

Immigration song

Australians, culture, identity



Peter Geyer

What is it to be Australian— or *not* to be?

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Where do you come from?

What corner is your land?

Everybody knows where they come from

Paul Kantner and Grace Slick

Football, meat pies, kangaroos and Holden cars

Holden advertising jingle

People are strange when you're a stranger

Faces seem ugly when you're alone

The Doors

I love the whole 'no worries' mentality that Aussies seem to have. I can't wait to go back.

Eva Mendes

I often wonder if I had been born in another country what my life would have been like.

Nicky Zimmerman

What is it to be Australian—or *not* to be, to be excluded, for whatever reason? Does it consist simply of just being in, on or of the land, or having begun life there and gone elsewhere?

An immigrant society such as Australia has its beginnings with people who have begun life elsewhere, then arrived on its shores, some involuntarily, for whatever reason or purpose. In the long run we're all immigrants from somewhere, although Aboriginal people, similarly to other First Nations peoples, claim they've always been here. It's a moot point really, as 40 000 or more years is a lot longer than the 200-odd years maximum for only a few of us.

'Australia' is a recent social entity: Aboriginal people didn't describe themselves as Australians, or by any other collective noun; they were, and are, many nations,

whose common language is English, as indigenous languages can be quite dissimilar.

Many years ago I recall being in a lift in Melbourne with an Aboriginal woman from the Kimberley, who was with a fellow Aboriginal person also from that area. She pointed out to me, in an amused fashion, that while they came from adjacent tribes, their native languages were mutually incomprehensible.

The debate about being Australian, which began in the 19th Century, has until very recently excluded indigenous Australians from consideration. There are many reasons for this, some not all that pleasant, although long-standing.

The journalist and social observer Martin Flanagan (2007b) recently reported on an AFL football carnival between South Africans and indigenous Australians, where a local made invidious comparisons between black South Africans and Aboriginal people, viewing the latter with much disdain. The runner and sprite Catherine Freeman, an introverted feeling type by my observation, continues to seek herself as someone separate from her celebrity status and the spirit in her feet (Wood 2007).

But what is it about culture, and what's explicitly Australian about it all?

Are there things that should be said, and in a particular way? Are there distinct public activities and behaviours, demonstrations of loyalty and fidelity? Perhaps a particular community spirit, family connections, or generations of residence?

How did you and I get here, and why? What's typical about it all? And how important should it be: might we take the whole thing too seriously, and to general detriment?

We all may have a common future, but certainly not a common past.

Sarah E F Yong

Each of us has a story about how we engage in Australian life, and there are typical and non-typical experiences for all of us—including how Australian we feel personally, and whether others would agree with that judgement. Try it yourself, and see.

For example, I'm a fifth-generation Australian, mid-50s, with a mostly German and Irish background. On the paternal side my family arrived in Melbourne from India almost exactly 150 years ago as you read this; on the maternal side my family arrived in Tasmania in the 1860s from England. There are no convict ancestors.

I was taught at Catholic schools in a family that regularly attended church, and I was an altar boy for a while. In primary school I was taught by nuns from the Sisters of St Joseph, an Australian order, although they were Irish. In secondary school I was taught by Christian Brothers, an Irish order, and all but one were Australians. There were some secular teachers, but not many. I marched up Bourke Street, Melbourne with my schools for St Patrick's Day in many of those years.

At these schools I studied and played with children from all over the place: Czechs, English, Germans, Irish, Italians, Poles, Ukrainians, Croatians and so on. We didn't really play organised sport at all at primary school. The most popular game for the boys in the small bitumenised playground was soccer, played with a tennis ball. No authority figure attempted to stop this 'non-Australian game', as happened elsewhere around that time (Black 2007).

The only time I saw the Australian flag was at the end of a movie, when people were going out of the picture theatre anyway. Nobody seemed to notice it much, just as a high proportion of spectators at football games stayed seated when the then national anthem, 'God Save the Queen', was played. (Spectators weren't called 'punters' then, something that came into the language later, probably from English rock music publications.)

Essentially I'm a working-class boy from Melbourne's western suburbs; the first person in my family to complete school, and later gain tertiary qualifications. These days I'd be identified as 'aspirational', as class terms have fallen out of use, which is a pity as I think they still work well.

As an INTP I engage in intellectual activities, and I genuinely like sport—mostly AFL and cricket, but not racing, horses or otherwise. I speak Australian, not any other language.

