A FAIR DINKUM
AUSSIE DICTIONARY

A collection of Aussie terms and sayings

"You little beauty!"

"Mate, give this a burl!"

"Grouse!!"

"Cripes, fire up the billy, pass me a bickie and cop a look at this."
A FAIR DINKUM AUSSIE DICTIONARY
A collection of Aussie terms and Sayings

“Whether you’re a bloke or a sheila, have a go at our Aussie lingo. In an arvo, you’ll be speaking like you’re from Down Under!”
Australian English is justifiably notorious for its colourful and seemingly endless collection of slang terms and sayings. Some Australianisms such as “she’ll be right, mate” and “fair dinkum” are well known around the world, but these are just the start.

Many a visitor to the land Down Under has been more than a little mystified when told that it is his or her turn to “shout” while drinking with new mates at a pub; or that he or she has “Buckley’s of making the next bus to Brissie”; or that the “blowies” in Bullamakanka are as big as emus.

Many early Australianisms were words taken over by or derived from the languages spoken by Aboriginal tribes. Thus, words such as boomerang, billabong, kangaroo and cockatoo soon became part of the general language (lingo) spoken by all Australians.

Australian place names of Aboriginal origin can be another source of amazement to newcomers – especially tongue-twisters like Woolloomooloo, Mullumbimby, Wollongong and Wagga Wagga, names which simply trip off the tongues of the locals.

Not included in this collection, but something you are bound to encounter at some point during your stay, is the popular Aussie habit of nicknaming mates and cobbers by embellishing the endings of their first names with an “o”.

For example, if your name is David, you may find yourself being called Davo; likewise, Stevens can expect to be called Stevo; and Johns to be called Johnno. Names ending in “ie” or “y” are often transformed by a “zza” ending. A Gary is almost invariably known as Gazza, Barry as Bazza, Sharon as Shazza.

While the terms which made it into this dictionary are as Australian as meat pie, we’d have to have more hide than Ned Kelly to suggest that this is the last word on the matter.

Like all languages, Aussie English is growing and changing with the times. And while you’ll be flat out like a lizard drinking if you try to make head or tail of all the local lingo, this book will, hopefully, give you the drum on some common ones you may encounter on your trip Down Under.

“Hold on to your esky and give this a burl.”
ace
Excellent

ANZAC
Members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps in World War I. Anzac Day, which falls on April 25, is a national holiday. Delicious biscuits (cookies), made with oats and golden syrup, are also known as Anzacs.

Alice, The
Alice Springs, Northern Territory.

amber fluid
Beer. “Let’s have a quick transfusion of amber fluid.”

ankle-biter
A small child. See rug-rat.

apples
Everything’s under control, as in “She’s apples.”

Apple Isle, The
Tasmania, our only island state.

arvo
Afternoon.

Aussie
Australian.

Aussie salute
The backward and forward waving of hands before the face to shoo away the flies. See blowie.

back of beyond
Way out there somewhere; remote. See the black stump and woop woop.

bag of fruit
Rhyming slang for a man’s suit.

Balmain Bug
Small type of crayfish. Named after the trawlers of the historic Sydney suburb of Balmain, who pioneered the industry. See Moreton Bay Bug.

barbie
Barbecue. “Let’s go down to the beach and have a barbie.” Also, “He’s a few snags (sausages) short of a barbie” is used to describe someone who is a little crazy.

barney
An argument or a dispute.

barrack
To give encouragement to your sports team.

barramundi
Aboriginal name for a large tasty fish found in the waters of Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia.

battler
Someone who struggles hard to make ends meet or to overcome adversity. “He’s a real Aussie battler.”

beaut or beauty
Great! Terrific! Also pronounced beauity, or bewdy.

bell
To call someone on the telephone. “I’ll give you a bell from the back of beyond.”

big-note
To boast and exaggerate one’s wealth and power.

billabong
A water hole in a dry river bed. “Once a jolly swagman camped by a billabong…”

bickie
A cookie.

bingle
A minor car crash or accident. See prang.

