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EDITORIAL

Aussie English has been in the news with the controversy over the Tourism Australia international television advertisement that ended with the line 'So where the bloody hell are you?' Was it a deliberate ploy to draw out the wowers and whackos?

First, the British Broadcasting Advertising Clearance Centre (BACC) banned the advertisement because of the word 'bloody'. Newspapers reported that 'bloody' was 25th in BACC's list of banned words, following such words as bastard (6th), bollocks (8th), shag (11th), spastic (15th), bugger (21st), and sodding (24th). The ban was lifted after an appeal from the Australian tourism minister. Then came the Canadians. First there was the baffling judgment that the line 'We've poured you a beer' could not be used because it refers to an unbranded beer. Then there was the ruling that the word 'hell' could not be used in family-viewing time slots (although 'bloody' was OK).

In an article in *Ozwords* in April 2001, I explained how taboo words change with time. I thought that the nineteenth-century obsession with blasphemy had largely disappeared, but the fact that 'hell' is a word of concern in Canada shows that some cultures are still sensitive to this taboo area. In Australia, the taboos about such words have largely disappeared. The Tourism Australia campaign demonstrates how culturally specific the issue of taboo can be. But watch out very carefully for the American Christian group that wants 'hello' to be replaced as a greeting by 'heaveno' on the grounds that 'hello' is satanic! Following this logic we would have to christen 'hellebore' as 'heaven-a-bore'!

Frederick Ludowyk
Editor, *Ozwords*

ADVANCE AUSTRALIA

FREDERICK LUDOWYK

Australians know the phrase 'Advance Australia' from the Australian National Anthem. The anthem was heard during some eighty-four gold-medal presentations at the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne last month. What most Australians do not know is that the phrase has had a long and interesting history independent of its place in the Australian National Anthem.

It began its life as a patriotic catchphrase, and was used frequently and increasingly thereafter in song and verse from the early nineteenth century. It even made it briefly to the exalted and emblematic position of motto on the Australian coat of arms. This was the coat of arms granted by King Edward VII in 1908. It was similar to the present coat of arms, with the shield supported by the kangaroo and the emu, but at the base was a scroll with the motto 'Advance Australia' emblazoned. This scroll disappeared in 1912 when a new coat of arms was introduced.

The motto has the meaning *Floreat Australia*, 'May Australia Flourish', 'May it Grow from Strength to Strength'. The first citation we have for it comes from 1828, admittedly in a somewhat restricted sense: 'Joseph speaks fluently to the Blacks we having only six at present but are "Advancing Australia"' (L.E. Threlkeld, *Australian Reminiscences and Papers*, ed. N. Gunson (1974) II. p. 245). In 1832 the slogan was used in its current wider sense in an advertisement for the opening of a new inn near Emu Ferry on the Nepean River: 'Advance Australia!' (*Sydney Herald* 21 June). From the same paper we get the following description of a pageant in 1841: 'First a canopy of wreaths surmounted a gorgeous floral crown which overtopped a meadow coloured arch, on which the words **Advance Australia** appeared formed of the brilliant orange coloured flowers of the Xeranthemum' (12 February). Colourful patriotism, though unfortunately the Xeranthemum happens to be a foreigner brought in to our sea-girt home from Europe. In 1842 the *Sydney Herald* changed its name to the *Sydney Morning Herald* and this is what the *SMH* had to say in 1843: 'Advance Australia is the poet's song! Advance Australia patriot hearts prolong!' (25 May). The patriotic fervour reaches heights of hyperbole in 1844 (once again from the *SMH*): 'Advance Australia Felix! now the cheapest country in the world'

[an unintended *double entendre* there: the price one pays for getting carried away by emotion], 'and destined ... to become probably the most populous, powerful, and opulent nation of either the southern or northern hemisphere' (6 August). 'Most populous' in the world? The mind boggles. In 1846 the *SMH* testifies to the fact that by then the patriotic catchphrase had achieved the status of a national slogan, analogous to 'Britannia Rules the Waves', and was well on its way to gracing the Australian coat of arms: 'The colonial motto—"Advance Australia"' (28 January).

The discovery of gold in Australia gave new and heady impetus to the now countrywide catch-cry. In 1851: 'Slab huts succumb to weather-boarded tenements, and brick yards are already talked of. Gold abounds more profusely than ever and the universal watch-word seems to be "Advance Australia"' (*Empire*, Sydney, 5 December). That 'universal watch-word' is taken up in 1855 by W.A. Howitt who wrote much and well on especially the Victorian goldfields: 'Let us cordially cry, "Advance Australia!" and so treat her in her infancy that she shall remember us with grateful affection in the power and splendor of her maturity' (*Land, Labor and Gold*, II. p. 426).

That note of buoyant optimism is still to be heard thirty-three years later, in 1888: 'Advance Australia! Yes, my boys,/And this seems something like advancing!' (*Morning Bulletin*, Rockhampton, 11 April). But the *Tocsin*, Melbourne, sounds a sardonic note in 1899: 'Advance Australia on a 30 bob a week "living" wage!' (29 June). This citation is interesting—the fact that *Tocsin* could chide the motto shows how firmly established it was. Such chiding notwithstanding, the journal *Nineteenth Century* (London) could proclaim in 1904: "'Advance Australia" is our national motto' (July, p. 105).

