

OZ WORDS



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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the second edition of *Ozwords* for 2017. I have written the lead article for this edition. My theme is the history of swearing in 19th century Australia. This article forms part of a project I am currently working on, and I would be keen to hear from any readers who would like to share their memories and reflections on how attitudes towards swearing in public and in the media have shifted. I hope to continue to share aspects of this research project with you in future editions of *Ozwords*.

The other two articles are both products of our ongoing research into the breadth and depth of Australian English. We are now beginning our work on the next edition of the *Australian National Dictionary*—which we hope to launch online in the next couple of years—and we have already collected many possible entries. We are doing research on these, and Julia Robinson shares some of those we've identified in her article. If you have any information on them, we would welcome the feedback. Mark Gwynn has been using social media to 'crowdsource' our research, especially in hunting for new Australian variations of idioms. Again, if you have anything to add to our research, we would love to hear from you. We are very excited at the prospect of discovering more Australianisms—proof that Australian English is alive and well!

Amanda Laugesen
Director



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BAD LANGUAGE IN NINETEENTH CENTURY AUSTRALIA

AMANDA LAUGESEN

Swearing has a rich and varied history, dating back to ancient times. While most language considered offensive has generally centred around blasphemy and religion (*damn, Jesus Christ*) on the one hand, or the sexual and excremental (*fuck, shit*) on the other, our understanding of just how shocking or offensive these terms are has changed significantly across time.

One of the really interesting aspects of studying the history of swearing is considering how such language has reflected, and even helped to shape, society and culture in the past. This is definitely the case in considering the history of bad language in colonial Australia.

Australia was settled in the late eighteenth century and as the colonial population expanded through the nineteenth century, the main motivation behind concerns about language centred around social and class relations. Colonial Australia aspired to respectability, and bad language challenged the making of a civil society.

In the first half of the nineteenth century the challenge came from the convicts; concerns about the influx of miners during the gold rushes and the growth of 'larrikin youth' and their offensive speech followed later.

In order to control the various groups that had the potential to undermine colonial society, offensive language laws were put in place. Laws governing convict behaviour—including controlling abusive language—were in place from early in the nineteenth century. In 1835 a Vagrancy Act was introduced, and from 1851 the Act extended to include 'threatening, abusive, or insulting words and behaviour in public' as an offence.

During the convict period, numerous court cases reveal how convict behaviour was controlled through the legal system—this included attempts to censure convict language, and many convicts were punished for using bad language. But bad language could be used by the convicts as a way of expressing their contempt for authority, and they were willing to accept the consequences. One such example is the story of a female assigned servant who was reprimanded for using 'vile language'. Instead of obeying, the woman responded 'If you don't like it, send me to the [Female] Factory, where I want to go. You can't flog me, you —'. (*Sydney Herald*, 10 March 1834, p. 2)

Over time, the justice system became less preoccupied with determining the relationship between masters and servants, and more concerned with the 'purifying' of public space. The Vagrancy Act clearly stated that it was offensive language in public that was the problem. In other words, people could and should only be charged with using bad language when such language was used in public and within earshot of 'respectable people'. This tied to colonial society's desire to be seen as 'civilised'.

Settlers, free or freed, often made use of bad language if colonial newspapers are anything to go by. They frequently report on the number of people charged with using offensive language, many of whom were also charged with drunkenness and sometimes assault. In addition, many settlers took advantage of the law to take action in disputes with other settlers—they simply reported offensive language to the local constable. Most of those found guilty of offensive language were fined, and constables were awarded

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL DICTIONARY CENTRE
A JOINT VENTURE BETWEEN
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part of the fine. This was a significant incentive: one colonial newspaper observed that constables would ‘construe any words into bad language for 2s. 6d.’ (Hobart *Colonial Times*, 17 February 1835, p. 7)

In 1852 it was noted that, in Melbourne, profane language was too often heard on the streets. ‘Between drunken bullock-drivers, flash expirees, and half crazed gold diggers’, opined one commentator, ‘it is scarcely possible for a respectable woman to walk the streets of Melbourne, either morning, noon, or evening, without having their ears shocked with the most disgusting and blasphemous expressions’. (Launceston *Cornwall Chronicle*, 28 January 1852, p. 60)

As the nineteenth century continued, complaints about offensive language often focused on diggers from the goldfields and the larrikin gangs. In Western Australia, where the gold rushes continued until the end of the century, there continued to be a commentary on the prevalence of diggers who still had a ‘habitual inclination to blasphemy, swearing and drunkenness’. (*West Australian*, 7 November 1893, p. 6)

