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ISSUES IN AUSTRALIAN STYLE AND THE USE OF ENGLISH IN AUSTRALIA

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Collecting Queensland words

Julia Robinson is the editor of Voices of Queensland: Words from the Sunshine State, published by Oxford University Press.

Voices of Queensland is the latest regional offering from the Australian National Dictionary Centre at the ANU. There are six contributors: five AND Centre staff and one University of Melbourne linguist. The book records 500 words of significance to Queensland with their origins, meanings, and illustrative quotations taken from the Centre's database of Australian English. The words come from different aspects of Queensland life: politics and society, tourism, the outback, lifestyle, work, relations with the south. The inclusion policy was deliberately broad: words that originate in Queensland, words that are used more frequently there than elsewhere, and words that need no explanation locally but are not self-evident outside the state. There are words for local activities (*cane toad racing, cricko*), occupations (*tickie, meter maid*), institutions (*the Ekeka, Brownies of the Air*), and words associated with Queensland's history (*separation, plains of promise*). Some will be familiar to readers throughout Australia, but many will be known only to Queenslanders.

How did this project come about? The AND Centre already has two regional glossaries to its name, Brooks and Ritchie's *Words from the West* (1994) and *Tassie Terms* (1995).

Voices of Queensland is the third in the series. All three grew out of the regional reading program begun at the Centre in 1987 after the completion of the *Australian National Dictionary* (AND), a dictionary of Australian English based on historical principles. The reading program targeted one type of source material, the regional newspaper, as being the best potential source of regionalisms. At their best, local papers identify with community concerns and occupations, and speak with an informality likely to produce genuinely local terms.

At the time the newspaper evidence in the Centre's database of Australian English (from which the material for AND was drawn) had a distinctly south-east-coast bias. It was mostly confined to sources readily accessible to researchers: those in the National Library of Australia (Canberra) and the Mitchell Library (Sydney). The newspaper evidence was therefore largely metropolitan and reflected the concentration of the population in Australia's south-east corner. The regional reading program redressed this imbalance by sampling widely across all states.

The initial sampling of Queensland newspapers was done by a single reader who looked at

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fourteen papers from across the state, from towns such as Cairns and Townsville in the far north, inland pastoral centres such as Charleville, Longreach and Blackall, the mining town of Mount Isa, and towns associated with the sugar industry such as Mackay and Bundaberg. Other regional centres included Bowen, Dalby, Toowoomba and Charters Towers. The reader scanned each paper for a continuous sequence, on average, of six months; longer if it proved useful, and less if it did not produce enough data.

The sampling enabled the reader to ascertain the most useful newspapers, to establish which parts of each paper were worth reading closely, and the categories of data each produced. Thus, for instance, the initial report notes that the *Bowen Independent* is generating mango-growing and sporting terms, and that the feature articles are the most productive; that Mackay's *Daily Mercury* is producing sugar and cattle industry words, particularly in the 'Land' section, letters to the editor, classifieds and real estate; and that there is no point in continuing to read Toowoomba's *Downs Star* because it has produced only one word worth collecting in a three-month run.

The original sampling established the territory in pointing to interests, activities and occupations of likely regional significance. It was followed by data collection that focused on the most productive sources. The resulting data, along with the items already identified in *AND* itself as being of Queensland origin or importance, formed the basis of the Queensland archive. It has been added to significantly with data from magazines and works of fiction and non-fiction.

When we began to edit this material for *Voices of Queensland* we found that it fell naturally into groups

of words. At this point the decision was made to break with the format of our Western Australian and Tasmanian glossaries, which are presented as a single word list from A to Z. The Queensland material is grouped thematically into six chapters: a structure which dovetails with our inclination, as historical lexicographers, to view words as items of social and historical interest. We hope to give a context to the words, so they have a resonance beyond the individual entry. Each chapter begins with an introduction outlining the theme and range of the material, and this is followed by a word list. Each entry in the word list has a headword followed by a definition and at least one illustrative quotation. The quotations are taken from the Centre's database of Australian English.

In some respects, what we found in the Queensland data was similar to the data thrown up by the Tasmanian and Western Australian research. Clusters of words around local industries (in this case the sugar and cattle industries), words reflecting local activities, occupations, climate and environment. One of the features of the earlier glossaries was the evidence of survivals from British dialect, including *nointer* (a spoiled or troublesome child) and *yaffler* (a garrulous person) in Tasmania, and *faction* (a sporting team within a school or club) in the west. No such survivals were found in the Queensland lexicon – its distinctive local terms reflect its contemporary lifestyles and its socio-political history.