billy
A metal can, usually tin, enamel ware or aluminium used for making tea over an open fire.

black stump
An imaginary point dividing civilization and the Outback. “She’s the biggest big-noter this side of the black stump.” See back of beyond and woop woop.
blind freddy
The person who can immediately see the bleedin’ obvious. “Blind Freddy can tell he’s a bludger”.

bloke
A male.

blowie
Blowfly. Sometimes jokingly referred to as Australia’s national bird. See Aussie salute.

bludger
Someone who doesn’t pull their weight at work and sponges off others.

blue
To have an argument or a fight.

bluey
Nickname for a bloke with red hair. Also, a swagman’s blanket roll.

blue heeler
A nuggety cattle dog with a blue-flecked coat, popular with bushies and city folk alike.

boomer
A large male kangaroo. It is believed by some Aussie youngsters that Santa Claus’ sleigh is pulled by six white boomers.

boot
Trunk of a car.

bombed out
Unsuccessful, also drunk.

bonzer
A great bloke or sheila. “He’s a bonzer bloke to have on your side in a blue.”

bottler
Someone (or something) who performs well.

bottle shop
Liquor store, often part of a hotel. Also known as a ‘bottlo’.

breakkie
Breakfast.

brolly
An umbrella.

brumby
From an Aboriginal word meaning a wild horse.

bubbler
A drinking fountain.

bucket, to
To dump on someone; to blame them for everything.

Buckley’s chance
Absolutely no chance.

budgie smuggler
A tight men’s swimming costume. Named after the budgerigar, a small colourful native bird.

bull artist
A teller of tall tales; a braggart. Closely related to a big noter.

Bundy
The town of Bundaberg in Queensland. Also the name of a popular brand of rum.

bung, to
To put on an act; to throw. “There’s no need to bung it on with me.”

bush, the
Unspoiled land beyond the city with natural vegetation. Also, “to go bush” is to get away from all your troubles. “Bruce’s gone bush.”

bushie
Used to describe someone who lives miles from anywhere. “Bazza’s a real bushie.”

bushed, I’m
“I’m tired.”

bushranger
An outlaw in early colonial days. Ned Kelly was one of Australia’s most notorious bushrangers.
bush Tucker
Native foods such as berries, roots and food stuffs, such as edible insects, known to Aborigines and only recently discovered by European Australians.

B.Y.O.
Bring your own. Unlicensed restaurant where you need to bring your own alcohol. Many party invitations include the B.Y.O. proviso.

cactus
Useless, broken.

Captain Cook
British navigator and explorer who mapped the east coast of Australia in 1770. Also, “take a Captain Cook” is rhyming slang for take a look.

cashed up
Having plenty of ready money.

cark it
To die.

cheese and kisses
Rhyming slang for wife, i.e.: the missus.

chemist
Pharmacy or drugstore.

chewy
Chewing gum.

chips
French fries or potato crisps. To “spit chips” means that you are very angry.

chook
Domestic chicken or hen. Some Australians keep chooks in the back garden in a chook house with a chook run. “He’s running around like a headless chook,” refers to someone who is over-excited or disorganized. Also a mild derogatory term for an older woman: “the dear old chook”.

chrissie
Christmas; Chrissie prezzie (present).

chuck a wobbly
To go berserk.

Clayton’s
Name of a soft drink that was promoted as a substitute for alcohol. The term came to mean something that is not what it seems. “This is a Clayton’s dictionary if ever I saw one”.

coathanger, the
Term for the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Cobber
A close friend.

cockey
A cockatoo, native bird of Australia; can also mean a farmer. Boss Cocky means the boss; and someone who is cocky is over-confident.

come a cropper
To fall heavily or have an accident.

cooee
Originally a call used by Aborigines in the bush, it is now used by all Australians. To be “within cooee” is to be in earshot.

cop, to
Take a look at that! “Cop that.” Also, “Cop it sweet” means to take bad news well or “on the chin.”

