

‘Stralyan: The unique Aussie language

Many Australian adults bemoan the way teenagers speak today; with claims they are massacring the English language with their shortened words, Americanized (☺) spelling and incorrect grammar. However, on the eve of Australia Day, social analyst and author of “Word Up” a new book that looks at slang in 21st Century Australia. Mark McCrindle digs deeper into our dynamic Australian language which has the ability to flex to meet the needs of changing generations and changing times.

From youth slang to Aussie-isms:

Some of the most popular youth slang words used today are shortened words, including chron (chronic), whatever (whatever), tots (totally), dis (disrespect) and ‘sup (what’s up?). While these slang words are used globally, such shortening has a long tradition with Australian English.

Across the Generations:

From Baby Boomers through to Generation Alpha (who are just learning to say G’Day!) our Australian language is continually evolving. Some traditional Australian phrases are still well recognised and used across the generations, while other phrases are now endangered in our vocabulary with others very much on their way to extinction.

Examples of shortened Aussie words:



Thriving	Endangered	Near Extinct
No worries	Fair dinkim	Not within cooee
You beauty	True blue	Buckley’s chance
Too right	Woop woop	Ankle biter
G’day mate	Spit the dummy	Dinky di
She’ll be right	Crikey	Bull dust

Across the States and Territories:

Australians have a common tradition when it comes to nicknaming destinations across the country. Across Australia popular destinations are routinely shortened as a sign of familiarity and affection. Interestingly, SA is the only state that has no commonly used shortened names.

Examples across the nation:

- QLD: Brizzie (Brisbane)
- NSW: Parra (Parramatta)
- VIC: The G (The MCG)
- TAS: Tassie (Tasmania)
- WA: Freo (Fremantle)
- NT: The Alice (Alice Springs)
- SA: No commonly known shortened names

Embracing Aussie Brands:

Shortening a name is one way Australians show their endearment, and some of our favourite brands and organisations have been lucky enough to score their own– a movement that these organisations have been quick to embrace. Woolworths is called “Woolies” by many Australians and now used on many of its marketing materials (“My Woolies”). “Macca’s” (McDonalds) is a uniquely Australian way of referring to the fast food giant, while The Salvation Army has wholeheartedly embraced the title “Salvos” with their well known strapline “thank God for the Salvos”. Similarly, The St Vincent De Paul Society is more commonly known as “Vinnies”.

A slow decline – phasing out elements of the Australian language:

As seen above, the Australian way of speaking is constantly evolving as the generations grow up, and as Australia’s identity moves more towards the urban and away from the rural, some of our traditional phrases are no longer in regular use among the new generations.

Rhyming slang and Aussie similes were once very popular among the Builders and Boomer generations. However, from Generation X onwards, these expressions have lost popularity.

Rhyming slang:	Metaphorical phrases:
Trouble and strife (wife)	Full as a goog
Do the Harry Holt (do the bolt)	Fit as a Mallee bull
Hit the frog and toad (hit the road)	Cunning as a dunny rat
Dog and bone (phone)	Dry as a pommy’s towel
Joe Blake (snake)	Blind as a welder’s dog

Regardless of the changes, our Australian language retains its cheeky humour (where else in the world can you call a redhead “bluey” or a stranger “mate”?) its creativity and its resilience.

Mark McCrindle is a social analyst with an international renown for tracking emerging issues, researching social trends and analysing customer segments. Mark’s recently released book, *Word Up: A Lexicon and Guide to Communication in the 21st Century* looks at the changing use of the English language in Australia: <http://www.wordup.net.au>

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