You can compare and contrast. There'll be regional differences as well as differences within towns and cities. I know contemporaries who didn't go to schools with the ethnic diversity I perceived as normal, and in at least one case their children have also experienced the same lack of diversity.

On the basis of this information you would probably see me as being Australian, even typically so, yet I've struggled with that all of my life. I know I look like that, and it's good to be here, but it's never been as comfortable as I would have liked, and I feel an outsider regarding the things most Australians appear to do.

Martin Flanagan recently wrote of a Greek Australian he knows who 'learned about social acceptance from the outside' (2007c) and while that's a different experience, it resonates in part. It's a major reason why I'm curious, sometimes bewildered, about Australian culture, because I belong here, but I don't.

That's what culture is about.

Culture in general

Culture has been, until recently, presumed to be something unique to human beings (Wheeler *et al* 2002). A swift glance around the globe identifies quite different ways of going about it. **Geert Hofstede** (1980; 1983) pioneered the understanding of different human cultures' approach to power and other constructs, such as time and organisation—information which would have been useful for those planning and executing the invasion of Iraq. As with type, sometimes it's difficult to see past your own model and experience.



I'm curious about Australian culture, because I belong here, but I don't

Harry Triandis (1995) has focused more specifically on individualism and collectivism. Societies can be one or the other, but not exclusively. Australia, for instance, is easily identified as an individualist society, notwithstanding that core elements of its society involve collectivist notions of belonging, such as what might define an Australian. These sorts of discussions seem to arise at times of stress, like a national inferior function or shadow experience, although this isn't Triandis's focus.

Kenneth O Doyle (1999) uses a number of intellectual and psychological perspectives, including psychological type, to identify different cultural approaches to money and property, acceptability, methods, and so on. The opposition between United States and Native American cultures in this topic is instructive, as are Christian and Islamic approaches, among others. There are also four generalised individual approaches.

Game theory—sometimes expressed as 'rational choice theory'—is often used to explain or predict decision-making in societies present and past, including the more cooperative aspects. The presumption is that people cooperate for rational, i.e. logical, reasons, compatible with the situation and human evolution, as understood.

The over-reliance on this method in the social sciences has been argued by some (Green and Shapiro 1994; Shapiro 2005), for reasons that users of Jung's typology would appreciate—namely, the different perspectives that different people take to decision making, and living in general. To be fair, the preponderance of extraverted thinking, expressed in one way or another in the practice of western politics (but not necessarily by the leaders) would probably give encouragement to the use of this one perspective.

Rational choice theory presumes extraverted thinking, and is accompanied by various mathematical formulae. **Ken Binmore** (in Runciman 2001) uses these methods astutely in examining norms of fairness in cultures, something important to Australian cultural considerations, but more general than exclusivists in current discussions may wish to consider.

Binmore would endorse the sociologist **Clyde Kluckhohn's** mantra 'all men are like all other men, some other men and no other men' (which these days might have to be amended from a gender perspective) as a way of expressing the differences both between and within cultures (1948). So, all Australians are like each other, like some Australians, and like no other Australians: a useful paraphrase in the current situation

Kluckhohn's phrase was also regularly used by the late Mary McCauley in alluding to the differences among people of the same type, usually cultural and existential considerations, but also congenital. An evolutionary approach to cultures fits well with Jungian ideas, and with psychological type in particular. **Tim Ingold** puts a biological perspective:

... organic form ... is generated, not expressed, in development, and arises as an emergent property of the total system of relations set up by virtue of the presence and activity of the organism in the environment. (Wheeler *et al.*, 52)

This can be paraphrased as 'the psychology of a being, more particularly, psychological orientation (or type), is generated by being in and acting in an environment' (you can't be *outside* an environment). Expression might then have to do with behaviours and developments.

C A Hooker asserts that 'culture emerges from dynamical interactions and between individuals and their environment and yet constitutes an irreducibly holistic dynamical organisation that shapes individuals even as it is shaped by them'. This includes 'an interactive interplay between simultaneous "top-down" collective and "bottom-up" individual dynamical constraints' (in Wheeler *et al.*, 70-71).

Personality, then, should always be observed in the context of culture in an interactional sense. It's fairly meaningless to say that one comes before the other, but its expression can be different, as the fashionista **Nicky Zimmerman** indicates by speculating on what things may have been like for her had she been raised somewhere else (2007). **Yusuf Sheikh Omar**



All Australians are like each other, like some others, and like no other

articulates the complexity of learning about a new land, and the status of dogs in particular (2007)

In Jungian terms, culture has conscious and unconscious aspects. Generalised demographic constructs such as Generation X and Y or Baby Boomers are better understood as relating to behaviours expressed at a particular time and place and influenced by what went on at the time—acceptable ways of speaking, dressing and so on. They have little to do with individual type-related expression.

