THE VOCABULARY OF AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH

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The vocabulary of Australian English comes from many sources. This document outlines some of the most important sources of Australian words, and some of the important historical events that have shaped the creation of Australian words. At times, reference is made to the *Australian Oxford Dictionary* (OUP 1999) edited by Bruce Moore.

1. BORROWINGS FROM AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES

In 1770 Captain James Cook was forced to beach the *Endeavour* for repairs near present-day Cooktown, after the ship had been damaged on reefs. He and Joseph Banks collected a number of Aboriginal words from the local Guugu Yimidhirr people. One of these words was **kangaroo**, the Guugu Yimidhirr name for the large black or grey kangaroo *Macropus robustus*. On 12 July 1770 Banks recorded in his journal ‘Kill Kanguru’, and on 4 August Cook wrote: ‘the Animal which I have before mentioned called by the natives *Kangooroo* or *Kanguru*’. The word found its way back to Britain. In Boswell's *Life of Johnson* for the year 1773 we find an account of the famous lexicographer Dr Johnson expounding on the nature of the new creature:

> The appearance, conformation, and habits of the qwuadruped were of the most singular kind; and in order to render his description more vivid and graphic, Johnson rose from the table and volunteered an imitation of the animal. The company stared; and Mr Grant said nothing could be more ludicrous than the appearance of a tall, heavy, grave-looking man, like Dr Johnson, standing up to mimic the shape and motions of a kangaroo. He stood erect, put out his hands like feelers, and, gathering up the tails of his huge brown coat so as to resemble the pouch of the animal, made two or three vigorous bounds across the room.

Thus the word **kangaroo** had become part of the English language even before the First Fleet set sail. Cook and Banks mistakenly thought that **kangaroo** was a general or generic term for all kangaroos. Later, Banks gave Governor Phillip a vocabulary of the ‘New Holland language' to take with him on the First Fleet, and Phillip mistakenly thought that it must have been taken down at Botany Bay. Members of the First Fleet employed the word in talking to the local Aborigines, but it took them some time to realise that the Aborigines of the Sydney region did not understand the words that had been collected near Cooktown. David Collins, a naval officer who was appointed Deputy Judge-Advocate at Botany Bay in 1786, was one of the more astute

observers. In his *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales* (1798), he notes that the words adopted from the Sydney Aborigines pertained exclusively to the external world: ‘our knowledge of their language consisted at this time of only a few terms for such things as, being visible, could not well be mistaken; but no one had yet attained words enough to convey an idea in connected terms’. Collins recognised that the Sydney language was very different from the language Cook had recorded in northern Queensland: ‘The dialect spoken by the natives at Sydney not only differs entirely from that left us by Captain Cook of the people with whom he had intercourse to the northward, (about Endeavour river,) but also from that spoken by those natives who lived at Port Stephens, and to the southward of Botany-Bay, (about Adventure Bay,) as well as on the banks of the Hawkesbury’.

We now know that when the First Fleet arrived in 1788 there were about 300,000 Aborigines in Australia, divided into roughly 600 tribal groups, each with about 500 members. Thus there were at least 600 dialects. And there were more, since clans within tribes sometimes had their own dialect. Yet to speak of dialects is misleading—within these groupings, there were in fact some 250 distinct languages, each as different from one another as English is different from, German, French, Italian, Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, and Hindi.

In the first 100 years of European settlement and exploration about 400 words were borrowed into Australian English from some 80 languages. Most of the borrowings were from the languages spoken in or near the major points of settlement.

The Dharuk language was spoken in the area around Sydney, and this language provided a large number of very familiar words. They include (with the year in which they were first recorded indicated):

bettong (1802)
boobook (1790)
boomerang (1790)

burrawang (1790)
corroboree (1790)
dingo (1789)
geebung (1790)
gibber (1790)
gunyah (1803)
koala (1798)
koradji (1793)
kurrajong (1801)
nulla-nulla (1790)
paddymelon (1802)
potoroo (1789)
waddy (1790)
wallaby (1798)
wallaroo (1826)
waratah (1788)
warrigal (1790)
wombat (1798)
woomera (1793)

