

Aussie Idioms

By [Roger Keays](#), 4 December 2008

While I was browsing the language section of the Brisbane library (a favourite hang-out of mine), I came across this book called "Lost for Words" by an Aussie old timer, Hugh Lunn. He had collected a whole lot of classic Australianisms from as far back as the 1940s, and made a series of radio shows for the ABC using them. Later, he published the book of the series which makes for a pretty entertaining read.

Here are some of my favourites from the book. There are many many snippets which are very Aussie but are still so commonly used that they didn't make my list of funny and interesting sayings. A lot of them clearly come from England too.

Emphatic phrases and insults:

- "Where are you going?" ... "I'm off to see a man about a dog."
- "I'm coming!" ... "yeh, so's Christmas."
- "I'm bored mum." ... "Well go pee in your shoe."
- Is the Pope a Catholic?
- Can a duck swim?
- What do you think this is? Bush week?
- That's my excuse, and I'm sticking to it.
- Well, I've never read about her on jam tins.
- Did you meet anybody you liked better than yourself?
- We'll need two good men or a dozen footballers for this job.
- No. You're big enough and ugly enough to do it yourself.
- Yeh, well that's his own funeral.
- I'll forgive you - thousands wouldn't.
- Go take a long walk of a short pier.

Metaphors and similes:

- He sits there like a lonely little petunia in an onion patch.
- (He's so desparate) he crawled over broken glass to meet the sheila.

- (He's so dumb) he wouldn't know how to pour sarsparilla out of a boot if the instructions were printed on the sole.
- He's always standing around like a spare groom at a wedding.
- He's one sandwich short a picnic.
- I'm so happy I could kick a hole in a drum.
- I'm as happy as a dog with two tails!
- He's as crooked as a dog's hind leg.
- It was about as exciting as a budgerigar convention.

Euphamisms and idioms:

- He's gone to the farm. (died)
- It's cactus. (broken)
- All he got from Janice was advice on how to tie a cravat.
- Don't bring the bedroom into the lounge!
- She tripped and fell pregnant.

Rhymes and spoonerisms:

- After you... age before beauty.
- He's one rotten dog of a mongrel.
- Things are crook in Tallarook.

Advice and observations:

- Never put anything smaller than your elbow in your ear.
- You never know your luck until a dead horse kicks you.
- A *man* will be criticised, but he will not be laughed at.
- Where there's a will, there's a relative.
- He did it the Egyptian way: hard work and perseverance.
- Measure twice, cut once.

About Roger Keays



Roger Keays is an artist, an engineer, and a student of life. He has no fixed address and has left footprints on 40-something different countries around the world. Roger is addicted to surfing. His other interests are music, psychology, languages, the proper use of semicolons, and finding good food.

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