Corroboree
Aboriginal dance ceremony or meeting.

cot case
A drunk or exhausted person, fit only for bed.

cozzies
Swimming costume. “I got some cozzies for Chrissie.”

crikey
An expression of surprise.

crook
To be sick or no good; also angry.
crows, stone the
A mild oath.

cuppa
A cup of tea. “What you need is a good cuppa.” The Australian antidote to all problems.

dag
Basically a nerd or even a little worse.

damper
Traditionally, unleavened bread baked in the ashes of a fire. The name comes from the practice of damping the fires so the bread can be cooked in the glowing embers.

dead-set
Absolute; genuine. “He’s a dead-set mate,” or “Is that dead-set?”

digger
Originally a miner in the goldfields, now used to refer to an Australian soldier.

dill
A simpleton or a fool.

dilly-bag
A small woven bag carried by Aboriginal women. Often used to describe a small bag of any sort.

dinga
A native dog.

dinky - di
Genuine.

dobber
An informant who has “dobbed in” someone.

dog's breakfast
A mess.

Dover
The brand name of a bushman’s knife. “To flash one’s Dover,” means to open a clasp knife to begin a meal.

Down Under
Australia. “We come from the land Down Under…”

dongo
A real fool or a moron.

drover
A person who herds stock or sheep over a long distance.

dummy, spit the
To lose one’s temper.

dumper
The bane of all surfers, a dumper is a large wave that tosses you around like a piece of driftwood instead of carrying you in to shore.

dunny
Originally an unsewered toilet at the bottom of the garden, now used generally for the toilet.

earbasher
Someone who talks endlessly; a bore.

enzed
New Zealand. An Enzedder is a New Zealander.

Esky
Brand name but now used generically for a cooler to carry drinks and food to barbies and parties.

fair dinkum
True, genuine; an assertion of truth or genuineness. “It’s true, mate, fair dinkum.”

fair go
A chance, an equal opportunity. “Give us a fair go, Bruce.”

fang
To drive around at high speed.

far out
Unbelievable.

first cab off the rank
To jump at an opportunity; quick off the mark.

flake (out), to
Collapse, fall asleep or change plans with your mates.

flat out
Very busy. “He’s flat out like a lizard drinking.”
flush
Having plenty of money.

footy
Refers to either Rugby League, Rugby Union, or Australian Rules football.

fossick
Originally meant to search or pick around for gold or gemstones, but is now used in the more general sense of searching for something.

Fremantle Doctor
Cool breeze that blows in off the Indian Ocean during the hot summer months of December to March in Fremantle.

frog and toad
Rhyming slang for road. “Let’s hit the frog and toad” — leave.

furphy
Originally the brand name of a water-cart but now means a rumour or phony story.

galah
Native bird with a grey back and a pink front. Also, a fool.

garbo
Garbage man.

g'day
Good day. “G’day, me old cobber, me mate.”

Ghan, The
Nickname for the Afghani camel drivers who helped open up the Outback. Also, the name of the train running from Adelaide to Darwin.

give it a burl
Give it a try.

goodo
Good one.

googie
An egg.

grasshopper
A bush term for a tourist, especially in tourist groups: “They eat everything in sight and never have a drink”. Also known as a grassie.

greenie
A mildly derogatory term for a conservationist.

grouse
Very good.

grog
General name for all alcohol. A “grog-on” or “grog-up” is a drinking party.

gum tree
Eucalyptus tree. There are many different types of gum trees. To be “up a gum tree” means you are in trouble.

gutful
More than enough. “I’ve had a gutful”. Also gut’s full.

gutless
Lacking courage.

