

# Oxford Australia Word of the Month

October 2010

**Barrier Rise** – *noun*. the start of a horse race.

*Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary 5th edition*

Why have I received **Oxford Australia Word of the Month**?

You are receiving this email because you are a valued customer of Oxford University Press.

You can unsubscribe at any time by sending an email to [wordofthemonth.au@oup.com](mailto:wordofthemonth.au@oup.com) with 'Unsubscribe WOTM' in the subject line.

How do I subscribe?

If you have a colleague or a friend who you think would like to receive Oxford Australia Word of the Month, all they need to do is email [wordofthemonth.au@oup.com](mailto:wordofthemonth.au@oup.com) with 'Subscribe WOTM' in the subject line.

Where can I learn more about the **Australian National Dictionary Centre**?

Visit: [www.anu.edu.au/ANDC](http://www.anu.edu.au/ANDC)

Where can I learn more about **Oxford University Press**?

Visit: [www.oup.com.au](http://www.oup.com.au)



• **Word of the Month: The Full Story**

• **Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary**

*Please direct all media enquiries to:*

**Betty Hew**

Marketing Coordinator  
General Division

Phone:  
(03) 9934 9131

Email:  
[betty.hew@oup.com](mailto:betty.hew@oup.com)



**OXFORD**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS  
AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

# Barrier Rise

## The story behind the Word of the Month

The *Daily Examiner* is a newspaper from Grafton in north-eastern New South Wales. In July 2009 it reported on a bowls tournament:

‘The semi-finals of the club triples was held last Saturday. The first semi was won by Bill McDonald (sub) Bill Cox and Peter Forrester who sprinted at **barrier rise** to an unassailable lead eventually defeating Laurie Thompson, Jamie Eichorn and Ray Miller.’

The term **barrier rise** is usually associated with horse racing.

These days horses usually begin their races from starting stalls, which open out to release the individual horses. The term **barrier rise** refers to an earlier stage of racing, before the 1960s, when a wire strand was positioned across the front of the horses, and this strand was raised by a spring mechanism to indicate the start of the race: this was the **barrier rise**. With the introduction of starting stalls, there was no longer a raising of the **barrier**. Indeed, there was no longer a **barrier** in the original sense of the term. Horses, however, are still ‘taken to the **barrier**’ or ‘walk up the **barrier**’, as if the older style of starting races still exists. And so, the term **barrier rise** remained meaning ‘the start of a horse race’. Thus, in report in a Perth newspaper in September 2010:

‘Paul Harvey rode a very confident race, taking Ringmeister (\$1.80 to \$1.50 fav) to the front on **barrier rise** and slowing the race down to a canter, bunching the field up behind him.’

The Grafton bowls report indicates that the term **barrier rise** can be transferred to other sports, where it there means ‘the start of a contest’. We have yet to see a more general transfer of the term—would it have been possible to talk about the **barrier rise** that started the election contest between Julia Gillard and Tony Abbot?

The horseracing sense of **barrier** has given Australian English a number of *barrier-compounds*. A *barrier trial* is a practice race for young, inexperienced, or resuming racehorses, especially to familiarise them with the starting gates. A *barrier blanket* is a heavy blanket placed over the flanks of a racehorse to calm it when entering a *barrier stall* at the start of a race. And a *barrier rogue* is a racehorse that regularly misbehaves when being placed into a starting gate.

Even if you are not a racegoer, when tuning in to this year’s Melbourne Cup carnival, watch out for some of these distinctively Australian terms.

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