at 8 o'clock on the dot. On the other hand, there are cultures where such punctuality is not considered so important. They might give more importance to a social relationship or more important commitments.
5. **Using Slang and Idioms**  
Slang is a casual vocabulary specific to a particular group (e.g. "she'll be apples"). An idiom is a form of expression that cannot be interpreted literally, but must be understood as a whole. For example, "hop into the shower" directly translated, can mean someone hopping like a kangaroo into the shower. Both idioms and slang are culturally specific: be it social, regional or generational. To limit misunderstandings and be inclusive it is important to avoid using slang and idioms when interacting with CALD consumers.



## The Problem with Idiomatic Expressions

By Annalise Webb

I was working as a project officer in a migrant resource centre some years ago, when a lovely lady who had recently arrived from Armenia complimented the necklace I was wearing.

"Oh, thanks, this is so old," I said, without thinking, "I've had it since puss was a kitten!" Her brow furrowed and slowly she replied, "Sooo... you have a cat who is also very old?"

We both laughed but I immediately apologised for using an unfamiliar expression and explained it. The client was nonplussed and said it all helped her "learn Australian culture"; However, it occurred to me that another client might just as easily have been embarrassed for not understanding. They may not have responded with laughter but left feeling confused and unhappy. I was at work, a service provider, and I realised that it was neither inclusive nor professional of me. The thing is, I had spoken automatically, without thinking at all.

A number of CALD clients have told me that when they first arrived to Australia they were initially quite flummoxed by the question "What's up?". We are so used to hearing this common greeting and say it so often that it would not occur to us that it really does not make much logical sense to a person from a non-English speaking background. Several have said they actually did look up in response to the question!

The way we use our language is critical to ensuring good communication and understanding is taking place. **Idioms are cultural** and often these tricky turns-of-phrase are the stumbling blocks for those who are trying to decipher English. They can even confuse English-speaking clients from other nations, such as the UK and US. The good news is that idiomatic expressions that can confuse CALD clients can be easily substituted with just a little thought. It's not

difficult to do, and can make a huge difference to the client.

Here are some examples of idioms, and better ways something could be expressed.

Instead of	Try
"Hang on a minute"	"Could you please wait a minute?"
"Let's get the ball rolling"	"Let's get started"
"I'll see if I can pull some strings"	"I'll see if I can fix this"
"Just pop in the centre any time"	"Just come into the centre any time"
"I'll give you a bell/tinkle"	"I'll call you on the telephone"
"What's up?"	"What's been happening for you?"
"How's tricks?"	"How are you?"

There are more than 200 languages spoken every day in Australia - about 70 of those are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and about 130 are European and Asian. While English is generally accepted as Australia's national language, it's just one of 200! Yet our expectations are often that, as an "English-speaking" nation, everyone should have a perfect grasp of the language and our Australian expressions - just for being here. If we keep rigidly to this concept and keep choosing to use idioms, we run the risk of alienating some clients by using a term they don't understand, and for unexpected issues.



## Multicultural Calendar

Great News! The 2017 Multicultural Calendar is currently available for download via our website, or you can call us to order a free hard copy.

Diversicare's Multicultural Advisory Service have once again developed a wonderful tool for service providers and consumers. This tool can be used to plan your multicultural events to support culturally inclusive services with consumers and co-workers.

This year the calendar features Australian artists from 12 cultures around the world. In addition, CALD consumers share aspects of their arts and culture. Understanding different cultures gives us an insight into one part of that culture and helps us better deliver culturally inclusive services to CALD consumers.

For further information, contact your local multicultural advisory service (see page 7).

## Cross Cultural Communication - A Personal Experience

By Thana Roysmith

**When I first came to Australia, I thought I would have no problem as Australia is an English speaking country, and I was literate in spoken and written English. I was in for a surprise.**

On the first day of my arrival I was greeted by a University Official from the University where I would be studying. At the airport, after greeting each other, he asked me "Will you be going to the barbie tonight?" I looked at him with a puzzled look. I was thinking 'what does barbie mean?' I was embarrassed but finally plucked up the courage to ask what it meant. I did not realise then that this was the first of a series of phrases unique to Australia that I was going to encounter – mozzie, bickie, togs, thongs etc.

