Australian Rhyming Slang ( Australians)

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Abstract

Originally made popular by the quick-witted and waggish Cockneys in London’s East End, rhyming slang spread to other parts of the world and in particular to Australia. Australians with their strong English background and taste for fun and irreverence, readily adopted rhyming slang and made it a part of their culture. Most rhyming slang words deal with everyday matters and despite a preoccupation with drinking, gambling, body parts and formication, the language is essentially good natured.

Many rhyming slang words are euphemisms-Bengal Lancer (cancer), Edgar Britt (shit), Khyber Pass (arse). Some imported words were used during wars and the depression and fell into disuse. Other are very recent and are often based on high-profile politicians, sportsmen and film and medial identities.

Rhyming slang has its rules. It consists of two or more words the last of which rhymes with the word replaced. Where applicable, the shedding of the second or rhyming word is encouraged.

What Is It ?

A writer in the “Bulletin” of January 18, 1902, gives the following example:

Me mother’s away, as I was swiftly flowing up the field of wheat in the bread-and-jam, a heavenly plan with a big charming mottle of O-my-dear sticking out of his sky-rocket fancy sashed the girl-abductor on his bundle-of-socks with it cos he wouldn’t let him have a virgin-bride for nothing.

The other day as I was going up the street in a tram a man with a big bottle of beer sticking out of his pocket bashed the conductor over the head (i. e. think-box) with it (i. e. the bottle) because hi wouldn’t let him have a ride for nothing.

It is a comment that rhyming slang was “twenty years old at least” in Australia, which would take us back to the 1880s. However, in 1898, a writer points out:

The Cockney rhyming slang is popular in Australia and the lion comiques and lydies of the variety stage are helping to make the hold stronger.
The following example were added to show the type of rhymes used; Arty Rolla, a collar; mince pies, eyes; cheese and kisses, the missus; Charlie Prescott, waistcoat; pot and pan, old man; tiddley wink, a drink; lamb's fry, tie; plates o'meat, feet. These example, or the greater percentage of them, are not Australian. What authentic rhyming slang there is in this part of the world, will usually be found in a disguised form. Most rhyming slang words deal with everyday matters and despite a preoccupation with drinking, gambling, body parts and forniation, the language is essentially good natured.

A disguise is dropped over many indigenous expressions that were originally rhyming slang. Knock-me denotes a billy, from the rhyme knock-me-silly; poddy is two-and-six, from poddy calf, as a rhyme on half-a-casar; maggies denotes women's drawers by clipping from Maggie Moores; Robertson means profit, by extraction from the name of the Melbourne firm of Robertson and Moffat; do a Botany, to run away, from a rhyme on Botany Bay; Steele Rudds, potatoes, from a rhyme on "spuds"; don't be auntie! meaning don't be silly! has travelled even further—it has come by transference from the English rhyming slang don't be Unlike Willie; Victor Trumper, a cigarette butt (by rhyme on the Australianism bumper).

A few examples are more complex than this. Listening to some deft words by a floor flogger (a drink steward) in a Sydney club, who has taken his order to the bar: "Three lilies new, Paterson Laing old, a oncer rogans the kembla". Translated, this means "three schooners of new beer, two schooners of old beer, £1 given to buy them, given me the change in shillings". This translation is achieved by knowing that a schooner of beer is referred to in rhyming slang as a lily of Laguna and is then cut to lily; a duce, i.e. two, is formed on the name of a Sydney firm Paterson, Laing and Bruce, which is then cut to Paterson Laing (sometimes to Paterson alone); a oncer is £1, although this, of course, is not rhyming slang; rogan is a shilling, extracted from the English rhyming slang rogue and villain, and Kembla means change, extracted from Kembla Grange, the racecourse at Wollongong, N. S. W.

Another good example is melbourne with the meaning of "back". This is how it works out: Melbourne is short for Melbourne Grammer, the school; hammer and tack, which is a rhyme for back. Unfortunately, a great deal of rhyming slang fails to reach these levels. In the round-up of rhyming terms given below, only a few of the items are worthy of attention, they are used exactly for high school students. Because I quizzed them about how they know at Waracknabeal college. Aug. in '98.

I found that they use them exactly in daily life. The most used expressions are as follows.