In the eastern cities, especially Sydney and Melbourne, the larrikins were targeted, revealing anxieties about the rapid growth of the cities and the potential moral difficulties of controlling young people in the big city. One Melbourne writer condemned the young people who were, according to him, knocking down old people, destroying property, and ‘indulg[ing] in foul-mouthed blasphemy’ in the streets. He called for them to be flogged ‘hard’. (Melbourne *Argus*, 23 July 1874, p. 4)

The speech and culture of larrikins was a source of fascination and discussion. Larrikin speech was described by one writer as a ‘curious mixture of “loudness,” blasphemy, lewdness, slang, and vulgarity’. (*Rockhampton Bulletin*, 19 July 1877, p. 3) Indeed, the larrikin was seen to be able to swear and use obscenity more effectively than just about anybody, with the possible exception of the bullock-driver.

What was the bad language of the period? Through much of the nineteenth century, the words that we can trace include a range of standard ‘bad’ words of the time: *bloody*, *bugger*, and *damn* being the most well-attested from the records (although a variety of printable insults from *darned rascal* to *ninnyhammer* ‘a fool, a simpleton’ are recorded). Stronger words were undoubtedly around—Melissa Mohr, in her history of swearing (*Holy Sh*t*, 2013), has suggested that by the nineteenth century the full repertoire of language used in the twentieth century was established—but the historical evidence for such words is thin.

Of the words we can find evidence for, *bloody* is the most interesting, primarily because contemporary commentators associated it so closely with Australia. In 1847, Alexander Marjoribanks travelled through the Australian colonies and observed of Australian speech:

The word bloody is the favourite oath in that country. One man will tell you that he married a bloody young wife, another, a bloody old one, and a bushranger will call out, ‘stop, or I’ll blow your bloody brains out.’ I had once the curiosity to count the number of times that a bullock driver used this word in the course of a quarter of an hour, and found that he did so twenty-five times. I gave him eight hours in the day to sleep, and six to be silent, thus leaving ten hours for conversation. I supposed that he had commenced at twenty and continued till seventy years of age ... and found that in the course of that time he must have pronounced this disgusting word no less than 18,200,000 times. (*Travels in New South Wales*)

Bloody was undoubtedly used frequently in the colonies, although whether it was used more than in Britain or whether ‘respectable’ people were just more likely to be exposed to hearing it in the mixed society of the colonies is arguable. From the 1890s *bloody* came to be referred to as the *great Australian adjective*.



THE BULLOCK-DRIVER WAS RENOWNED FOR HIS SWEARING. SOURCE: H.J. GRAHAM, ‘BULLOCK DRAY’, NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA, PIC VOLUME 1009 #R9866/123

“
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”

By the last two decades of the nineteenth century, however, a new theme was starting to emerge in discussions about bad language. As Australian cultural nationalism began to emerge, the use of bad language (including slang and swearing) came to be associated with a national type. Bad language used by certain characters (such as bullock-drivers) and in certain contexts (such as the rough conditions of the bush) came to be, if not celebrated, at least a source of humour rather than outright condemnation.

The association of bad language and the Australian colonies was reflected in several terms for bad language particular to Australian English. The term *colonial oath* was used both as a euphemistic exclamation—‘my colonial oath’—and, from 1861, a term to refer to bad language. The term *Australian language*, used to refer to an Australian English characterised by swearing, is first recorded in 1891.

While discussions of the language of larrikins rarely, if ever, excused or rationalised their use of such language, humorous stories about language began to find their way into print. *The Bulletin*, the leading Australian cultural nationalist periodical, was especially celebratory of Australian colloquialism and this extended to greater toleration of bad language. That the bullock-driver and the bushman were now central to an Australian cultural mythology is not coincidental.

This celebratory view of bad language and the Australian character was reinforced by the First World War when the use of bad language by the Anzac was accepted. The Australian soldier was well-known for his use of bad language: as Joseph Beeston observed, ‘[p]rofanity oozes from him like music from a barrel organ’. (*Five Months at Anzac*, 1916) But there was little condemnation of this language, as it was recognised that its use was prompted by the condition soldiers found themselves in. Lieutenant H. Bowden Fletcher, writing on the topic of ‘war and religion’ for the *Methodist*, a religious newspaper published in Sydney, commented on the vices of soldiers, including drinking, swearing, and gambling. He wasn’t going to justify the vices, ‘but would point out in passing that Billjim’s swearing is not blasphemy, but purely a safety-valve, a rough one no doubt, but the conditions are certainly rough’. (9 June 1917, p. 5)