I was still trying to learn as many phrases to avoid embarrassment, when during the

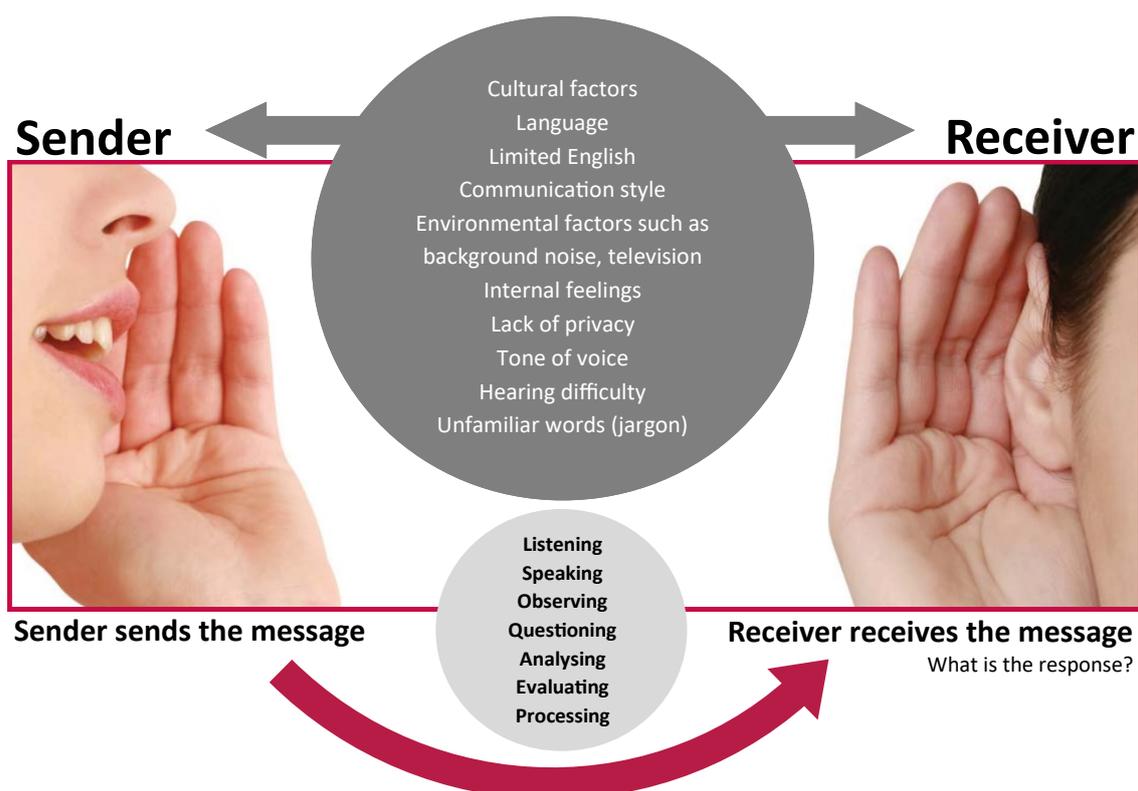
last week of our 1<sup>st</sup> semester tutorial the tutor said, "Hey everyone, bring a plate next week". Everyone dashed out while I was trying to make sense of the phrase 'bring a plate'. I thought "what a generous Uni and country; they just want me to bring an empty plate and they are going to provide the food!" I could not wait to tell my family in Singapore. Then there was another source of stress! Should I bring a paper, plastic, glass plate etc. I spent the rest of the day pondering on this apparent dilemma! Later in the day I was put out of my misery by a senior Singaporean student. She had a good laugh. I am still learning after 20 years—recently I heard about 'budgie smugglers'. I have learnt not to analyse the phrases and their meanings too much – just accept it and laugh!

Throughout the years, I have heard numerous similar encounters from

migrants. In hindsight, whilst it may sound and seem humorous, it could be very stressful especially for new migrants. Therefore it is important to be mindful of slang terms when communicating with people from another country, and even more so if they are not proficient in the English language.

For more Aussie slang terms, please see the following link: <https://www.facebook.com/jessica.pratt.7355/posts/10154031362007133>

## Barriers to Communication



## Cross Cultural Communication and Humour

By Ruby Winter

**H**umour is a universal phenomenon, present in virtually all cultural groups. We are yet to determine exactly why humans partake in humour but many have provided theories, including Darwin who described it as an evolutionary function to foster comradery and convey emotion. Freud saw humour as an essential human function to release tension and negative energy.

Regardless of the specific purpose, it is evident that every culture enjoys some form of humour. It is important to note that humour has difficulty crossing cultural boundaries and it has been said that a 'universal joke' does not exist. When a joke has been translated, and language barriers removed, it can still be easily misunderstood in a cross cultural interaction. This is because what is considered funny is tied to social structure and cultural norms. Having a poor understanding of the influence of humour on cross cultural communication can lead to damaging blunders, even with the best intentions.