After Queensland, the next cab off the rank is South Australia. Centre staffer and linguist Dorothy Jauncey is working on this at the moment, discovering along the way such croweater's delights as *frog cakes*, *fritz* and *floaters*. The book is due for publication in 2003. □



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Federation Book Launch

Very pleased I was when asked to launch the Federation Edition of the *Macquarie Dictionary*. What better way to mark a hundred years of nationhood than to reflect on the distinctive, strangely uniform language which courses the length and breadth of this island continent? I was a little cocky too. Was it perhaps time to ask a scientist, now that biological sciences has its own dictionary, namely the first draft of the human genome project, albeit with only 40,000 rather than 100,000 words? And isn't there something quintessentially scientific about the precision of words, what Michael Kirby has termed "the building blocks for the ideas of the Australian people as they enter a new century"? But my hubris vanished when I read the two Federation essays by Michael Kirby and Les Murray, because nothing that I could say could come anywhere near matching the elegance of their insights or the sheer beauty of their prose. Furthermore, intricate and nuanced though the language of the genes may be, no subtlety of biochemistry or complexity of gene function could rival the inventiveness of Australian English.

Our humanity is tremendously tied up with words. Ideas and concepts flicker, duck and weave, and all too often vanish until the discipline of language captures them, enables them to be refined and reviewed, permits them gradually to build an edifice. It is so important to use words with precision and I genuinely am full of admiration for the pithy way in which the *Macquarie Dictionary* uses a few well-chosen words and simple, telling examples to detail what each headword really means.

Michael Kirby's essay explores the essence of Australian nationhood. Without for a second denying the unpromising start and the many dismal moments in our history, Kirby's analysis is unashamedly optimistic:

Compared with most human societies, Australia still has a lot to

celebrate. After a century of wars, revolutions, genocide, chaos and unrelieved suffering, Australians have generally kept aflame the beacons of stability, order and gradual progress towards justice for all.

Kirby looks at our politics, our institutions, the contributions of Australian science and technology, the excellence in sport, the riches in art, literature and culture, and the diversity of the Australian population. He sees our multiculturalism as an alternative to cultural xenophobia and ethnic cleansing, the basic decency of the people as ensuring that everyone will have a fair go. He calls not for complacency but for action to ensure the sustaining of excellence in the above fields and for generosity to other lands and peoples less fortunate than ourselves.

Les Murray brings us his insightful, quirky, affectionate view of how the Australian language evolved and how the notorious Australian accent first emerged. Used first by the offspring of convicts and soldiers, rubbished for being 'hideous, low, degraded, mindless, nasal, Cockney' it gradually became universal, though in the variants known as Broad, General, Cultivated and Modified. Murray notes the importance of the distinctive Aboriginal accent and a wealth of Aboriginal expressions and concepts which have come into Australian English. He points out further that while a language or dialect can have a productive encounter with one or two other languages, as for example in Canada or South Africa, it is impossible to have a cross-fertilising relationship with 150 languages, so no non-English language has really penetrated into Australian usage. Thickly accented Australian English is the first generation's lingua franca, and in the second generation true dinkum Aussie vernacular will issue equally from white, yellow, brown, black, fair, swarthy or any other kind of visage – to my great delight. As

Excerpts from the speech of Professor Emeritus Sir Gustav Nossal, launching the Macquarie Dictionary Federation Edition, at the University of Melbourne, 9 October 2001

Murray notes, state and regional differences in speech are surprisingly meagre in Australia, by comparison, for example, with USA. This makes the odd distinctive word all the more fascinating: *coggie* for swimming costume in Sydney, *bathers* in Melbourne; *bindi-eyes* for burrs in most of Australia, *double-Gs* in Western Australia. But overall Australian English is not only a great, unmistakable identifier, it is also a strong unifying force. Who doesn't get a bit of a thrill when overhearing an Aussie phrase in distant parts?

The first edition of the *Macquarie Dictionary* was published in 1981 after a decade of research and planning – what a great thing for a new university to become involved in, and now – 20 years later in our Centenary of Federation year we have this Limited Edition to mark the event. The word *icon* is over-used, but I still love it, thank goodness it has only 6 meanings according to the *Macquarie Dictionary*! I leave you with meaning number 5: "An artefact, practice, etc., which is associated with a particular way of life so strongly that it comes to be seen as a symbol of it". The *Macquarie Dictionary* is certainly an icon of the Australian way of life. □



SCOSE NOTES

Language researcher Irene Poinkin summarises recent discussions at SCOSE, the ABC Standing Committee on Spoken English.