The First World War and the emblemised (often quasi-mythologised) grit and valour of the Anzacs and the Aussie diggers in the various theatres of the war gave the 'national motto' a further boost. In 1917: 'They have proved to the Hun that "Advance Australia" is not a mere phrase, but a virile, palpitating reality' (*Huon Times*, Franklin, Tasmania, 19 October). The same happened during and after the Second World War: 'The old popular slogan "Advance Australia" has gained special

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

significance since the Second World War' (S. Hope, *Diggers' Paradise*, 1956, p. 18).

Finally a ragtag group of citations, all of some interest. In the first (from 1965) the writer seems to be categorising the 'types' of people conducive to making Australia Advance: 'Be a visionary businessman' [*It's possible that there could be one or two lurking around here and there, we suppose*], 'a public-minded citizen, a mother-of-five' [*Why five, we wonder bemusedly, and not 'one' or 'seven'?*] 'with a love of the wide open spaces' [*What about the woman who hasn't any children, lives in the city, and likes it?*]. 'Advance Australia Fair!' (G.H. Fearnside, *The Golden Ram*, p. 114). There is some very woolly stereotyping going on in Fearnside's effusion. Then in 1981: 'Victoria's 1981 Moomba Festival carried a key theme of "Advance Australia" with an Advance Australia float leading the parade' (*Advance Australia*, iii. p. 3).

From 1788 to 1974 the British National Anthem, with its exhortation to God to 'Save the King' or 'Queen', whichever happened to be apposite, was Australia's National Anthem as well, a fact that caused a great deal of disaffection from very early on. As early as 1826, for instance, John Dunmore Lang, an ardent republican, published an alternative 'Australian Anthem' in his *Aurora Australis*, and many other writers and composers over the years propounded their own alternatives. In fact, from a very early stage, several competitions were held to find a new Australian National Anthem. In 1859, for instance, the Anthem 'Song of Australia', with words by Caroline Carleton and music by Carl Linger, won first prize in a competition, and in 1908 C.J. Dennis was awarded a special prize in the competition for an Anthem conducted by the *Bulletin*. Dennis called his Anthem 'The Australaise' after 'La Marseillaise' and his refreshingly irreverent words included the following:

*Fellers of Australia,
Blokes and coves and coots,
Shift your bloody carcasses,
Move your bloody boots....*

The melody of the Australian National Anthem is stirring. Not quite as good, perhaps, as the melody of the hymn *God the All Terrible* (which used to be the tune of the Russian National Anthem in the time of the Czars), or the melody of *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles, über alles in der Welt* ('Germany, Germany above all, above all in the world'), the former National Anthem of Germany (the opening line is now the less contentious *Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit*—'Unity and Justice and Freedom'—but the melody is still the very lovely one Haydn adapted from a Croatian folk tune and altered extensively), or

the very catchy melody of *La Marseillaise*, composed, it is almost certain, by Rouget de Lisle as a song for the Revolution (he wrote the somewhat bloodthirsty words too—*à bas les aristos!*), but our Aussie tune is very worthwhile nonetheless. It has vim and vigour. The words of our Anthem, however, are perhaps a different matter:

Australia's sons let us rejoice....

Let's begin again. That was the original first line. It was subsequently altered to make it more representative of all Australians. Our Anthem was composed circa 1878 by a Scot, Peter Dodds McCormick, writing under the pen-name *Amicus*, 'Friend'. It was sung by a choir of 10,000 at the inauguration of the Commonwealth at Centennial Park on 1 January 1901, and at the time of McCormick's death in 1916 the *SMH* asserted that the anthem 'has come to be recognised as something in the nature of an Australian National Anthem'. The entire Anthem is given below, but only the stanzas in italics have been retained:

*Australians all let us rejoice,
For we are young and free;
We've golden soil and wealth for toil,
Our home is girt by sea;
Our land abounds in Nature's gifts
Of beauty rich and rare;
In history's page, let every stage
Advance Australia fair!
In joyful strains then let us sing,
'Advance Australia fair!'*

[When gallant Cook from Albion
sail'd
To trace wide oceans o'er,
True British courage bore him on,
Till he landed on our shore.
Then here he raised Old England's
Flag,
The standard of the brave;
With all Her faults we love Her still,
Britannia rules the wave!
In joyful strains then let us sing
'Advance Australia fair!']

*Beneath the radiant Southern Cross,
We'll toil with hearts and hands;
To make this Commonwealth of ours
Renowned of all the lands;
For those who've come across the seas
We've boundless plains to share;
With courage let us all combine
To advance Australia fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing
'Advance Australia fair!'*

[While other nations of the globe
Behold us from afar,
We'll rise to high renown and shine
Like our glorious southern star;

From England, Scotia, Erin's Isle,
Who come our lot to share,
Let all combine with heart and hand
To advance Australia fair!
In joyful strains then let us sing
'Advance Australia fair!']

[Shou'd foreign foe e'er sight our
coast,
Or dare a foot to land,
We'll rouse to arms like sires of yore
To guard our native strand;
Britannia then shall surely know,
Beyond wide ocean's roll,
Her sons in fair Australia's land
Still keep a British soul.
In joyful strains then let us sing
'Advance Australia fair!']

