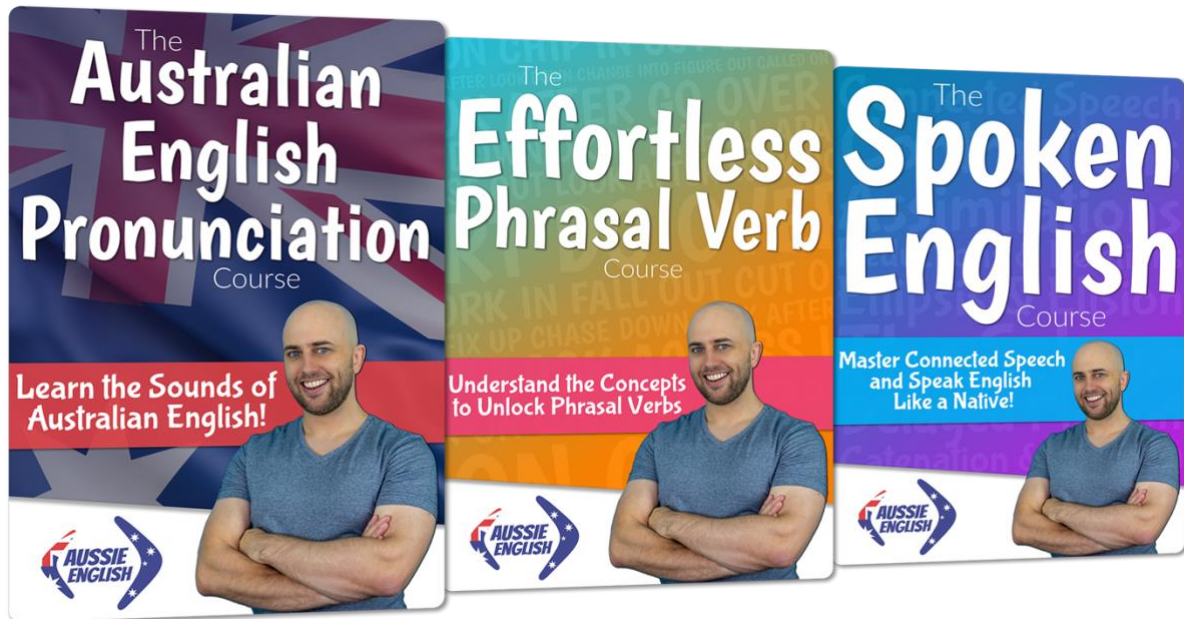
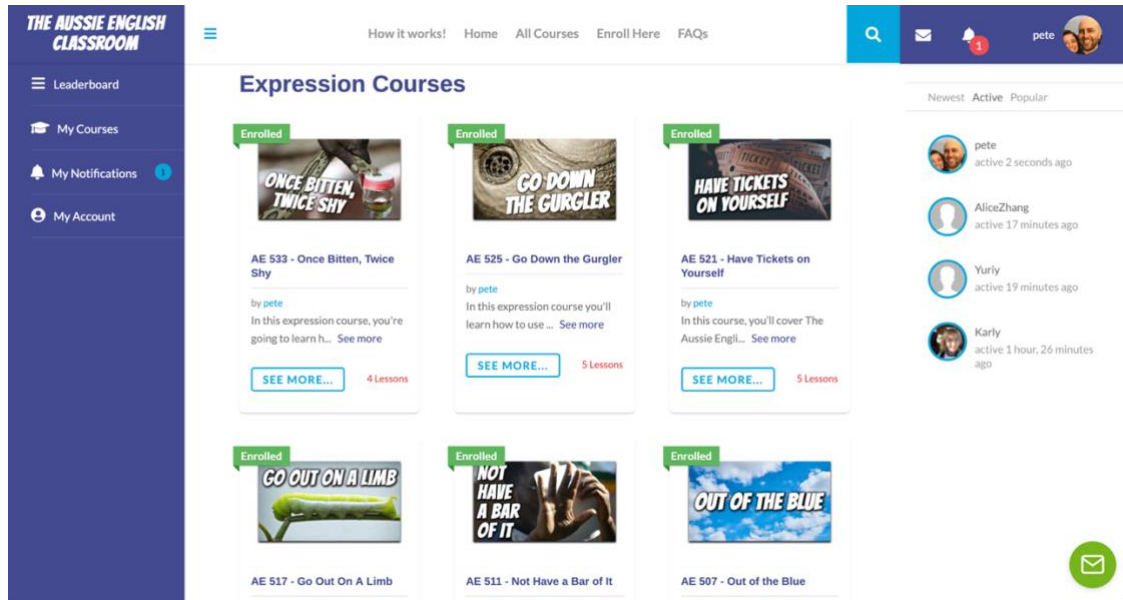


**Want to take your English to the
next level?**

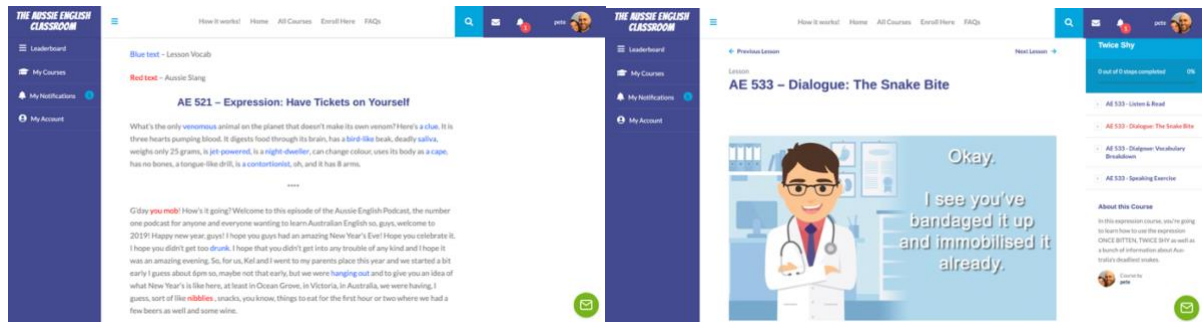


**Check out my advanced English
Courses here!**

Get instant access to 80+ Advanced English Courses!



