

Welcome to the second 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: [Tony Abbott Sticks to His Controversial Policy of Towing Refugee Boats Back to Indonesia](#) — *The Australian* (16 March)

In the latest development in Australia's [ongoing political debate](#) about asylum seekers, [Tony Abbott](#), the [Leader of the Opposition](#) from the [Liberal Party](#), has stuck to his promise of towing boats from Australia back to Indonesia, despite opposition from the Indonesian government and human rights groups, and reports warning that this policy is unpopular in the Navy and will endanger refugees and navy personnel.



ECONOMICS: [Furore Over Selection of Future Fund Chairman](#) — *The Australian* (16 March)

The Australian Government has just named [David Gonski](#) as the Chairman of the [Future Fund](#), Australia's sovereign wealth fund. Controversy has erupted after it was revealed the [Labor Party](#) Government rejected advice recommending former [Treasurer Peter Costello](#), of the [Liberal Party](#). Costello and many business leaders accused the ruling Labor Government of incompetence, leading current Treasurer [Wayne Swan](#) to label Costello as arrogant.

SOCIETY: [Australian Military Faces Years of Abuse Inquiries](#) — *BBC* (7 March)

A review has discovered hundreds of possible cases of mistreatment by military staff since the 1950s, such as sexual abuse, alcoholism, and social-media bullying, and recommended compensation, an apology to victims, and an official inquiry.

"Military rife with abuse"

THE ARTS: [Famous American TV Sitcom Steals Australian Band's Song](#) — *ABC* (16 March)

Popular American sitcom [How I Met Your Mother](#) has been caught not once, but twice using a song composed by little-known Australian metal band [TONK](#) for scenes in strip clubs, without asking for the band's permission. The Canberra-based band were caught by surprise when fans posted the news on their official Facebook page, and have since contacted the show and received a substantial payout, much more than if the song had been licensed legally!

SPORT: [Swimmer Ian Thorpe's Comeback Fails](#) — *BBC* (18 March)

Legendary Australian swimmer [Ian Thorpe](#), who won 5 Olympic gold medals at the Sydney 2000 and Athens 2004 Olympics, recently announced a comeback to the world of competitive swimming, with the aim of qualifying for the London 2012 Olympic Games. However, he failed to qualify in the Australian national trials and so will not be able to compete, but says he will keep trying in the future!



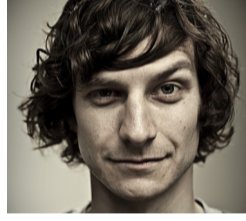
TRAVEL: [Tourism Australia targets China's Secondary Cities](#) — *BBC* (12 March)

[Tourism Australia](#) has recently announced that it will begin to increase promotion of Australia as a tourist destination to citizens of second-tier cities such as Hangzhou, Shenzhen, and Tianjin, as research has found that Australia is perceived as an aspirational "must-see" destination for the emerging Chinese middle class. China is Australia's fastest-growing tourism market, with the [Sydney Opera House](#) and the [Great Barrier Reef](#) the most popular attractions.

Culture Watch

Artist of the Month — [Gotye](#)

Gotye is a contemporary Australian singer-songwriter who has recently experienced massive success both domestically and internationally, largely due to the popularity of his 2011 song ["Somebody That I Used To Know"](#) - which was a huge hit in Australia, the UK, and the USA, and topped the 2011 edition of the popular and prestigious [Triple J Hottest 100](#) music poll. Previously, Gotye had only been well-known in the Australian music industry, with other notable songs including "Eyes Wide Open", "Heart's a Mess", and "Learnalilgivananlovin". Gotye was born in Belgium but moved to Australia when he was two years old, meaning that he is fluent in both English and Flemish!

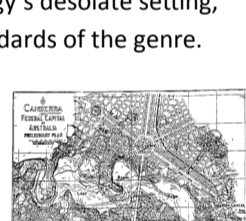


Movie of the Month — [Mad Max \(1979\)](#)

Mad Max and its two sequels, [Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior](#) and [Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome](#), formed an unexpectedly successful and immensely [influential](#) trilogy of post-apocalyptic action movies that paved the way for the global reception of [Australian New Wave](#) cinema and set the films' star, [Mel Gibson](#), on the path to Hollywood stardom. The movie is set in a dystopian Australian future where oil has almost run out and society has gradually broken down, and gangs of leather-wearing motorcycle-riding gangs terrorise settlements in search of fuel and supplies. Mel Gibson plays Max Rockatansky, the film's protagonist, who is on a quest to avenge the murder of his family. The trilogy's desolate setting, crazy vehicles, colourful characters, and leather fashion became standards of the genre.

