



Some Popular Australian Slang Words and Phrases

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Abstract: This article explores the diversity of popular slang words and phrases in Australian English, analysing their origins, usage and cultural significance in contemporary Australian social and literary environments. The article examines the evolution of slang from traditional expressions to modern trends, highlighting the main features of the vocabulary and semantics of Australian slang. A comparison with English and other national varieties of English is also made to identify unique features of the Australian cultural and linguistic heritage.

Keywords: slang, American and British slang, Australian English, slang abbreviations, shortening words, selfie.



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Anyone encountering Australian slang for the first time will be quite surprised by how sweet it sounds. It's as if all the adults suddenly started talking like children: *«I'll defo cook barbie with mushies. Bring my coldie and chokkie for Paddooo (Patrick)»*. There isn't an Australian who doesn't regularly use at least 2-3 slang words. And by slang I mean diminutives of common words like «Aussie» or «Straya». By the way, «Aussie» is not pronounced like «ossi», but rather like the name Ozzy Osbourne.

The use of abbreviated words became a national, unique feature of Australians more than three centuries ago! The earliest references to abbreviated words date back to the 1800s, and the tradition is still popular today and often refers to the number of words, length of statements, and even expressions used in colloquial speech.

In this article, we have divided all Australian words and phrases into four groups.

Diminutive abbreviations with endings “-ie”, “-ye”, “-y”

«Selfie». Since there's no point in further explaining the meaning of this word, we'll dwell a little on how exactly “selfie” has become a fast-growing trend among teenagers who fill Instagram and Twitter with stories about themselves in photographs. Posting selfies with comments has become one of the ways to stand out, express your individuality and communicate with other users. For many brands and social networks, selfies have become an effective tool to reach audiences, for example through posting stories on Snapchat or Instagram.

The origin of the word is undoubtedly Australian. One of the most detailed explanations can be found in The Telegraph article. In short, the word “selfie” was invented by a university student who preferred to shorten all words by adding “-ie” and “-ey” and even called himself Hopey. After one of the parties, Hopey joined a student forum to discuss his lip problems and posted a photo with the comment: *«I had a hole about 1cm long right through my bottom lip. And sorry about the focus, it was a selfie»*.

Among other Australian abbreviations, I came across a few more interesting and pleasant-to-hear examples:

1. **Barbie** – barbecue
2. **Mushie** – mushroom
3. **Sunnies** – sunglasses
4. **Furphy** – a strongly believed untrue story or rumor
5. **Billy** – a teapot for boiling water
6. **Cossie** – a swimming suit
7. **Prezzy** – a present
8. **Brekkie** – a breakfast
9. **Chrissie** – Christmas
10. **Bikkie** – a biscuit
11. **To cost big bikkies** – to be too expensive
12. **Exy** – shorter variant of “expensive”
13. **Footy** – Australian football
14. **Lippy** – lipstick
15. **Lollies** – the same as lollipops
16. **Mozzie** – a mosquito
17. **Polly** – a police officer
18. **Pozzy** – taking a good position

Slang abbreviations ending in “-o”

Shortening words with soft vowels like “-ie”, “-a” or “o” has become a hallmark of Australian slang. Most Americans and Brits still think Australians are too lazy to pronounce words in full. But what is the real reason behind the Australian habit of cutting words? In fact, shortened words allow the conversation to be less formal and strict. This is also explained by the soft pronunciation of words in Australian English. Unlike American English, Australian English lacks sharp changes and is generally characterized by a more relaxed manner of speech.

Therefore, slang abbreviations help the speaker sound more friendly and familiar. For example: “*pash*” means “*a passionate kiss*”, “*Macca’s*” means *McDonald’s*, “*daks*” means “*trousers*”, “*chook*” means “*chicken*”, “*click*” means “*kilometer*” and so on.

By the way, did you know that the famous fast food restaurant McDonald’s has abandoned its traditional name in Australia? The reason is that more than 50% of respondents pronounce “*Macca’s*” instead of the full name, as this word is the second most used Australian slang word in the language. So, if you get to the country of “ru” (kangaroo) - you will be able to enjoy the unique Australian “*Macca’s*”.

1. **Bizzo** – business («mind your own bizzo»)
2. **Ambo** – ambulance, ambulance driver
3. **Milko** – milkman
4. **Nasho** – the National Services (obligatory military services)
5. **Relo** – a relative
6. **Servo** – a gas station



7. **Vego** – a vegetarian
8. **Smoko** – a short break for a smoke
9. **Defo** – definitely
10. **Muso** – a musician
11. **Preggo** – pregnant
12. **Rego** – registration of a vehicle
13. **Arvo** – an afternoon
14. **Evo** – an evening
15. **Avo** – avocado
16. **Aggro** – aggressive
17. **Seppo** – an American

The Australian slang word «seppo» is derived from other words: «septic tank» or «yank» and is not very common among Australian youth. In fact, other words mentioned in the lists above are also rarely used by young people.

According to recent research, abbreviations ending in “-ie”, “-y” and “-o” are more commonly used by older people, while Australians from Generations Z and Y prefer to add the ending «-s» to shortened words. For example: «uggies» – «Ugg boots», «firies» – «fire fighters», «mobile» – «mobes» and so on.

Original Australian English Slang Expressions

There is a story that the tradition of speaking at a high rate was born out of the need to pronounce words faster to avoid catching flies in your mouth. Many people doubt the authenticity of this story, as most shortened words in Australian English can be even longer than they were before they were shortened (for example: «yakker» – «talk», «coldie» – «beer»). Or differ slightly in length (for example: «bonzer» – «great», «yakka» – «a work», «moolah» – «money»). There are even words that extend slang: «boozer» – «a pub», «rotten» – «drunk» and so on.

Unlike American and British slang, Australian slang is more known for its abbreviations than its expressions, but that’s only for foreigners. No matter what Australian city you visit, you’ll likely hear at least a dozen of the following phrases, as all Australian slang is not tied to specific regions, but is used throughout the country.

- **Fair Dinkum** – confirming the truthfulness of a sentence
- **Apples, she’ll be** – It’ll be alright
- **Banana bender** – someone from Queensland
- **Dog’s breakfast** – complete chaos, mess
- **Big Smoke** – a large city like Sydney
- **No worries** – no problem
- **Face, off one’s** – drunk
- **G’Day** – Hi!, Hello!
- **Give it a burl** – make a try!
- **Grinning like a shot fox** – entirely satisfied and happy
- **Good onya** – good for you
- **Liquid laugh** – puke, vomit



- **Piece of piss** – very easy task
- **London to a brick** – expressing certainty or high probability
- **Good oil** – good idea or information

Looking at all the interesting Australian words and expressions, I noticed how quickly they all stick in my mind the first time. Perhaps this is due to the uniqueness of Australian slang, as each statement is spoken with respect and love for its own language.

In conclusion, exploring Australian slang reveals a rich tapestry of linguistic creativity and cultural identity. From everyday interactions to media representations, these colloquialisms paint a vivid picture of Australian life and humor. Embracing these unique expressions not only fosters connection but also offers a glimpse into the vibrant and distinctive language that defines Australian culture. Whether you're a local or a visitor, understanding these slang words and phrases adds a layer of appreciation for the diversity and charm that make Australia truly unique.

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