Take your English to the next level!



- 100s of Video Lessons
- 100s of Audio Lessons
- 100s of Transcripts

Join Here



AE 638 – The Goss: Devils, Tigers, Spiders, & Judas Goats

G'day you mob! Welcome to episode number three of The Goss, where I get to sit down and have a chinwag with my dad each week about news and current affairs down under in Australia, as well as, you know, just around the globe. Anything that's interesting that comes up, we will chat about if we notice it as it's a good way for you guys to learn about what's going on in the world whilst working on your English, whilst hearing our opinions and our, I guess, our perspectives on things and also helping you to form your own opinions about these things, whether you agree with us or not about certain contentious issues, so that you can talk about them in English when they come up in conversation. That is the whole point of this series, The Goss.

So, today is a bit of a mixed bag, meaning a mixed bag of lollies, right. In Australia, lollies are candy. So when you get a mixed bag, you get a a bag of all different kinds of lollies. And we use the expression "a mixed bag" to

mean that we have a mix of different things, right. It's not just one consistent topic today, for example. So today we talk about a bunch of different things, Aussie weather, extreme weather like dust storms and the crazy hailstones as big as your fist that were landing in places like Melbourne and Canberra this week, early Australian explorers, why Tasmania was once called "Van Diemen's Land."

We also talk about Tassie Devil Face Tumours, the extinction of the Tasmanian Tiger, a recent warning of a funnel web spider bonanza around Sydney. My favourite part of this episode, we talk about Judas goats. Those goats are crazy. Stay around to listen to that bit. And also the Australian Open and why Australians are so tennis-crazy. Anyway guys, smack the kookaburra and let's get into this episode. G'day, dad.

G'day, Pete.

Welcome to this episode of The Goss. Number three.

Number three! Who thought the season would last this long?

So I guess... Yeah... How's your week been?

Yeah, busy doing not very much. A day in hospital, which was planned; just a check-up. And spending most of my time looking after the dog with his recovery from his knee surgery.

So tell us about the dog. What happened to the dog?

He tore an anterior cruciate ligament, which to all those out there, all those sports-people out there would be going "Ouch!" right now. It's a footballer sort of injury.

For me as a jujitsu practitioner, that's a heel hook injury.

Yeah.

Where you twist a knee.

It's a twist. Side impact with a twist.

Yeah. Not good.

Yeah, so...

Long recovery, right?

Three months of recovery. Sitting in a cage indoors and very short walks outside under control, which he doesn't like doing.

So you literally and figuratively keep him on a short leash?

Exactly right. Yes.

So how's he been enjoying that, too?

Well, look, he... He doesn't like the short leash on walks because he wants to sniff at everything and go and inspect things and bark dogs when he walks past a house with a dog barking at a fence. But when he's inside,

he's fantastic. Much better than we thought he would be. We thought that this was going to be a challenge for him, of just been lying down in a cage indoors, but he's accepted it pretty well. Obviously, he likes being in there with us, but normally he likes wandering around and checking things out.

You wonder what happens to dogs like that in the wild when they have those sorts of injuries. I guess it's just suck it up, and that's the rest of your life now.

Yeah, it's one of those things where it'll recover because, you know, all that happens with that ligament is that it's really just holding the knee together.

It's stabilisation.

Stabilising it, yeah. So if that's torn and completely ruptured, then you're just going to have a less stable knee.

And you're not going to be the one at the head of the wolf-pack, hunting down the gazelle.

But yeah, it's obviously it'll take a long time to recover, but eventually it would. But I suspect that it would be susceptible to being damaged again a lot more. Obviously you can't damage the same ligament, but with more movement in the knee you can damage other things.

Far out. My jujitsu coach has had two reconstructions of the knees and it was like eight weeks or more for recovery on each one. So he had to do one recover, do the other recover...

Which is what they do so that you can be mobile.

Yeah, so he wasn't in a wheelchair.

Yeah, exactly.

Alright, so has anything interesting been in the news this week? I think we were sort of chatting off air and we were like, "Well, there isn't really anything big going on except, I guess, the bushfires have sort of been quelled a little bit with the rain that's come through."

And look, there's still some fires going on. There's no major new ones which is good.

There's not much left to burn!

Exactly. Unfortunately, sounds sort of humorous, but it's a bit sad. But. So there's nothing new that's come up. But we haven't had any extreme weather over the last week or so.

Well we have, just not heatwaves.

Yeah. All right. Yeah, we've had thunderstorms and golf-ball sized hailstones.

Bigger than that in Melbourne.

Yeah, I know, they're tennis balls, just about. Ridiculous.

So I brought up some of these stories because I saw my newsfeed on Facebook and I think Instagram with all these people in Melbourne that I

know holding things the size of baseballs in their hands. That seemed insane, right, because we didn't cop anything here.

No, that's right. The whole storm just passed down the eastern side of Port Phillip Bay, from the eastern suburbs of Melbourne and missed us completely. Like, we didn't even get any rain. It was weird.

So that's why I was sort of shocked when I saw that on the news. I was like, "wait, where did all this severe weather go? We missed it."

Yeah. And it was one of those weird patterns that... Because typically, you know, just for your listeners, the weather patterns in Victoria come from the West. So yeah, we'll get our weather that will pass over us before it gets to Melbourne because we're about 100 kilometres south west is the city of Melbourne.

if it's really, you know, what, like a vertical kind of front, right.

