

Welcome to the first edition of ACYA's AustraliaBites! Below you can browse through a selection of recent Australian news events, Australian cultural snapshots, and everyday Australian language. We hope to provide Chinese interested in Australia and/or learning English with a fun and useful way to engage with Australia! If you have any questions, suggestions, or ideas about AustraliaBites, please send an email to neil.thomas@acya.org.au

Media Watch

POLITICS: [Australian Prime Minister Wins Leadership Challenge](#) — *The Australian* (27 February)

Australian Prime Minister (PM) [Julia Gillard](#), of the [Australian Labor Party \(ALP\)](#), has survived a leadership challenge from former ALP PM [Kevin Rudd](#) (fluent in Chinese!). However, she is still not popular with voters, and faces an uphill battle to beat [Tony Abbott](#), the Leader of the Opposition from the [Liberal Party](#), at the next national election.



ECONOMICS: [Australia's Economic Outlook Closely Linked to China](#) — *ABC* (8 February)

Top analysts argue that China is Australia's "Great Wall" of economic protection from global economic events, and that Australia's economic future will be affected far more by the growth path of China (Australia's largest export partner) than the outcomes of the current European financial crisis. Thus their economic outlook for Australia is very positive, as Chinese demand for Australian resources will not be greatly slowed by a European recession.

SOCIETY: ["Dingo Stole My Baby" Case Reinvestigated](#) — *BBC* (24 February)

Australia's [most famous legal case](#) continues! Lindy Chamberlain was convicted of murdering her baby daughter on a camping trip in 1980, but argued that a dingo killed her. Chamberlain was later acquitted, but a cause-of-death ruling never made. Until now!

"A dingo stole my baby!"

THE ARTS: [Li Cunxin to become Head of Queensland Ballet Company](#) — *ABC* (24 February)

[Li Cunxin](#), the Chinese ballet dancer who defected to the West in 1981 and is famously known as "[Mao's Last Dancer](#)" from the title of his bestselling autobiography and subsequent feature film, has recently been appointed as the new artistic director of Queensland Ballet. Beforehand, Li was working as a stockbroker in Melbourne, having moved to Australia in 1995 after marrying an Australian dancer.

SPORT: [Cricketer Michael Clark Wins Allan Border Medal](#) — *ABC* (27 February)

The captain of the Australian [cricket](#) team, Michael Clark, has just won the [Allan Border Medal](#) for national cricketer of the year. Additionally, legendary Australian cricketer and cultural figure [Shane Warne](#) was inducted into the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame.



TRAVEL: [Australia's Strangest Sights!](#) — *news.com.au*

When most people think about Australia they only think about kangaroos, beaches, and sunny weather, but Australia's vast landmass and coastal waters are home to some of the strangest and rarest animals and natural phenomena in the world. From horizontal waterfalls to seas of crabs, from blue-eyed koalas to staircases to the moon, check out this slideshow of some of Australia's most unusual animals and places!

Culture Watch

Band of the Month — [Bliss 'N' Eso](#)

Most people automatically associate hip-hop music with the USA, but Australia has its own very unique and vibrant hip-hop music scene, recognisable by the distinctive Australian accent and the far more relaxed approach to life than the likes of 50 Cent and Eminem! Bliss 'N' Eso formed in 2000 and are now at the forefront of the Australian hip-hop and alternative scenes, with their latest album being an Australian #1 and receiving heavy airplay on the renowned [Triple J](#) public radio station. Some of their most well-known songs are "Addicted", "The Sea Is Rising", and "Bullet And A Target".



Movie of the Month — [The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert](#)

This 1994 Australian comedy-drama tells the story of three drag queens who travel from coastal Sydney to central Alice Springs to perform a series of shows at a friend's hotel. *Priscilla* is the name of the old tour bus they travel in, whilst *Queen* is a pun on an English slang term for a male homosexual. The movie deals with issues of [Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender](#) discrimination, racism, sexism, and self-identity, emphasising the values of individuality and self-expression. Receiving rave reviews, it was screened at the renowned Cannes International Film Festival. It was also instrumental in bringing the Australian film industry to worldwide attention and helping to introduce LGBT themes to a mainstream audience.

