



AUSTRALIAN

Language & Culture

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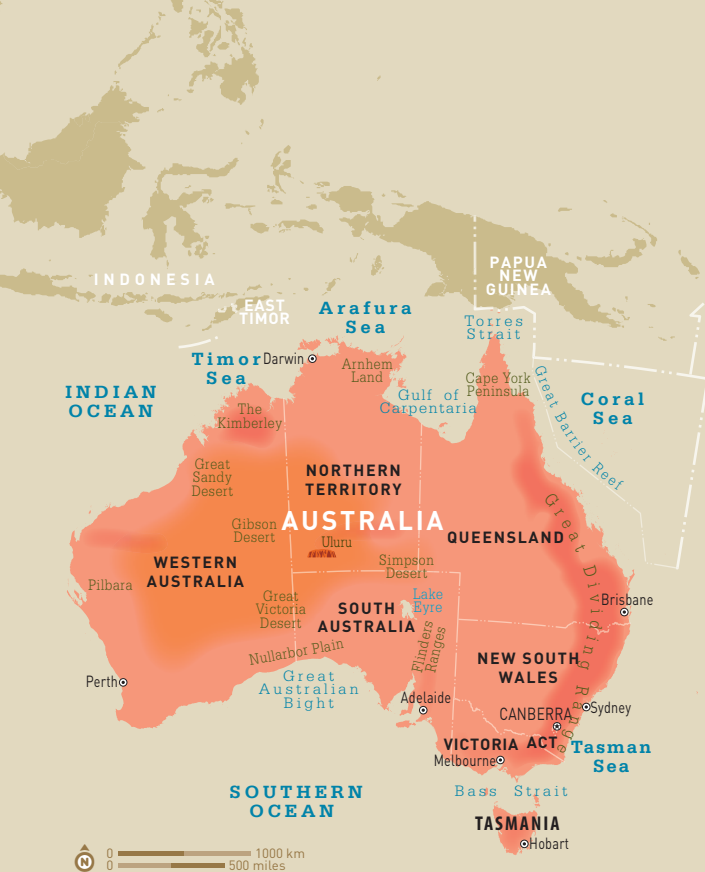
**EATING,
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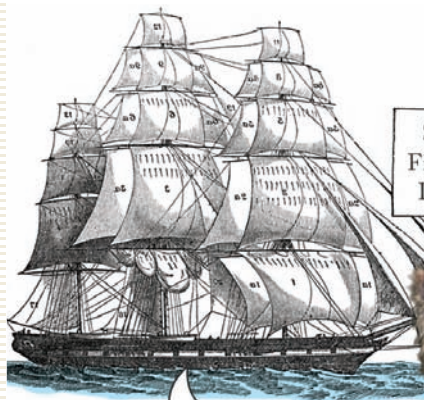
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**INDIGENOUS
LANGUAGES**

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Sure mate!
First right at
Dandenong

Do you know
the way to
Wagga Wagga?



A SHORT HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN



Look out for these...

CLASSIC PHRASE:

DIGGER

Miners ('diggers') on the goldfields always worked in pairs and came to symbolise mateship, via the soldiers of WWI

TRY THIS ONE:

COOEE!

An Aboriginal word yelled by bushwalking Aussies when they reach a particularly isolated area – to call their friends, or to hear the echo

USE WITH CAUTION:

SHEILA

Originally a word for any Irish woman, it became used for any woman (the female equivalent of 'bloke'), and a byword for ocker sexism

MISUNDERSTANDINGS:

KANGAROO

It does mean 'kangaroo', despite rumours that Aborigines had given Captain Cook the word for 'I don't know' (or something much ruder)



A SHORT HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN

When the British government established a convict settlement in Sydney Cove in 1788 they wouldn't even have thought about the linguistic consequences. The history of Australian English is not just one of transplantation from the UK to Australia, within the dour confines of the First Fleet, but also of adaptation. As time went by, both the convicts and the free settlers adapted English to their new home, twisting the meanings of existing words and borrowing new ones to suit.

The beginnings of Aussie English

Convict influence

The earliest Australian English was very much a working-class variety, as the vast majority of the UK arrivals (mostly convicts) were poor and unskilled. Some words even filtered through from what was called the 'Flash Language' – the thieves' language of London – which earned an unexpected respectability on Australian shores. For example, in London 'plant' was the name for stolen goods hidden away to be collected later when it was safe. In early Australian English the word came to refer to stores and provisions hidden away in the bush to be collected on a return trip, and a matching verb 'to plant' was created. So when contemporary Australians speak of **planting** Christmas presents where the children can't find them, they're using old British criminal slang.

Early British influence

Words and expressions from British English took on a whole new meaning in colonial Australia. For example, in the UK a ‘paddock’ is a small enclosed meadow – in Australia a ‘paddock’ may extend further than the eye can see. In the UK a ‘creek’ is a small tidal inlet – in Australia a ‘creek’ is a subsidiary of a river and can be bigger than the Thames.

Australian English is predominantly a town-based language, as most of the convicts and early settlers were from British towns and cities, especially London and communities in the southeast of England. This partially explains why rural British English labels such as ‘brook’, ‘glen’ and ‘dale’ haven’t become part of the Australian English vocabulary.

“ DIGGER

— A GOLD MINER; SYMBOL OF
AUSSIE MATESHIP ”

Early Irish influence

The other main influence on Australian English was Irish English, as convicts were also transported from Ireland following the 1798 Irish rebellion. Later on, in the 1840s, many Irish migrants were forced to settle in Australia after the potato famine. Australian English has therefore incorporated a number of Irish English words and phrases into its vocabulary. The term **sheila**, for example, is an Irish girls’ name which was used in early Australian English to apply to any Irish girl, just as **paddy** was used for any Irish man. Later on sheila began to be used for any woman, although it’s not a term women