History of the Month — [A Capital City That Doesn't Exist!](#)

Most countries' capital cities have played an important part in their histories or serve as major centres of business or trade, but because of historical bickering Australia is very different in this regard! On 12 March 1913, Canberra was established as the capital city of Australia—without even having been built! Following the [Federation of Australia](#) in 1901, which created Australia as an independent country, there was intense competition between Sydney and Melbourne to become the national capital. This argument was resolved with the compromise solution that a new city would be built in-between Sydney and Melbourne to serve as the capital. Thus Canberra is also unusual for an Australian city in the sense that it is entirely planned, with its design being undertaken by American architect [Water Burley Griffin](#) after he won an international competition.



Quote of the Month — [Bob Hawke, Former Prime Minister \(1983\)](#)

'Any boss who sacks a worker for not turning up today is a bum.'

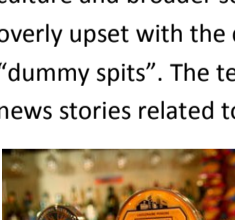
Bob Hawke became [Prime Minister](#) on 11 March 1983, and continued to serve in this role until 20 December 1991, becoming Australia's third longest-serving Prime Minister. Hawke was known for his ability to connect with and endear himself to common people; notably, whilst studying at Oxford University in 1953, he entered the [Guinness Book of World Records](#) for setting a world record time of 11 seconds for drinking a "yard glass" of beer (1.4 litres)! The quote above was said following the historic victory of the Royal Perth Yacht Club's *Australia II* yacht in the 1983 [America's Cup](#) yacht race, which ended the record 132-year winning streak of the New York Yacht Club. This event is a great source of national pride for Australians, who are fiercely proud of their small country's impressive success in the international sporting arena and ability to beat the odds and win as ["underdogs"](#). Hawke's quote encouraging Australians to spend the night out celebrating the victory rather than going to bed early to get up for work the next day (as indeed Hawke himself got rather drunk that night!) became famous as representative of his down-to-earth style. He is also known for introducing (with his [Treasurer](#), and future Prime Minister, [Paul Keating](#)) a raft of [economic reforms](#) such as financial deregulation and floating the Australian Dollar.



Language

Australian Saying of the Month — "Spit The Dummy"

To "spit the dummy" is to engage in a sudden and usually quite public display of anger or frustration; to lose one's temper and use obscenities, a heated tone of voice, and/or overly-exaggerated gestures to vent one's disapproval of a state of affairs. The noun is a "dummy spit". This saying is typically used in reference to an adult, with the implication that their behaviour is childish and an unreasonable reaction to the situation. The saying arises from a comparison with a baby spitting out its "dummy" (also known as a "pacifier") during a tantrum and refusing to be reasoned with. Given the strong value placed on sportsmanship in Australian sporting culture and broader society, the term is frequently associated with sportspeople who get overly upset with the decisions of umpires or referees; see [this](#) collection of famous sporting "dummy spits". The term is also used frequently by newspapers to make bad puns about news stories related to young children; see news articles [here](#) and [here](#).



Australian Slang of the Month

- **"Shout" (verb, noun):** used as a verb this means to pay for someone else, usually for a coffee, a round of beers, or maybe even a meal. Used as a noun, it somewhat awkwardly refers to that which you are paying for in this situation. E.g. "I'll *shout* you this one!" or "It's my *shout*!".
- **"Stoked" (adjective):** if you are 'stoked' then you are very pleased with the results of a some prior action or situation or are very much looking forward to something happening in the future. E.g. "I'm so *stoked* for my new job!".
- **"Stickybeak" (verb, noun):** 'to stickybeak' is to attempt to find out more about or become involved in other people's matters which are of no concern to you, or to go and have a look at an incident or situation which you are not directly involved in. A 'stickybeak' is a person who likes to get involved in others people's business. E.g. "I don't mean to be a *stickybeak*, but you didn't look so *stoked* when I offered to *shout* you a beer?".



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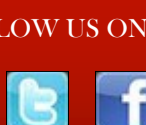
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