

---

# Celebrating the holidays

---

By Angela Owens

As the year draws to a close, many services will be preparing to say goodbye to some children and families, while getting ready to welcome fresh faces in the New Year. This can also be a time when services are thinking about whether they should engage in end of year celebrations, and how they might do this inclusively.

Many celebrations and holidays are intrinsic and important aspects of an individual's cultural background and identity. Understanding and celebrating important events can be a great opportunity for services to enrich the lives and experiences of all stakeholders.

When deciding what and how the service might celebrate, child care professionals may find the following tips useful:

- Invite stakeholders to identify and explain the celebrations that are important in their culture. This information may be sought through enrolment/employment forms, daily informal discussions, meetings or surveys/questionnaires
- When celebrating cultural or religious events, it is important that there is a focus on what is meaningful to individual children and families
- Ask stakeholders about the aspects of specific celebrations they find acceptable. For example, a family may be happy for their child to be involved in Christmas cooking activities, but prefer that they not participate in Christmas music experiences
- Find out about celebrations that are relevant to the wider community and incorporate these, or facets of these into the service's program. It is important that such activities are linked appropriately to children's interests. Services may find out about the cultural and religious celebrations in their community through their local council or media sources, and may be able to use community resources to support their activities
- Child care professionals must ensure that all celebrations take into account the skills and abilities of children. Regardless of the event being celebrated, child care professionals must ensure that the security, safety and wellbeing of all children are overriding considerations
- Maintain ongoing, open communication with families and other service stakeholders to ensure that they are comfortable with the experiences being provided for children ■