Two words stand out from the turn of the century as being particularly Australian in association. One is *bastard* and the other *cow* (and *fair cow*). The term *bastard*, first recorded in English in 1297 and in the generalised, typically Australian sense in 1872, enjoyed considerable use in the Australian colonies, and even came to be used with some affection. This latter use has come to be seen as particularly Australian and is still used in this way. *Cow* has largely fallen out of usage as a generalised term of abuse, but it was widely used during the early part of the twentieth century. It was seen to be quintessentially Australian, with a lot of the early evidence for the term appearing in the pages of *The Bulletin*. The authors of *The Bulletin* particularly attributed use of the word to the iconic figure of turn-of-the-century Australia, the bullock-driver, noting in 1901: ‘In the whole range of the bullock-driver’s vocabulary there is no word that expresses his blistering scorn so well as “cow”.’ (7 December, p. 30) Its popularity with the Australian soldiers fighting in the First World War is clear, with an Australian soldier nicely summing up his attitude towards the First World War in a letter home quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1915: ‘Dear aunt.—This war is a fair cow. Your nephew.’ (10 June, p. 6)

The twentieth century would see continued celebration and condemnation of bad language. Although language usage in the public domain shifted considerably from the 1970s onwards, there are still concerns about the type of language that can, for example, be broadcast on television. Moral panics over the use of bad language are few and far between, with today’s primary ‘taboo’ words being racial epithets. What the early history of Australian swearing reveals, however, is the complex stories of public language use: offensive language laws being used to control groups within society (which continues today with Indigenous Australians being overwhelmingly targeted by offensive language laws that remain on the statute books); the Australian embrace of bad language as indicative of the broader Australian characteristic of contempt for authority; and the struggle between respectability and freedom of expression. Many fascinating stories about Australian history are revealed through a study of bad language.

“
Dear aunt.—This
war is a fair cow.
Your nephew.
”

Amanda Laugesen is the Director of the Australian National Dictionary Centre.

A note to our subscribers: This is the final print edition of *Ozwords*. From April 2018, *Ozwords* will be published in digital format only. If you are currently a print subscriber, please email ozwords.au@oup.com to ensure that you remain subscribed to *Ozwords*.

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MAILBAG

We welcome readers' comments on their recent observations of Australian usage, both positive and negative, and their queries, particularly those not easily answerable from the standard reference books.

HEAD OVER TURKEY

'He went head over turkey.' It has the same meaning as 'head over heels'. My parents used the expression when as children we had a fall, generally a spectacular one. This was in the 1950s and was commonly used at this time. I was living in Kalamunda in WA.

Gael, via Word Box

Head over turkey is an Australian expression still in use today. It is a variant of the standard English *head over heels*, with exactly the same meaning, as Gael notes: 'turning over completely, as in a somersault'. *Head over heels* dates from the late 17th century, and, like its Australian variant, it is also used in a figurative sense to mean 'completely, hopelessly'. Interestingly, the first Australian evidence we have for *head over turkey* is in the figurative sense: 'Romeo has fallen head over turkey in love with the mashful* Maud.' (Perth *Sunday Times*, 11 September 1904) Interesting too that the earliest evidence is from Perth, in light of Gael's childhood in Kalamunda, one of Perth's eastern suburbs. However, *head over turkey* is not specific to Western Australia. [*Mashful derives from the word *mash*, meaning an infatuation, flirtation, or sweetheart.]

UNCLE CRUSTACEAN

A visitor to our website recently watched *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie*, the 1972 classic Oz movie based on the comic strip created and written by Barry Humphries. He mentioned the large number of words and idioms used in the film, but was puzzled by one expression in particular: 'Don't come uncle crustacean with me. I can't imagine what this means!' Some of the colourful expressions used by the character of Barry McKenzie are existing Australianisms, but a number are the creation of Barry Humphries. The expression that puzzled our visitor is one of these. However, he has misheard what the character really says, which is: *don't come the uncooked crustacean with me*. It first appears in Humphries' book *Bazza Pulls it Off—More Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (1971). The opinion of Tim Bowden, writing in the lead article for our last issue ('Barry Humphries, Satirist of Suburbia'), is that this expression is a jocular variant of the familiar Australian term *don't come the raw prawn with me*. We agree.