Yeah, and this weather came from the north east, so... And it was spiralling as weather does. But there obviously wasn't a lot of air mass movement, gross air mass movement in comparison with this. It was a mini cyclone effectively.

Really?

Well, a cyclone is a cyclone. I mean, a low pressure system. That's a meteorological term for a low pressure system is a cyclone. We use that as a synonym for hurricane that would be used in North America or other words in other parts of the world. But it was like a little mini cyclone, except

it came from the land. Normally, you know, cyclones and hurricanes kind of form over the sea.

Because they suck all the hot energy out of the water, right?

Yeah. They're actually just getting a lot of water vapour that evaporated out of the sea. And then soon as they hit land, it tends to dissipate as rain or various forms of precipitation. In this case, it was very large hailstones.

Do you want to talk a bit about why we get the weather from the east because it is one of those weird things...

West.

Sorry. Yeah, it comes to the east. Yes.

Yeah, from west to east.

From west to east. Because growing up you get used to it, living in Victoria, and probably South Australia or West Australia, but you quickly realise when you travel elsewhere that that pattern isn't replicated everywhere, not just a, you know, there's a flat line spinning around the world and the weather changes in front of that.

So yeah. So there's... Yeah, that's the basic pattern around the world obviously, because the Earth spins in the other direction. So the earth is moving under the air mass. Obviously, that air mass is held by gravitation over that thing. But it will sort of move across the Earth's surface as the actual earth is spinning around underneath it. But it also depends on which latitude you're in as to where those major air masses move, because they

move in sort of semicircular oval shaped things around the tropics and in the subtropics and then the temperate zone. And then the Arctic and Antarctic have their own sort of weird weather patterns, but... So it depends on where you are in the world as to what that little micro movement is going to do. But basically it is going to come from the west to the east. But if you're in the tropics, it will be different.

Some of the interesting stuff you'll learn about, if you look up some of the early explorers like James Cook and, you know, Matthew Flinders, they have to obviously have a good grip of weather systems and how the winds work. And that was why we called them the trade winds. Right. Going from... Was that from America to Europe?

Yeah. Yeah.

But, apart from like... That obviously has nothing to do with Australia but the... We have names don't we, for the 30s, 40s and 50s in latitude? I think I know The Roaring 40s.

The Roaring 40s is called that because it has the strongest winds. Yeah. Overall on average it will have the strongest winds. So almost all of Australia is above 40 degrees latitude. There's a little bit of Tasmania that's slightly below it. But... So if you wanted to get to Australia from Cape Town in South Africa, notionally the easiest thing to do would just be to follow a latitude which would be catching the winds but you'd be following a latitude in the 30s, 30 degrees south, and the winds aren't as strong. So it made more sense to travel further south. And then... And that was hundreds of years ago. And then Navigator's worked out that travelling on the great circles around the globe was faster than travelling the latitudes because it makes more sense if you... It's hard, this is hard to talk about. I can only

show you in two dimensions. But if you get a sphere, you can you can draw a shorter line going closer to the pole than you can by following a line of latitude.

Well, that said, if you were to draw lines around a tennis ball or whatever, like as circles, the smaller circles are at either pole of the tennis ball.

Yeah. You're also going to for moving from one place to another one. You can move closer to the poles. Like, if you're flying from North America to Europe. You go over almost, and we do go into the Arctic Circle, and almost over the North Pole is the shorter line, rather than looking on a two dimensional map and drawing in a straight line. When you read that back on to a glow, it's not the straightest line.

Well, that's why you'll tend to see flights being mapped out and they're always arcs, right. They tend to be dead straight lines unless they're between two very close locations.

Because they're following the shortest... Other than in very busy areas, then they separating them, you know, just for air traffic control. But typically they'll follow the shortest distance, not the one that looks like a straight line on a two dimensional map.

You know more about this than me, but is that how Van Diemen's Land was found originally? So Van Diemen's Land is what Tasmania used to be called when it was found by...

Abel Tasman.

Abel Tasman.

After whom it is now named. He named it after his sponsor, if you like, Van Diemen. Yeah, he basically bumped into it.

Yeah. Because he'd gone, and he was trying to cut across, cut through that latitude, right.

Yeah. And that was before the rest of mainland Australia, other than a few European sailors and probably lots of Asian sailors that we haven't read their records, if they ever kept them, landed on the west coast and the north coast of Australia. But the south coast and the east coast really hadn't had... Had no Europeans landing on it until Tasman landed in Tasmania. And then he went on to New Zealand.

Did he do that in the early seventeen hundreds? Late sixteen hundreds?

Late sixteen hundreds, off the top of my head.

It's crazy when you realise that Australia was bumped into... I think it was sixteen... Early 1610s, right? By..?

Dirk Hartog?

Yeah, Dirk Hartog.

And William Dampier. And there was another one.

So those guys that came... Those guys were Dutch. They were Dutch, right?

Dampier was English. Well, actually wasn't but by the time he had landed here he was a citizen of England and Dirk Hartog was Dutch. Yeah. And the English and the Dutch had huge trade routes going to what we now call Indonesia, called the East Indies at the time. And because they were getting spices, they called them Spice Islands. So they were getting spices and taking them back to Europe. And they... This obviously is way before the Suez Canal, so they would come around the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, and they found it easier because of the roaring 40s winds to sail south, catch the roaring 40s, and then go north up the coast of Australia. And so a few people, they knew about that west coast of Australia for a long time, but nobody ever landed on it because from the sea, it just looks like cliffs and sand dunes. That doesn't look anything worth going and stopping.