Borrowings from other NSW Aboriginal are fewer and later, as exploration and settlement spread out from the central hub of Sydney. Borrowings from the Kamilaroi language of eastern New South Wales include:

brolga (1896)
budgerigar (1840)
bora (1850)
gilgai (1867)

Borrowings from the Yuwaalaraay language of northern New South Wales include:

bilby (1885)
galah (1862)

gidgee (1862)

Borrowings from the Wiradhuri languages of south-western New South Wales include:

corella (1859)
gang-gang (1833)
kookaburra (1834)
quandong (1836)

In terms of number of borrowings, the only language that compares with Dharuk is the Nyungar language of south-western Western Australia. There was a European settlement at the present site of Albany in 1826, but the major settlement was on the Swan River in 1829. Many words for flora and fauna were borrowed from Nyungar. They include:

boodie (1842)
chuditch (1842)
dalgite (1840)
dibbler (1850)
gnow (1840)
jarrah (1833)
karri (1866)
kylie (1835)
mardo (1839)
marl (1840)
morrel (1837)
mundarda (1840)
noolbenger (1842)
numbat (1842)
quenda (1839)
quokka (1842)
tammar (1847)
wambenger (1928)

woylie (1842)

The words borrowed from Indigenous languages are almost exclusively nouns, and they refer to the external world. Most of the borrowings are terms for flora and fauna, followed by words for religion and ceremony, implements, and features of the environment, suggesting that there was no interest on the part of the colonisers in understanding any of the conceptual aspects of Indigenous cultures.

Some adjectives and verbs were borrowed into the Australian pidgin that was spoken in the nineteenth century. Most of these have now disappeared, but two important words have survived. These are **bung** (1841) and **yakka** (1847), both borrowed from the Yagara language of the Brisbane region.

2. ENGLISH FORMATIONS

The settlers often used the resources of British English to attempt to describe the new world of Australia. Sometimes they altered existing senses. For example, in Britain a **paddock** is a small fenced field, often used for keeping or exercising horses. In Australia, its meaning was greatly expanded, so that it has come to mean ‘a piece of land, fenced, defined by natural boundaries, or otherwise considered distinct, usually a section of a rural property’. This extended sense is first recorded in 1808.

Flora and fauna were often named after a fancied resemblance to European fauna and flora. The term **ash**, for example, was applied to trees which produced timber resembling the European ash, even though the trees are in no way related. The Australian trees so described are mainly eucalypts. The first recorded example of this use of **ash** in Australia occurs in 1801: ‘Here we found plenty of different sorts of wood, and the ash trees of considerable magnitude’. There are similar transferred uses of **apple** (1801), **cedar** (1795), **cherry** (1799), **mahogany** (1792), and **oak** (1789). These are often further described by distinguishing epithets: **red mahogany** (1817), **swamp mahogany** (1817), **desert oak** (1898), **forest oak** (1819), **she-oak** (1792), **river oak** (1817), **silky oak** (1836). Similarly, the term **bream** (1789) was applied to various freshwater and marine fish, again often with a distinguishing epithet as **black bream** (1857), **red bream** (1857), and **silver bream** (1870).

In order to distinguish the Australian plant or animal from the European plant or animal with which it was compared, the Australian word was often preceded by a term such as **native**. Thus: **native artichoke** (1909), **native bee** (1845), **native bluebell** (1900), **native bread** (1831), **native cat** (1804), **native dog** (1788), **native cherry** (1817), **native cucumber** (1859), **native cumquat** (1880), **native fuchsia** (1860), **native grape** (1838), **native mulberry** (1846), **native orange** (1860).

The word **bush** was similarly used: **bush cucumber** (1937), **bush fly** (1838), **bush hay** (1827), **bush kangaroo** (1832), **bush mouse** (1872), **bush rat** (1855), **bush tomato**, **bush turkey** (1836). The productivity of **bush** in compounds was and continues to be much greater than **native.** It has been used to indicate many aspects of Australian life, especially outside the heavily settled areas: **bush ballad** (1895), **bush bash** (1967), **bush bread** (1840), **bush capital** (1906), **bush cattle** (1833), **bush house** (1837), **bush medicine**, **bush mile** (1862), **bush telegraph** (1864), **bush tucker** (1895), **bush week** (1919).