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Nevertheless, there are some universally appreciated aspects of humour that have been studied and recorded over time. Humour traits like exaggeration, understatement, witty cynicism, verbal irony; disguise and deception have been marked as consistently funny across many different regions of the world.

For example; British humour is often cynical and based on the ability to use the meaning of a word to its opposite intent, referred to as irony. Irony is very often misunderstood in direct-speaking cultures like Switzerland, Germany or the Netherlands.

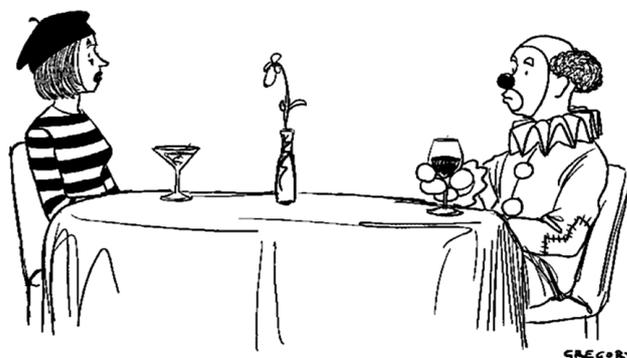
Sarcasm is another tricky form of humour and can often leave one person offended or confused. Sarcasm can be seen as hurtful in Latin American countries but considered very funny in other countries such as India or Israel precisely due to the abrasive, in-your face style.

Self-deprecating humour is commonly used in the West, including Australian culture where it aligns with our strong values of modesty and avoiding 'the tall poppy syndrome'. However, self-deprecating humour in some Asian cultures can often result in quiet empathy, discomfort and confusion at why you would embarrass yourself in a jovial manner.

Humour from the United States can often be interpreted as aggressive or dominating, especially as 'put-down' humour features heavily. The use of this type of humour can be attributed to the cultural values of confidence and individualism. For other cultures criticising someone for amusement can be very offensive, especially where strong effort is made to preserve one's dignity within the culture.

To sum up, here are some points to guide you when considering including humour within cross-cultural communication:

- Each culture has it's own humour
- Humour is very difficult to export
- Humour often involves wordplay, slang and colloquial expression
- Interacting in humour requires high level knowledge of a language
- Understanding humour requires an in-depth understanding of culture
- Avoid the following types of humour: stereotyping, sexual, cultural, or religious. Try to keep it politically correct at the start of the engagement
- When in doubt play it safe; be friendly but avoid humour.
- We often start a speech or introduction with a joke. Be cautious because this is not always well received and may go against some cultural protocols
- Over time and with effort you will be able to develop an understanding of what is amusing to a person, sometimes it just



"You're a really great guy, John, but I think we just have really different senses of humor."

takes a little longer when their culture is different to your own.

Its funny how culture plays a crucial role in determining what exactly is and isn't funny. It is definitely possible to enjoy humour with a person from a culture other than your own, but make sure you are familiar with the person or the audience before using one of your well tested local jokes.

#### Sources:

<http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/austn-humour>

Neil, M & E.Sullivan (2013) *Sense of Humor across Cultures: A Comparison of British, Australian and American Respondents*, *North American Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 15, No. 2.

Yue, X, Jiang, F, Lu, S and Hiranandani, N (2016) *To Be or Not To Be Humorous? Cross Cultural Perspectives on Humor*, *Journal of Frontier Psychology*. Vol 7, No. 1495

## Culture and Communication

## Multicultural Advisory Service

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### What are the Benefits of Engaging a Professional Interpreter?

By Marcela Fischer

There are significant advantages from engaging a professional interpreter when providing services to culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) consumers whose English is inadequate for the communication of significant information.



A professional interpreter will ensure:

**Accuracy** – will render interpretation faithfully, without additions, omissions, or alteration to the message.

**Neutrality** – not to permit personal bias or opinions affect accuracy.

**Confidentiality** – will maintain strict confidentiality in all matter pertaining to an interpretation.

**Cultural context** – to translate the information into the cultural context.

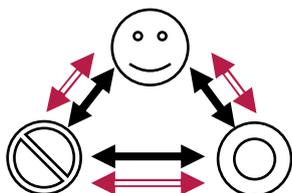
Using a bilingual person who is untrained in interpreting may risk compromising accuracy, neutrality and confidentiality which might lead to loss of business.