It's funny, isn't it, because you would imagine that if the coasts had been reversed in Australia, because the East Coast is, as I'm sure the listeners are aware, it is incredibly lush and green because of the Great Dividing Range. And that's where the population is. But if they'd been reversed, Australia probably would have been colonised and populated 100, 200 years earlier.

Much earlier and it probably would have been the Dutch.

Yeah, exactly. And so... It's funny too, when you grow up and you learn about this stuff at school, you're kind of, "Oh, yeah, the Dutch and the French and the English were just around this area," but you don't really know much about why. So what were they doing in this area? What were the companies they were involved in and where were they based?

Well, there are companies in India to start with. The East India Company and which was basically ran in what we would currently call India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The majority of those states in those countries were run by the East India Company. It wasn't the British government that were running it. It was a huge company. And they were a trade company. They were running trade out of the rest of South Asia and Southeast Asia back to Europe, taking products mostly out of Southeast Asia were spices. So they said that pepper was worth more than gold.

There were a few of those sorts of stories at that time. Tulips or something was worth more than gold too, in Holland, for a long time. And they had a... Everyone was going crazy trying to buy them, and then the prices plummeted, right. Everyone lost their fortune on tulips.

Yes. Because they actually have no real value other than aesthetics.

So, yeah, there were obviously... they had the East India Company, which was England, and the Dutch had the Dutch...

I can't remember the name of the company.

It was The Dutch East India Company or something like that where they're in the... They were in the same area, right? In Indonesia, though.

And the French were in what we now call Vietnam.

Yeah. As well as Vanuatu and everything like that.

Yeah. Some of those small islands in Melanesia and Polynesia because they are out in the Pacific as well. Places like Tahiti and New Caledonia were originally French colonies.

Yeah. Which again, you sort of take it for granted that those places, yeah, they speak French there. Of course, yeah, that's what they speak, you know, we learn that growing up but you don't remember... Well, you do remember; you don't know why until you know more about colonialisation.

And look, some of the places in the islands north of Australia and New Guinea were colonised by the Germans much later than the Dutch and the English and the French and the Spanish and the Portuguese were around. But they got those... So some of those islands have German names. You know, they don't speak German, but they have German names.

So it's really funny how different the world would be had colonisation not taken place with... Obviously the racial makeup of countries like Australia and not to mention, you know, how the lands changed and everything, but also the languages and dialects that are being spread around the world, chiefly from Spanish, French, I guess Dutch to a lesser extent, though, they kind of got out of a lot of their colonies earlier.

They did.

Right. But one of the interesting things I found out when I was learning a bit of, um, Bahasa Indonesian, which is their sort of Mandarin Chinese. Right. It's the language they created...

Language that Malaysia and Indonesia made...

For them to communicate because there are so many hundreds of languages that has a lot of Dutch in it because of that company that was there which blew my mind at the time. So, yeah. Anyway, a bit of a side track. Lots of things to talk about if we don't follow the news.

We never know where this is going to go. That's why it's called "Gossip."

I had to show you this video and I'll see if I can turn it up loud enough for everyone to hear. But it was a classic this week. So what's happening here is there's a little Tasmanian devil running away with chocolate in its mouth. He's got a packet of mint chocolate and this guy's chasing this Tasmanian devil down. I haven't seen this!

"Tassie devils got my Lindt!"

And it's gone. He dropped it. Just as well.

78%, you Mongrel!

The guy at the end there, "78%, you mongrel!"

That's a really... That's a cool piece of news. just look it up. I'm sure you can Google it.

I'll tag it.

Tasmanian devil!

Stealing dark chocolate, yeah.

That'll be an interesting one too. You know, you'd have to get veterinary advice on that as to whether marsupial carnivores like the Tassie devil are affected by the caffeine in chocolate the same way that dogs and cats are. Because you don't feed dogs and cats chocolate because they're really adversely affected by the caffeine.

Yeah. Well, that's what I was thinking when I saw it. I was like, holy shit. If Tassie Devil had run off with that, he probably would have died. If it's like other mammals because... Yeah, we had a friend who was living with us when we were living in a share house in Melbourne and he was dating a girl who went to New Zealand, bought a heap of dark chocolate, brought her back to our house. He was staying the night there, and remembers waking up and her dog was vomiting violently like absolutely covering the place in vomit and then had a cardiac arrest and a foaming at the mouth. And they found that later, like he was trying to do CPR or resuscitate this dog, but tragically passed away. They found out later that it had eaten half a kilogram of dark chocolate and it was a tiny lapdog. So it just didn't have a chance.

Keep chocolate away from your dogs.

Yeah, exactly. Tassie devils. So why are they called Tassie Devils, Dad?

Well, they come from, well they now come from Tasmania. They've become extinct on the mainland. There are relatively recent fossils, you know, sort of seven, eight thousand, ten thousand years old in Victoria. So they were here pre the creation of the Bass Strait, which is the waterway between Victoria and the mainland and Tasman, the island of Tasmania, around 6000 years ago. I think during the melting from the last ice age. And so they got isolated in Tasmania with no large predators to compete with

them other than the thylacine. And the thylacine got wiped out about 100 years ago, but it was probably on its way out about that time as well. We don't know what the population looked like in the last few years.

I've heard mix things, but I know that on the mainland, yeah, we used to have the Tasmanian devil, which would have just been the devil, I guess on the mainland,.

Aussie devil!

And we had, I think, five species of thylacine that were here, but I think from memory it was the... What was it? The dingo. When the dingo got here it was the reason that they got wiped out.

Probably the reason because they certainly disappeared. Those species of thylacine, and probably the Tasmanian devil, disappeared around the same time that we know dingoes were introduced into Australia.

