
2010-11 Postcards

Postcards from Abroad

3-8-2011

Learning the Local Lingo

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Recommended Citation

Liebrock, Elisabeth, "Learning the Local Lingo" (2011). *2010-11 Postcards*. Article. Submission 15.
https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/intl_postcards_1011/15

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Journals from Deakin University

2011-03-08 Learning the Local Lingo

I was prepared for some cultural adjustment when I arrived in Australia, but I wasn't expecting to need a dictionary! Though English is the native language, there are times when the Aussies speak and I have no idea what they're saying. The accents can certainly muddle my comprehension, but it's their vocabulary that really throws me for a loop. Below is a silly story I wrote to show some of the crazy ways I've heard Aussies express themselves...

It was already two in the arvo, but Gary was just waking up from a restless night. He stumbled down the stairs and into the kitchen where his mate Dave was cooking up some chook.

"You're looking quite feral this morning," Dave laughed. "Are you keen for some late brekky? I'm making some vegemite on toast and rashers. I've got some tomato sauce for the rashers if you like."

"Nah, I don't think I could handle it," Gary replied. "I had some really dodgy spag bol for teal last night and I'm not feeling so hot."

"I bet all the goon you drank didn't help the situation."

Gary rolled his eyes and trudged back to his room to get ready for uni. To his dismay, he'd completely misread his timetable and realized that he only had 20 minutes before class started. He ran back downstairs to beg Dave for a ride to uni since there was no way the bus would get him there on time.

"Sorry mate," Dave said, "but the big smoke is the complete opposite direction for me. I've got to drive my ute to woop woop to pick-up a shipment of kiwi fruit."

"Looks like I'm skipping lectures today," Gary said sadly.

"Cheer up, mate," Dave said while patting Gary on the back. "I've got an extra ticket for the Collinwood/St. Kilda footie match tonight and I'm giving it to you. I'm having a barbie beforehand and I've invited a pommie shelia over to meet you."

"Fair dinkum? That sounds fab. Anything I can do to help out?"

"We need some bread*and some coldies," Dave replied

"Toats. I'll run over to the bottle-o and milkbar and stock up."

It might have been a rough morning, but now Gary was sure that apples she would be.

-----Arvo: afternoon

Mate: friend (used all the time)

Chook: chicken

Feral: disheveled

Keen: very common way of expressing interest or desire. "I'm keen to see that movie."

Brekky: breakfast – even restaurants call it this

Vegemite: concentrated yeast extract. The Aussies love it! I haven't met one who didn't. Personally, I find it tastes like a dirty salt.

Rashers: bacon

Tomato sauce: ketchup – all the Americans have been made fun of for asking for “ketchup”
Dodgy: questionable
Spag Bol: spaghetti bolognaise
Tea: dinner – I asked why it’s called this and no one has any idea
Goon: cheap wine that comes boxed and in a plastic sac, it’s about all uni students can afford
Uni: college - I learned quickly that I cannot say school or college. “School” stops when students leave high school and sometimes high school is called college.
Big smoke: the city
Ute: pick-up truck
Woop woop: a town far from a big city
Kiwi fruit: not just kiwi, you must say kiwi fruit
Footie: Australian rules football is so different than any game I’ve ever seen played. It’s like a combination of basketball, rugby, soccer, and football. Colinwood and St.Kilda are two of the Melbourne based teams
Barbie: BBQ
Fair dinkum: really? Are you serious?
Fab: fabulous. Aussies love to shorten their words
*Bread: for some strange reason Aussies don’t use buns for their burgers or sausages. You just wrap bread around your choice of meat instead...
Coldies: beer
Toats: definitely
Bottle-o: Liquor store
Milkbar: convenience store
Apples she would/will be: It would/will be all right
Enjoy everyone!

-Elisabeth