- dead horse = sauce
- dog's eye = meat pie
- bag of fruit = suit
- East and West = vest
- four by twos = shoes
- tit for tat = hat
- cry and laugh = scarf
- dead wowsers = trousers
fiddles and flutes □ boots
keys and locks □ socks
Joe Blake □ snake
Joe Rees □ bees
Joe Marks □ sharks
a macaroni □ pony
chock and log □ dog
apple sauce □ horse
Dad and Mum □ rum
Angus Murray □ curry
Gypsie Lee □ tea
Huckleberry Finn □ gin
kerb and gutter □ butter
loop the loop □ soup
Mother Machree □ tea
soft as silk □ milk
squatter’s daughter □ water
Tom and Sam □ jam
Uncle Ned □ bread
stop thief □ beef
Betty Grable □ table
Teddy bear □ chair
bat and ball □ hall

The rhyming slang word for road id “frog and toad.” Simply drop the rhyming word “toad” and say “I’m off down the frog.” means I go down the road. And I met “trouble and strife”. means I met my wife.
Examples:

after darks □ sharks
alone □ Pat M alone, I’m on my Pat tonight.
any good? □ any plum pud?
arms □ Warwick Farms, usually refers to lack of underarm hygiene. Someone may be a bit woopy (smelly) or Long Jetty (sweaty) under the Warwicks. A Sydney racecourse.
arse (bum) □ Khyber luck (you arsey bastard); job dismissal; or sexual achievement for one to tell another to stick up your Khyber indicates a distinct lack of good will between the two.
back □ hammer and tack (hammer), to be on someone’s hammer is to pursue that person by keeping on his track or figuratively, “back”. Also used to indicate a sudden lack of employment. “I got the hammer”
balls (testicles)  □ orchestra stalls
                Niagara Falls
town halls
bank  □ J. Arthur Rank, used literally-I’m going to the J. Arthur’ or
      figuratively by punters.
bar  □ near and far, I’ll meet you in the near and far.
barber  □ Sydney Harbour
bath (tub)  □ Bib and Bub
bed  □ roses red (roses)
      Bill and Ted
      Roberta Flack =sack Roberta
beer  □ Ray Steher, Australian rugby player.
      Terry Dear, Australian radio personality.
belly  □ Ned Kelly, Notorious Australian bush ranger.
bet (to have a)  □ cast a net
bill (account)  □ Jack and Jill, What we get at the end of a restaurant meal.
blonde  □ magic wand, as in good sort.
bog (defecate)  □ hollow log
      One takes a bog as opposed to leaving it.
booze  □ Laperouse (Larpa)
      To be, or plan to be on the Larpa suggests rather more than a
      quiet social drink.
      Sydney suburb.
boss  □ pitch and toss
      Of shearing shed origins but now used to describe authority in
      the workplace.
bowl (cricket)  □ Coca-Cola
bowlers (lawn)  □ rock and rollers
      A somewhat facetious but not unkind term for the mostly elderly
      folk who play lawn bowls.
brandy  □ Fine and Dandy
      Champion australian racehorse.
bread  □ lump of lead
broke  □ hearts of oak
      Often describes lack of success at the racetrack.
brolly (umbrella)  □ Aunt M olly
bum  □ deaf and dumb
butter  □ kerb and gutter
cab (taxi)  □ Sandy M cNabb
can (beer)  □ Neville Wran
      NSW premier 1976-1986
cancer  □ Bengal Lancer
      civil answer
      Spanish dancer
      Jimmy Dancer
cash
— sausage and mash
  Oscar Asche
  Aussie actor

change
— Kembla Grange
  Money, Keep the Kembla.
  A racetrack south of Sydney.

cheque
— goose’s neck
  Gregory Peck
  nervous wreck

chilly
— Picadilly

chunder
— up and under
  The chunder or technicolour yawn, has become an Australian institution.
  Chunders always contain carrot fragments even when none have recently been eaten.

clock
— dickory dock

cobber (mate)
— thief and robber

cock (penis)
— eight day clock
  The popular clock which lasted eight days when fully wound
  somehow contrasts with the average male appendage.

cold
— soldiers bold (soldiers)

cook
— babbling brook
  Army and outback cooks not noted for their culinary skills.

cop (policeman)
— John Hop

Grap (shit)
— Andy Capp

crock (unwell)
— butcher’s hook
  “I’m feeling a bit butchers.” Some times used for look as in “Have a butchers at this.”

cunt
— Ballina Punt
  When one refers to another as a Ballina there is obviously a serious level of animosity between the two. “Some prefer All quiet on the Western Front”

curry
— Arthur Murray
  When Indian restaurants were changing Australian’s eating habits, Arthur Murray was teaching us to dance.

dance
— Jack Palance
  US film actor.

daughter
— ten furlongs
  = mile and a quarter

dole
— rock and roll
  The curious custom of being paid for not working.
  “He’s on the rock and roll.”