History of the Month — [Australia's "Pearl Harbour"](#)

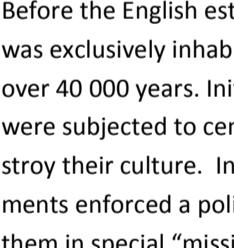
On 19 February 1942, during World War Two, Australia suffered the most catastrophic military attack in its recent history when Japanese fighter jets swooped on the northern city of Darwin, sinking eight ships, destroying 22 aircraft, razing dozens of buildings, and killing over 240 people. Darwin was completely unprepared for such an attack, lacking in ammunition and soldiers, lacking in proper warning systems, and even lacking telephones! Japan never invaded Australia during the War but launched many aerial assaults on Darwin and other northern cities before the tide of the war turned against it. Historians of the [Pacific Theatre](#) of World War Two have previously not paid much attention to this attack, focusing almost exclusively on the well-known [Pearl Harbour](#) incident, and only now is it beginning to gain more recognition in Australian history.



Quote of the Month — [Kevin Rudd](#), Australian Prime Minister, 13 February 2008

"For the indignity and degradation...inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry."

From: [Apology to the Stolen Generation](#), speech given to Australian Federal Parliament, Canberra



Before the English established the first permanent settlement in Australia in 1788, Australia was exclusively inhabited by [Aboriginal Australians](#), who have been living in Australia for over 40 000 years. Initially, Aboriginals were treated as sub-human by white colonisers and were subjected to centuries of discrimination, violence, exploitation, and attempts to destroy their culture. In particular, from the 1860s to the 1970s many Australian governments enforced a policy of forcibly taking Aboriginal children from their parents to raise them in special "missions" to educate them into "civilised" white society. These children are referred to as the "[Stolen Generations](#)" and for many years former Liberal Party PM [John Howard](#) refused to offer an official government apology for the abuses inflicted upon the Stolen Generations. After Howard was defeated in the 2007 national election, the first official act of new PM Kevin Rudd was to "say sorry".

Language

Australian Saying of the Month — "Chuck a Sickie"

To "chuck a sickie" is to tell the company that you work for that you are sick when actually you are not, so that you can then take that day off work. A "sickie" is a noun referring to the day taken off work and "to chuck" is the verb action. "Chucking a sickie" is a popular phenomenon in Australian society and is seen as a relatively easy way to 'cheat the system' through doing as little work as possible for as much money as possible. The main reasons for "chucking a sickie" are usually: being hungover, unusually good weather, short-term travel, watching sports matches, reading just-released books (e.g. the *Harry Potter* series), or simply laziness. This irreverent attitude towards authority is a much-loved part of the Australian national character, but it has great economic downsides. Every year, Australian workers take an average of 9.4 sick days per year, at a cost to the Australian economy of up to \$30billion, making "chucking a sickie" a big enough issue to be serious news! See news articles [here](#) and [here](#).



Australian Slang of the Month

- "Arvo" (noun): very common and very Australian slang for "afternoon". No other English-speaking country uses this slang, so it is as close to 澳语 (àoyǔ) as you can get! E.g. "What are you planning to do this *arvo*?"
- "Barbie" (noun): very common Australian slang for "barbeque", both the cooking device and an event (usually an informal social gathering or a fundraiser) where people cook with this device. E.g. "Do you want to come over for a *barbie* [event] this *arvo*?"
- "Sausage sizzle" (noun): a barbeque (event, not device) where a barbeque (device) is used to cook only sausages and onions to make a "sausage bun" consisting of a slice of white bread folded around a cooked sausage with added onions, tomato sauce, and mustard. Extremely popular promotional (free) or fundraising (A\$2) events on Australian university campuses! E.g. "Did you bring the *barbie* [device] for the *sausage sizzle* this *arvo*?"

Questions or comments? Please email neil.thomas@acya.org.au

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