The past six months would have been relatively quiet but for the sudden increase in the number of listener complaints about “haitch” after members of the public and ABC broadcasters alike spent many hours on air discussing the collapse of HIH Insurance. The public’s interest in the pronunciation of H led SCOSE to review its stance on it. Taking into consideration the results of the previous Style Council Feedback survey, showing that 25% of the Australian population pronounced it “haitch” instead of “aitch”, SCOSE decided that it was time to abandon any active resistance to “haitch” and apply its energy elsewhere. (This decision in itself upset some people.)

Happily there were plenty of new issues to consider, with some interesting new expressions attracting objections from listeners! *Telco* is already so well-established in finance contexts that it hardly needs an explanation. Even so, several SCOSE members were less than enthusiastic about endorsing its use, partly because there is a company called Telco Australia listed on the stock exchange, and partly because the word smacks of jargon. Such considerations are unlikely to deter finance commentators from using the word. It’s much too convenient.

Another expression heard in finance contexts is *going forward*, as in “We can expect further rate cuts going forward”. The phrase appears to have very little to justify its existence as it simply means “in future” or “later”. Let’s hope it has a limited shelf-life.

In sport, we’ve been hearing the new verb *to verse*, shorthand for “to play against (versus)”, as in “the Bulldogs are versing the Broncos tomorrow”. Also, one commentator’s repeated use of the phrase *for mine* intrigued one listener. The context indicated that it was a truncated version of *for my money*. SCOSE pondered whether it is appropriate for sports commentators to use such

jargon and concluded that in general if a word appears in print (eg. in a newspaper article), it is legitimate to use it on air.

The verbs *to breach* and *to service* are being used in a new way – with a person as its object. Normally, a person can *breach an agreement*, but now an organisation (or person) can *breach a person*, that is, strip them of certain benefits if they fail to comply with an agreement. We’ve heard, for example, how some job seekers have been “breached” by Centrelink for not filling in a form or in some way failing to comply with their social security obligations. This use of the word quickly made its way into print.

SCOSE members laughed when they were presented with the phrase “to best *service* its audience”. Traditionally, the object of *service* could include items like “car”, “cow”, “debt” and “school”, but not “person” or “people”. In a recent SCOSE report to staff we attempted to discourage the latter, but the odds are stacked against us when public service departments have phone messages saying “your call is important to us... all our operators are busy *servicing* other customers...”. The word *serve* has become unpopular, it seems, and no-one laughs or complains when *service* is used instead of it. Don’t blame the ABC!

Another relatively new word is *meningococcal* and there’s disagreement about how it should be pronounced. The ABC recommends muh-ninj-uh-KOK-uhl, which appears to be the most common pronunciation, mirroring the pronunciation of the more familiar word *meningitis*. However, British dictionaries indicate that it should be pronounced muh-ning-guh-KOK-uhl (with the hard [g] rather than [j]), and some listeners have been quick to point this out. Time will tell which version Australians will prefer. For mine, it’s muh-ninj-uh-KOK-uhl, but I guess we’ll know going forward! □



Communicating measurement: the importance of standards

There is a widely held, but erroneous, view that modern SI units are for technical people, with the implied corollary that old fashioned measures are for other folk such as editors! Yet, those same editors have possibly used a litre of petrol to drive several kilometres to pick up a kilogram of sausages and a four litre cask of wine!

Technologists and scientists consult “standards” as a matter of course for accurate definitions of units and their symbols so that their measurements will have definite meanings now and in the future. These standards may be industry standards, national standards, international standards, or, ultimately, a standard based on deliberations of the Conférence Générale des Poids et Mesures (CGPM). The last of these are contained in the brochure, *The International System of Units (SI)*, and are regarded as the final authority on issues relating to measuring units. Copies of this document are freely available from the website of the Bureau International des Poids et Mesures at <<http://www.bipm.fr>>.

The International System of Units

Unlike the so-called “Imperial System” (more a collection of measurements), the International System of Units is exactly that – a system. It achieves its simplicity by having only one unit for each physical quantity, with only seven base units from which all other units are derived. The metre is the only unit to measure length, with SI prefixes, such as kilo and milli, for larger or smaller amounts. If you want to measure (say) the area of a piece of paper, you simply multiply its length (in metres) by its width (in metres) to find the area of the paper and to form a new derived unit – square metre. For example, an A0 piece of paper measures 1189 mm by 841 mm, and its area is 1.189 metres x 0.841 metre = 0.999 square metre,

say one square metre (1 m²).

In turn, if you know that the mass of your square metre of paper is 80 grams you can readily form a new unit to describe the mass of the paper divided by its area; in this case, it would be the ubiquitous 80 grams per square metre that is correctly written using SI symbols as 80 g/m².

