

Welcome to the fourth issue of ACYA's monthly AustraliaBites, designed to give Chinese and Australian students a unique insight into Australian society and culture. If you missed them, click [here](#) for previous issues. If you have any questions, suggestions, or contributions to AustraliaBites, please send an email to neil.thomas@acya.org.au



Media Watch

POLITICS: [Ruling Labor Party In A Mess — Economist \(11 May\)](#)

Facing an uphill battle to be re-elected next year, [Prime Minister](#) and [Labor Party](#) leader [Julia Gillard](#) was hoping that a generous surplus Budget would lift her chances, but recent scandals involving Labor MP [Craig Thomson](#) (right), charged with abusing [Union](#) funds to pay for escort services, and [Parliamentary Speaker Peter Slipper](#), who is being sued by an ex-staffer for sexual harassment, have threatened to break apart her [minority government](#) and dash her hopes for another term.



ECONOMICS: [National Budget Set to Return to Surplus in 2013 — BBC \(8 May\)](#)

[Australian Treasurer Wayne Swan](#) has announced that after four years of running a deficit, Australia's [Federal Budget](#) will return to surplus in 2013. In what is widely seen as a political Budget aimed at helping Labor's slim 2013 re-election hopes, Swan has cut military spending, reneged on a corporate tax cut, and delayed an increase in foreign aid in favour of providing increased payments to low-income households and tax-breaks for small businesses.

SOCIETY: [Uproar as Group of Doctors Say Heterosexual Marriage Better for Children — ABC \(14 May\)](#)

The [Senate](#) inquiry into same-sex marriage has received a submission from Doctors For The Family arguing that children in same-sex households are worse off. The [Australian Medical Association](#) has stated that medical research says there is actually no difference.

"No evidence children better off in mother-father family"

THE ARTS: [Children's Band The Wiggles Change Line-Up — Daily Telegraph \(17 May\)](#)

Phenomenally popular Australian children's band [The Wiggles](#) have announced that three of the four founding members will retire at the end of the year, to be replaced by a new generation of band members. The Wiggles started performing in 1991 and since then, along with characters such as [Captain Feathersword](#) and [Dorothy the Dinosaur](#), have built an enormous worldwide following and a commercial empire of children's entertainment products.

SPORT: [Australian Golfer Hits World Record Score — ABC \(18 May\)](#)

Minor-league Australian golfer Rhein Gibson has carded a world-record 55 score for a round of golf on the River Oaks Golf Club in Oklahoma, which was a 16 under-par score for the course. It is the second time ever that a 55 score has been recorded, but this is the first time following the implementation of the current, stricter qualifying rules for official records.



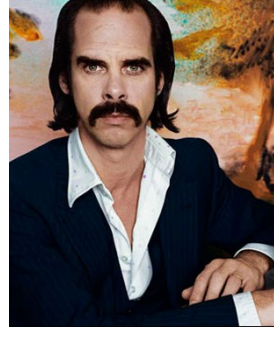
TRAVEL: [Chinese Tourists Key to Tourist Industry — Sydney Morning Herald \(19 May\)](#)

The tropical Queensland tourist town of [Cairns](#), a gateway to the [Great Barrier Reef](#) that is extremely popular with domestic tourists but isolated from the main flight routes of most international tourists, is seeking to tap into the potentially huge Chinese tourist market by opening up direct flights to and from mainland China, adding yet another destination to the ever-increasing availability of direct connections between Australia and China.

Culture Watch

Artist of the Month—[Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds](#)

Fronted by the flamboyant and multi-talented [Nick Cave](#), since forming in 1983 this critically-acclaimed Australian alternative rock band have forged a unique niche and an avid following in both the Australian and international music scenes. Their back catalogue is extensive and ranges from hard garage-rock to lush-orchestral singer-songwriter pieces, but their most well-known song is the macabre ["Where The Wild Roses Grow"](#), a collaboration with fellow Australian music legend [Kylie Minogue](#) taken from their aptly named "Murder Ballads" album.