They're also a reminder that culture, as with other things, doesn't have a starting point, something pure and specific. It's continuous and evolutionary: there isn't a time when one second there was no culture, and the next there was.

Introverted sensing types seem more likely to consider personal experience as being general. The Prime Minister recently said on television that 'we all remember World War 2' (Howard 2007)—a curious statement, given that this is impossible for all Australians under the age of 60, and many beyond that age. But it was part of *his* early experience, and he naturally extrapolated that onto others.

The custom of placing flowers at the scene of a car accident, where someone's spirit left their body (from an animist perspective) didn't really exist a couple of decades ago; now it's almost mandatory, expected. I quite like the meaning implicit in the practice, whilst recognising that it's a late addition to what Australians do, usually unknowingly, unconsciously.

Apotheosis, icons

Unconscious aspects of culture often have to do with the process of *apotheosis*, where an event or person becomes beyond fact (the facts actually get in the way). Princess Diana is the best-known example; here, Sir Donald Bradman, Slim Dusty, Peter Brock and Steve Irwin are others. John Howard exalts Churchill and Menzies, secure in the reality that they can't comment on him.

In earlier cultures, and some contemporary ones (e.g. India), those people would be

considered gods, although not in the Judaeo-Christian understanding of the term.

The events of these kinds of lives become hagiographies (in type, Isabel Myers provides an excellent example), and their virtues are generally unquestioned, at least not without causing murmurs of disapproval. Americans can view the Founding Fathers in a similar way: far-seeing individuals who founded the American Republic. That all of these people would be profoundly at sea in the 21st century doesn't seem to be recognised. Some people seem to prefer to look for messiahs rather than doing something themselves.

One can also become an 'icon', an ossifying term (to my mind) originally applied to religious artwork, particularly that of Orthodox Christianity, as well as religious statuary in general. Now, somewhat like 'diva', it's applied to almost anything or anyone. Pillars of the community are now described as icons, but nobody (as yet) flings flowers at their feet, lights incense in propitiation, or swings a thurible in their general direction.

Some icons are invented, or played by actors: in the distant past, Chips Rafferty, more recently, Crocodile Dundee (Paul Hogan): not so much for the *setting* (which, together with the unfortunate Steve Irwin, gulls people from elsewhere into thinking that crocodiles are endemic throughout all of Australia, rather than far from the vast majority of Australians, who are urban suburbanites), but for the *language* of the Australian characters.

This includes the sort of 'tall stories and barefaced lies' one might see depicted in Australian literature and life (Goldsworthy 2007), fairly much an SP perspective.

H G Nelson is a reliable repository for this traditional Australian language (2007) which is both out there, somewhere, and disappearing in terms of use and understanding elsewhere.

Icons don't have to be human beings, of course. The so-called 'national carrier' **Qantas** has iconic status, notwithstanding Australians being generally unaware that they don't own it, and haven't for a while (Smith 2007), which is useful for marketing, I suppose.



Constructs such as **Baby Boomers** have little to do with individual expression

According to weather presenters and other media, the iconic Christmas lunch includes a turkey. If that's true today, it certainly has a recent history, as the meats available a few decades ago were lamb, ham and chicken (the most expensive).

In some ways, people pick up 'traditions' that are in fact new, and make them traditions because someone of influence has suggested that this is what they should do. 'Keeping up with the Joneses' is more an SJ activity, but it can be in the unconscious of a few more people as well.

The beach is also iconic, as a place where Australians relax and play, amongst other things. Some people have depicted this preference for coastal life as something mysterious, of eschewing the inner parts of Australia like a heart, implying that as a culture we have none, no feelings. Australia isn't a feeling culture by any means, but a reality is that a substantial majority of the Earth's population likes the coast and water as well. Uluru is also an icon, particularly to Aboriginal people, but it's not part of my dreaming.

The beach has to do with visions of bronzed Australians. Current female icons such as Nicole Kidman seem to avoid the beach for the indoors, or somewhere where the complexion remains pale (Hush 2007).

But this is expressed more often in the ranks of lifesavers, a movement that has part of its origins in keeping 'the race' vigorous and healthy, fairly typical of health movements in the first part of the 20th Century: something lost on **Rosemary Neill** (2006), who seems to presume that people fought against entities such as Nazi Germany because their ideas were completely alien, and there were no possible similarities in the countries that opposed that state.