Yeah, and I remember seeing when I was at the museum studying evolutionary biology, there was a guy from the Smithsonian talking about looking at skins from the thylacine in Tasmania that were kept at museums and looking at the different bacteria and other diseases they had. And they he thinks that they'd been bottlenecked. Their population had shrunk to the point where they were really closely related to one another, which is the problem that Tasmanian devils have currently, and a disease potentially wiped them out and was more of an issue for them than hunting by people, although people were hunting them. He believes that it should have been the disease that did it, not people.

Quite likely, I suspect. And I think that the spread of the disease has probably been exacerbated by having people farming because there will have been... Those thylacines will have been feeding on certainly young sheep, if not adult sheep. They'd be feeding on lambs and there'd be multiple animals feeding on the same prey. So they're likely to spread viruses or bacteria.

So, yeah, Tassie Devil-wise, what's the issue with their population that's not very genetically diverse at the moment? That's always in the news.

There's a big sort of tumour and it's like a cancer; behaves a bit like a cancer, but it's infectious. Highly infectious.

Yeah. It's one of the only infectious cancers that we know of, right? Yeah. There may be one other example, but that's one where they...

Directly. And there's some cancers that are caused by viruses, but indirectly.

One of the biggest issues with the Tassie devils is that a big part of their sort of behaviour is biting other Tassie devils on the face in order to fight and to assert dominance.

And then their courtship rituals are around, you know, biting and mouthing each other so they get these horrible tumours on their face.

Yeah, and it's a tragic end because they end up starving to death because they can't eat. Yeah.

And the challenge is, a bit like the thylacines in the past, the Tassie devils are in a bit of a genetic bottleneck. They're all so similarly related that they're going to be very few of them that are likely to be resistant to this disease. So and there's... Yeah, there's certainly a lot of work being done at the moment, as you know, because you used to sponsor some of that research on finding populations on isolated islands that are not affected and having breeding programs.

I believe they've taken about a thousand or so from Tasmania, different areas, and they have a population now on the mainland, because they want to have a sort of security population where the cancer isn't prevalent. It's not present so that they could repopulate Tasmania should anything horrible go wrong and they will get wiped out. But also because they want to potentially reintroduce them into forests on the mainland to try and control things like foxes and cats because these guys directly compete with them.

Yeah, exactly. So and that... Look, that may be a challenge in itself because who knows now what's changed in the environments that we're going to try and put them back into. A lot of those forests are reasonably pristine, the original old growth forests, but they're being logged and they're being burnt in bushfires. So we don't know what the regrowth forests are going to look like in terms of being able to have enough small animal population to maintain a viable genetic population of these predators.

All right. A quick pause there, because my Spidey-Senses were tingling and I could could've sworn that I could hear Noah crying in the background. And lo and behold, he was. Don't worry. He had gas. Sorted it out. And I think he is okay now. But Dad dropped the ball. Come on, man. You've got the Monitor, you're meant to be watching!

I know. I screwed up! Sorry! Put it up here so I can see it. Hey guys!

That's it. There's senhor, sleeping. All right. So back to... I guess we were talking about thylacines and devils. Yeah. It's funny growing up and watching Looney Tunes because I think that was my first introduction to the Tassie Devil, indirectly, though, I didn't realise at the time. But Tas, the character that doesn't speak just does the, "[gibberish],"

And spins around.

Tornado, yeah. That was my introduction to it.

Yeah. And that's how they behave. It was actually reasonably good. Obviously the spinning around in this sort of little mini tornado is not quite what they do, but it's certainly the sound they make. They're... If you had landed as a European settler in Tasmania 200 years ago and you set up camp somewhere and then you heard that at night, you'd think it was the devil that had come to kill you. It's an amazing sound.

There are some horrifying stories from there during that time too, of settlers. Do you know the convict, I think his name is Alexander Pearce.

Yes.

You heard of him. And I've forgotten the guy that he escaped with. But these guys decided to, I guess, bail on... I think it was in the late seventeen hundreds, right. So it was relatively recent.

Early eighteen hundreds.

Early eighteen hundreds. But it was it was during that time of settlement where we would have had what? Sydney, Tasmania and maybe Melbourne.

No that was it: Sydney and Tasmania.

Yeah. Melbourne was 1835. Yeah. So he bailed with I think seven or eight other guys from a camp where they were enforced...

It was an island, a prison.

Right. And these guys tried to cross Tasmania to get to the other side because they believed there was another settlement. Yeah, well, that was the mainland.

Yeah, but these guys probably wouldn't have known that they are on an island, so.

True, so... Yeah, but they escaped. The eight of them ran off into the bush and within a few days I think realised they had nothing to eat. And what did Alexander Pearce and his mates start doing?

They ate each other. It's the best way of bringing food, the food that can carry itself.

I know, that's it. So they started killing each other and eating each other. And I think it ultimately ended up with only two of them walking out, getting caught, going back.

Going back again. And they escaped again.

And they escaped again. And Alex ate another guy before he was hung. So that was one of those crazy stories that I was reading up on recently because I was doing an episode on Bushrangers.

Right.

Yeah. And so it was one of those...

He was one of the early ones.

He was the ultimate Tassie Devil.

That's it. exactly. That's it; there were scarier animals in the wildlife down there than there are... Well there's people, right, than there were animals. Exactly. But I can't imagine... Have you been camping down in Tasmania?

I haven't been camping in Tasmania. I've been there a lot and staying and out walking, but during the daytime, most of our mammals are nocturnal. So during the daytime, you don't notice much, but you certainly hear them. And even in Victoria, you know, brush-tail possums and koalas put on a pretty good audio act night.

I remember hearing...

Male koalas in mating when they're ruffing...

I remember hearing them for the first time when you guys... You and mum took us camping somewhere. I can't remember where it was.

Yeah, I think it was one of the volcano national parks down in western Victoria.

