

Oxford Australia Word of the Month

August 2007

barbecue stopper *n. Aust. colloq.*
important topic of public discussion, esp. a political one.

Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary, Sixth Edition

Welcome to the launch issue of **Oxford Australia Word of the Month**.

Ever wondered how uniquely Australian words such as *tree change*, *grey nomad* and *barbecue stopper* make it into our dictionaries?

Oxford University Press, in association with the **Australian National Dictionary Centre (ANDC)**, will be publishing a **Word of the Month** starting from August 2007. Each month, the **Oxford Australia Word of the Month** will focus on a distinctively Australian word, with a detailed and often humorous account of the kind of research the **ANDC** conducts.

Join us each month as we explore some of these Aussie words and find out just how much each of us contribute to the development of Australian English.



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Barbecue stopper

The story behind the Word of the Month

On 29 October 2001 the *Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper reported:

Snap. That's the sound of the stretch between family and work for an awful lot of parents. John Howard says the balancing act between the two is the most common discussion at any neighbourhood barbecue. A '**barbecue-stopper**', he likes to call it. That's why he is attempting to put the extra sizzle into his election campaign with a new tax break for women having children.

A **barbecue stopper** is a topic of conversation that is interesting or controversial enough to halt proceedings at a barbecue – and anything that could interrupt an Aussie barbecue would have to be very significant indeed!

It is fairly rare for us to know who coined a new term. Most new terms emerge without an author. But with **barbecue stopper** we know that it was coined by Australian Prime Minister John Howard in the context of balancing work pressures with family responsibilities.

For some time it looked as if the term might remain exclusively linked to the work/family nexus. If that had occurred, it is likely that the term would have been short-lived, and would have disappeared from Australian English.

But by 2004 **barbecue stopper** could be used in a variety of contexts to signal a significant topic:

Sibling rivalry is the new **barbecue stopper** – at least in my circles. We are talking about our own grown-up brothers and sisters. It's the rivalry that re-emerges when adult siblings have to make important decisions about ailing parents. *Sydney Morning Herald* 20 November 2004

Indeed, by 2007 the term could be used in a context where its creator, John Howard, was now the ironic butt of his own invention:

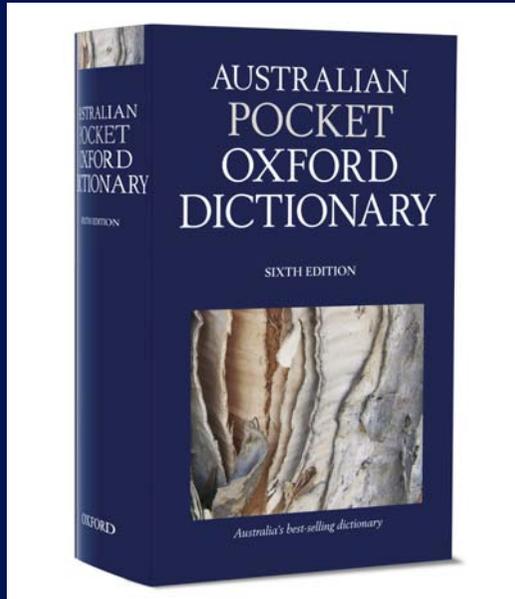
And Hicks will be presented as a symbol and as something of a martyr, even though he is about as heroic as cancer. It is an interesting example of Howard failing to detect early a significant public mood and do something about it. It might not be a **barbecue stopper**, but certainly is a front-bar head nodder: Tell fellow drinkers that Hicks is a mongrel but deserves better treatment and you will get agreement. *Daily Telegraph* 8 February 2007

The evidence indicates that **barbecue stopper** is a stayer in Australian English, and has earned a place in our dictionaries.

metrosexual
weapon
of mass destruction
karrack
glycaemic
burka
index
barbecue stopper
senior moment
Sudoku
hornbag
dishlicker
witlof
cyberstalking
Naltrexone
pear-shaped
yakitori
Bioterrorism

Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary

Sixth Edition



Barbecue stopper and other words to be featured in **Oxford Australia Word of the Month** are all new entries from the sixth edition of Australia's most trusted dictionary, the *Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary*. To learn more about this fantastic new edition, or to order a copy, visit www.oup.com.au/apod6

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