Stanzas 2, 4, and 5, we're profoundly glad to say, have been expunged. They have no relevance to the reality of modern Australia whatsoever and would be deeply offensive not merely to the innumerable dinky-di Aussies who did not originate in 'England, Scotia, Erin's Isle', but to the original indigenous Aussies as well. Our official Anthem now consists solely of stanzas 1 and 3.

The original version of *Advance Australia Fair* is almost as fatuous as the second stanza of the poms' *God Save the Queen* (not that the first stanza is markedly better):

*O Lord our God arise,
Scatter her enemies
And make them fall!
Confound their politics,
Frustrate their knavish tricks.
On Thee our hopes we fix,
God save us all!*

In 1973 Prime Minister Gough Whitlam held another in the long series of competitions to find a truly Australian National Anthem. None of the hundreds of entries received were deemed meritorious enough for adoption. Prime Minister Whitlam then instituted a sample poll of sixty thousand Australians: they were asked to indicate their preference for one of three possible anthems, *Advance Australia Fair*, Carl Linger and Caroline Carleton's 1860 *Song of Australia* (referred to above), and Banjo Paterson's *Waltzing Matilda*. Over 51 per cent of those polled opted for *Advance Australia Fair*. Thereupon Prime Minister Whitlam proclaimed in 1974 that the melody of *Advance Australia Fair* (not the words) would replace *God Save the Queen* as the national tune of Australia, unless the Queen happened to be present in this country, in which eventuality both tunes would be played.

ADVANCE AUSTRALIA

FREDERICK LUDOWYK

In 1976 Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser reinstated *God Save the Queen* as Australia's National Anthem for all Australian Government occasions. He held a national referendum in 1978 in which voters were asked to choose one of *God Save the Queen*, *Advance Australia Fair*, *Waltzing Matilda*, and *Song of Australia*. *God Save the Queen* received a meagre 19 per cent of the vote. Some 43 per cent of Australians voted for *Advance Australia Fair*. *Waltzing Matilda* came second with 28%, and *Song of Australia* last with 10%.

Advance Australia Fair coexisted for a while thereafter with *God Save the Queen* (at the 1980 Olympic Games—for instance, Australians winning gold medals were greeted with the strains of *God Save the Queen* when they mounted the victory podium, but at the Commonwealth Games of 1982 Aussie gold-winners heard *Advance Australia Fair* as the Australian flag was raised). In 1984 Prime Minister Bob Hawke dethroned the pommie anthem and gave it the merciful *coup de grâce*. With some words modified (the original 'our youthful Commonwealth' became 'this

Commonwealth of ours' and 'For loyal sons beyond the seas' became 'For those who've come across the seas') and with entire stanzas cut, *Advance Australia Fair* was finally established as the Australian National Anthem.

At about the same time, however, **Advance Australia's** early role as a marketing catchphrase was revived in the government-approved, but private-enterprise run Advance Australia Campaign—for a fee, Australian-made products were able to advertise their patriotism by displaying the 'Advance Australia' motto.

More recently, the phrase and the anthem have appeared in some very disturbing contexts. In December 2005 newspapers reported that in the riots between 'skips' and 'people of Middle Eastern appearance' at Cronulla in Sydney, the anthem was used in perverse ways. The *Australian* on 17 December reported: 'Some took up chants of "no more Lebs" and "kill the Lebs", then switched into a chorus of *Advance Australia Fair* or *Waltzing Matilda*. Skinheads in boots and braces handed out

pamphlets for the neo-Nazi group Blood and Honour.' The *Sunday Mail* (Brisbane) reported on 18 December:

Thus a drunken, racist mob showed its true colours. The shirtless ones were draped in Australian flags with a beer in the hand that wasn't a flaying fist. They sang *Advance Australia Fair*, *Waltzing Matilda* and even—with an irony that escapes them—*I Am, You Are, We Are Australian* as they bashed women and ambulance officers. Their war paint slogans said, among other things: 'I grew here, you flew here' and 'Ethnic Cleansing Unit' as they chanted 'Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, oi, oi, oi' and brought international shame to the country they claim to love and protect.

A writer to the *SMH* 29 December 2005 focused on the potential ambiguity in the word **fair**:

We speak of a fair go for all and we even sing that we wish to *Advance Australia Fair*, but what do we mean by fair?

What, indeed!

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We welcome readers' comments on their recent observations of Australian usage, both positive and negative, and their queries, particularly those not easily answerable from the standard reference books.

CHUFFED

A colleague of mine claims that **chuffed** is the only word in the English language that has absolutely opposite meanings. Is this true?

F. James, Tas.

I must confess that I was familiar with only the positive meaning of this word, but a check in the large *OED* (now available online) shows that two meanings are available. The two meanings are also given in the *Australian Oxford Dictionary*. For its first meaning, the *OED* gives 'pleased, satisfied', with citations from 1957 onwards. For its second meaning, the *OED* gives 'displeased, disgruntled', with citations from 1960 onwards. From the written evidence it seems that these two opposite meanings emerged at about the same time.