Yeah. And I remember hearing that...

Which has now changed its name, so I won't bother. I can't remember the new indigenous name that they've given the national park.

Yeah. But during the night. I think it would have been in summer that we would have been there or maybe spring and the males were calling and they are frightening.

They are! Yeah. Fucking little koalas.

Yeah. Because it's this resonant guttural, "ROOF ROOF ROOF," right in the background. And they do it for the night.

Yeah. And they just go all night.

It's insane. It's insane. That was terrifying. I remember that being like, "oh my God, what the hell is that? Dad, you didn't warn me!"

With brush-tail possums, it's very similar. Yeah. Screech and growl and carry on. Yeah.

They make a lot of noise don't they. And you get them in your roofs, don't you?

We had one roof up in the Dandenongs; the previous house we lived in.

So that's a unique Australian problem, right, with brushed-tail possums being something that will get inside... Because obviously they're nocturnal. So they're looking for hollows to sleep in or, you know, nooks and crannies in trees where they can park themselves. I remember being at the royal... What is it called again? Carlton Gardens.

The Carlton Gardens around the museum.

Yeah. And there's dozens of them around the place because they eat all the food in the bins and they just park it in the trees with their bums hanging out of hollows. You can walk up and pat them.

It's like the old cliché of the camel sticking its head in the sand. As long as they've got their head in a hole they think they're hiding.

And they tend to be a bit bigger than normal ones, I think, because they eat all the trash. Ah but yeah, we end up with them in the roofs.

Yeah, right.

And what's the issue though? You need to make sure they have left so you have to get someone to come or do it yourself and make sure that you close the entrance...

After they're gone!

Yeah, to where they're getting into their router after they've left so that they don't die and stink up.

Exactly. The odd sort of rat or mouse dying in the wall or the ceiling of a house is not going to be too bad from a smell point of view. But yeah, these possums that weigh a few kilograms, they'd be awful.

Well they're about the size of a cat. Yeah. And many people wouldn't know too that they're in New Zealand. Right. Has a massive problem.

Yeah. Yeah.

I had no idea for most of my life I think until I started studying biology that they some idiot had taken them across from Australia.

Hey, you know, some idiot brought rabbits here and pigs and goats. Yeah. But yeah, like pigs and goats you can understand because they used them, they farmed them and a few escaped. But yeah. Why you would take possums to New Zealand? I don't know.

Well that's it and they're massive problem because they're trying to kill all of them now because they're competing with a lot of the other wildlife there.

A lot of... Yeah, the wildlife, the small birds in particular.

New Zealand was unique to ride because it didn't have any land mammals, did it? Just humans around a thousand years ago when the first Polynesians got there.

Exactly.

It was a unique place. I guess that's a good Segway. I love this story of the Judas goat. We're talking about camels last week and how we have to cull

them. And so that had me thinking about the Judas goat. Do you know what the Judas goat is?

I do. But you tell the story.

So they have effectively a goat that they train to find other goats or associate with other goats so that if they let it go in the wild, it will go find other goats and live with them. And so in Australia, we have a big problem with invasive species like large... Especially ungulate mammals. Right. Large mammals like horses, goats, deer, pigs, all of those sorts of animals are really big issues and seem to thrive in our environment, especially on the East Coast.

Got no predators.

Goats are a big issue, especially on some of the islands. I don't know if it's Kangaroo Island, that's a big problem there.

A lot of the islands have got problems.

And so one of the solutions more recently was instead of just paying hunters or hiring people to go and try and find the goats themselves and then shoot the goats or, you know, even worse, hire a helicopter, you got to pay for the fuel and the time in the air and then try and snipe them out of the air. What they would do is tie a tracking device around the Judas goat that they would just let go and then come back a week later and go straight to where the Judas goat was.

And it'd be in a herd of goats!

Kill all of the other goats and leave the Judas go find another herd. And I was thinking that must be the most tragic story, where this goat's like, "I'm in paradise. There's no predators here. I've just found this group of people and then all of them have been massacred," You know, imagine the PTSD he has after the first time, let alone the second, third, fourth, fifth time!

I know that you'd start to question the meaning of life.

Every time I find a new group of friends, I'm the only survivor. And it's like that movie...

Survivor Guilt.

What's the movie with? Is it Unbreakable or... No, there's a movie with... I think it's Unbreakable with... What's his name, the dude from Diehard... What's the actor's name, the bald guy?

Bruce Willis,.

Bruce Willis. Yeah, where he survives a plane crash. He's the only survivor. Right. Right. And everyone else is dead. And you left there questioning, "why did I survive?" You know, "why did God pick me" or "why did I have the luck?"

Survivor guilt.

Imagine that goat going through that process on a weekly basis for his entire life!

Get a reputation.

I know. That's it. Imagine that all the other goats are there and they're just like, "Bail! He's coming! Run! Run! Run!"

Fortunately, I don't think there's a lot of cultural evolution in goats.

That's tragic. Another story that I saw come up in the news was that "Australian Reptile Park warns of funnel web spider bonanza due to the wet weather." So because of the rain coming through, it's going to be wet and warm. And so the spiders can get out and about.

Probably reproduce more because they'll be more food available. Better conditions for the young.

And so you got to be careful if you guys are anywhere... I think they were talking about the distribution of the spiders... Where was it here? From Newcastle to Nowra. And as far west as Lithgow...

It's about an area of a hundred kilometres of circle... A radius around Sydney.

That's crazy. It's such a small environment. It's perfect for them. But if you're around there, don't leave your shoes outside. And keep an eye out for them, but...

And if you're gardening, use very thick gloves and don't garden with your hands. Garden with implements.