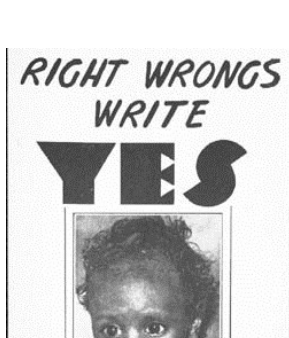
Movie of the Month—[The Castle](#)

The Castle is a 1997 Australian comedy based around the blue-collar Kerrigan family, whose Melbourne home is threatened by developers who want to compulsorily acquire it to expand the neighbouring Melbourne Airport, forcing the Kerrigans to go to court to defend their quintessential Australian lifestyle. *The Castle's* funny and warm-hearted portrayal of Australian suburban life has won it a unique place in Australian culture, as well as providing endless entertainment for Australian law students due to its case references and the character of [Dennis Denuto](#), a bumbling lawyer who attempts to argue that the Kerrigans' eviction is against the "vibe" of the [Australian Constitution](#).



History of the Month—[Referendum on Aboriginal Australians](#)

A referendum on 27 May 1967 approved with a 91% majority two proposed amendments to remove discriminatory sections from the [Australian Constitution](#) regarding [Aboriginal Australians](#); it allowed for Aboriginal Australians to be counted in official census data, and allowed the Federal Government to enact laws relating specifically to Aboriginal Australians. This referendum was a symbolic watershed in the Aboriginal rights movement in Australia, and gave impetus to future reforms such as achieving equal pay, ending segregation, [native title](#) land rights, and prompting Australian governments to implement policies to address the chronic disparities in living conditions faced by Aboriginal Australians.



Quote of the Month—[John Gorton, 19th Prime Minister](#)

Born: 9 September, 1911 Died: 19 May, 2002

"Well, that is not a vote of confidence, so the party will have to elect a new leader."

Spoken on 10 March 1971 after a [Liberal Party](#) vote-of-confidence on Gorton's leadership resulted in a tied vote. With these words Gorton became unique in effectively 'voting' himself out of office, voluntarily relinquishing the Prime Ministership and forcing another leadership ballot.

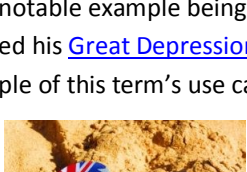


John Gorton was a Liberal Party politician who became Prime Minister of Australia in January 1968 following the mysterious disappearance of then-Prime Minister [Harold Holt](#), who went missing whilst swimming at Cheviot Beach and is presumed to have drowned. Gorton was known for serving as a fighter pilot in the [Pacific Theatre of WWII](#), during which time a crash landing left him with permanent facial injuries, his down-to-earth '[larrikin](#)' nature and taste for drinking and gambling, and his very poor public speaking abilities. Following Gorton's decision to end his leadership, [William McMahon](#) became the 20th Prime Minister of Australia but was soon defeated by [Gough Whitlam](#) of the [Australian Labor Party](#) at the 1972 election.

Language

Australian Saying of the Month — "Tall Poppy Syndrome"

It is colloquially accepted that Australian society is very prone to Tall Poppy Syndrome, which refers to the tendency to resent and criticise meritoriously successful people. The term especially refers to criticism of people whose talents or achievements set them apart as more accomplished than those who are criticising them, and is typically seen with regards to those who are wealthy and/or are seen to exercise a great deal of power, often being linked to the 'politics of envy'. The saying derives originally from an [ancient Greek tale](#) where the cutting of the tallest poppy flowers in a field symbolised a message to execute the most eminent citizens. References to it have appeared in Australian society since the mid-19th century, a notable example being in 1931 when the then New South Wales Premier [Jack Lang](#) promoted his [Great Depression](#) policies as "cutting the heads off tall poppies". A more recent example of this term's use can be seen in [this news article](#) about [Rupert Murdoch](#).



Australian Slang of the Month

- **"Thongs"** (noun): in Australia 'thongs' are a type of footwear with a thin rubber sole with two straps running from the sides of the foot to the gap between the big toe and its neighbour. E.g. "I need to buy a new pair of thongs". WARNING: in the UK and the USA a 'thong' refers to a [G-string!](#)



- **"Truckie"** (noun): a 'truckie' is someone who drives a truck for a living, especially the enormous semi-trailers that travel long-distances between cities through the [Outback](#). 'Truckies' are proud of their work and have a unique lifestyle and subculture. E.g. "My cousin Dave is a truckie".



- **"True Blue"** (adjective): if something is 'true blue' then it is either very patriotically Australian, or it is truthful, honest, or the real deal. This is very unique Australian vernacular and has been idolized in the [John Williamson song of the same name](#). E.g. "That truckie over there wearing the thongs could not be more of a true blue Aussie!", or "I hear what you're saying but I still don't think it's true blue".

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

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