Your colleague is not right about this being the only word with **opposite** meanings, as distinct from words that are spelt and pronounced the same way but have **different** meanings—homophones such as **bank** 'a slope' and **bank** 'a place to store money'. For example, we know that teenagers often deliberately generate opposite meanings for standard words, so that to them a 'bad' or 'sick' party is a 'wonderful' party. Sometimes these opposite meanings are the result of quite different etymologies. A good example of this is the verb **cleave**. It can mean 'to split or sever', and in this sense goes back to the Old English verb *cleofan* (the diphthong in the first syllable is long). It can also mean 'to stick fast to' (quite the opposite meaning), and in this sense goes back to the Old English verb *cleofian* (the diphthong in the first syllable is short). In Old English they sounded quite different, but as a result of various sound changes they became homonyms.

The two senses of **chuffed** have a similar history, although they have always been pronounced the same way. There is a dialect adjective **chuff** (first recorded in 1609) that had the senses '1. swollen or puffed out with fat; chubby. 2. pleased, satisfied, happy'. This goes back to a noun **chuff** (first recorded in 1530) that meant 'a cheek swollen or puffed with fat'. But there is another dialect adjective **chuff** (first recorded in 1832) that means 'clownish, churlish, rude, surly, morose'. This goes back to a noun **chuff** (first recorded in 1440) that meant '1. a rustic boor, clown, churl. 2. a rude coarse churlish fellow; a miser'. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries there was also

an adjective **chuffy**, again having both opposite meanings.

What is curious about the **chuffed** form is that it emerges so late—in the 1950s and 1960s. But both senses of the word have a long and venerable history. **ED.**

HASH

When I pay my phone and other bills by phone, I am constantly told to enter details and then press the 'hash button'. If I need extra information at any time I am told to press the 'star button'. I understand that one—the symbol on the key looks like a 'star'. But in what sense does the symbol on the bottom right key look like a 'hash'? It is simply #, which looks a bit like the start of a game of noughts and crosses? Am I missing something here?

J. Sadler, NSW

The term **hash sign** first appeared in the early 1980s. The origin of the term is not entirely clear, but the *OED* suggests that it is probably ultimately from the verb **hatch** in the sense 'to cut, engrave, or draw a series of lines, generally parallel, on (a metal, wood, or paper surface); chiefly used for shading on engraving or drawing'. From the seventeenth century the term **hatched moulding** was used to describe a kind of moulding, used in earlier Norman architecture, 'formed with two series of oblique parallel incisions crossing each other'. In the United States of America, it is usually called the **number sign**, and in some uses the sign simply means 'number'. This sense sometimes appears in Australia—our building at the Australian National University is officially designated #96. An unusual alternate name for the sign is **octothorp** (or **octothorpe**), first appearing in 1974. The **octo-** part seems to be a straightforward reference to the Latin or Greek combining form meaning 'eight'. The **thorp(e)** element has been variously interpreted. The *OED* explains that the 'term was reportedly coined in the early 1960s by Don Macpherson, an employee of Bell Laboratories'. Macpherson was also reportedly involved in a campaign to return from Sweden the Olympic medals of American athlete Jim Thorpe. Thorpe had won medals in the 1912 Stockholm Games, but they were taken from him when his amateur status was compromised by information that he had been paid for playing baseball. So Macpherson enshrined his memory in this newly coined word. Another explanation has it that **thorp(e)** is the Old English word for 'village' (there are numerous English place names with this ending) and that the sign

represents a village surrounded by eight fields. Very complicated. By comparison, the explanation of **hash** as an alteration of **hatch** is simplicity indeed! **ED.**

BRONZED, SILVERED, GOLDED

Have I caught the first appearance of a new verb? During the Commonwealth Games I heard a commentator say that a swimmer had **bronzed** in an event, meaning that he had won the bronze medal. Is this now acceptable?

L. Baird, Vic.

By coincidence, the Australian National Dictionary Centre's director Bruce Moore discussed this recently with Steve Martin of ABC Radio Ballarat. A writer in the *Adelaide Advertiser*, in August 2002, noted that a swimming commentator had used the formulation 'she **silvered**' at the Pan-Pac tournament, and even earlier, in May 2000, the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* commented on the way a swimmer was described as having **bronzed** an event. These new verbs are certainly being used, but they are not quite dictionary material yet. **Bronze** and **silver** have the advantage of existing as verbs in other contexts: 'to give something a surface of bronze'; 'to coat or plate with silver'. But what of gold? You gild something rather than gold it. 'He gilded the 50 metres freestyle' sounds as unlikely as 'he golded' that most brief of races. **ED.**

PEAR-SHAPED

Not so long ago, the usual phrase to describe the collapse of a project was 'the wheels fell off'. Now, it seems, the main danger is that projects will 'go pear-shaped'. Why is a pear seen as having an undesirable configuration? Perhaps the phrase refers to a lapse from circularity, but what field of endeavour has given us this metaphor?

J. Mackenzie, Vic.

When applied to a person (especially a woman), the adjective **pear-shaped** is most uncomplimentary. It means that that person is hideously 'hippy', has hips that are uglily wide in relation to the upper part of the body—shaped like a pear in fact. From there it is but a step to the sense 'out of proportion, not functioning well'. This sense was verbed in RAF slang as **to go pear-shaped**, meaning 'to come a cropper', 'go disastrously wrong'. I like your gloss 'lapse from circularity', if circularity be considered the acme of perfection. A pear, therefore (shameless, self-indulgent fruit!), or a pear-shaped person or project, has fallen badly from grace. **ED.**

Centre members are finalising their choices of entries for a new edition of the *Australian National Dictionary*. As explained in previous numbers of *Ozwords*, this is a dictionary based on historical principles, so there are quotations from newspapers, magazines, books, etc., that illustrate how the word has been used. In general, we aim to have a quotation for each decade. For a number of words that will form new entries, we have been surprised how late the 'earliest' evidence is. In the examples given below, we are sure that earlier printed evidence must be available. Can any readers help us with printed evidence for the dates as indicated?