BIGLY, UNPRESIDENTED, AND COVFEFE

Several people have asked us about Donald Trump's use and misuse of words. Although some of the criticism is unfair—we all make typos, especially after midnight—his language has been a boon to social media and to online dictionaries, who report big spikes in lookups following Trump's unusual word choices. These have included *bigly*, *unpresidented*, and *covfefe*. Throughout his campaign he sent the media into a spin with his continued use of what sounded like *bigly*, as in 'I'm going to cut taxes bigly', and 'I'm going to win bigly'. *Bigly* is a rare word, defined variously as 'in a

big manner', 'with great force', and 'loudly, or boastfully'. In fact Trump did not say *bigly*. He was using the term *big league*, derived from professional baseball. His adverbial use of it is unusual, akin to the more familiar *big time* (as in 'I messed up big time'). His Twitter posts have been big league news too, magnified by their frequency and the fact that he tweets in the wee small hours. As president-elect his best Twitter typo was *unpresidented*, a word that seemed to echo the wishes of those who planned to vote for other candidates. He meant *unprecedented*. Last May he posted this confusing tweet: 'Despite the constant negative press covfefe'. It was posted just after midnight and got a huge response on social media; in a very short time the word *covfefe* had its own Twitter account, and the hashtag #covfefe was trending. Trump replaced the post with 'Who can figure out the true meaning of "covfefe" ??? Enjoy!' We believe the word he originally intended to write was *coverage*.

TUBE

How big was the original *tube* of beer? Our research defines the word *tube* as 'a can (occasionally a bottle) of beer', but we do not specify the size. M. Bragge of Victoria considers that the word *tube* was first applied (by consumers) to a 500ml can, because it had a more pronounced tube-like shape than the standard 375ml can: *My first contact with the word was when I was in the Citizens Military Forces in the early 1960s and it described a Carlton and United Breweries 500ml can which was then an elongated version of the 375ml one—tube-like. It did not last very long as I think stubby holders were not around then and the beer got warm before final consumption. ... James Boag produced a 500ml beer can about 10 years ago and appropriately labelled it 'the 500ml tube'. M. Bragge's research took him to the brewer James Boag, who 'have not identified the source of their name for the 500ml can possibly because to them it is obvious'. He wishes to know if any fellow beer drinkers from the 1960s remember using the name *tube* for the 500ml can at the time, to support his theory.*

CABBAGE TREES CARRY THE FIELD

I came across this expression in a Bathurst newspaper from 1851, in the context of describing a pub brawl between some young men from the diggings attacking the publican and his wife and sons: 'the cabbage trees were on the point of carrying the field.' I've never come across it before and I can't find anything online. I wonder if anyone there can help me out.

Marcia, via email

The attackers are described earlier in this article from the *Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal* as 'Sydney arrivals'. The *cabbage trees* were young urban hooligans, particularly in and around Sydney, distinguished by their wearing of *cabbage-tree hats* (wide-brimmed, low-crowned hats woven from the leaves of the cabbage palm). These young roughs were often known as the *cabbage-tree mob* and *cabbage-tree hat mob*, and flourished in the mid-19th century. Our earliest evidence describes

Sydney theatre-goers being 'waylaid by about a dozen of the "cabbage-tree hat" gentry ... and on the gentlemen remonstrating with them they assaulted them in the most savage manner'. (*Australasian Chronicle*, 29 December 1840)

HOOP SNAKES AND DROP BEARS

I enjoyed reading your glossary of Australian words and phrases. I was looking at them with my wife, who emigrated from England as a 4 year old, and we came across drop bears. My wife ... mentioned that as a child she was always told to be on lookout for drop bears and hoop snakes. Her father stated that he had never heard of a hoop snake until they came to Australia and that the two imaginary creatures, more often than not, were mentioned in the same sentence. ... My wife was told the hoop snake curled up in a circle by biting its tail and rolled after you at high speed. It was told with the same intention as the drop bear, to put the wind up gullible tourists or migrants.

R. Patterson, via email

Our research reveals that *hoop snake* is not Australian, but has a long history in American English, going back to the 18th century. The usual description of the snake is that it rolls along like a hoop with its tail in its mouth. Some early sources suggest belief in an actual snake, but later evidence for the term begins to associate belief in the *hoop snake* with uneducated or gullible people: 'Tens of thousands of country people see hoop snakes rolling about like hoops, but these snakes quickly stop rolling and crawl when a herpetologist looms in sight.' (C.H. Pope, *The Reptile World*, 1956) Drop bears on the other hand are not as shy around scientists. The Australian Museum website has a distribution map for the species (*Thylarctos plummetus*), and offers new members a free Drop Bear Survival Kit. We think it may contain Vegemite.