Symbols vs abbreviations

This use of symbols, rather than abbreviations, to represent units is crucial to representing them unambiguously; kg is not an abbreviation for kilogram but an internationally agreed symbol. A Chinese wool buyer requiring two hundred kilograms of wool could write 200 kg in the middle of text written in Chinese.

The metre has the lower case letter m as its SI symbol. But if we use abbreviations we have all the following options (collected from signs and newspapers in Geelong): M, Mt, MT, Mt., MT., Mtr, Mtr., Mtrs., mr, mr., me, m., ms, ms., mt, mt., mts, mts., mtr, mtr., mtrs, mtrs., or my personal favourite Mtres. All of these are legitimate in the sense that they have been used by someone, somewhere, sometime in the past. On the same principle, you might like to choose from this list collected from paper suppliers:

100 g/m², 100 Gm2, 100 GSM, 100gsm, 110 g/m², 110 GSM, 150GSM, 200 G.S.M, 70 g/m², 70g.s.m., 70gsm, 80 g.s.m, 80 G.S.M, 80 g/m2, 80 g/m² 80 grs/m, 80 gsm, 80 GSM, 80 gsm, 80GSM, 80gsm, 90 g/m² 90 gr/m2, 90 gr/m², 90 GSM, 90GSM, Brandname 80, GM2, GSM (without a number), Gsm 90, GSM: 110 Grain:, GSM: 140, GSM: 140 Grains:, GSM: 150 Grain:, GSM: 200, GSM: 80, GSM: 80 Grains.

The internationally agreed SI symbol for grams per square metre is g/m².

Pat Naughtin is a speaker, writer, editor and publisher, and consults internationally on the International System of Units. Pat acted as an adviser for the chapter on numbers and measurement for the forthcoming 6th edition of the Australian government Style Manual.

Every nation in the world, without exception, uses SI symbols as prescribed by the CGPM. While the USA does not admit to using SI openly, they use SI for about 40 % of their internal measures and for almost all of their international trade.

Like any living language, measurement evolves as it produces “better” ways of doing things. It has the advantage over language that this evolution can be systematic, allowing our measuring methods to be in accord with the philosopher Condorcet’s 1790s maxim on the metre:

“A tous les temps; a tous les peuples” – “For all time; for all people”. □



Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor

A word about one of my current bugbear buzzwords/phrases: 'best performed' (in sporting reports) e.g. Greg Baum, *The Age* Sport Section 9/12/00 'Thorpe loss a blow to England'; "Thorpe is England's best-performed batsman against Australia ..." Why not just 'best' or even 'best performer/player' – since anyone reading it would know he bats?

Do they mean to imply something like 'Currently T. is England's best batsman against Oz...' or do they intend to somehow suggest he is currently the best 'performer' but have to somehow make it past tense, in case someone else hits a 'ton(ne)' tomorrow?

Is this strange construction really necessary??

S A Gunter
Surrey Hills Vic.

BALLAD OF DIMINUTIVES

The trannie's on to get the footy score.
Santa brings Chrissie pressies in a sleigh.
The cabbie U-ied in his Commodore.
The telemovie soapie on today
Is a three-hanky weepie. If a stray
Blowie invades our barbie - or a mossie -
Just zap it with this anti-Louie spray.
Aunt Lizzie had a hyssie in the hossie.

What did the brickie take a sickie for?
A flatie caused the bikie some delay.
Although I'm not a meanie, I deplore
Rellics on hollies breezing in to stay.
The oldies like to watch the kiddies play.
Some smartie at the Gabba swiped my possie.
Don't think a lezzy prossie's life is gay.
Aunt Lizzie had a hyssie in the hossie.

Most truckies don't pop bennies any more.
Do pollics on big bikkies earn their pay?
This pickie shows the pinny Grannie wore.
When Brissie folk get woollics out in May
The doley surfie heads for Byron Bay,
And lives there clad in sunnies and a cossie.
A Pommy chalkie's hanky-pankyng Fay.
Aunt Lizzie had a hyssie in the hossie.

Yes, "hysterectomy" is hard to say,
And even "hospital" can tax an Aussie,
But he will tell you, in his own sweet way:
Aunt Lizzie had a hyssie in the hossie.

Ray Kelley
INDOOROPHILLY QLD

Dear Editor

The article about names given to children was interesting. I know of one couple who always give, as a second name, to their children the location where the child was conceived. One of the offspring has "Seventeen Seventy" as her middle name. I'll bet she is glad her parents didn't camp at Tin Can Bay that night.