dollar
— Oxford scholar
  Rhodes scholar

dope (drug)
— Bob Hope
  A broad term for all illegal drugs.
double (racing) □ froth and bubble
drink □ cuff link
drum (racing tip) □ deaf and dumb
drunk □ elephant's trunk
Being “elephants” is more socially acceptable than being drunk.
Wally the monk (molly the monk)
dunny □ Gene Tunny
The classic Australian outhouse.
US heavyweight boxer.
ears □ ginger beers
errection □ State election
eyes □ mince pies
face □ Martin Place
boat race
fart □ horse and cart
“Who horse and catred?”
fat (erection) □ Larrikin’s hat
“I've got half a larrikan.”
feet □ Plates of meat
ferry □ Chuck Berry
As seen on sydney Harbour.
finger □ onkaparinga
Engagements are formalised by placing the Frank Thring on the
Onkaparinga.
South Australian Blanket manufacture.
flowers □ Cobar showers
flu □ Dan McGrew
influenza
flush (poker) □ barmaid’s blush
food □ Rodney Rude
Australian comedian.
fork □ Duke of York
fridge □ Brooklyn Bridge
(Refrigerator)
fuck □ Donald Duck (Donald)
“Did you get a Donald?”
full (drunk) □ Roy Bull
“I got a bit Roy Bull last night”
Rugby league player.
function □ Bondi Junction
Sydney’s best known suburb.
gay (homosexual) □ Doris Day
Hollywood actor.
gin □ Vara Lynn (vera)
Wartime English singer
Huckleberry Finn

gin and water  □ mile-and-a-quarter
girl  □ twist and twirl
glass (beer)  □ forward pass
gloves  □ turtle doves
Greek  □ bubble and squeak

Werris Creek
Can be used for leak-urinate.
grouse (good)  □ Mickey Mouse
In Aussi-speak, grouse means good and extra grouse means very good.
Whilst grouse is rarely used today, Mickey Mouse remains.
A Mickey Mouse result is a good result, although it can sometimes mean inferior quality □ “a Mickey Mouse watch.”
guts  □ comic cuts (comics)
He hit him in the comics.

hair  □ Fred Astair
American actor/dancer born Fredrick Austerlize (1899–1987)

hands  □ German bands
harlot  □ apple charlotte
hat  □ tit for tat
head  □ Kelly Ned
heart  □ jam tart

raspberry tart

horn (erection)  □ early morn
Most erections occur in the early morn.
Sarah Vaughan (Sarah), US jazz singer.
horses (races)  □ tomato sauces

idiot  □ Beecham’s Pill
jew  □ four by two (fourby)

Usually spoken about Jewish people not to them.

jewellery  □ tom foolery (tom)

keg (beer)  □ Jersey Flegg
Australian rugby league player.
kids  □ billy Lids (billys)

knackers (balls)  □ Jatz Crackers
An Aussie biscuit.
knees  □ gum trees

Gypsie Rose Lee (s)
lair (a dandy)  □ teddy bear
One, who by showy dress or ostentatious manner, achieves general contempt.

lay  □ Johnny Ray
US singer.

leak (urinate)  □ Werris Creek
To have a Werris is classic Australian rhyming slang for urinating.

legs
- bacon and eggs
- fried eggs, Ginger M eggs.

lie
- pork pie
- Politicians are good at telling porkies.

lift (car ride)
- M alcom Clift (Malcolm)
- Australian rugby league player and coach.

look
- Captain Cook (captain)
- The original Cockney for “look” was “butchers hook.”
- Now, have a captain at this is the common term.

matches
- Jack Scratches

mate
- China plate (China)
- The common form is China which is so often abbreviated that most are unaware that plate is attached.
- Used widely by Australian males even though no real evidence of mateship exists.

meal
- Leonard Teal
- Australian actor.

milk
- Acker Bilk (Acker)
- English Jazz musician

missus
- cheese and kisses (cheese)
- She who must be obeyed.

money
- Bugs Bunny
- bread and honey

mouth
- north and south
- Pronounced “norf an souf.”

nod
- Murray cod
- Refers to betting on credit or “on the nod.”
- An Australian inland river fish.

nose
- I suppose
- Queensland shearing shed origins where it applied to a sheep’s nose.

on credit
- on the Murray cod

party
- gay and hearty
- “We’re having a gay and hearty next week.”

pecker (penis)
- Boris Becker
- A German tennis player of some note.

pee
- you and me
- “I’m going for a you and me.”