Perhaps a lack of historical and philosophical knowledge is the reason why difference is so difficult to understand, and similarity so difficult to acknowledge—or too uncomfortable to recognise. **Kirsty Gunn** (2007) and **Simon Gregg** (2007) avoid any of this discomfort by leaving culture as thin description, detail without examination. Perhaps it's better that way. Indeed, historian **John Hirst** suggests persuasively that the Australian brand of tolerance and

acceptance has been more about not making too much about it, and appealing to common sense and appropriate behaviour (2005). You don't want to make a scene.

Perhaps this is why 'fitting in' has specific physical connotations—not designed to offend, but with inevitable consequences. **Ramdah Abdel-Fattah**, identifying as an Australian, is startled when a schoolgirl suggests that the requirement for being a 'real Aussie' is being an 'Anglo' (2007). A Muslim woman with a thick Australian accent, Frida, attests to the preparation of a 'fair dinkum' chicken roast as proof of her Australianness: 'You can't get more Aussie than that!' (Blundell 2007)

Cultural appropriation

Unless a culture is more or less closed to external influences, such as North Korea, or Burma, other cultures can be influential or prevailing, regarding language, dress and entertainment, for instance. France's struggle with the encroachment of English terms into colloquial French is well documented, also including American food and business practices (Button 2007). English and American culture similarly inform and influence Australian culture.

This sort of thing is nothing new. The archaeologist **Francis Pryor** (2005) has challenged the conventional view of cultural invasion and replacement in Britain under the Romans (and the 'Dark Ages' that followed) by suggesting that changes in things such as personal adornment and language in a society don't necessarily mean that the original inhabitants were supplanted by foreign invaders; they've simply adapted to a different prevailing culture, while continuing with selected traditional practices.

McDonald's demonstrates this well, as an organisation which introduced a hamburger with pickles and a specifically American cheese, encased in a roll quite different to local experience, as well as things such as 'French fries', hash browns, and so on. Now, McDonalds, as with KFC and the like, is part of contemporary Australian culture, irrespective of whether some think it's a good thing or not. And you don't find



The beach is iconic as a place where Australians relax and play

fish and chip shops ('fish and chippery' is a relatively recent term) in the USA.

The natural process of appropriating culture from elsewhere leads to conundrums and curiosities. The speech patterns of younger Australians seem to be infused with a combination of East End (London) glottal stops and fricatives and American expressiveness derived from various forms of visual entertainment ('Oh my God!', etc).

Flags

Australian flags are now brandished openly, even as clothing. They used to be rarely seen, mostly in government buildings of some sort, or raised at public schools, an event I never experienced in my Catholic schooling. No flags of any sort were seen, nor portraits of the Queen, for that matter, nor the Pope, now I come to think of it—just icons.

In any case a permit was needed to purchase a flag, and there were (and are) rules for their display. The Centrelink office in Warrnambool displays the Aboriginal flag, Australian flag and Centrelink flag (!) together against the wall. This wouldn't have been legal in the past, and may not be so today.

A large Australian flag installed in an open area near the Melbourne Royal Children's Hospital appeared in the 1980s, but not with the support of the then State government, or the populace; it was a private initiative and few expressed any public support. Now people fly them at home, or wear them as cloaks at music festivals. A recent query to *The Weekend Australian Magazine* (Ostrow *et al* 2007) about whether it is good manners to fly a flag in a suburban front yard received no demurrals at all from the three people replying, all of whom were mature in age and well-educated.

Flag flying (as distinct from waving) is a recent practice that probably has to do with a combination of World Series Cricket, Pauline Hanson and Catherine Freeman, as well as a campaign by the Returned Servicemen's League. The RSL failed to state that Australians in either World War didn't fight for, or under, this particular flag. There were no Australian Iwo Jimas.

My late father, who fought in one of those conflicts, used to make this clear when we were cheerfully jeering George Reeves on TV as Superman, 'fighting a never-ending battle for Truth, Justice, and the American Way', standing front of a large ceremonial Stars and Stripes flag. Interestingly, my father towards the end of his life became quite attached to the Australian flag—an example of how a culture over time can change a concrete object into a symbol.

The Australian flag as symbol has appropriated some American cultural attributes relating to respect and worship, some of which have been enshrined in legislation. The nature and the design of the flag itself, however, mean that there is division about what the symbol really means, or whether it should mean anything at all (Gurciullo 2007; Hutchison 2007; Poynting 2007; O'Kane 2007).