DISINTERESTED

P. Hutchings (Victoria) laments the current ignorance of the traditional meaning of *disinterested* ('impartial, not influenced by interest'), a word now often used, especially in informal contexts, to mean 'not interested'. In fact this sense has a long history, dating back to 1631. Current dictionaries allow both meanings.



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FROM THE CENTRE

The Australian National
Dictionary Centre

GARY SIMES

We were saddened to hear of the death in Sydney of Dr Gary Simes, scholar and lexicographer, who made a significant contribution to Australian lexicography with his 1993 publication *A Dictionary of Australian Underworld Slang* (Oxford University Press Australia). It is based on two previously unpublished New South Wales prison glossaries compiled in the 1940s and 1950s by two separate prisoners, one of whom, 'Thirty-five', was sentenced to life, while the other, Ted Hartley, served a sentence as a conscientious objector. The story of Gary's accidental discovery of the Ted Hartley manuscript (in the National Library among Kylie Tennant's papers), and his research into its origin and authorship, is a detective yarn in itself. His dictionary combines the two glossaries and provides each entry with further historical evidence and commentary. His work was an important resource for our own research into Australian English, providing early evidence for 120 entries in the *Australian National Dictionary*. Over many years his major research project was the compilation of a historically based dictionary of sexual language. Gary died on 10 July 2017.

PUBLICATION

A new combined dictionary and thesaurus has been published for students in middle and upper school years by Oxford University Press Australia & New Zealand. The *Australian School Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus* (fourth edition) was edited by Mark Gwynn. We are pleased to say it is shortlisted for the 24th Educational Publishing Awards, to be announced later this year.

DESIGN AWARD

In May our handsome new *Australian National Dictionary* (2016) won an Australian Book Design Award, in the Best Designed Scholarly and Reference Book category. The two-volume dictionary was designed by Sue Dani (of Oxford University Press Australia & New Zealand), and was based on the art of George Raper, a sailor aboard the First Fleet's *Sirius*. Thanks to our publisher, Oxford, for putting the dictionary up for the award, and special thanks to Sue Dani for her creativity, which we enjoy on a daily basis. We love her use of the waratah and king parrot images, and we're not the only ones; since the launch of the dictionary we've had many compliments on its design.

OUTREACH AND MEDIA

ANDC staff have been published on two UK websites in recent months. Amanda Laugesen was asked to enlighten UK readers of the Oxford Dictionaries blog about the meaning of *tall poppy syndrome* ('What is tall poppy syndrome?', 21 June). This was in response to news stories about Australian comedian Rebel Wilson's defamation case against several popular magazines. Wilson had tweeted: 'thanks shady Australian press

for your tall poppy syndrome', and the Brits were puzzled. In July ANDC staff wrote a blog to inform the same readership about our favourite pollie-related terminology ('Pollie-speak: 9 uniquely Australian political terms', 11 July), including *wombat trail*, *Dorothy Dixer*, and *keeping the bastards honest*. The latter surprised us by earning the piece a language warning, leading us to conclude that we are hardened by a lifetime of listening to Parliamentary broadcasts. On a less contentious note, the BBC Travel site interviewed Mark Gwynn on the slang of our beach culture for 'The real story behind Australian slang' (5 July).

Amanda Laugesen, Director of the Centre, presented a public talk on 'Australian Slang in the First World War' at the Kerang and District Sub-branch RSL, sponsored by the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance. The talk was well received, and is available online (<https://www.mixcloud.com/talksandlectures/australian-slang-in-the-first-world-war/>). Amanda has also appeared on ABC Canberra for a regular 'Words' segment, and has so far talked about a range of subjects including Donald Trump, fidget spinners, and the latest Oxford English Dictionary updates.



JOHN PETSCHAUER, PRESIDENT OF THE
KERANG AND DISTRICT SUB-BRANCH
RSL, AND AMANDA LAUGESEN

READING FOR ANDC

This year we have begun to develop a reading program for the purpose of collecting up-to-date quotation evidence of Australian English in the 21st century. Through this we hope to identify new Australianisms that will ultimately go into the next edition of the *Australian National Dictionary*. The first edition of the dictionary (1988) drew on a wide range of original 19th and 20th century sources, including newspapers, diaries, novels, annual reports, journals, poetry, and early manuscripts. The second edition (2016) drew on a similarly broad range of sources, with particular focus on two areas that the centre's research had identified as needing further investigation: regionalisms and Aboriginal English, both now well represented in the dictionary. With

our new reading list we will continue to cast a wide net to capture words and meanings from all areas of Australian life in the 21st century. Initially we plan to focus on two areas of special interest: the language of migrant English, and terms relating to Indigenous Australia. If there is a particular title you think we should read, please contact us.