Flora and fauna were often given descriptive names of various kinds: **beefwood** (*Grevillea striata* and some similar trees) was named from the redness of the tree's wood; **blackwood** (applied to several eucalypts) was named because of a characteristic charred fibrous bark on the lower trunk; **bottlebrush** (any callistemon) was named because its flower spikes are shaped like a bottle brush; **muzzlewood** (the small tree *Eucalyptus stellulata*) was named because its wood was used to make muzzles for unweaned calves to prevent them from suckling; **chef's hat correa** (*Correa baeurlenii*) has a calyx that gives each flower the appearance of a chef's traditional hat; and the **possum banksia** (*Banksia baueri*) has large, woolly, brown-grey flowers which remain woolly after they die, resembling possums on the bush.

Among such interesting terms for fauna included in the *Australian Oxford Dictionary* are:

anvil bird
archerfish
apostle bird
barking spider
bicycle lizard
bird-eating spider
catbird
cranky fan
dollar bird

friar bird
holy cross toad
leafcutter bee
letter-winged kite
magnetic termite
musk duck
organ grinder
pilot bird
pobblebonk
policeman fly
processional caterpillar
semaphore crab
thorny devil
twenty eight
whipbird
whisky drinker

Among such interesting terms for flora included in the *Australian Oxford Dictionary* are:

anthouse plant
bird orchid
bitter bark
cheese tree
cider gum
coachwood
compass bush
corkscrew grass
curly wigs
digger's delight
emu bush
kerosene bush
lawyer palm
parson's bands

poached egg daisy

possum banksia

raspberry jam tree

sandpaper fig

shatterwood

snow-in-summer

soap tree

tallow wood

wait-a-while

wombat berry

3. THE CONVICT ERA

Between 1788 and 1852 some 150,000 convicts were transported from Britain to eastern Australia, with New South Wales and Tasmania established as penal colonies. About 25,000 of these were women. With the impending cessation of transportation to the eastern colonies, the British government commenced transportation to Western Australia in 1850, and this continued until 1868. About 10,000 convicts were sent to Western Australia.

Many writers make comments about the early language of the convict class. In 1793 Watkin Tench, in *A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson*, wrote of the ‘flash language’ of the convicts: ‘In some of our early courts of justice, an interpreter was frequently necessary to translate the deposition of the witness, and the defence of the prisoner. This language has many dialects. The sly dexterity of the pickpocket; the brutal ferocity of the footpad; the more elevated career of the highwayman; and the deadly purpose of the midnight ruffian, is each strictly appropriate in the terms which distinguish and characterize it’. Tench is referring to underworld language, but while this language was no doubt commonly used, it is understandably not well represented in the early written records. One exception to this is the work of the convict James Hardy Vaux, who wrote his *New and Comprehensive Vocabulary of the Flash Language* in 1812, and dedicated the work to Thomas Skottowe, the commandant at the penal settlement at Newcastle. The dictionary was published in 1819 when it was appended to Vaux’s*Memoirs.* While the dictionary was produced in Australia, it is largely a collection of early nineteenth-century London underworld slang.

A few of these underworld terms, often with transferred meanings, became part of Australian English. **Plant** in the sense ‘to hide (articles, animals, etc.) frequently stolen goods’ belonged to thieves’ slang from the seventeenth century. But soon after settlement we find it being used as part of the general language of the colony. In the early examples the sense is often labelled as belonging to thieves, as in this example:

> **1793** Some villains dug up every one of the potatoes … A very strict search was made, in order to find out the offender, but to no purpose, as the potatoes were (in the cant phrase) *All planted*; viz. buried in the ground, so as to be taken out as they were wanted. J Hunter (Governor of NSW in 1794)

The term **swag** similarly has its origin in thieves' slang. It originally referred to a thief's booty or plunder, but by the middle of the nineteenth century it was used to describe the collection of personal belongings wrapped up in a bedroll, as carried by a bush traveller. This is the beginning of the **swagman** tradition.