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kanga
Kangaroo. In the bush, to “have a bit of a kanga” is to have some cash. Kanga cricket is a form of the game designed for children.

koora
An Australian breed of short haired dog, used to herd sheep.

kookaburra
Australian kingfisher bird with brown and white feathers and a distinctive almost human laugh.

kylie
The West Australian Nyungar Aboriginal word for boomerang.

lamington
Sponge cake squares dipped in chocolate and coated in grated coconut. They are supposed to have originated in the Brisbane kitchens of Charles Wallace Baillie, and named after Baron Lamington, who was Queensland Governor from 1895 to 1901.

larrakin
An urban hooligan with a dash of style.

lash out, to
Spend money freely. Also, lashings, which means lots of something – especially food and drink.

legless
Someone who is so intoxicated they can’t walk.

lilly-pilly
Bush tucker. An Indigenous purple berry.

lingo
Language.

loaded
Extremely wealthy. Also means drunk.

lolly
Candy or boiled sweet. Lolly water is soft drink. Also, “to do your lolly” is to lose your temper.

loo
The toilet; the bathroom.

Lucky Country, The
Title of a book by well known Australian academic, Donald Horne. Horne used the term ironically, but it’s sometimes used in the literal sense.

lurk, to
To act suspiciously. Also, a “lurk merchant” is someone who is a shrewd operator.

mail, Mulga
Rumour or gossip. Also called the bush telegraph. “I heard it on the Mulga mail.”

marge
Margarine.

mate
Friend, buddy. The great Australian leveller. Anyone can be your mate, from the Prime Minister to the bloke next door. Also, affectionate term for a close friend. “G’day, mate,” is a common Aussie greeting.
Matilda
A swag or bedroll. To waltz Matilda is to carry a swag.

mental, to chuck a
To lose one’s temper.

“Kylie really chucked a mental at the barbie last night.”

mozzie
Mosquito.

muddie
Mud crab. Large, delicious crab found in the mangrove wetlands of Queensland and New South Wales.

mug
A fool.

Mulga, The
Type of acacia tree found in the dry inland areas of Australia. Generally used to describe the sparser inland areas.

“Hey mate, you look like a stunned mullet.”

mullet, stunned
Someone who is dazed or uncomprehending.

nana
To be mentally deranged or to lose your temper. “He was off his nana.”

neck oil
Common term for beer. Look out for other terms such as “suck a tube”; “bend the elbow”; “crack a coldie”; “tearing a tinnie”.

never never, the
The remotest part of inland Australia.

nick, to
Steal.

noggin
A fool or lazy, hapless person.

no worries
Don’t worry, everything is okay. See apples.

nong
A fool or silly person.

nuggety
A short, thickset person.

nulla-nulla
An Aboriginal war club.

off
Many meanings such as tainted food is “off”; bad taste is also “off”; to leave in a hurry is to be “off”; and if someone is ill they are “feeling off”. “Off like a bucket of prawns”, means something has a very bad smell. Someone who is in a hurry can be said to be “off like a bride’s nightie.”

middy
A medium sized (9 oz.) glass of beer (New South Wales and Western Australia). “Let’s go down to the pub for a couple of middies.”

misssus, the
Slang for wife.

moral
Tribe or group of emotionally connected companions: ‘Is he one of your mob?’

moral
A sure thing. “A moral certainty.”

Moreton Bay Bug
Small crayfish from the waters of Queensland and northern Australia.

nana
To be mentally deranged or to lose your temper. “He was off his nana.”

napper
A small child. Also the name for a trainee surf-lifesaver.
old man
A fully grown male kangaroo.

onya
Congratulations, short for “good on you”.

orstralia
Australia in broad Aussie Outback dialect.

Outback
Inland Australia.

Oz
Australia.

paralytic
Extremely intoxicated.

Pat Malone
Rhyming slang for “own”. “I’m on my Pat Malone.”

pavlova
Or pav. A popular suburban dessert, named after the Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova. A pav consists of a large, soft-centred meringue filled with cream and topped with fruit.

perks
Little extras; the side benefits.

petrol
Gasoline.

pie floater
Meat pie floating in a bowl of pea soup. Some devotees believe a pie floater is the best hangover cure.

pokies
Poker or slot machines. Also, one-armed bandits.

pollie
Politician.

pommy
Someone from the British Isles. There are a number of explanations but the most common are: pomegranate for the ruddy red cheeks of British immigrants; the acronym P.O.M.E. stamped on early convicts’ clothing, which stood for Prisoner of Mother England.

possie
A position or spot. “There’s a good possie on the the beach to relax.”

postie
Mail man or woman. Aussie posties carry the mail in a red rucksack.