NAIDOC WEEK

In July the ABC celebrated NAIDOC Week with a focus on Indigenous culture, broadcasting Indigenous stories, interviews, and music across their media platforms. We were pleased to see the effort to promote awareness of Indigenous languages, including through the 'Splash' song competition, a collaboration with First Languages Australia. Schools were invited to translate a particular song into a traditional language of their area. The winner was Yipirinya School (NT), who sang in Arrernte, Warlpiri, and Luritja, three of the local languages of Central Australia.

RESOURCES

The name of slang expert Jonathon Green will be familiar to regular readers of *Ozwords*. *Green's Dictionary of Slang* (2010) is the authoritative work on the last 500 years of English-language slang, and it is now available online. There are two versions: free, and by subscription. Free searches give the user headwords, parts of speech, definitions, etymologies, senses, and usage labels. Cross-references are linked to other entries, and in the margin of each entry you can quickly link to the entries that precede and follow. Browsing is irresistible. The subscriber version has greater functionality and a wealth of historical quotations. The dictionary is live, and new material continues to be added; at present it has about 130,000 terms. Lovers of language will find a lot to engage their interest. The online dictionary can be found at: <https://greensdictofslang.com>

WORD OF THE YEAR

As usual in spring we start to think hard about candidates for the ANDC's Word of the Year, which is announced each December. What has been preoccupying the nation this year? What things have we been discussing at the water-cooler? What word captures the mood of the nation? If you have any suggestions for our Word of the Year, we'd love to hear from you.

Letters, emails and tweets
are welcome.

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SOCIAL MEDIA AND CLASSIC AUSSIE IDIOMS

Mark Gwynn

This year the ANDC is using social media, especially Twitter and Facebook, to find variations on a number of well-known Australian idioms. The responses we receive are providing evidence for our Australian English database, and may be considered for inclusion in future editions of our dictionaries. The established idioms we have looked at so far are *to have a head like a robber's dog*, *to be a stubby short of a six-pack*, and *to chuck a wobbly*. Evocative expressions like these and the creative use of idiom are typical of Australian English, so we were not surprised by the positive feedback from social media users when we asked them what similar expressions they knew based on these forms.

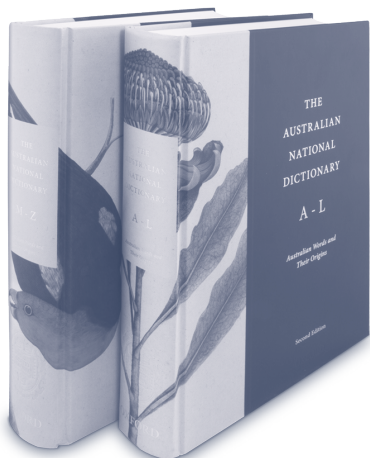
Here is a brief summary of our findings to date.

- *To have a head like a robber's dog* (to be very ugly or unattractive). This is first recorded in the 1940s, and we already had evidence of these established variants: *a head like a drover's dog*, *a head like a beaten favourite*, and *a head like a sucked mango*. We had a great response on social media, with our followers providing many variants including: *a head like a bucket of smashed crabs*, *a head like a chewed minty*, *a head like an angle grinder*, and *a head like a kicked-in biscuit tin*. A number of followers also suggested variants on a similar idiom with the same meaning, replacing 'head' with 'face': *to have a face like a dropped pie* and *a face like a smacked bum*.
- *To be a stubby short of a six-pack* (to be very silly, mad, or eccentric). First recorded in the mid-1990s, this is one of a number of idioms, with the same meaning, that follow the formula 'an X short of a Y'. The formula is found in standard English today, but the earliest evidence is Australian. Established Aussie variants include: *a sausage short of a barbie*, *a sandwich short of a picnic*, *a zac short of a quid*, *a kangaroo short of a full paddock*, and *a few snags short of a barbie*. Our followers responded enthusiastically to this form and provided a number of variants including: *a boiled lolly short of a raincoat*, *a few bricks short of a wall*, *a few slices short of a loaf*, *a few spring rolls short of a banquet*, *a few peanuts short of a Snickers*, and *two wafers short of a communion*.
- *To chuck a wobbly* (to become angry or to have a fit of temper). This idiom dating from the mid-1980s is a variant of the British English *to throw a wobbly*. In Australian English the word *chuck*, meaning 'to perform', 'to do', or 'to put on', is found in a number of established forms including: *chuck a berko*, *chuck a mickey*, *chuck a willy*, all with the same meaning as *chuck a wobbly*. As well, there are several other *chuck* forms with different meanings, such as: *chuck a browneye* (make the rude gesture of bending over and exposing one's buttocks and anus); *chuck a sickie* (take a day's sick leave from work, when often not ill at all); and *chuck a uey* (do a U-turn). We asked for other idioms based on *chuck*, but this request elicited the least response on social media. Our followers struggled to provide variants, with the exception of *chuck a tanty*, *chuck a hissy fit*, and *chuck a lucky seven*.