Most of the recorded terminology has to do with the organisation and administration of the convict system, and disappeared with the demise of that system. Many of these, however, are included in the *Australian Oxford Dictionary* because of their importance to Australian history. They include:

anti-transportation
assign (sense 1c)
assignment (sense 4)
bolter (sense 2)
Botany Bay (senses 2 & 3)
canary (sense 2)
chain gang
on the chain
cockatoo[2]
conditional emancipation (or pardon)
convict colony
convict constable
convict overseer
convict settler
convict station

convict system

double-convict

educated (sense 5)

emancipate (sense 4)

emancipation (sense 2b)

emancipist

exclusionist (sense 2)

expiree

Female Factory

felonry (sense 2)

free settler

gentleman convict

government gang

government man

government servant

government station

indent (noun 2)

iron gang

lag^{3} (noun 1)

legitimate (noun)

muster book

muster-roll

overseer (sense 1b)

parramatta (sense 2)

pass (noun 11)

penal colony

penal servitude

Pentonvillain

Pentonville

Prisoner of the Crown

probation (sense 1b)

road gang

servant of the Crown

sevener
ticket-of-leave
transport (verb 2; noun 4)
triangle (sense 8)
Vandemonia
Vandemonian

In addition to **plant** and **swag**, some other convict terms have found their way into general Australian English. Most Australians are unaware of the fact that the term **public servant** (it is **civil servant** in Britain) had its origin in the convict system. Many writers comment on the fact that there was some unease in the early colony about using the word convict, and various euphemisms were created. In 1826 P Cunningham noted that convicts were ‘spoken of under the loyal designation of *government-men*, the term *convict* being erased by a sort of general tacit compact from our Botany Bay dictionary as a word too ticklish to be pronounced in these sensitive latitudes’. In 1843 Charles Rowcroft, in *Tales of the Colonies*, wrote: ‘I must warn you that we never speak of the convicts in this country by that term; we always call them ‘government men’; or on some occasions, prisoners; but we never use the term ‘convict’, which is considered by them as an insulting term’. And so a convict was often called a **public servant**, and this was later applied to anyone who worked for the government. The word **muster** was used in Standard English to refer to ‘an assembly of soldiers, sailors, etc., for inspection, ascertainment or verification of numbers, exercise, display, etc’. In the Australian convict colony the term was applied to a similar assembly of convicts, and by the mid-nineteenth century it was being used to refer to the gathering together of livestock for counting and branding.

The development of bushranging in Australia is an off-shoot of the convict system. The first bushrangers were convicts, escaping either from imprisonment or from bad masters when in assigned service. To them, we owe the terms **bail-up** and **stick-up**. The bushrangers of the post-goldrush are the more familiar ‘Ned Kelly’ kind. To them we owe the development of

such terms as **bush telegraph**, **cattle duffing**, **gully raking**, and **poddy dodging**.

4. BRITISH DIALECT

British dialects were an important source of Australian words in the nineteenth century. About 200 words, from a range of British dialects, lost their ‘dialect’ status in Australian and became part of mainstream Australian English. There are two interesting features about these dialect borrowings. First, most of the important borrowings occur in the second 60 years of settlement. Secondly, many of the words borrowed come from the dialects of northern England and Scotland.

Surprisingly, there are few borrowings from Ireland. The Irish made up the second largest group of immigrants to Australia in the nineteenth century. For example, in the period 1847–1872, 35 per cent of total assisted emigrants were Irish, and over the period 1840–1914, over 300,000 Irish emigrated to Australia (James Jupp, *The Australian People*, 1988: 58, 560). But on the available evidence, Irish is under-represented in Australian English. It is likely that it has much to do with social and religious factors: most of the Irish emigrants were Catholic, their levels of literacy were low, and there was significant prejudice against them from the convict period right through the nineteenth century (and beyond).