**Sources:**

*Guide to working with interpreters, Cultural Interpretation Services for Our communities (CISOC), 2013.*

*Why Use Professional Interpreting? Ethniccommunities.govt.nz*

*What are the benefits of hiring a Professional Interpreter or Translator, Francesco Pagano, Mar 2015*



### Identifying the Belief Systems to Spot Blocks to Communication

Published at Honolulu Community Center

**1. Ethnocentrism:**

Inability to accept another culture's world view; "my way is the best."

**2. Discrimination:**

Differential treatment of an individual due to minority status; actual and perceived; e.g. "we just aren't equipped to serve people like that."

**3. Stereotyping:**

Generalizing about a person while ignoring presence of individual difference; e.g., "she's like that because she's Asian – all Asians are nonverbal."

**4. Cultural Blindness:**

Differences are ignored and one proceeds as though differences did not exist; e.g. "there's no need to worry about a person's culture – if you're a sensitive teacher, you do okay."

**5. Cultural Imposition:**

Belief that everyone should conform to the majority; e.g., "we know what's best for you, if you don't like it you can go elsewhere."

### World Day for Cultural Diversity 2017

By Annalise Webb

In 2002, the UN General Assembly declared May 21 to be the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development.

The day provides us with an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the values of cultural diversity and to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In 2011, 'Do One Thing For Diversity and Inclusion' was launched by UNESCO and the UN Alliance of Civilizations. It encourages people and organizations from around the world to take concrete action to support diversity, combat stereotypes and raise awareness about the importance of intercultural dialogue, diversity and inclusion, using a [Facebook page](#) as a platform for people around the world to share their experiences through posts and videos.

Six simple ways to celebrate the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development

- ▶ Visit an art exhibit or a museum dedicated to other cultures.
- ▶ Invite a family or people in your community from another culture or religion to share a meal with you and exchange views on life.
- ▶ Rent a movie or read a book from another country or in another language than your own.
- ▶ Explore music from a different culture.
- ▶ Read about great thinkers from other cultures (e.g. Confucius, Socrates, Rumi).
- ▶ Play the "stereotypes game." Stick a post-it on your forehead with the name of a country and ask others to tell you stereotypes associated with people from that country. The winner is the first person to find out where they are



*continued from page 1*

#### **Working Effectively with Interpreters**

Explores the need for the use of professional interpreters in accordance with legislation.

#### **Culture and Disability**

Explores various cultural perspectives about disability and its impact on service delivery to CALD consumers.

#### **Working in Culturally Diverse Teams**

Explores the impact of cultural diversity in the workplace.

#### **Cultural Briefings**

Explores specific cultures, their customs, traditions, values, beliefs and the ways of life of CALD communities.

**We can organise** specialist presenters to provide workshops for:

- RUDAS: Dementia assessment scale for multicultural clients
- Lifestyle and Leisure Activities for CALD clients
- Supporting CALD older people who have experienced trauma.

**We partner** with specialists to present:

- Culture and Continence
- Culture and Dementia.

#### **We Offer:**

- Resources for service providers and CALD communities (e.g. Multicultural Calendar, Little Book of Cultural Tips, Online Community Profiles, Food Project Resources, Communication Tools, Telephone Interpreting Services)
- Provide support in multicultural service delivery to aged care providers and identify gaps in services
- Coordinate events, forums and expos on specific cultural or awareness days
- Participate in forums and consultations to advocate for CALD communities
- Provide information sessions to CALD communities
- Seek community views on how services can meet their needs
- Identify issues affecting CALD clients and assist with providing strategies
- Provide feedback at federal, state and local level

Region/s	Mobile	Email
MAS Team Leader - State wide	0407 045 203	J.fraser@diversicare.com.au
Brisbane Region	0413 054 642	baman@diversicare.com.au
Brisbane Region (CALD Community)	0413 512 967	mas.brisbanesouth@diversicare.com.au
Cairns Peninsula Region	0432 322 154	mas.peninsula@diversicare.com.au
Gold Coast Region	0431 017 943	mas.goldcoast@diversicare.com.au
Logan/West Moreton/Central Queensland	0434 254 812	mas.westmoreton@diversicare.com.au
North Brisbane/Sunshine Coast/Wide Bay Regions	0447 721 968	mas.sunshine@diversicare.com.au
North Queensland Region	0407 045 203	mas.northern@diversicare.com.au
North Queensland Region (CALD Community)	0428 332 965	cald.tsv@diversicare.com.au

