

Oxford Australia Word of the Month

March 2009

dunny budgie – ‘a blowfly’.

Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary, 5th Edition (forthcoming)

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dunny budgie

The story behind the Word of the Month

On 12 July 1989 the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported:

Sydneysiders have not been slow in leaping to the assistance of the Environment Minister, Mr Tim Moore, in his search for a solution to Sydney's sewage problems. One ... idea involves a large concrete tank being built to house all the effluent. Into it are introduced a number of **dunny budgies** (also known as blowflies). They lay maggots in the muck and these munch through the stuff, rendering it harmless. The maggot droppings are turned into fertiliser and the maggots are compacted and fed to farm animals.

A 2001 novel, set in Australia but geared to an overseas audience (Ernie Palamarek, *Along Came a Swagman*), includes this passage:

'Speaking of direction, folks, the dunny is out that way', said one ringer as he pointed with an outstretched arm. 'And watch out for the snakes when you go tripping out there in the dead of the night!' The group laughed loudly.

'It's more likely that the dunny budgies will get them first!'

'Dunny budgies?' I asked.

'Outhouse flies. We've got a rough outhouse just over there', Billy replied. 'But the mozzies are more likely to be a problem at sunset and sunrise than the budgies will ever be. Mind you, they sure wreak havoc during the day.'

Dunny budgie is a fairly new (and jocular) Australian term for a *blowfly*. Given the widespread annoyance that the creature causes it is perhaps surprising that the only other colloquial term it has generated is **blowie** (first recorded in 1916).

The compound **dunny budgie** combines two well-established Australian terms. **Dunny** for 'toilet' (originally an unsewered outdoor toilet) was first recorded in 1933, and is from a British dialect word *dunnekin* (literally 'dung-house')—abbreviated to 'dun' and then expanded with the Australian -y ending. **Budgie** follows a similar pattern of Australian word formation. **Budgerigar**, the name for the small green and yellow parrot, is a borrowing from the Kamilaroi language of eastern New South Wales (first recorded by the zoologist John Gould in 1840). In its abbreviated form with the -ie suffix (**budgie**) it is part of international English, but this form was recorded earliest in Australia in 1935.

Dunny budgie therefore brings together two well-established Australian words to create a new Australian word.

metrosexual
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glycaemic
burka
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barbecue stopper
senior moment
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