P-plate
Newly licensed drivers in Australia have to display a (Provisional) P-plate for three years and are known as P-platers.

prang
A car crash or accident.

prawn
What Americans call a shrimp. Also, a fool. “Don’t come the raw prawn with me, mate”, means don’t try and pull a fast one.

pub
Public house, hotel or bar.

pull your head in
Mind your own business.

Rafferty’s rules
No rules at all.

rager
Someone who likes to party.

ratbag
A bit of a rogue or troublemaker. Ratbaggery is the act of being a ratbag.
razoo
An imaginary coin of no value. Also, to have no money at all. “She didn’t have a brass razoo.”

redder
A small black spider with a red spot on its back. Potentially lethal. They hang out in outhouses (dunnies), or other dark places.

rego
Motor vehicle registration.

ring-in
Something replaced fraudulently. Also, someone who arrives at a party uninvited.

ringer
In sheep country a ringer is the fastest shearer; in cattle country he’s the best stockman.

ripper
Someone or something really good.

ropeable
Angry or bad tempered.

ratty
Mad or deranged.

razoo
An imaginary coin of no value. Also, to have no money at all. “She didn’t have a brass razoo.”

redback
A small black spider with a red spot on its back. Potentially lethal. They hang out in outhouses (dunnies), or other dark places.

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ripper
Someone or something really good.
shonky
Poor quality.

shoot through
To leave or escape quickly, as in “to shoot through like a Bondi tram.”

shout
To pay for a round of drinks, also used when buying anything for another person. In an Aussie pub you’ll often hear, “It’s your shout, mate.”

sickie
To “chuck a sickie” is to take a day off work when you are not really ill.

silvertail
Someone with social aspirations; can also refer to a wealthy person.

singlet
Mostly worn by men under their shirts like a t-shirt but sleeveless. Sometimes worn alone with shorts. See ocker.

six-pack
Package of six cans or bottles of beer.

skerrick
A small amount.

skite
To boast or to brag.

slacker
Someone who avoids hard work.

sling-off, to
To ridicule or mock.

smoko
A break from work (originally for a cigarette).

snag
A light meal, but most commonly a sausage. See barbie.

snaky
Angry. Can also mean sneaky.

soft drink
Soda or pop.

sook
Someone who is pouting.

sparrow fart
Very early in the morning.

spinner
Used in the gambling game, Two-up. The spinner is the player who tosses the coins. “Come in Spinner” is said to call up one’s luck as the coins are tossed.

sport
A friendly greeting. “G’day, sport.”

stir, to
To provoke someone. A stirrer is a troublemaker.

strides
Men’s trousers.

strike, to
A mild oath. “Strike me blue.” “Strike me lucky.” “Strike a light.”

strine
Australian slang. Australians are masters at slurring words together, e.g., Emmachisit (how much is it), as well as shortening as many words as possible.

station
A ranch where cattle or sheep are the major industry.

stinky beak
A nosy, prying person.

stinker
An objectionable person. Also a very hot day.

station
A ranch where cattle or sheep are the major industry.

sticko
A break from work (originally for a cigarette).

six-pack
Package of six cans or bottles of beer.

six-pack
Package of six cans or bottles of beer.
stubby
A short, squat bottle of beer. Look out for stubby coolers; small styrofoam or rubber holders shaped to fit a cold stubby or can (tinnie). Prevents frostbite caused by holding too many ice-cold beers in the hot sun.

swimmers
Bathing costume.

ta
Thank you. “Ta ta” means goodbye, and to go “ta tas” means to go on an outing.

Tassie
Tasmania.