Years ago, as a GP in West Scotland, I was handed a Registration Card by a proud father. I didn't actually read the card but asked what name they had chosen for their daughter. "Same as her mother", he said. Only when I read the card later did I see that the child's name had been registered as "Peril". Mother's name was Pearl, but father could not read nor write so the registrar wrote phonetically what he said. In the region PEARL is spoken as PERIL not PURL. I had a difficult time persuading the authorities to change the name in the Register.

Peter Fraser
Via Email

Dear Pam

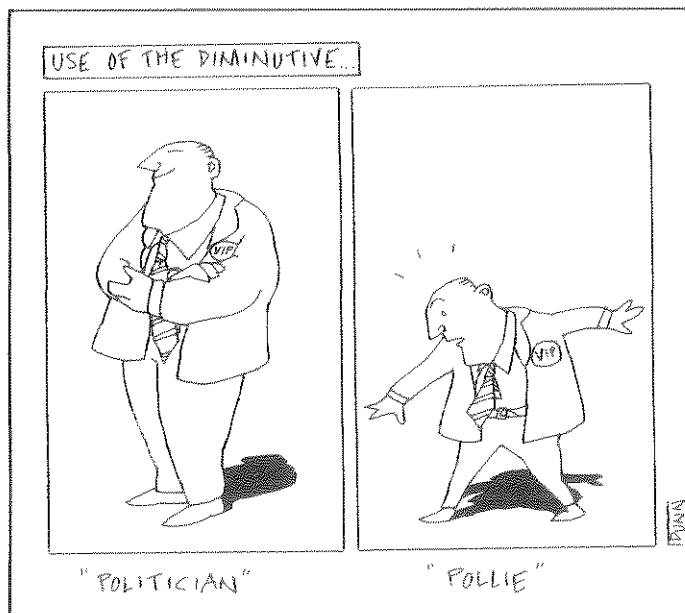
I noticed the following word 'EFEMINATION' in a Christian Science 'Sentinel' July 17, 2000. P.21.

The writer acknowledges that there is no such word, and considers that it could well be included in the canon.

The lady invented it as a collateral of *emasculatation*, which is rather gender specific, and considers it necessary to have a word meaning to alter or remove that which is feminine.

The word has that 'natural' feel about it. I rather feel that Shakespeare would approve it. Perhaps Portia might have used it. What think you?

J W Laird
Maroochydore Qld.





From the Editor

Correspondence to *Australian Style* comes from all directions, and we're very grateful to people from all states who take the trouble to write about elements of English that have surprised or intrigued them. This time we have letters noting that AS is being read in places as far away as Vietnam and Germany, by those interested in the state of the language down under.

The vagaries of Australian vowels were the topic of several letters, particularly where there are alternative pronunciations for the same word. Margaret Beavis (NSW) queried *adversary* in this regard, and whether the stress falls on the first, second or third syllable. The standard British pronunciation puts the stress on the first syllable and the American on the third – whereas stress on the second suggests the analogy of *adversity* (see SCOSE Notes, AS 9:1). Putting the stress on the second or third syllable helps to divide up the string of weak syllables that result from having the stress upfront (as in the British pronunciation). The American pronunciation with stress on the third (or penultimate) syllable solves the problem for this and other polysyllabic words.

American influence might help to account for the changing pronunciation of *route* (from “root” to “rou”), which Claire van Rooy (NT) has heard it from people ranging in age from 20-something to 50-something. That age range suggests it's not just a matter of linguistic fashion and emulating American speech, but that it serves some deeper purpose. Americans themselves use both “root” and “rou” for *route*, according to their dictionaries, and both *Websters* and *Random House* give priority to “root”. Why then would Australians choose the lesser American alternative? The answer lies in Australian slang, where the word *root* has a sexual meaning, and hints of this come up when *route* is pronounced “root”. The pronunciation “rou” helps to sidestep

the problem. Because neither Americans nor Britains use *root* as sexual slang, there's no such embarrassment for them in pronouncing *route* to rhyme with it. In the same way, Americans avoid the word *ass* by using *burro* (a Spanish word for “donkey”), lest there be any hint of “arse” in their utterance!

The pronunciation of *kilometre* still varies, as emerged in the results of Feedback 3 (1992), with more than a third of Australians putting the stress on the second syllable. This runs counter to the recommendation of the now-disbanded Metrication Board, as pointed out by Mark Blunt (WA) – and despite the promotion of the pronunciation with stress on the first syllable, which was advised in a booklet sent out to every Australian householder on metric conversion. But not everyone reveres all things metric. As Wendy Pomroy (VIC) points out if God had meant us to be metric, Jesus would have had ten disciples.