## Cultural Briefing Roadshow

#### **When**

**14 March**  
**15 March**  
**16 March**  
**23 May**  
**30 May**  
**8 June**

#### **Where**

**Cairns**  
**Townsville**  
**Atherton**  
**Mackay**  
**Gold Coast**  
**Sunshine Coast**

## Culture and Communication

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### Brisbane Region

Contact Bushra Aman, 0413 054 642  
baman@diversicare.com.au

- **22 Mar** - Cultural Awareness Training for Life Without Barriers, Rockhampton
- **23 Mar** - Rockhampton Forum
- **31 Mar** - Cultural Awareness and Communication Training for Change Future
- **6 Apr** - Cultural Awareness Training for ECCQ
- **23 Mar** - Cultural Awareness Training for Flexible Living

### Brisbane Region

Contact Taryn Quach, 0413 512 967  
mas.brisbanesouth@diversicare.com.au

- **Mar/Apr (TBC)** - Information Session for the Sikh community, Sikh Temple, Eight Mile Plains

### Gold Coast Region

Contact Annalise Webb, 0431 017 943  
mas.goldcoast@diversicare.com.au

- **Every 2nd Thursday of the month** - Talking Circles: For new arrivals English conversational skills and social connection group, 4pm to 5:30pm, MCCGC Wellness Centre, 1 Dominions Road, Ashmore
- **21 Mar** - Harmony Day 2017 Celebration, 11am to 1pm, Southport Library, Cnr Garden and Lawson Streets, Southport
- **24 May** - "Diversity Matters" Cultural Diversity and Disability Forum, 9am to 4pm, Main Auditorium, Robina Community Centre, 196 Robina Town Centre Drive, Robina
- **30 May** - Cultural Briefing Roadshow, Italian and South American, 9:30am to 12:30pm, Upper Coomera Community Centre Main Hall, 90 Reserve Road, Upper Coomera (morning tea and lunch provided)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark your Calendar

- **17 Jun** - Seniors Morning Tea "Being Active and Your Health", 10am to 11:30am, The Pines Centre, 13-31 Guineas Creek Road, Elanora (morning tea provided)

### North Brisbane/Sunshine Coast/ Wide Bay Regions

Contact Thana Roysmith, 0447 721 968  
mas.sunshine@diversicare.com.au

- **21 Mar** - Harmony Day Celebrations, Sunshine Coast, Mundubbera, Bundaberg
- **22 Mar** - Cultural Awareness Training, Blue Care, Caloundra
- **30 Mar** - Cultural Awareness Training, Blue Care, Caloundra
- **Mar/Apr** - Cultural Awareness Training, Churches of Christ Care, Bundaberg (dates TBA)
- **Mar/Apr** - Information Sessions on Aged Care Reforms (date/place TBA)
- **4 May** - 5th Multicultural Seniors Expo, Sunshine Coast
- **10 May** - Cultural Awareness Training, CommLink, Sunshine Coast
- **17 May** - Cultural Awareness Training, CommLink, Sunshine Coast
- **23 May** - Cultural Briefing Roadshow - Indian and Muslim Faith, Mackay
- **30 May** - Cultural Awareness Training, Phoenix House, Bundaberg
- **8 Jun** - Cultural Briefing Roadshow - Latin America, Working with Interpreters Training, Sunshine Coast
- **July** - Cultural Communication Training, CommLink, Sunshine Coast

### North Queensland Region

Contact Julie Fraser, 0407 045 203  
j.fraser@diversicare.com.au; or  
Iris Min He, 0428 332 965  
caldtsv@diversicare.com.au

- **19-20 April** - Mackay Training (in-service), Venue TBA
- **24 Mar** - Harmony Day Event, 10am to 1:30pm, 34/184-188 Vickers Road North, Condon
- **18 May** - World Day for Cultural Diversity, Venue TBA
- **22-26 May** - Rural & Remote training, Hughenden, Richmond, Julia Creek & Mt Isa

### Cairns Peninsula Region

Contact Marcela Fischer, 0432 322 154  
mas.peninsula@diversicare.com.au

- **Every 1st Thursday of the month** — Monthly Older Persons Morning Tea and Information Session, 10am to 12pm, Hambledon House Community Centre, 177 Bruce Hwy, Edmonton
- **22 Mar** - Cultural Awareness Training, Centacare Marlin Coast Respite Centre
- **29 Mar** - Cultural Awareness Training, Catalyst, Cairns
- **30 Apr** - Cultures in Harmony 2017, 9am to 1pm, The Tanks Arts Centre, 45 Collins Ave, Edge Hill, Cairns
- **25 May** - Diversity Forum "Forever Young: Better Health and Wellbeing for Our Culturally Diverse Older Australians" Healthy consumers - stronger business outcomes and job satisfaction, 8am to 5pm, Cairns Convention Centre, Cairns