Do you know of any other variations on these idioms? We would love to hear about them. And please stay tuned to our social media platforms for the next idiom to get a guernsey in our search.

“
Evocative expressions like these and the creative use of idiom are typical of Australian English...
”

Mark Gwynn is an editor and researcher at the Australian National Dictionary Centre.



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FINDING NEW AUSTRALIAN WORDS

Julia Robinson

It's a year since we celebrated the launch of the new *Australian National Dictionary*, with its 16,000 Australian words and meanings. Since then we have not been taking it easy and neither has Australian English—we began collecting new words even as we sent off the manuscript to the publisher. We now have more than 300 items worthy of further research.

Our list is deliberately inclusive since we can't know which terms will prove to be stayers. A number are new or recent coinages that just missed our editorial deadline; others are older terms we rejected as having too little evidence, but now look more established; some are speculative; and some simply flew under our radar. Here is a sample of the terms under consideration as future entries.

Familiar Australian words such as *bush*, *koala*, *Anzac*, and *preference* (the political sense) are the basis for newer terms: *bush rave* (a rave party in the bush); *koala diplomacy* (the loan or gift of koalas to another nation's zoo, as a form of soft-power diplomacy); *Anzac fatigue* (what we feel after over-exposure to Anzac centenary commemoration); and *preference harvesting* (the flow of preferences to a micro-party or independent as a result of strategic preference deals).

We continue to coin terms related to politics. The double-dissolution federal election last year alerted us to the abbreviation *double D*, and the same election helped popularise the *democracy sausage* (the sausage sandwich you buy on election day at a polling booth sausage sizzle). The term *sixty-sevener* (a campaigner for the 1967 referendum) glances back in time; current concerns are reflected in *quarry vision* (our continuing fixation with coal as a major source of energy and revenue). A nickname for Greens politicians may be more ephemeral: *tree Tories* (conservative on economic policy).

State-based terms are represented on our list, especially from Tasmania. *Tassie tuxedo* (a puffer jacket); *turbo chook* (the Tasmanian native hen, a flightless bird with a fast turn of speed); and *flannelette curtain*. If you live on the wrong side of the *flannelette curtain* in Hobart, you live in the poorer suburbs—the wrong (flannie-shirt wearing) side of town. Western Australia gives us *white*, a term for a western rock lobster that is a pale pinkish-white colour after moulting, and *white run*, the annual event in late spring when *whites* migrate in large groups to spawning grounds in deeper water. *Branch-bombing* (branch-stacking) also seems to be associated with the west.

The typical Australian habit of creating words with an 'ie' or 'o' ending is still going strong. Recent coinages include *convo* (conversation); *deso* (designated driver); *devo* (devastated); *smashed avo* (seasoned, mashed avocado on toast); *reco* (surgical reconstruction, as in *knee reco*); *nettie* (a netball player); *parmi* (parmigiana, as in the dish *chicken parmi*); and *shoey* (the act of drinking alcohol out of a shoe to celebrate a victory).

The word *kangaroo* continues to be productive in Australian English, contributing to *kangatarian* (a person who eats kangaroo meat but avoids other meat, on environmental grounds). The trend for using 'roo' as a suffix in the names of national sporting teams (Socceroos, Hockeyroos, etc.) continues with the *Wheelaroos* (our wheelchair rugby team). We have also found 'roo' in *wazzaroo*, a one-off coinage for a roadkill kangaroo ('was a roo').

Several well-known Australians contribute to our list. John Farnham's fondness for farewell shows is celebrated in *Johnny Farnham comeback* and *chuck a Farnsie* (referring to a comeback, especially after a farewell performance or retirement). Rugby League player Trent Merrin's private life is alluded to in *doing a merrin* (having a partner who is considered out of one's league). The historical figure Ned Kelly still has a grip on our imagination. He gives his name this century to the *Ned Kelly letterbox* (a letterbox resembling Kelly's armour, especially the helmet, where the eye opening is the mail slot). The expression *Black Caviar odds* (very short betting odds) honours the four-legged legend of the racetrack, Black Caviar, undefeated in all her starts.