IDIOMS

a stubby short of a six-pack: before 1996.

carry on like a pork chop: before 1988.

covered more ground than Burke and Wills: before 1980.

death adder in one's pocket [= miserly]: before 1965; between 1968 and 1995; after 1995.

flash as a rat with a gold tooth: before 1985.

land of the fair go: before 1984.

land of the golden fleece: between 1914 and 1984.

like the cocky on the biscuit tin [from the Arnott's biscuit tin that had a rosella parrot on the lid—'on the outside']: before 1985.

off like a bucket of prawns: before 1989.

stacks on the mill [in children's games or in football]: before 1988.

that's the way the violet crumbles: before 1988.

to kill/choke a brown dog [often used to describe unpalatable food]: before 1980.

RECREATION

beer and prawns night: before 1993.

cent sale [charity/fundraising sale]: before 1995.

dilly pot/net: before 1984.

dinger [= a shanghai]: before 1984.

esky lidder [= body boarder]: before 1994.

fosterphone: before 1987.

goodoo [= Murray cod]: before 1998.

goose club [a kind of raffle]: before 1991.

rabbit of the river/river rabbit [= carp]: before 1995.

rissole [= RSL Club]: before 1985.

stinger suit: before 1984.

thong-throwing competition: before 1986.

yabby trap: before 1998.

RHYMING SLANG

Barry Crocker = shocker: before 1996.

Harold Holt = bolt: before 1985.

Jack (the) dancer = cancer: before 1989.



The Australian National Dictionary Centre is jointly funded by **Oxford University Press Australia** and **The Australian National University** to research all aspects of Australian English and to publish Australian dictionaries and other works.

Jatz Crackers = knackers: before 1996.

Lionel Rose = nose: before 1988.

seppo = yank: before 1985.

ABBREVIATIONS

ambo = ambulance officer: before 1989.

firie = firefighter: before 1993.

glassie = bar worker: before 1996.

lammo = lamington: before 1987.

pube = public servant: before 1993.

rellie = relative: before 1981.

servo: before 1985.

trackie daks = tracksuit trousers: before 1993.

FOOD AND DRINK

Belgium sausage: between 1934 and 2003.

Boston bun: before 1992.

cleanskin [= wine]: before 1988.

counter meal: before 1985.

devonshire tea: before 1984.

early opener: before 1986.

sausage sizzle: before 1984.

snot block [= vanilla slice]: before 1992.

sticky [= sweet wine]: before 1984.

DOMESTIC

chook pen: before 1986.

chook shed: before 1987.

light globe: before 1980.

splayd: before 1988.

sunbeam [= unused cutlery]: before 1982.

BODY

Bondi cigar: before 1996.

franger: before 1979.

hornbag: before 1981.

spunkrat: before 1984.

tockley [= penis]: before 1994.

verandah over the toolshed/toyshop: before 1991.

VEHICLES

circle work: before 1996.

do a blockie: before 1999.

five poster [= bull bar with five vertical posts]: before 2000.

rebirth [verb = to make over a stolen car]: before 1997.

Toorak tractor: before 1984.

yank tank: before 1986.

OTHER REGIONAL

barbed wire [Qld = Fourex beer]: before 1981.

Barossa Deutsche [SA]: before 1981.

bevan [Qld = lout]: before 1988.

Brizvegas [Qld]: before 1996.

chigga [Tas. = lout]: before 1990.

Collingwood six-footer [Vic.]: before 1983.

double cut roll [SA]: before 1987.

echo [SA = small beer bottle]: before 1984.

nointer [Tas. = mischievous child]: before 1994.

piff [Vic. = to throw]: before 1994.

skimpy [WA = barmaid]: before 1988.

spoggy [SA = sparrow]: before 1974.

tomboy stitch [SA]: before 1988.

yaffler [Tas. = loud-mouthed person]: before 1989.

MISCELLANEOUS

Anzac legend: before 1984.

barrier blanket [at a racecourse]: before 1997.

blue swimmer [= \$10 note]: before 1986.

branch stacking [in politics]: before 1984.

chromer [= inhaler of aerosol paint]: before 2001.

disendorse [a politician]: before 1987.

display home: before 1986.

drop bear: before 1982.

dummy spitting: before 1991.

femocrat: before 1989.

hoodlum [= kingfish]: before 1995.

KG [= King George whiting]: before 1995.

lemon [= lesbian]: before 1987.

lobster [= \$20 note]: before 1988.

mate's rates: before 1986.

meat tray [in a pub raffle etc.]: before 1986.

motorbike frog: before 1997.

saltwater yabby: before 1986.

wonky hole [= an underground stream that breaks out through the ocean floor' especially off the coast of Queensland]: before 2000.