The cartoonist and satirist **Michael Leunig** recently produced a work which had a lover of the Australian flag enthusiastically eating, sleeping with, and consummating a relationship with his object of devotion (2007). The Victorian government is planning to fly Australian and Victorian flags from the heights of the West Gate Bridge. Few seem in favour of this and most recommendations are for the government (an overwhelmingly STJ operation) to engage in something that has some use instead.

Britain, convicts, etc

British culture is part of the Australian founding myth to the extent that many called Britain 'home'—something that confused me, as I've never encountered anyone who used the term.

Barry Humphries's satirical figure Barry McKenzie is partly based on the notion of an Australian returning to a 'home' where he'd never before set foot, an opportunity to portray a crude, ignorant type of Australian in an unfamiliar setting (Coslovich 2007), which was personally unconvincing (which isn't to say that I haven't met a few crude and ignorant Australians).

The convict influence is fairly randomised as well, in that not too many people have convict ancestors and so are disconnected



Flying the flag:
Catherine Freeman

from a convict past. (There are prisoners, of course, but convicts have to do with transportation from England).

Melbourne and Adelaide weren't convict settlements. There were convicts in Port Phillip for a brief time, but not really connected with the nature or governance of the settlement. Adelaide didn't experience that sort of thing at all. The results of convict (military) administration, of course, are reflected in some of our contemporary government institutions and policies: those that involve lack of trust and punishment for non-compliance, perhaps dissent as well.

In an editorial around Australia Day, the *Warrnambool Standard* suggested that the day should involve more celebration, and suggested, amongst other things, a local parade with people dressed up as convicts, notwithstanding the lack of relevance of such people to south-west Victoria. It would be more relevant for people to dress up as whalers, or drive sheep and cattle through the streets with milk floats and local cheeses (Bayne 2007). Australia Day, like footage of the beginning of Australian television, essentially refers to a Sydney experience.

Convicts are an Australian stereotype, of course, perhaps even an icon, which can mean you think they're relevant even when they're not. But they're by no means universally relevant for Australians.

Stereotypes

Are there any words in the English language less compatible than 'Australian' and 'Princess'?

Catherine Deveny

I'm a typical American, so Sunday morning I'm looking for sport on the TV.

Bill Withers

Catherine Deveny suggests that Australian women as a whole prefer to be irreverent, uncomplicated and unsophisticated, rather than iconic females. The veteran musician and performer **Bill Withers** suggests that on Sundays Americans are more likely to be attached to the television than church. The first of these examples presents a stereotype; the second challenges a stereotype.

Stereotypes are much maligned, and type categories are regularly defended against such claims. In providing one of these defences, **Gordon Lawrence** later uses a stereotype, that of INTPs liking computers, in recounting a story giving effective educational advice (1993).

As the philosopher **Terry Eagleton** (2006) points out, stereotypes are not necessarily negative, but often informative and useful:

It is an open secret, for example, that Ulster Protestants are not by and large dandyish aesthetes notable for their extravagant word-play and surreal sense of humour. The English middle classes are for the most part less physically and emotionally expressive than Neapolitan dockers. It is unusual to meet a working-class Liverpoolian who dresses for dinner, other than in the sense of putting on a shirt. Corporation executives tend not to be Dadaists.

Eagleton continues:

If a group of people have shared roughly the same material conditions over long periods of time, it would be astonishing if they were not to manifest some cultural and psychological traits in common ... This does not mean that such people will all be clones of one another; but habits of mind, patterns of behaviour and emotional dispositions are bound up with the way we live with others, rather than being purely personal affairs.

As individuals in societies, cultural attributes are going to vary. The US magazine *Archaeology* recently presented survey data that that 49% of Americans do not believe that humans evolved over millions of years; 51% believe that humans and dinosaurs co-existed; and 85% think archaeologists study dinosaurs (Young 2007). One presumes that Hillary Clinton, identified in the same issue as a sometime reader, does not fit these generalisations, and nor would many Americans, but it's still useful data.

So you have to pick your mark. And there are paradoxes. Eagleton (2006) observes that 'liberal-minded people might eschew labelling, but may also state everyone is "special"', which is fairly unhelpful.



Deveny suggests that Australian women prefer to be irreverent

So what are Australians like?

