

# Podcast 106 – The Macquarie Dictionary

Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia,  
with Rob McCormack

*Podcast Number 106 – The Macquarie Dictionary*

<http://traffic.libsyn.com/slowenglish/podcast106.mp3>

Hi,

In Australia we speak standard English. There are however some minor differences in the English spoken by Australians, compared to other English speakers. These differences have come from our unique history as a nation of migrants and also from the many languages of the indigenous people of Australia, whose history goes back tens of thousands of years in Australia. As a result, there are some English words and phrases which you will hear only in Australia.

We have developed a dictionary here which includes, not only all the words of standard English, but also all those unique words and phrases used by Australians. It is our national dictionary and is called The Macquarie Dictionary, the dictionary of Australian English. In this podcast, I would like to tell you a little about it.



The sixth edition of The Macquarie Dictionary (Complete and Concise versions). This version has now been updated in the 7th Edition, 2017.

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The Macquarie Dictionary was first published in 1981. The development of a dictionary of Australian English first started around 1970.

<http://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/macquarie-dictionary>

It started as a project lead by Professor Arthur Delbridge at Macquarie University in Sydney. His team aimed to produce a full dictionary of English, but one which also included all those special and unique words which only Australians used. Such a dictionary did not exist at the time. One of the team members was a research assistant named Susan Butler. She remained with the team over the years and eventually became

the editor, from 2005 until 2018, when she retired after 48 years working on the dictionary.

The team started by using the list of English words from the 1971 Encyclopedic World Dictionary published by the British company Hamlyn. Firstly, they removed some words not relevant to Australian English. Then they redefined some words which had a slightly different meaning in Australia and then began adding new words which were distinctly Australian. They found these words in Australian books, in radio and television broadcasts and by asking Australians to send them lists of Australian words. They also asked specialists in areas such as chemistry, music, education, languages and many others, to assist in reviewing and providing specialist words which were uniquely Australian. The dictionary also included words which were only used in a certain area or states of Australia, such as 'middy', which is the name of a glass of beer, used in Perth and Sydney.

After helping to get the project started, their first publisher then decided not to proceed. Luckily, an Australian book publisher and business man, Kevin Weldon, agreed to publish the dictionary. He established a company called Macquarie Library Pty Ltd which publishes the dictionary. Initially, they were hoping that they could sell 50,000 copies in their first year. However, the book was very well accepted by Australians and they sold 50,000 copies in their first 3 months of publication. So right from the start, the dictionary was a success. Following that success, other variants of the dictionary were published in order to meet the different needs of its users. These included the Compact Macquarie (the smallest version), the Concise Macquarie (a bigger version) and also a thesaurus.

The Macquarie Thesaurus is something I have used a lot in my career as a teacher, in my university studies later in life, and also as a writer. I bought my copy in the mid-1980s and I can remember my great joy at exploring the book looking for

all those Australian slang terms with which I was familiar. I was always able to find the word in the Macquarie Thesaurus, along with a whole list of synonyms which I could use as a replacement.

Nowadays you can buy a range of Macquarie Dictionary books as well as the complete dictionary. For example, as well as the 3 hardback dictionaries (Compact, Concise and the complete dictionary itself), you can buy paperback versions, little versions with fewer entries, spelling workbooks for school students and budget versions of the dictionary if low price is important.

[https://www.macquariedictionary.com.au/shop/home/?category\\_selection=publications#publications](https://www.macquariedictionary.com.au/shop/home/?category_selection=publications#publications)

Of course, languages change over time, with new words and phrases coming into use. The Macquarie Dictionary has had several major updates in the form of new Editions. It is now up to the 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, which came out in 2017.

You can also use the Macquarie Dictionary Online. It's cheaper than buying a hard copy version and it gets updated every six months.

<https://www.macquariedictionary.com.au/>

I am not surprised that the Macquarie Dictionary has been successful in Australia. It's a wonderful resource for anyone who has an interest in Australian English. It's not only great for improving your word knowledge and usage, but importantly the Macquarie Dictionary helps to explain, through documenting and recording our Australian English, exactly who we are as Australians.

If you have a question or a comment to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at [rob@slowenglish.info](mailto:rob@slowenglish.info). I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about

yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

## Podcast 106 Quiz - Did you understand the podcast?

You can take the quiz as many times as you like.

[Start quiz](#)

### Vocabulary

aimed = when you try to reach a goal or a target

as a result = (here) therefore

assist = help

broadcasts = (here) a program or show on the radio or television

budget = (here) a cheaper version or example

career = the time from when you start your job to when you finish your job

certain = (here) particular

company = a group of people working together in business

compared = when you decide if something is better, worse or just different to something else

copies = (here) the number of things that have copied or made

copy = (here) an example of a book or other publication

differences = when two things are not the same, they have differences

distinctly = a feature that belongs to a person or thing or group

documenting = to write something down so others can read it

editor = a person who checks that a book is correct in all aspects, who decides what will be included

entries = the things in a list

established = started

eventually = finally, after a period of time

exist = when something is there to be seen

explain = to tell about something

familiar = when you have seen something before or know about it already

goes back = (here) into the past

hardback = a book with a hard cover

history = what has happened in the past

includes = (here) when things or people are put together

indigenous people = the people who lived in Australia before European settlement (and they still live in Australia today)

migrants = people who go to live in another country, never to return

minor = (here) small

national = when it applies or belongs to the whole country or nation.

not relevant = when something does not apply, is not important, or has no meaning for you

paperback = a book with a soft paper cover

phrases = a few words together

proceed = to go ahead, to continue

project = when you have a job to do which has a start and a finish

providing = giving

publication = the book which is published

published = when a book is copied many times and given or sold to the public

publisher = the person or company who organises to have a book copied many times and sold to the public

range = a lot of different things from which you can choose

recording = (here) to write things down so other can read it

redefined = when you change the meaning of a word or a concept

remained = stayed

removed = taken away

research assistant = a person who helps other people who are doing research, finding things out

resource = something you can use to help you do a job

retired = your career has finished and you do not work in a job anymore

reviewing = to look at something to see if it is correct or to improve it

slang = a word made up by someone and with a special meaning

slightly = a small amount

special = when something is different and important

specialists = people who know a lot about one subject or topic

standard = something common, used by everyone

success = when things are going well, or you reach your goal or target

synonyms = words with the same meaning as another word

thesaurus = a special type of dictionary which gives other words with the same meaning (synonyms)

unique = there are no others like it

updates = the changes you make to improve something

usage = how you use something

variant = an example of something, but with some changes

version = an example of something, but with some changes

well accepted = people liked the product or thing

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