Bruce Moore

Director



I recently needed to compile a list of Australian words and usages for a word game. Carrying out this task has given me a new appreciation of the difficulties facing Australian lexicographers. Not only must one try to find all the entries that *should* be included, but also it is necessary to take efforts to exclude all the items that don't really belong. Words and meanings that seem, to the Australian ear, to be distinctively Australian sometimes turn out to be commonly used elsewhere.

Fortunately, the World Wide Web provides a number of techniques that can be used to localise the usage of a word or phrase. A large percentage of Australianisms are slang and colloquial terms, some of which rarely appear in books or newspapers. But online discussion forums encourage a casual style of writing, which sometimes includes expressions that are mostly used orally, so the archives of these forums provide a rich source of data for the bush lexicographer.

I wanted an Australian word list for an electronic game that I was developing. The game requires its players to make words out of randomly chosen letters, with the twist that the score is doubled for a word classed as Australian. To make the Australian angle significant, I needed a reasonably large list of Australian words so I decided I would use not only words unique to Australia, such as **nong**, but also words with a special Australian usage, such as **dill**. The nature of my game meant that I needed only to consider three- and four-letter words, but even so, the job turned out to be much more difficult than I had imagined.

One of the words I investigated was **hoy**. As an interjection to attract attention, the word is international, but in the sense of any kind of contact (or, specifically, 'a call'), as in 'give me a hoy', it seems to be Australian. When an Internet search engine is used to look for phrases like 'give me a hoy' or 'give them a hoy', the results seem to be almost always of Australian origin wherever the nationality of the writer can be determined. (On one discussion board, it was also used as a verb in 'hoy I will' in reply to someone else saying 'give me a hoy'.) Another completely different Australian meaning for **hoy** is as the name of a game of chance, similar to bingo, played with packs of cards. The game is played at quite a few venues, including the very Aussie-sounding Woolgoolga Bowling Club. It is recorded in the *Australian National Dictionary*, with the earliest evidence from 1965.

Another three-letter word with a usage

that may not be obviously Australian is **ask**, when used as a noun in phrases like 'a big ask'. Two years ago, US presidential candidate John Kerry said in a speech: 'I'm asking you to trust our nation, our history, the world, your families, in my hands. And I understand that it's a big ask.' (Too big an ask, as it turned out!) Kerry's use of the phrase provoked some discussion on the US-based Language Log website, archived at <http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/languagelog/archives/001331.html>. Some of the contributors considered 'ask' was simply being used to mean a request, with one person citing a definition to this effect on a Microsoft website. The general feeling seemed to be that this usage was to be regretted.

It certainly would be a deplorable trend if **ask** as a noun was no more than a piece of corporate baby-talk for 'something that is asked', but it seems to have a more specific connotation in Australian usage, as a reference to the magnitude of a request. So as well as a 'big ask', we can have a 'small ask', or a 'reasonable ask'. Or simply, 'an ask', which would usually imply a big ask, as in the application of this term to a perhaps unexpected topic by Professor Gab Kovacs, the Monash IVF Medical Director, reported in the *Age* on 5 March 2005: 'If you've got a busy day and have to race out and produce a sperm specimen rather than have a sandwich and read the paper, it's an ask.'

Furthermore, the magnitude of the ask can be considered from two distinct perspectives. A 'big ask' can be a heavy imposition on someone's generosity, in which case it means much the same as 'a lot to ask', or it can be something that will be difficult to provide, even though the person asked may be happy to meet the request if only they can, as when a sporting coach's call for his team to win a match might be considered a 'tough ask'.

So, is this an Australian usage? The phrase 'big ask' is classed as Australian by the *Australian Oxford Dictionary* and by G.A. Wilkes's *Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms*. Further evidence is provided perhaps by the fact that the non-Australian language mavens discussing John Kerry's use of the phrase considered it a novelty. In contrast, Australia's Kate Burridge concludes a list of verbs converted to nouns with, 'and of course a *big ask*', without feeling the need for any further explanation (*Weeds in the Garden of Words* (2005), p. 26). *The Big Ask* (2001) is an Australian crime novel by Shane Maloney.

Other books with 'ask' as a noun in the title are *A Big Ask* (2002) by Ruth Nelson and *The Great Big Animal Ask* (2005) by Libby Hathorn—both also Australian writers. Web searches show a preponderance of Australians using **ask** in this way, although there are instances from people in the UK and elsewhere, so the usage has evidently spread.

Indeed, the **big ask** recently appeared in the 2003 UK *Oxford Dictionary of English*, defined as 'a difficult demand to fulfil'. Is this another Australian export, delivered to the UK audience via the Australian soapies, just as **rage** in the sense 'a wild party' spread to the UK? And of course, there's the John Kerry speech. Was there an Australian speechwriter in the Kerry camp perhaps?

Both **hoy** and **ask** raise the issue of whether a word can be considered to be an Australianism in its own right if its distinctively Australian usage is only as part of a phrase. It could be argued that **hoy** has a distinctively Australian sense only in the phrase 'give...a hoy', but this is nevertheless a sense of **hoy** that is not available to non-Australian speakers. In any case, the card game meaning allows me to use this word in my game with a clear conscience. In the case of **ask**, there seems to be sufficient variety of expressions incorporating this usage to qualify it as a word with an Australian-made meaning.