Many of the early terms have to do with agriculture, land settlement, and mining, and they may well not have been spread evenly through the language of colonial society. Indeed, most of the mining terms in the period would have been restricted to areas where there were Cornish miners, especially in South Australia. The significant borrowings from British dialect are concentrated in the second 60 years of settlement. They include:

nugget (1851)
fossick (1852)
lolly (sense 1b) (1854)

chook (1855)

mullock (1855)

skite (1857)

shanghai (noun) (1863)

eye (in phrase **pick the eyes out of**) (1865)

dag (1867)

larrikin (1868)

barrack (1878)

rouseabout (1881)

derry (in phrase **have a derry on**) (1883)

soursob (see **soursop** sense 2) (1885)

little house (1886)

kip[4] (1887)

crib (noun 7) (1890)

cronk (1890)

gig[4, 5] (1891)

nark (1891)

bowyang (1893)

stoush (1893)

smoodge (1898)

wowser (1899)

5. BRITISH SLANG

Australian English's sources for borrowings from British English were not limited to British dialects. There is another group of terms that is marked in the *Australian National Dictionary* as coming from 'British slang', as distinct from 'British dialect'. Some of these are 'underworld' words, and no doubt many of them have their origin in London and its near counties. Given their colloquial nature, many of them have disappeared from Australian English, but some survive, and some others are included in the *Australian Oxford Dictionary* because of their historical significance. They include:

bludger (1882)
caser (1825)
chiack (1853)
cow (sense 3) (1864)
deener (1882)
dona (1874)
joker (sense 2) (1810)
lumber (verb 5) (1827)
moral (noun 3) (1873)
pebble (sense 4) (1848)
prad (1841)
ripper (sense 3) (1858)
ryebuck (1890)
shake (verb 9) (1845)
sheila (1832)
skinner (sense 3)
stiff (sense 10)
trap (noun 13) (1817)
tucker (noun 2) (1833)

6. GOLD

Gold was discovered in Australia in 1851, first near Bathurst in New South Wales, and then at Clunes and Buninyong in Victoria. The yellow fever, as it was commonly called, had profound social and economic effects. There was a massive increase in population, with some 700,000 migrants arriving between 1850 and 1860. The population was also very mobile, continually on the move from gold rush to gold rush. The yellow fever also affected the Australian language. On 16 September 1851 the *Geelong Advertiser's* correspondent at Ballarat reported: 'Gold is revolutionising manners and language — everything is tinctured with the yellow hue, and ounces, and grains, have become familiar words'. Similarly, in February 1859 the *Colonial Mining Journal* also expressed the need for a dictionary of the goldfields: 'A great want felt in this district is a good lexicographer. What is meant or is to be understood by a great number of terms used in the mining regulations by the Mining Board is beyond comprehension'.

Some of the words used were standard mining terminology. Some of them were transported to the Australian goldfields from the Californian goldfields. Many of them, however, are Australian, although many of the terms lasted only as long as the goldrush period itself. This is especially true of the terms associated with alluvial mining, the kind of goldmining which attracted the greatest number and social range of miners, and which ceased earliest, as it gave way to machinery.

In the following list the sense numbers refer to the entries in the *Australian Oxford Dictionary*.

alluvial lead
claim jumper
cradle (sense 4d)
deep leader
dish (noun 3; verb 4)
dolly (noun 2; verb 2)

duffer (sense 3)
gold commissioner
gold escort
gold washer
hatter (see hatter[2])
jeweller's shop
joe[2]
jump (verb 15)
jumper (sense 1c)
long tom
miner's right
puddle (verb 6)
shepherd (noun 3; verb 3a)
shicer (sense 1)
sluicer
specker
storekeeper's rush
tin dish

Even so, the gold rushes provided Australian English with some lasting terms. The importance of the term **digger** in Australian myth derives from its First World War associations, but its appearance in that war owes much to the analogy drawn between the often deep holes which had to be dug arduously in the search for gold, and the trenches which the soldiers had to dig. The political events surrounding the **Eureka Stockade** have similarly left an enduring mark on the Australian psyche. **Fossick**, which now means 'to rummage or search around or about', has its origin on the goldfields. The word comes from British dialect where it meant 'to obtain by asking, to ferret out'. On the goldfields it had two meanings: 'to search for gold on the surface, sometimes in a desultory or unsystematic way' and 'to steal gold from other diggers, especially from an unattended claim'. The second meaning was transferred from literal gold-seeking early on. Thus in 1853: 'If a man were to take a log of fire-wood from a neighbour's heap … it would be said he had

been fossicking'. The transferred usage was often ironic: 'If one in want of a dinner called at his neighbour's tent at mutton time he would be a fossicker'. But it is the first meaning which has survived into contemporary Australian English.