perve
- optic nerve
- The careful study of attractive young ladies.
- “Have an optiv at that ! ”

pictures
- flea and itches
- Classic 1930’s RS. People caught the bread and jam (tram) to the flea and itches.
- The term was very approoriate to many of the picture theatres of
the time.
piddle
  □ Nelson Riddle
piano
  □ goanna
pie (meat)
  □ dog’s eye
piles
  □ farmer Giles
plate
  □ Reg Date
    Australian soccer player.
piss
  □ hit and miss
    This is the most popular term.
    angel’s kiss
    Johnny Bliss (Johnny)
    Australian rugby league footballer.
    snake’s hiss
    Shirley Bliss (Shirley)
    Ex Miss Australia.
pissed
  □ Adrian Quist (Adrian)
    To some, being Mozart, Brahms, or Schindlers, more accurately
    describes the state of inebriation. Most RS. users however prefer
    to be a bit Adrian.
    Mozart and Liszt
    An unlikely alliance of the 18th century Austrian composer
    Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and 19th century Hungarian Franz
    Liszt.
    Schindler’s List
    A Hollywood movie based on Thomas Keneally’s book,
    Schindler’s Ark.
pocket
  □ sky rocket
poof (homosexual)
  □ horse’s hoof
poofter
  □ wooly wofter
pom (pomme)
  □ to and from
poor
  □ Archie Moore
    Describes a temporary shortage of funds rather than a permanent
    state of poverty.
    US heavyweight boxer.
port (wine)
  □ Goldsborough M ort
    Early sydney trading company.
price
  □ curry and rice
    When asking the price of an item, Australians often use the term
    “emmachist ? ”
pub (hotel)
  □ rubbity dub (rubbity)
pull
  □ Roy bull
    Australian rugby league player.
punch
  □ cut lunch
purse
  □ grey nurse
queen (homosexual)
  □ grey nurse
rain  □ Frankie Laine
       US singer

razor  □ Dawn Fraser
       Champion Australian swimmer.

rent  □ Duke of Kent

ring  □ Frank Thring
       Australian actor.

river  □ Shake and shiver

road  □ frog and toad
       To hit the frog is one of the most popular of all RS phrases.

root  □ Angus & Coote
       The getting of a downtown jeweller was long a sexual boast of young Sydney men.
       A Sydney jewellery firm.
       Also Ron Coote, Australian rugby league player.

rum  □ Dad Mum

sack (bed)  □ hammer and tack

sauce (tomato)  □ dead horse

set  □ each way bet

sex  □ Vincents and Bex
       Old Aussie headache powder.

schooner (beef)  □ Lilly of laguna (Lilly)

scotch (whisky)  □ Gordon & Gotch

scotch & water  □ Gordon and ten
       Obtained from Gordon & Gotch
       scotch and ten (furlongs) = mile
       and a quarter = water

shakes  □ Joe Blakes
       Usually the aftermath of a serious drinking session.
       = ducks and drakes

shark  □ Noah’s (Noah)

sharks  □ after darks

shave  □ Dad and Dave

sheep  □ willow the weep

sheila (woman)  □ Charlie Wheeler
       Women today prefer not to be called sheilas or charlies.

shirt  □ Ernie and Bert

sister  □ blood and blister

shit  □ Edgar Britt
       Refers to the function rather than the end-product. One goes for an Edgar. Famous Aussie jocker.
       Jimmy Britt (boxer).
       Hard hit

shits  □ tom tits
       Emotional rather than physical. One gives another the tom tits.
shivers  □  Hawkesbury Rivers
      A convenient rhyme despite the fact that there is only one
      Hawkesbury River.
      A river north of Sydney.

shoes  □  Basin Street Blues

short (of money)  □  Holmes a Court
      Being shorts of money was an experience unknown to the late
      Australian business tycoon, Robert Holmes a Court.

shout (bar)  □  Wally Grout
      When its your Wally its your turn to buy the next round of drinks.
      Aussie Test cricketer of the 60's.

shower  □  fairy bower.

sick  □  Tom and Dick

silly  □  Uncle Willy
      Don't be Uncle Willy.

sin  □  Vickers Gin

sister  □  skin and blister

six (cricket)  □  Tom Mix

skin  □  thick and thin

slang  □  Jack Lang
      Ex Premier of NSW

sleep  □  Bo Peep

smoke  □  laugh and joke

snake  □  Joe Blake

snooze  □  Tom Cruise
      Hollywood actor.

soap  □  Cape of Good Hope

socket (golf)  □  Davy Crockett
      The fear of all golfers.

socks  □  Joe Rocks

soup  □  loop-the-loop

speech  □  Bill Peach
      One may be called upon to make a Bill Peach at the next Bondi
      Junction (function).  Aussie TV personality.