In a similar vein, we could consider the word **cut**, as in the phrase **cut lunch**. A number of dictionaries have **cut lunch** as an Australian expression, but none seem to have **cut** as a verb meaning to *make* a packed lunch. Yet examples can be found of the word used in this way. An early example is in *Teens: A Story of Australian School Girls* (1923) by Louise Mack: "Do you cut your own lunch?" she asked. "No. My mother cuts it for me. Do you cut yours?" (Chapter 4—see online text at <http://purl.library.usyd.edu.au/setis/id/macteen>). A more recent example was an ABC Perth (21 June 2003) story (archived at <http://www.abc.net.au/perth/stories/s885061.htm>) on saving money around the house—'cut your own lunch to take to work every day'.

An Australian word that was absent from dictionaries until very recently is **piff**, meaning 'to throw, to discard'. There was a brief item about this word in *Ozwords* in April 2001, which appealed for examples of the word in print. The article drew attention to the existence of a Warrnambool-based band called 'the Piffen Yonnies'. (*Yonnie* is also an Australian slang word, meaning



'a small stone'.) Since then, **piff** (used primarily in Victoria) has appeared in the *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary* (2004) with the terse definition 'throw'. According to <<http://www.slangsite.com>>, **piff** is: 'A substitute for any verb. Used in Australia in the 1980s.' This is probably a little broad. (If it were true, **piff** could be proclaimed the Great Australian Verb, fit to take its place alongside the Great Australian Adjective.)

On the other hand, the *Australian Oxford Dictionary* definition may be a little narrow, focusing on the sense of physically throwing something. The term is sometimes used in connection with getting rid of and discarding things, and does not always entail a physical act of throwing. If you discard something, you could say you 'piffed it out', 'piffed it away', 'piffed it off', or, simply, 'piffed it'. For example, 'piff those files off the computer'. A friend who was telling me about a meditation class said: 'you have to focus on your thoughts, so you can piff them off.' (Could there be some influence here from 'pissing things off'?)

Sometimes a word usage believed to have originated in Australia has subsequently been adopted widely in other places. An example is **surf**, when used as a verb. The earliest example of this usage quoted in the *Australian National Dictionary* is from a 1913 *Bulletin* article. Although most people in other countries would probably not think of it now as an Australian expression, its Australian origin, together with the strong association between surfing and the stereotypical Australian lifestyle, give it a strong claim to be considered an Australianism.

Call, meaning to commentate on a sporting event is used elsewhere now, but claimed as Australian by the *Australian National Dictionary*, with an earliest usage example from 1906. Websites from various parts of the world can be found using the expression **race caller**, but Australians use **call** for all kinds of sport. For example: 'Would it be too much to ask for the ABC commentary team to comprehensively call the cricket ball by ball, give us the score frequently and describe the atmosphere?' asked 'Bob Cricket', a contributor to a discussion on the Crikey Website in January 2004. In Don DeLillo's *Mao II*, an American character says: 'When I was a kid I used to announce ballgames to myself' (1991, p. 45). An Australian would probably say: 'I used to call cricket matches to myself.'

Other Australian-originated terms that

have spread beyond our shores include **demo** (for a political demonstration) and **muso** (for a musician), both of which seem good candidates for Australian word status because of the characteristic -o ending.

A more debatable word is **jake**, meaning satisfactory, as in 'everything's jake'. The term has probably been used as much in North America as in Australia and authorities are divided as to where it originated. In any case, **jake** now seems to lack a distinctively Australian flavour. Perhaps most significantly, the term appears to have largely gone out of use everywhere. In keeping with my purpose of compiling an Australian word list for a game, and while I'm keen to get as many words as I can, I don't want to burden my list with too many dated or obscure usages. (Now, if you were to say, 'She'll be jake', this use of **she** would certainly be counted as an Australianism!)

A term that one might expect to be just as dated as **jake** is **gun**, meaning pre-eminent, as in **gun shearer**. But in fact this usage seems to live on, in new contexts. 'Have gun online service, will travel' was an *Age* headline on 7 September 2004. The phrase **gun coder** was used by Sausage Software, as documented by this comment from a May 2000 review: 'The guys at Sausage are calling HotDog Professional 6.0, "The Gun Coder's Solution". I found this description apt as the program sports almost every feature you could imagine in an HTML Editor.' (See <<http://www.sitepoint.com/article/sausage-software>>.)

Another Australianism that, far from going out of style, seems to be having a new lease of life, is **pash**, with the meaning succinctly expressed in this 1997 song lyric: 'kiss me passionately/ pash me pash me pash me' ('Pash', by Kate Ceberano and Mark Goldenberg). An article by Barry Divola in *Sunday Life*, the *Sunday Age Magazine*, on 6 February 2005 describes **pash** as 1970s Australian slang, but claims it is big in the UK and is set for a resurgence (a significant point here is that whereas in the UK **pash** means 'a brief infatuation', in Australia it is used as a verb meaning 'to kiss and caress amorously'). Divola says: 'Be prepared for **pash rash** all over again.' **Pash rash** is stubble rash caused by prolonged pashing with a badly-shaven man. **Pash rash** doesn't seem to have made it into any of the printed Australian dictionaries yet, but there are plenty of websites using the phrase. Regular viewers of *Kath & Kim* will recall Sharon's affliction with this condition.