Roll-up in the sense of 'a mass meeting of miners to consider an individual grievance or an issue of common concern' is used in mining contexts well into the twentieth century, but by the end of the nineteenth century it had developed its transferred sense of 'an assembly', which is now its primary meaning in Australian English: 'He hoped for a big roll-up at next Thursday's meeting'. The Australian phrase **to knock out a living** has its origin on the goldfields, where the 'knocking out' was quite literal. **Mullock** in the sense 'rubbish, nonsense', and especially in the phrase **a load of mullock** (earlier **a lot of mullock**), owes its existence to the goldmining sense of 'mining refuse'. The earliest transferred use of the term in Australia points to the connection: '**A lot of mullock** ... is a gold fields phrase, and means, according to my views, anything of no use' The phrase **to hump one's swag** is usually associated with itinerant rural workers of the final quarter of the nineteenth century, but there is no doubt that it arose in gold-rush contexts. All of the early citations (1851–1867) use the phrase in referring to diggers, and the diggings' phrase is the one which later gives rise to the phrases **to hump one's drum** (1870), **to hump one's bluey** (1891), and **to hump one's Matilda** (1902). Indeed, the term **swag** achieved its widespread use in goldmining contexts.

7. WARS

Military slang, as with the any kind of slang, has the function of uniting groups and defining their values. Since the Australian military is made up of many groups, each of these groups has its own special language, although there are overlaps in terminology between these Australian groups and worldwide military slang. Navy slang, especially, tends to be international (originally British) slang. Even so, some distinctively Australian Navy terms have been produced. They include: **beagle** ‘a steward’; **boy scout’s leave** ‘a brief shore-leave’; **dimple** ‘a hole in a ship’s hull caused by a torpedo’; **drain the bilge** ‘to be extremely seasick’; **macaroon** ‘a new rating’; **molly** ‘a malingerer’; **squid** ‘female trainee’. Air Force slang is also greatly influenced by British traditions, but there have been many Australian terms: **blear** ‘(when lost) fly about in search of a landmark’; **blind stabbing** ‘blind flying’; **emu** ‘member of the ground staff’; **nest** ‘an aerodrome (to which all the little aircraft fly home)’; **wags** ‘signallers’. Such language is generally known only to the members of the service or to groups within a particular service, and they are too specialised to include in the *Australian Oxford Dictionary*. The wider community very rarely has access to this language.

But it is the Army which carries the numbers, and it is the Army which has produced the bulk of the military slang which has found its way back into the wider Australian community. The large-scale nature of the First and Second World Wars suddenly threw together people from vastly different backgrounds, people who had no other reason than the fact of war itself for living together in extraordinarily close and intimate circumstances. In the introduction to his *Digger Dialects* (1919) WH Downing comments: ‘By the conditions of their service, and by the howling desolation of the battle-zones, our men were isolated during nearly the whole of the time they spent in theatres of war, from the ways, the thoughts and the speech of the world behind them’. Indeed, it seems that those involved in wars of this magnitude need a new language to adapt to their new situation, and to construct ways of coping with it. When Tom Skeyhill in ‘Soldier Songs from Anzac‘ (1915) wrote

‘We’ve forgotten all our manners / And our talk is full of slang’, he points to the linguistic inventiveness which was part of the wartime experience.

It is inevitable that most terms do not survive their wartime contexts, for the end of a war brings to an end the need for the existence of such terms. This is illustrated by the following terms from WH Downing’s *Digger Dialects* (most of them confirmed by the 1924 typescript ‘Glossary of Slang and Peculiar Terms in Use in the AIF’ held at the Australian War Memorial, and available in edited form on the ANDC’s website) : **Anzac button** ‘a nail used in place of a trouser button’; **Anzac soup** ‘shell-hole water polluted by a corpse’; **Anzac stew** ‘an urn of hot water and one bacon rind’; **belly-ache** ‘a mortal wound’; **boy-with-his-boots-off** ‘a shell which bursts before the sound of its passage through the air is heard’; **broken-doll** ‘an inefficient staff-officer returned to his unit’; **camouflaged Aussy** ‘An Englishman serving with the AIF’; **to go into cold storage** ‘to be killed during the 1916 winter’; **dugout king** ‘an officer who remains at the bottom of a dugout, while his men are exposed to danger’; **floating kidney** ‘a soldier unattached to any unit, or without definite duties’; **lance-corporal bacon** ‘bacon consisting of fat through which runs a thin streak of lean’.