Use a shovel! But interestingly, I'm surprised too, the story suggested that people try and capture them in order to give to the reptile park to be milked

for anti-venom. But it's interesting because most of the time, especially with venomous animals, they'll say leave them alone, but they said, "if you have the opportunity to catch one..."

That's... Well, you've got to assume... The Australian Reptile Park is one of the biggest organisations for venomous animals in Australia. So they should know what they're talking about. But yeah, I would question that one myself, but trust the experts. Yeah, because generally the advice is if there's a dangerous animal, leave it alone. You don't go and catch it.

Well, call someone to deal with it.

Yeah. And that may be the thing is that I don't know whether they will do it, but there may well be other services that you could call and say, "Hey, we got a couple of funnel webs in the backyard. You want to come and get them?" Rather than going and trying to go and catch them, yourself. These are large aggressive spiders, not the little passive thing that you can put a glass in a piece of paper like a huntsman.

That's a funny thing. Huntsmans always have a bad rap. Those guys I feel like are the Labrador's of the spider world because they... I don't think I've ever heard of anyone being bitten by a huntsman.

No, the problem that we have with Huntsman is that, wolf-spiders look very similar to them. If you know what you're looking for, they don't but superficially, they look similar. And so I think people would look at it and go, oh, another Huntsman. And just, you know, some people would just pick him up in their hand. And they're perfectly fine to do that.

Don't do that with a wolf spider.

Don't do it with a wolf spider. They're not going to kill you but they'll hurt and you'll get sick.

And you're going to have a bad time.

Exactly.

But the good thing about them is that the Wolf spiders have, I think, vertical lines down there, thorax or their head. So they're pretty different, once you get used to it.

And they don't have the spread that... The flap spread of legs.

Well, they're not tree climbers. They live in the ground in burrows. Right. Whereas the huntsman a tree climbers and so they have this wide spread because they are used to living up on trees under bark, keeping flat to the ground. But yeah, huntsmans are great, guys. You know, if you find them in your house, you can always try... I wouldn't have any issue suggesting try and get them out by using, you know, a glass and a sheet of paper. Right?

Yeah. Or just leave them there.

Just leave them in your house. Well the good thing is that, and I'm always saying this to Kel, the huntsmans go to the highest part of the house. So they would try and get high up on the wall. They don't crawl around on the ground. They are up in the corners sitting there, waiting for insects and other animals to eat. And so they kill the mozzies and other things. We always used to do that, and they weren't an issue. But Kel, having grown up in the Brazilian rainforest and seeing wandering spiders, the world's

most venomous spiders, she's not a fan of any kind of spider. So I guess apart from that, the other story that I had was that insane dust storm that came from parts of South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales.

Western Victoria and southern New South Wales.

Yeah. So that was it. There was some insane footage of that, almost like you see in the movies, right?

It really is one of those sort of apocalyptic things that you see in, you know, as you say in the movies, like the ones that, you know, the old movies about Egypt, people getting trapped in sandstorms.

A plague coming through, right? Well, that's one of those things. You see footage sometimes of storms rolling in and you're kind of like, "holy crap, you know that that's pretty powerful. But at least it's hundreds of metres, if not a kilometre above me," whereas the dust storm is at eye level coming at you!

A hundred metres high and just rolling.

I didn't realise how quickly they move!

Oh yeah, well they're going with the wind.

Yeah. So I looked it up here. Dust storms are created when these fronts sweep onto hot, arid surfaces and when cold fronts undercut warm air, the pressure gradient increases and winds shift and become quite gusty, as high as 100 miles. What is it? As high as... Oh, okay, in speed, as high as 50 to 100 miles an hour. So 160k's an hour, so that's how the dust gets

thrown up into the air. And they're obviously always taking place in the interior of Australia and spreading outwards. They're not happening on the East Coast in Sydney, usually.

Well, they would have come from dusty areas. Obviously, you've got to have the sand and the dust and the soil to be just exposed and blown up into the air. So if there's vegetation, you won't get them.

It was crazy. I remember talking about this on the podcast, previously, that I think it's millions and millions of tons of soil are actually getting blown away. So you see a dust storm and you think, you know, "just dust floating."

Mostly that will end up in the... If it lands in another place...

New Zealand! Making glaciers back in New Zealand and Chile.

But even if it lands on another, you know, another piece of land, if you can land on land, then that's just going to be loose topsoil. So it will get washed away. So that all ends up in the sea. Yeah, it's the ultimate in erosion. Just pick it up and dump it in the sea.

Yeah. So that was about it for the week, Dad. I guess there was sort of small interesting stories and I guess it was just an excuse to talk about some Australian history.

And the only other one is the Australian Open. Tennis going on at the moment in Melbourne, which tends to be the focus of our commercial media, obviously newspapers, radio, television, they're all talking about the tennis because it's the biggest show in town for two weeks, 800,000 people attended over a two week period.

Why are Aussies so tennis-crazy?

Well, I think we're sport-crazy, but it's... Tennis is just one of those sports, I think, that because it's event based, it's not a season in Australia. We have, you know, two or three large tournaments and one major tournament. And they all occur within about three weeks, three or four weeks of each other. So we have a couple of lead up tournaments, it's a women's lead up tournament, a male... A men's lead up tournament, and then the Australian Open. And there's a couple of smaller tournament's that are going on around the place. But so really our season occurs in a very short period of time from the point of when you're going to watch tennis. And then when it hits, it's the big event. It's one of the four big tournaments in the world and we don't have much other tennis. But, you know... Tennis is obviously a popular sport for people just to play in Australia so it's no surprise. But other popular sports that we have are a season based. So, you know, our cricket season goes for months. Our football seasons, you know, given that we play various codes of football, but they will go for months. So it's not concentrated. Certainly the AFL is the... AFL Australian Football League, they're a 25-week season, when you add all 26 weeks if you add the finals in. That will... That has, I think about seven million people attending that...