Since I have had my Australian word list and definitions online at <<http://www.ozlip.lexigame.com/ozdict.html>>, **pash rash** has been the third most common search phrase that has brought people to the site, after 'Australian words' and 'Australian dictionary'. 'Pashing definition' has come in fourth. This probably says more about the nature of the Internet than it does about the nature of Australian English. Other Australianisms that have been used in multiple searches that reached the site include, in descending order of frequency, **hoon**, **hoy**, **goog**, **nork**, **mole**, and **pom**.

My list of three- and four-letter words at the moment stands at:

alec ambo arse arvo avo
 bag bite blue bog bomb bora bot bulk
 bung burl bush
 call cark carn cas cask chop clag cob coit
 comp cove cow cray crib crim croc cut
 dack dag daks darg darl date dee demo
 dero dice diff dig dike dill ding dink dob
 doco doer dog dong donk drum duco
 dud duff dyke
 emu esky xy
 fang fat full
 geek gig gin ging goog goom grog gum
 gun gyno
 hide hoon hoop hops hoy hump
 jack joe joey jube
 kero kino knap
 lag lair lash lob lurk
 mark mate mob mole moz muso myxo
 nana nick nong norg nork
 oil onka onya oval
 pash pat pav pea piff pimp pom port prop
 punt push
 rage rap rapt rego rels roo root rort ruck
 sank sav she sink skip skol slab slag slug sly
 snag soda sook sool sort surf swag swy
 tea teno tike tip toey togs toot tote tray
 trot tuan tube turn tyke
 uni ute
 vag vege
 wag wipe wog woma wonk wrap
 yarn yeo yoe
 zac zack ziff

Please visit the site to try the game and to offer any suggestions for more Australian words.

[Alan Walker is a Melbourne software developer who has recently taken up creating word games for computers and mobile phones.]

OZWORDS COMPETITION NO. 25: RESULTS

You were asked to choose any Australian animal (fish, flesh, or fowl) and create a simile that provides a needed and/or witty addition to the Australian lexicon. There were many entries, and here is a sampling:

As cumbersome as a cassowary
As gaudy as a Gouldian finch
As gregarious as a galah
As garrulous as a galah [M. Manoy]
As bashful as a baby bunyip.
As legless as a drunken fruitbat
[J. McGahey]
As cool as a kookaburra [G. Watson]
As coarse as a cockie's squawk
As malicious as a maggie's swoop
As cheeky as a kookaburra's chuckle
[N. Lane]
As lairy as a lorikeet

As comatose as a koala [A. Wilson]
As pugnacious as a peewee
As musical as a magpie [P. Sainsbury]
As transparent as a Tassie tiger
[C. Stirrup]
As brutal as a butcher bird
As quirky as a quoll [D. Andrews]
As spiky as a High Church echidna
[K. Thyer]

As bloated as a blue-tongue
As gawky as a gecko
As wobbly as a wombat [G. Case]
Tickled pink like a galah [J. Wingfield]
As pesky as a gecko [K. Shooter]
As pretty as a Tassy devil [W. Wetherell]
As nimble as a numbat
As dopey as a drongo [E. O'Brien]
As ridiculous as an ornithorincus
[R. Ruhlwe]

As stoned as a crow [B. French]
As wacky as a wombat
As cantankerous as a cassowary
As cuddly as an echidna
As quiet as a cockatoo [D. Tribe]
As mad as a mothering magpie
[D. Rockford]

Fish, flesh or fowl?
Let's start with an owl —
'As boggled as a boobook'.
Some flesh? Now let me think—

What about a skink?
'As wide-eyed as a wall lizard'.
That leaves us with a fish—
(Our favourite summer dish)
'Her skin was as tough as an old tommy-
ruff'
And she coughed like a croc that had
Swallowed a sock' [L. Evans]
As cuddly as a koala
As quaint as a quokka [G. Manoy]
As cunning as a currawong. [S. Shaw]
As dainty as a honey possum
[M. Mitchell]
As acquisitive as a bower bird
As timely as a Christmas beetle
As brazen as a butcherbird [B. Yell]
As rueful as a radiator-ed roo
More bluff than a blustering bluetongue
[S. Robson]
As bold as a brolga
As devious as a dingo
Waddling like a wombat [L. Pilsbury]

Second Prize (books to the value of \$50 from the OUP catalogue) to I. Nowak, WA, for 'as shifty as a blowie in a bow tie'. **First Prize** (books to the value of \$100 from the OUP catalogue) to J. McGahey, NSW, for 'as woebegone as a wobbegong'.

OZWORDS COMPETITION NO. 26

In 2004, to celebrate its seventieth birthday, the British Council produced a list of the seventy most beautiful English words, as voted for by people in 102 non English-speaking countries. The top ten words were: 1. Mother; 2. Passion; 3. Smile; 4. Love; 5. Eternity; 6. Fatalistic; 7. Destiny; 8. Freedom; 9. Liberty; 10. Tranquillity. With the exception of *mother*, they are all very abstract terms. Interestingly, the word *father* did not come into the top 70. The Australian *kangaroo* came in at 50.

So here are two questions. 1. What is your favourite Australian word? 2. What Australian word best sums up Australian values? Choose a word in either or in both categories, and in no more than 25 words explain the reason(s) for your choice.

ENTRIES CLOSE 4 SEPTEMBER 2006.

Entries sent by email should also contain a snail mail address. All entries should be sent to the editor.

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