Taswegian
Tasmanian.

tea tree
An aromatic tree whose oil has healing qualities. Also, ti tree.

tin lid
Rhyming slang for kid.

tinnie
A can of beer.

togs
A bathing costume.

tomato sauce
Ketchup.

too right
Certainly!

toot
Toilet.

turps
Alcoholic liquor.

two-bob
Cheap; of little value. Also, “as mad as a two-bob watch”, means silly or mad.

two-pot screamer
Someone who is very susceptible to alcohol.

two-up
A gambling game in which two coins are tossed and bets are made on how they will fall.

toris
A can of beer.

togs
A bathing costume.

tomato sauce
Ketchup.

top End
The northern part of the Northern Territory. A Top-Ender is a resident of this area.

troppro
To “go troppo” is to be mentally disturbed. The original usage probably came from illness caused by too much time spent under the tropical sun of northern Australia and Papua New Guinea.

true blue
To be true blue means to be genuine. “A true blue Aussie.”

tucker
To eat food. Can also mean to be tired out. “All this yarning has tuckered me out.”

sunbake
Sunbathe.

sundowner
Itinerant worker. Originally a tramp who wandered from station to station looking for work, making sure he arrived at sundown in time for dinner.

swagman
A tramp; an itinerant worker. Also known as a swaggie.

unc
University.
up a gum tree
Confused, not sure what to do.

ute
Utility truck or pickup truck.

Vegemite
Sometimes referred to as Australia’s national food. Loved by all true blue Aussies, Vegemite is a brown yeast extract spread on toast and sandwiches.

Waltzing Matilda
Australia’s unofficial national anthem. Also means to wander around the country with a swag. See Matilda.

walkabout
To wander the countryside. When Aborigines “go walkabout”, it means to live in the traditional manner of their ancestors.

westie
A resident of Sydney’s western suburbs.

Westralian
Someone from Western Australia.

whacker
A fool. A general term of abuse.

whacko
A positive exclamation such as “whacko the diddle O” or “whacko the chook”.

witchetty
In the language of the Aborigines of the Flinders Ranges in South Australia, a witchetty is a hooked stick to remove grubs from tree roots. Also, a witchetty grub is a large white grub that lives in the roots of certain types of gum trees. Aborigines value them as good tucker.

wobbegong
A New South Wales Aboriginal word for several species of sea-bed dwelling sharks. Also known as carpet sharks, they are harmless to humans.

woomera
An Aboriginal implement used to propel a spear.

woop woop
A fictional remote rural backwater. “That raving ratbag comes from somewhere out near Woop Woop.” See back of beyond and black stump.

whinge, to
To complain a lot. A whinger is a person who whinges.

white ant, to
To undermine someone’s reputation.

“Whacko the diddle O, Gazza’s gone and bought himself a flash new ute!”

“Whacko the diddle O, Gazza’s gone and bought himself a flash new ute!”

“Whacko the diddle O, Gazza’s gone and bought himself a flash new ute!”

whinge,

to

Not a problem!

wowser
Someone whose behaviour is puritanical or prudish.

write-off
Tired, or destroyed.

wuss
A spoilsport, a coward or a sissy. See sook.

yabby
Freshwater crayfish.

yahoo
Originally a New South Wales Aboriginal word meaning an evil spirit, now means a hooligan. See hoon.

yakka
Hard work. “She’s a demon for hard yakka.”

walkabout
To wander the countryside. When Aborigines “go walkabout”, it means to live in the traditional manner of their ancestors.

white ant, to
To undermine someone’s reputation.

No worries, mate!”

worry, no
Not a problem!

wowser
Someone whose behaviour is puritanical or prudish.

write-off
Tired, or destroyed.

wuss
A spoilsport, a coward or a sissy. See sook.

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walkabout
To wander the countryside. When Aborigines “go walkabout”, it means to live in the traditional manner of their ancestors.

white ant, to
To undermine someone’s reputation.
Now you’re sounding like a local, a fair dinkum Aussie – it’s time to go walkabout and give it a burl!

**yam**
An edible tuberous root.

**yarn, to**
To tell a bit of a tale. Also, to talk, to chat.

**yobbo**
A hoodlum or bogan.

**youse**
Slang for plural you. “Why don’t youse come over for a cuppa this arvo?”

**zonked (out)**
Tired, exhausted
“See ya later”

“Ta ta”