stairs  □  apples and pears

steak  □  off break
      Cricketing term.

story  □  John dory
      What's the JD ?  What's happening ?  an Aussie coastal fish.

suit  □  bag of fruit

sweaty  □  Long Jetty
      A NSW town.

swim  □  Tiger Tim
Sydney □ steak and kidney

taxi □ Joe Maxi

tea □ you and me
   “Let’s have a cup of you and me.”
teeth □ Ted Heath
   English band leader.
   Barrier Reef

telephone □ Al Capone
   This popular term immortalises the Italian-born Chicago crime
   boss who somehow managed to die of natural causes in 1947.
   eau de cologne

thief □ tea leaf
   Applies to those engaged in petty theft rather than serious crime.
tie □ Nazi spy
time □ Harry Lime
   Of the film “Third Man” fame. What’s the Harry Lime?
tip (racing) □ egg flip

tits □ brace and bits
   Some prefer Eartha Kitts or each way bet = set.
titties □ brace and bits
   Some prefer “Earth Kitts” or “each way bet” = set
toes □ these and those
tool (penis) □ April fool
toss (cricket) □ Joe Loss
   English bandleader.
tote □ giddy goat
towel □ Baden Powell
   Founder of the Boy Scouts movement
tram □ bread and jam
trots (harness racing) □ red hots
   Early harness racing was notorious for arranged race results.
   Red hot is slang for crooked.

trousers □ council houses

try (rugby) □ meat pie

tub (bath) □ Bib and Bub
turd □ Henry the Third
   Describes the tangible result of defecation as well as being a
derogatory and very unkind description of another.
turner (cricket) □ bunsen burner
   A cricketing term for a wicket which is taking spin.

uncle □ Simon and Garfunkle

undies □ Reg Grundy’s
(underwear) □ Aussie TV identity.

urinate □ snakes hiss
waiter □ hot potato
Pronounce potato as “potatah” and the sense is maintained.

wanker □ merchant banker
The term wanker was originally used to describe those who were perceived to be regularly engaged in masturbation. Now used in a broader sense to identify those whose behaviour is unusual, unpleasant or generally unacceptable.

wash □ lemon squash

water □ squatter’s daughter

wave (ocean) □ Indian brave

whisky □ gay and frisky

wicket (cricket) □ Wilson Pickett

wide (cricket) □ Frank Hyde
Aussie rugby league player and commentator.

wife □ trouble and strife (trouble)

wine □ Lindsay Kline
Australian cricketer of the 60's

winner □ baked dinner
Punters seek a baked dinner more than they seek a baked dinner.

wog □ Dapto Dog
During WW2, wog was a common and not unkind description of those of Middle Eastern origin. Today it seen as racist and usage is not recommended.

worries □ River Murrays (river)
Usually abbreviated to rivers as in no rivers or no wucking furries.

Yank □ septic tank
A somewhat unfortunate but essentially good natured reference to Americans. An upmarket dunny.

**Conclusion**

Rhyming Slang is a miscellaneous collection of phrases based on words which lend themselves to special treatment. Originally made popular by the quick-witted and waggish Cockneys in London’s East End, rhyming slang spread to other parts of the world and in particular to Australia.

While rhyming slang tended to be used by those who frequented pubs, clubs and racecourses, it also became popular with a broader public particularly when a substitute was required for a more direct and perhaps socially unacceptable word. Most rhyming slang words deal with everyday matters and despite a preoccupation with drinking, gambling, body parts and others.

Rhyming slang has its rules. It consists of two or more words the last of which rhymes with the word replaced. Where applicable, the shedding of the second or rhyming word is encouraged. Even in a daily life, some of them are still in use for kids in Australia. As follows:
< Food and Drink >
  dead horse (tomato sauce), dag's eye (meat pie), Dad and Mum (rum), Angus Murray (curry), Gypsie Lee (tea), Huckleberry Finn (gin), kerb and gutter (butter), loop the loop (soup), Mother Machree (tea), soft as silk (milk), squatter's daughter (water), Tom and Sam (jam), Uncle Ned (bread), stop thief (beef)

< Wear >
  bag of fruit (suit), East and West (vest), four by twos (shoes), tit for tat (hat), cry and laugh (scarf), dead wowsers (trousers), fiddles and flutes (boots), keys and locks (socks)

< Animal >
  Joe Blake (snake), Joe Ree (bees), a macaroni (pony), chock and log (dog), apple sauce (horse)

< Others >
  Betty Grable (table), Teddy bear (chair), bat and ball (hall)

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