On the innovations front, new verb uses were reported from Queensland. The first, reported from the Sunshine Coast Daily by Virginia Sargent (NSW) is *neighbour*, as in “J McD, who neighbours S's property in Cooroy...”. The second is *fragrance*, reported by Audrey Gardiner (QLD) came with the label for a household deodorant, which “cleans and fragrances for 4 weeks”. English offers plenty of scope for the “verbing” of nouns, but their effect on first encounter can be disconcerting.

Very old words can also surprise, as Bill Bottomley found in the interplay between *dint* and *dent*. Both go back to the Old English *dint* meaning “a forceful blow”, but in current Australian English either might perhaps describe what has just happened to your car (*dinted* or *dented*). The *Macquarie Dictionary* (1997) shows that *dint* used this way is particularly from the south and east of the country, and it would be interesting to hear from readers in the north and west whether they

have ever heard it. The old word encountered by Ken Cowen was “drouht” for *drought*, in an edition of Henry Lawson. It is one of the numerous variants for *drought* or *drouth*, as it was also written and pronounced during the last hundred years. Yet other dialect forms including “droughte”, “droughth”, “drowte”, “drouthe” are recorded in the big *Oxford Dictionary*. Australia is home to speakers of many British dialects, and in a dry country, the word was no doubt more often on people's lips than “back home”.

Several correspondents have queried the interplay between older and newer spellings, notably *inquire/enquire* and *inquiry/enquiry*. The *Oxford Dictionary* gives preference to *inquire* over *enquire*, probably for reasons of etymology (*inquire* being the more consistently Latin form, where *enquire* is hybrid French). Fowler meanwhile gave them complementary roles, *inquire/inquiry* being for official and public investigations, and *enquire/enquiry* for the individual or personal question. But there are also regional differences, in that British English seems to make more use of *enquire*, and American English of *inquire*. Australia is caught between these various currents of usage and opinion, and the *Australian Government Style Manual* has always recommended using *inquire/inquiry* to avoid unnecessary debate about it. But individuals are free to do as they please, in the light of knowing that! □



FEED BACK

Report

The words presented in the questionnaire were a mix of ones borrowed from the USA in relatively recent times (the last twenty to thirty years), which might or might not still seem to be American in flavor. Respondents were invited to rank them 1 to 5 on a scale from "very American" to "very Australian", and as often in such questionnaires, people tended to avoid the extremes, particularly the "very Australian" end of the scale. The only words whose results were weighted towards that end were *semitrailer* and *truck*, which were given ranks 4 or 5 by 50% or more of those responding. At the opposite end of the scale, words that were deemed still "very American", i.e. with the weight of responses on ranks 1 and 2 were *buck* (77%), *buddy* (84%), *cookie* (77%), *fix (you) a drink* (73%), *french fries* (78%), *rookie* (82%). As those numbers suggest, there was generally stronger conviction about

Feedback 17 on the assimilation of American loanwords was blessed with no less than 474 responses from groups and individuals. Special thanks go those who canvassed colleagues, students and friends at the following institutions, to swell the number of returns: Adelaide University Advisory Centre for University Education; the Anglican Church Grammar School, Brisbane; the Canberra Institute of Technology, Communication and Media Dept; Griffith Office of the NSW Dept of Education and Training; Yanco Agricultural High School; the Warrumbungles Environmental Education Centre; TAFE college staff contacted by JF Dean; Robyn Brady of Richmond, VIC; and the folks at a certain PO box number in Clayton, VIC. It was great to hear from you all.

The questionnaire was more complex than many with its ranked data on each item, and thanks go to May Heemskerk of the Style Council Centre, for getting the results together. The tables of selected data presented below were created by Adam Smith. [Ed]

what was American than what might have become Australian.

But the loss of Americanness is also reflected in the size of the "neutral" vote (rank 3), which was majority ranking for *back to back (appointments etc)*, *fabric*, *fast food*, *freak out*, *freeway*, *garbage*, *guy*, *hi*, *internship*, *kidding*, *paramedic*, *resume (= CV)*, *yuk*. These results are also some measure of how well assimilated many American loanwords have become. That list includes some which may now be the standard professional term, such as *internship*, *paramedic*, *resume*; or a useful generic label such as *fabric*, *fast food*, *freeway*. These words may be seen as filling some kind of lexical gaps in Australian English. But others must be seen as satisfying some social needs. The greeting *hi* and the exclamation *yuk* have quickly established themselves in the repertoire of many Australians, and colloquialisms such as *freak out*

and *(you're) kidding* likewise express feelings that cannot be captured so neatly in other words. Perhaps there's an element of fashion in them, but with substantial acceptance at ranks 2-3 or 3-4 across the age range, they would seem to be here to stay (see table on left).

