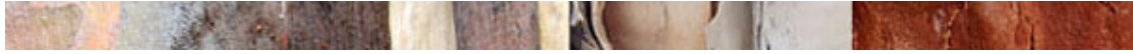


Click [here](#) if you are having trouble viewing this message.



# Oxford Word of the Month – March: corflute

*noun*: a temporary sign or poster made of corrugated plastic sheeting.

## THE STORY BEHIND THE WORD OF THE MONTH

*Another election and another spate of corflute crimes in Gladstone. (Gladstone Observer, 31 May 2016)*

2016 was a year of elections, here and elsewhere. It was also a year in which the corflute gained extra traction in our vocabulary.

The corflute is an essential campaign tool. It is a lightweight waterproof sign, usually printed with a candidate's image, name, and party affiliation (if any). It can be found in shopping centres as a billboard, or cable-tied to trees and fences, or attached to a stake and stuck into the ground alongside roads and highways for the attention of passing motorists.

The word corflute derives from a proprietary name for the corrugated plastic sheeting used for temporary signage, and signs made from this have been a feature of Australian campaigns for many years. However, evidence of corflute in the sense of 'a temporary sign' is relatively recent, and dates from about 2000. It occurs chiefly in election contexts.

An early use of the word refers to a couple of disappointed Queensland car thieves:

*The thieves, trying to find something of value, had pulled out the back seat to see what was in the boot. ... All it contained was two corflutes the car's owner had souvenired from Premier Peter Beattie and Member for Woodridge Mike Kaiser's campaigns. (Brisbane Courier-Mail, 17 July 2000)*

This item points to a problem associated with the use of corflutes—the ease with which they may be stolen. It is a recurring headache for political candidates. In 2004 the *Cairns Post* noted that:

*Cairns candidates are counting the cost of stolen election signs, with some runners out of pocket more than \$500. With still four days to go until the local government polls, corflutes across the city are disappearing daily by the dozen.*

(24 March)

Partisan vandalism is often suspected: ‘Member for Fisher Peter Slipper released a statement yesterday accusing the LNP and its supporters of conspiring against him by stealing and destroying corflutes.’ (*Sunshine Coast Daily*, 31 August 2013)

More recently the overuse of campaign corflutes has been regarded as a blot on the landscape:

*The Hills Shire Times wants your help to clean up our district. It’s been more than a week since the election but political advertising boards, or corflutes, are still strewn across the Hills. (Hills Shire Times, 5 April 2011)*

In the 2016 ACT election voters had to choose from a record number of candidates for an expanded Legislative Assembly. This meant many more signs were put up than usual, and public tolerance was pushed to the limit. It was described as ‘a war of corflutes’ and, post-election, an outlet for public frustration was planned:

*In what had been billed as ‘the first ever post-election stomping of the corflutes’, the Like Canberra party called on Canberrans to gather their ‘legally obtained surplus corflutes’ to destroy them in what would be a cathartic experience for many people. Corflute whacking party organiser ... Richard Tuffin said there had been a lot of anger about the density of corflutes. (Canberra Times, 16 October 2016)*

Not surprisingly, evidence for the word corflute spiked significantly in 2016. With more elections ahead, the ‘stomping of the corflutes’ may catch on.

Corflute will be considered for inclusion in the next edition of the *Australian National Dictionary*.

Share our Word of the Month:



Click [here](#) to unsubscribe from our Word of the Month. Read our [privacy policy](#).