

# The new Oz Oxford

Peter Judge has been reading this important new reference work



OXFORD HAVE JUST brought out a brand new dictionary, *The Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary (ACOD)*, which they claim offers 'a unique combination of international English and Australian usage that no other Australian dictionary can rival'. It is, their release notes say, a true 'concision'—selected from the twenty-volume *Oxford English Dictionary* (although its title page says only that it is 'Based on *The Concise Dictionary of Current English (8th Edition)*').

What does this new *Oxford* offer? It is certainly up-to-date: it was released on 20 November 1992, and nothing is more recent than that. It is the product of The Australian National Dictionary Centre at the ANU, which was established in 1988 after ten years of pioneering work, for 'conducting research into Australian English and

providing Oxford Australian dictionaries with editorial expertise'. Making use of the resources of the *Oxford English Dictionary* and its own research, the Centre believes that *ACOD* is 'the most compact and authoritative dictionary available for Australian users.'

The 1992 *ACOD* gives you 1375 pages for \$34.95 compared with the 1988 *Concise Mac*'s 1204 pages for \$29.95 (and the 1991 big *Mac*'s 2050 pages for \$49.95). It includes all manner of fun Australianisms like Blind Freddy, Hughie (but 'orig. unkn.? *Jupiter Pluvius!*'), Woop Woop and galah session (as does the *Mac*).

More seriously, it looks at the changes in the Australian vocabulary resulting from our increasing responsiveness to both our aboriginal heritage and our growing multiculturalism. *ACOD* has examined 56 aboriginal

languages and includes entries from about half that number; the *Mac* finds 'about four hundred aboriginal words in our English'. *ACOD* has agonised over spellings in current Australian usage and, like the *Mac*, it has become more tolerant, now allowing *enquiry* as well as *inquiry* (but with different meanings), *convenor* as well as *convener*, *judg(e)ment*, *-ise/-ize*, *hono(u)rable*, *program(me)* and so on.

*ACOD* takes a comprehensive swipe at its competitors, saying, for example, that the *Macquarie* dictionary is '...based on the *Hamlyn Encyclopedic World Dictionary* of 1971, ...and the *Concise Macquarie* is a concision of a one-volume dictionary, not a twenty-volume dictionary.' This seems to undervalue the progress made by Macquarie University's National Centre for Language Teaching and Research, within which the Dictionary Research Centre was set up in 1986.

Your reviewer admits to owning a dozen English dictionaries and encyclopaedias, including the 1971 *Hamlyn*, the 1991 big *Mac* and the two-volume *Shorter Oxford*. The *Mac* has the heaviest use, but the others all come in for particular queries. *inCite* follows the 1988 *AGPS Style Manual*, Fourth Edition, which (p32) in general preferred the spellings given in the *Macquarie*. However, *AGPS* drew attention to 'acceptable variants in current use' and the 'state of flux in the language', adding that 'No single dictionary... is likely to meet every need'.

Many Australians retain an affection for the old '*Concise Oxford*' dating back to their school days (and often still use their original ink-stained copy). For those sentimentalists, and for others on strictly practical grounds, the 1992 *ACOD* could be a logical and worthwhile purchase. Be warned! You need great self-discipline to keep out of those exciting and time-consuming etymological byways. But take *AGPS*'s advice and do some comparison shopping. Dictionaries differ one from another in philosophy, content and presentation, and what *you* want from *your* dictionary may not appear in the first one you pull from the shelf. ■

## 1992 COOL Awards presented

Jane Rankine announces the results of 'Canberra's own outstanding list'



MS ANITTA KEATING, PATRON of Children's Week in the ACT recently awarded prizes to Georgina Hawkins, 12 years, and Natalie Hodgkin, 11 years, winners of the certificate competition.

Georgina and Natalie then went on to announce the 1992 COOL Awards and to present the winning authors, Mr Paul Jennings and Ms Robin Klein, with their certificates.

The prizes were donated by the University Co-op Bookshop, ANU, and sponsorship for Ms Klein's and Mr Jennings's visit to the ACT was by the University Co-op Bookshop, ANU and Penguin Books Australia.

Results of the 1992 COOL Awards are:

### Primary Division

Winner:

*The Cabbage Patch Fib* by Paul Jennings published by Penguin Books.

Top Three:

*Paw Thing* by Paul Jennings published by Penguin Books.

*The Eleventh Hour* by Graeme Base published by Viking Books.

*Possum Magic* by Mem Fox published by Omnibus Books.

### Secondary Division

Winner:

*Came Back To Show You I Could Fly* by Robin Klein published by Penguin Books.

Top Three:

*Unreal!* by Paul Jennings published by Penguin Books.

*Unbearable!* by Paul Jennings published by Penguin Books.

*Hating Alison Ashley* by Robin Klein published by Viking Books. ■