Part of the motivation behind this Feedback survey was to see whether younger people were more inclined to accept American loanwords than their elders. Most of the words tested have been noted relatively recently, and so the willingness to take them on might be greater for young people who are still creating their verbal identity than for those who have already done this over decades. The results for *apartment* and *guy* provide some evidence of this, both of which were ranked 3 ("neutral") for a majority of Age group 1 (under 25), whereas older respondents tended to see them as still rather American.

There were some differences from state to state in ranking, suggesting that American loans are more readily assimilated on the east coast of Australia than the south or west. Queensland and New South Wales do after all share the Pacific rim with Americans, and are the first ports of call for many American tourists. This would help to explain why respondents from QLD were less inclined than those from Victoria to give rank 1 to the items surveyed, and those from NSW usually weighed in slightly under the national average.

These and other interesting aspects of the assimilation of American borrowings are further explored in Feedback 18 (see opposite). We welcome your responses to it. □

	Ranked Scale	Total	Age 1 (10-24)	Age 2 (25-44)	Age 3 (45-64)	Age 4 (65+)
freak out	1	18%	24%	13%	16%	22%
	2	27%	38%	31%	20%	28%
	3	43%	30%	34%	52%	40%
	4	8%	5%	17%	8%	6%
	5	4%	3%	6%	4%	4%
kidding	1	8%	9%	4%	7%	9%
	2	15%	21%	12%	13%	19%
	3	42%	32%	47%	45%	39%
	4	21%	26%	19%	22%	18%
	5	14%	12%	18%	13%	14%
apartment	1	22%	8%	27%	30%	15%
	2	39%	38%	41%	39%	41%
	3	37%	53%	32%	29%	40%
	4	2%	1%	0%	2%	2%
	5	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%
guy	1	23%	9%	16%	27%	31%
	2	32%	26%	23%	33%	42%
	3	36%	55%	47%	34%	22%
	4	6%	4%	10%	6%	4%
	5	2%	6%	4%	1%	2%



FEED BACK

— 18 —

AUSTRALIANNES

This questionnaire is designed to complement Feedback 17 in surveying how naturalised or otherwise are the numerous American borrowings of the twentieth century. Would you please calibrate the words listed below on the five-point scale, according to how relatively American or Australian they seem to you in the year 2001/2002. If that depends on how/where the word is used, do add a note on the contexts which would make it sound more or less American.

	Scale					Comments
	1	2	3	4	5	
	Very American		Neutral		Very Australian	
bluff "put on a bold front"	1	2	3	4	5	
boss	1	2	3	4	5	
breakthrough	1	2	3	4	5	
bug ("insect")	1	2	3	4	5	
bug ("error")	1	2	3	4	5	
to chip in	1	2	3	4	5	
crash program	1	2	3	4	5	
dago	1	2	3	4	5	
downtown	1	2	3	4	5	
dude	1	2	3	4	5	
escalation	1	2	3	4	5	
flashlight	1	2	3	4	5	
grand (e.g. "50 grand")	1	2	3	4	5	
high rise	1	2	3	4	5	
lay off	1	2	3	4	5	
lowdown	1	2	3	4	5	
nerd	1	2	3	4	5	
service station	1	2	3	4	5	
slick	1	2	3	4	5	
sneakers	1	2	3	4	5	
stash	1	2	3	4	5	
stooge	1	2	3	4	5	
take care!	1	2	3	4	5	
trash	1	2	3	4	5	

Would you please indicate your sex and age bracket:

F/M 10-24 25-44 45-64 65+

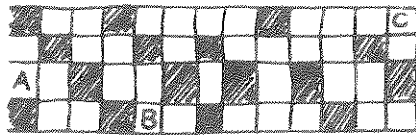
and the state in which you live:

ACT NSW NT QLD SA TAS VIC WA

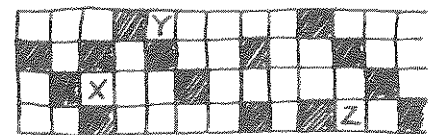
Please return this Feedback questionnaire to:

Style Council Centre, Linguistics Department, Macquarie University, NSW 2109 Australia.
Alternatively, the questionnaire may be faxed to the Style Council Centre at (02)9850 9199.