Over the whole period?

It's over six months. So in an individual weekend, yeah, you might get half a million people going to the football and that's a very big deal. But in two weeks in Melbourne, you get 800,000 people going to the tennis.

Tennis seems like a funny one to me because I think you buy the tickets not knowing who's going to be playing, right?

Yeah, exactly.

You don't even know, you know. Imagine doing that for footy or cricket where the tickets are being sold and they can't tell you who's going to be there. Right. Or a music festival. "Here are the tickets but we don't know who's playing."

We know who's going to be at the festival. We don't know who's playing the afternoon that you're there. So when you know... You're going to know by the time you get through to the later rounds. But if you want good seats, you're booking those months in advance. But the night sessions are the ones where... Because they announce those the day before. And a lot of those sessions are not sold until then.

I guess everyone wants to go to the finals.

They're presold, but a lot of people don't go and buy those.

Yes. Everyone wants to go to the finals and semi-finals because they've got a high chance of seeing the big names, right, like Federer and Nadal.

But they're more expensive, obviously. It's realistic. I think a ground pass in the first four days is probably one of the best sporting tickets that you can buy. I don't know what it is now, but it's probably in the order of \$20 to \$40 for a person just to walk in. You don't get a seat in any of the stadiums, but you can just wander round and there'll be good quality tennis going on in five or six different courts all day from 10:30 in the morning until 10 o'clock at night.

And so you guys are going tomorrow?

We are. Yeah, we're going tomorrow. We've got seats in not the major arena. Rod Laver Arena. We're going to Margaret Court Arena, again, it's less than half the price and you get three matches. And it's the... Also ground passes included.

So who are you hoping to see?

I didn't look up who it was. I can't remember now.

So none of the Aussies?

None of the Australians is playing it on Margaret Court tomorrow, but that's three good matches. But even if you get bored with one of those, you just go outside and wander around and look at some of the outside courts, which still have good matches on them in the first four days. Once you get past the second round into the third and fourth rounds, obviously there were fewer matches on and they put those on the major courts. One of the advantages that the Australian Open has over other tournaments is that we have three large stadiums with a roof. So, you know, it doesn't matter if it's raining, if it's too hot, they just close the roof. And so we can play tennis all day, every day.

Literally rain, hail or shine.

Rain, hail or shine.

And if it... if you're going to go off the last week, it's probably going to be hailing horribly.

Hailing, or smoke. Which just one of the interesting ones that they have introduced a new policy rather than a rule.

Air Quality Policy.

Air Quality Policy. For this tournament, just in case we get another day or two of heavy smoke.

Guess that shows that, again, it's sort of an unprecedented year. Right, because they've never had to worry about air quality in any of the sporting events in Australia, I'd imagine, until recently, we don't have issues with smog or pollution at all... Anymore. We might have in past.

Anyway, dad, thanks for joining me today on number three.

Thanks Pete. Number three. Look forward to next week.

Sounds good.

Hope something's happening.

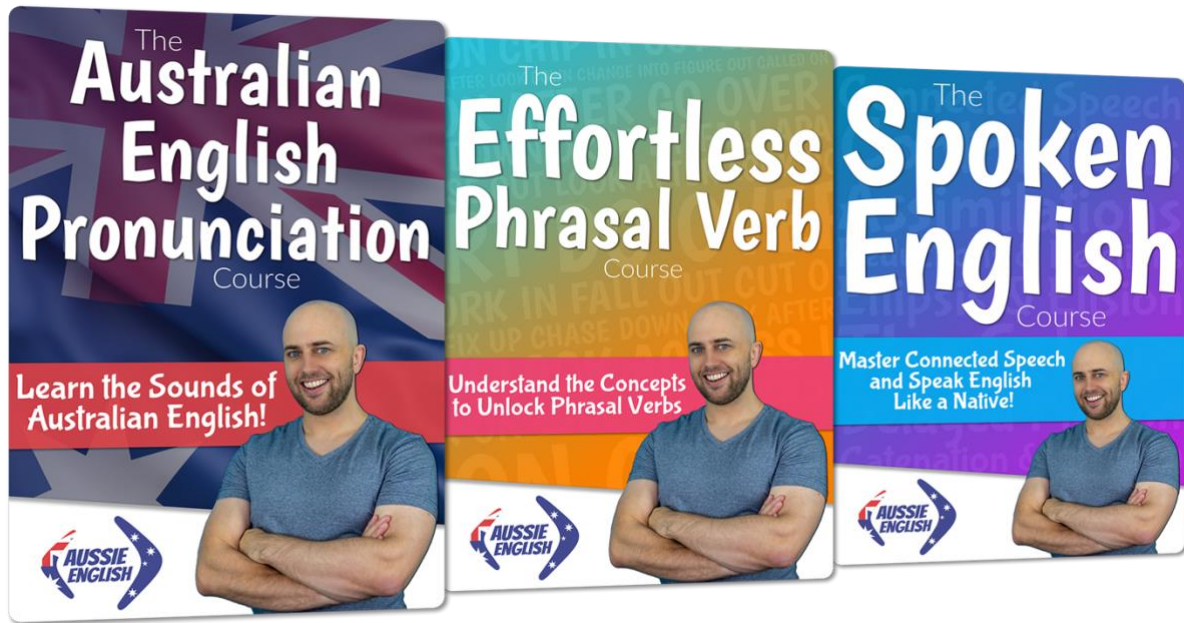
That's it, hopefully there's something interesting in the news!

See you!

**Be sure to visit Aussie English and say
“G’day!” on the platforms below:**



**Want to take your English to the
next level?**



Check out my [advanced English Courses here!](#)