Yet while many terms have been lost, the First World War produced a number of major Australian cultural icons, especially the terms **Anzac, digger**, and **Aussie**. The term **Anzac** appears in 1915 as an acronym formed from the initial letters of Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, originally used as a telegraphic code name for the corps. In the same year, it was used as an abbreviation for ‘Anzac Cove’ at Gallipoli, and then as a term for the ‘Gallipoli campaign’. In 1916 it was first used to refer to a member of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps who served in the Gallipoli campaign. By the end of the war, the term was being used emblematically to reflect the traditional view of the virtues displayed by those who served in the Gallipoli campaign, especially as these virtues are seen as national characteristics. The term **digger** in the military sense is a transferred use of the meaning ‘a miner on the Australian goldfields’. Throughout the century it has retained the military associations established in the First World War (it was widely used during

Second World War, and during the Vietnam War the Americans still knew the Australians as ‘diggers’). The term has also undergone a widening of meaning — in many contexts ‘digger’ and its abbreviated form ‘dig’ are used devoid of their military connotations (as a synonym for ‘cobber’ or ‘mate’). It was the First World War which produced the term **Aussie** for ‘Australia’, for an Australian soldier, and then more generally for ‘an Australian’ or ‘Australian’.

Many other common Australian terms had their origin in the First World War. The firm J Furphy and Sons Pty Ltd operated a foundry at Shepparton, Victoria, and water carts were included among their products. These water carts, bearing the name ‘Furphy’, were used in the First World War. Very quickly the term **furphy** came to mean ‘a rumour or false report, an absurd story’ — perhaps because drivers of the carts were notorious for bringing rumours into the camps, or because the conversations which took place around the cart were sources of gossip and rumour. The term **oil** in the sense ‘information, news’ (a transferred use of ‘oil’ as the substance essential to the running of a machine) and its compounds **dinkum oil**, **straight oil**, and **good oil** all gained wide currency as First World War Services’ slang. The term **possie** for ‘position of supposed advantage to the occupant; a place; a job’ is now so entrenched in Australian English that few realise it had its origin in trench warfare as the term for an individual soldier’s place of shelter or firing position. It is in First World War Australian military contexts that **souvenir** in the sense ‘to appropriate; to steal; to take as a souvenir’ first appears. The term **plonk** (probably a corruption of French *blanc* in *vin blanc* ‘white wine’) appears to have begun its Australian career during First World War. It is in First World War Australian military contexts that many Australian idioms are first recorded: **his blood’s worth bottling**, **give it a burl**, **hop in for one’s chop**, **come a gutzer**, **rough as bags**.

The Second World War was similarly productive of new terms. A writer in *Army Magazine* (June 1944) commented on the experience of soldiers in northern Australia and in the islands to the north of Australia: ‘thousands of Diggers complain humorously that they are “going troppo,” which means degenerating into mild imbecility through tropical conditions. When the war

ends there won't be so many to whom those conditions apply, but the man with a fishy gaze and sluggish limbs is almost certain to be for ever described as "troppo" '. The writer was correct, and the term, especially in the phrase **to go troppo**, has found a permanent place in the Australian idiom. Australian words and idioms which have their origin in the Second World War, and which are listed in the body of the *Australian Oxford Dictionary*, include:

wouldn't it
acre (sense 4)
blot (sense 5)
blue (sense 6)
bronzed (Aussie)
don't come the raw prawn
cruet (sense 4)
doover
cut-lunch commando
fuzzy-wuzzy angel
game as a pissant
it's on (for young and old)
no-hoper
nong
shiny-arse
shoofty
retread (sense 2)
spine-bash