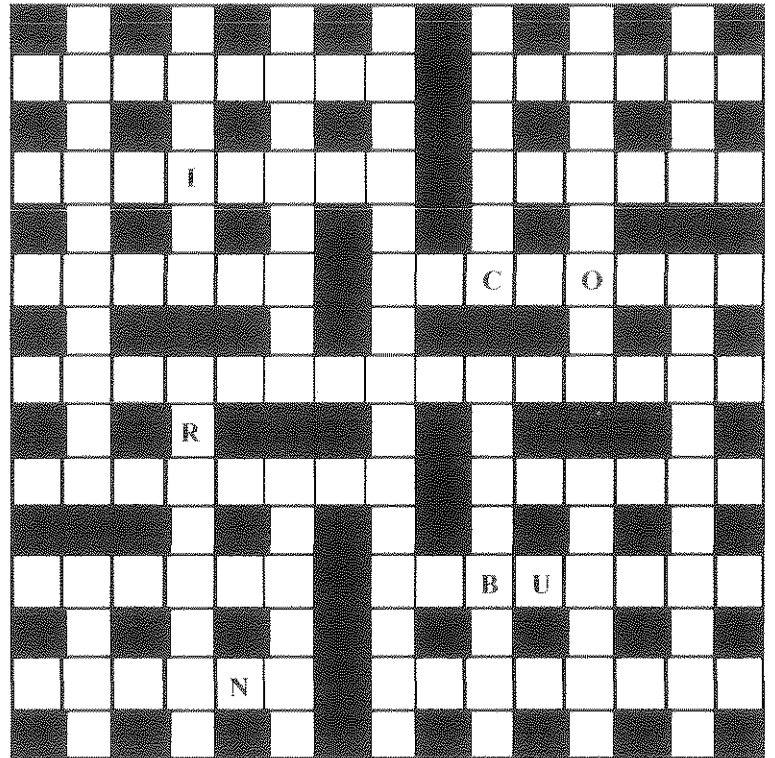


RUBICON



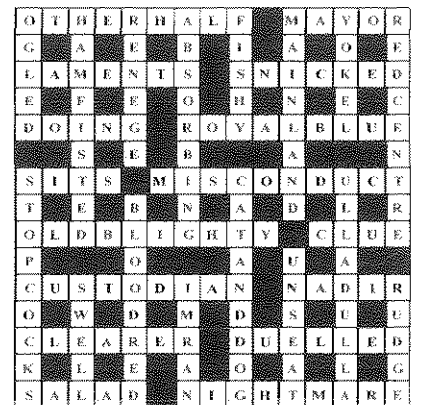
RUBICON, devised by David Astle, is a hybrid of crossword, jigsaw and acoustic. First, solve as many clues as you can and begin to fit the answers inside the grid. (The scattered letters of RUBICON should give you a toehold.) When the grid is completed, arrange the *clues* from the first Across to the last Down – their 26 initial letters will spell a category. As a bonus, which six of your answers belong to the category in question?

- Area bordered by police tape (5,2,3,5)
- Did a juvenile Cathy and Melinda shine here? (6,9)
- 'Inflation is triggered by excess cash,' insists this belief (10)
- Nous nurtured by Houdini (10)
- Any formal request made to a higher authority (8)
- At peace (8)
- International document (8)
- Issue arms (8)
- General disposition (8)
- Lustily (8)
- Pancake or liner, say (8)
- Superficial check (4-4)
- Tautological insect? (8)
- Your housing loan (8)
- An Olympic dash (6)
- Class of WWII hut (6)
- Extra rich cake (6)
- Laurie Daley's alliance? (6)
- Neutral adjudicator (6)
- Proverbially 'mailed' promise that never arrives (6)
- Rank peculiar to the US navy (6)
- Seaside French city opposite Portsmouth (6)
- Section of a hospital reserved for outpatients (6)
- Unanimous accord, once the hatchet is buried (6)
- Eternal springer? (4)
- Gigantic (4)



Solution to Rubicon in last issue
 ANAGRAMS OF FAMOUS ENGLISH NOVELISTS: SNICKED (Dickens), CLEARER (Le Carré), OGLED (Lodge), RENEGE (Greene), UNSEAT (Austen), SWELL (Wells)

With apologies: The category and answers above were mistakenly given in the last issue of *Australian Style*. We hope this didn't detract from the challenge too much. The solution that should have been given for the puzzle in Vol.8 No.2 is: RABBITS AFOOT IN ADAMS' WATERSHIP DOWN: Silver, Bigwig, Strawberry, Dandelion, Fiver, Hazel



How to contact *Australian Style*

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Call fax number 02 9850 9199

By Phone:

Call direct on 02 9850 7693. If there's no one in the Style Council Centre office, your call will be received on an answering machine and returned as soon as possible.