Our concern for wildlife is apparent in the terms *resnagging* (putting old logs back into river systems to restore habitat for native fish) and *pinky* (a pink, hairless pouch young, especially a baby wombat or kangaroo). An orphaned *pinky* may be rescued from the pouch of a female killed on the road, and relocated by carers into the pouch of a surrogate mother. We have seen this described as *pouch-surfing*, a play on 'couch-surfing'. An old term we've discovered recently for a baby mammal is *platypup*, a name for platypus young, first used in the 1940s with reference to the first platypus bred in captivity.

Finally, we have collected a number of new idioms, such as *calm your farm* (calm down, relax), a twenty-first century expression we share with New Zealand; and *more new starts than Centrelink* (referring to someone who has had more chances or opportunities than they may deserve). For variants on established Australian idioms, see Mark Gwynn's article opposite for some results from our social media campaign.

“ If you live on the wrong side of the *flannelette curtain* in Hobart, you live in the poorer suburbs... ”

A living language is never fully contained between hard covers. Even so, we have been surprised by the number of potential Australianisms we've identified in a short period of time. We hope to continue gathering new words at a similar rate over the course of the next twelve months as we move towards launching the *Australian National Dictionary* on the Internet.

Julia Robinson is an editor and researcher at the Australian National Dictionary Centre.

OZWORDS COMPETITION

OZWORDS COMPETITION NO. 48 RESULTS

We invited you to translate a famous quote into Australian English. You sent us quotes from novels, stories, songs, poems, speeches, and plays. Classic literature was well represented. Here are Charles Dickens, John Donne, and W.H. Auden:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness. 'Times were bloody beaut but a bit dodgy too, an age of big nob ideas and drongos.'

Never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee. 'Don't worry about whose mobile's ringing. I reckon it's yours.'

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone. 'We had the NBN connected yesterday.'

Shakespeare copped a beating:

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo? 'Johnno! Johnno! Where the bloody hell are ya?'

Is this a dagger which I see before me, the handle toward my hand? 'Is this a stubbie which I see before me, pull-top ring towards my hand?'

A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse! 'A hayburner! A neddy! I'll swap me crown for a nag!'

Special mention goes to the only entry that had the hide to translate the words of an Australian into Australian. This is explained by the fact that the speaker is Sir Robert Menzies: *Fellow Australians, it is my melancholy duty to inform you... Australia is also at war.* 'Mates and Cobbers, I'm real sorry to have to give you the drum... us Aussies are gunna have ta be in it too.'

And we dips our lid to the person who suggested the prize should be awarded posthumously to John Clarke. In *The Even More Complete Book of Australian Verse*, Clarke records this eerily familiar poetic fragment: 'Would there be any point in my drawing some sort of comparison between yourself and an absolute scorcher?'

1st prize (books to the value of \$150 from the OUP catalogue):

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must

be in want of a wife. (Jane Austen) 'It's fair dinkum a dead cert that a top bloke who's bloody loaded must be after a missus.' (M. Campbell)

2nd prize (books to the value of \$100 from the OUP catalogue):

The report of my death was an exaggeration. (Mark Twain) 'The earbashers reckoned I'd kicked the bucket—it's a flamin' furphy!' (S. Robson)

Honourable mention:

We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. (Winston Churchill) 'We shall fight them on the Gabba and the Waca, we shall fight them at Old Trafford and Trent Bridge, we shall fight them at the Oval and the G.' (R. Byard)

OZWORDS COMPETITION NO. 49

Earlier this year Cricket Australia decided to drop 'the Southern Stars' as the official name of the Australian women's cricket team. They will now be known simply as 'the Australian women's cricket team'. We find this a bit dull, but the move brings the team into line with the Australian men's cricket team, who have never been known by another name—unlike other national sporting teams such as the Socceroos, the Wallabies, and the Drop Bears (the Australian quidditch team—yes, there is one). Gender equality is the reason for the decision. Cricket Australia chairman David Peever said that cricket 'cannot hope to be a sport for all Australians if it does not recognise the power of words, and the respect for women that sits behind such decisions.' We agree. But we wonder if anyone considered the other option: giving the men's team a more exciting name. So for this competition we ask you to choose a better name for the Australian men's cricket team. The entries we like best will receive a prize.

Entries close 31 January 2018.

Send entries to the ANDC at one of the addresses in the next column, and please include a postal address, so we know where to send the prizes. You can also submit your entries via our Twitter handle @ozworders, or on our Facebook page.

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