Martin Flanagan observes that an identifiable sporting attribute is ‘mongrel’: to be tough, unrelenting, work hard, and so on. **Eva Mendes** (in Morgan 2007) might see us as the ‘no worries’ culture, but **Martin Johnson** (2007) and **Simon Briggs** (2007) comment caustically on rule-bound sporting venues and ‘nanny’ style restrictions. Both observations are true.

‘Nanny’ is quite a recent term, initially with Thatcherian roots, as a way of saying the government will get out of your way. One of the implications is that the government won’t protect you either, so it’s not all that clear cut (Longstaff; Gelber 2007). Now it’s more about televisual discipline for recalcitrant children sired by laissez-faire parents without much of a clue about anything.

But regulation has always been a part of Australian life, and Australians are fairly good at obedience, notwithstanding the admired larrikins of past and present. Look at any pedestrian crossing, particularly in Perth, and observe the number of people not walking across against the lights, even in the complete absence of traffic. Busking in Melbourne requires a licence; you can’t just sit down and toss out an empty hat for coins (Bailey 2007). It used to be banned completely, for reasons of civic decorum.

As a stereotype, though, it’s sport that seems to be a lynchpin to Australianness. The Muslim commentator Waleed Aly suggests this strongly and coherently (2007).

I recall being at a football game in the late 1970s. Kicking a ball around with friends at the game’s end, I noticed a Vietnamese family sitting inside the ground watching their young children doing the same thing. The children were decked out in football jumpers and the accoutrements, the parents with the appropriate sporting material. Whether they were accepted in general, I don’t know, but they were accepting.

Michael Gleeson observes that being a footballer transcends other, perhaps more significant, achievements (2007). Richard Pratt may be a billionaire now, but he once played Australian Rules for Carlton in their under-19 and reserves teams.

The label ‘clever country’ is hard to apply coherently to a country where the main criterion appears to be to work hard, more than anything else, and where being smart, or a ‘dreamer’, being ‘full of yourself’, or having a vision are not as a whole favourable attributes, although obviously they have some merit for some sections of the community (Koutsoukis 2007; Campbell 2007). But you don’t want to get ahead of yourself, as you may know.

Australia is fairly easily identified as a practical country, a sensing one. Artworks that are popular usually are to do with figurative art: literalism, not abstraction, according to the artist **Robert Jacks** (Backhouse 2007; Bailey 2007). And it’s no accident that it’s Australians who have been most successful at tribute acts such as the Pink Floyd Show or The Doors, in which the required music is played, as recorded, by performers who attempt to mimic the physical attributes of their heroes. Our icons are ordinary people; not intellectuals, but people we can relate to (Rothschild 2007).

Egalitarianism has been seen as a feature of Australian culture, but recent discussion has questioned whether things such as the ‘fair go’ (a construct never really closely defined) are in the past, and whether the use of economic terminology and methods denies that condition (e.g. Hirst 2007).

But we could all be shoppers, as **Victoria Laurie** suggests; and given that shopping complexes are seen by many as places of leisure, as opposed to functional environments for purchasing goods, Laurie has a point (2007).

Michael Cannon (1998) describes the rough-and-ready nature of the development of this and other aspects of Australia in the 19th Century, including substantial evidence of government lack of interest in, and inaction on, exploitation of immigrants and the shysters and conmen who are a core part of contemporary life. Entrepreneurial capitalism, I suppose. And the inchoately defined ‘mateship’.

There’s also the militarism. The Australian sporting symbol is a coat of arms, which has a military touch as well, and that eschewal of metaphor that seems so characteristic of being here.



Australia is fairly easily identified as a practical country, a sensing one

Militarism has been perennially popular, with the Digger being *The Australian's* Person of the Year (2007). Not all of that is about killing or being killed, which is something complex about military considerations.

Although contentious in our history, the reality of memorials to the Crimean War onwards throughout the land says something about the importance of this aspect of society. And the apotheosis of Gallipoli renders undiscussable the proposition that many Australians joined up so they could enjoy killing a few people: a non-Bigglesian perspective, I suppose.

There's more to Australian culture than this, of course, as there must be. It's a continual debate which benefits from examining and challenging myths and facts and desires about this place and the people who identify with it, in whatever way.

And you can look at it with your own life experience and see how much you fit in. Or not. ❖

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... we are a society that encourages outbreaks of optimism and pessimism, sometimes almost simultaneously.

Hugh Mackay

If you're not living in Sydney, you're just camping.

Paul Keating

*If you want to be a man
 The pride of our young nation
 Grab a bird and crack a can
 In the land of no complications*

Barry Humphries,
 'Chunder Down Under'
