

WORD OF THE MONTH

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budgie smugglers

- **noun**: a pair of close-fitting male swimming briefs.

THE STORY BEHIND THE WORD OF THE MONTH

Prime Minister Tony Abbott, a member of Queenscliff Surf Life Saving Club, is often portrayed in cartoons wearing a garment typically associated with surf lifesavers—a pair of tight red swimming briefs commonly known as *speedos* (a word derived from a popular brand of swimwear) and, more recently, **budgie smugglers**. Despite its recent coinage **budgie smugglers** is now a well-known term in Australia.

The late twentieth century saw a proliferation of colloquial terms for men's close-fitting swimming briefs. They refer to what the briefs (barely) cover—the male genitals. One of the earliest terms, recorded in 1972, is the word *sluggos*, a play on the word *speedos*, and possibly derived from an Australian naval slang word *slug* for 'penis'.

Several terms are based on the word *dick*, a colloquialism for 'penis': *dick stickers*, *dick pointers*, and *dick togs*. The abbreviations *DPs* (*dick pointers*) and *DTs* (*dick togs*) are also recorded, and may have arisen as euphemistic forms. Other synonyms that poke fun at the revealing nature of the briefs include *lolly bags*, *ballhuggers*, *meat hangers*, *banana hammock*, and *noodle benders*, some of which are regionally specific in Australia. In the last decade **budgie smugglers** has gained national recognition and eclipsed them all.

The first evidence for **budgie smugglers** comes from the ABC television comedy *The Games*. In the first series (1998) a character played by John Clarke says:

Des Renford would regularly take on the English Channel, Bryan. He would drop his tweeds, pull on a pair of oversized **budgie smugglers** and he would drop a bomb off the white cliffs of Dover and start rolling his arm over.

The term gained Australia-wide popularity in the early 2000s. It is based on the word *budgie*, an abbreviation of *budgerigar*, the small Australian parrot *Melopsittacus undulatus*, a common cage bird. (*Budgerigar* is derived from Kamilaroi and other neighbouring Aboriginal languages of northern New South Wales.) The form **budgie smugglers** may have been influenced by *grape smugglers*, an earlier term for men's swimming briefs used in international English.

The abbreviated form **budgies** has recently gained popularity. In 2010 Labor politician Anthony Albanese was asked if he was a 'boardies or **budgies** man'; he responded by saying 'I think all politicians would serve the country if they stayed out of **budgie**

smugglers, unless absolutely necessary'. (*Manly Daily*, 20 August 2010)

Budgie smugglers has been included in a number of our Oxford dictionaries and will be included in the second edition of the *Australian National Dictionary*.



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