

AUSTRALIAN RADIO ANECDOTES

- * On 3XY, Keith Williams was interviewing a gynaecologist and asked “*Which is best, oral contraception or the pill?*”
- * Engineer Noel Serpell placed some rubber on a heater at night when closing. The morning announcer turned the heater on, creating a burning rubber smell. The fire brigade was then called.
- * Ian McCrae once advised listeners that Telecom were about to clean out their telephone lines that were full of dust. He advised everyone to put their telephone receiver into a paper bag to collect the dust.
- * Jack Davey once bought a bunch of keys and attached tags reading “*return to Buster Fiddes, room *, hotel **, \$20 reward*”. Buster was then a household name and felt obliged to pay up each time.
- * John Blackman sometimes telephoned a station to say that they were off the air. The announcer would then often say on air “*A listener has told us that we are off the air. If you can't hear us please telephone the station*”.
- * 3AW arranged a special birthday surprise for Ormsby Wilkins. Students from the R.M.I.T. were given some equipment for their studio in return for a demonstration outside Ormsby's house, including placards saying “*Ormsby go home, Norman Banks forever*”.
- * Perth breakfast announcer John Burgess flew to Adelaide every Friday afternoon to record five episodes of “*Wheel of Fortune*”.
- * On 3XY, Bert Newton once had to present “*Melbourne Speaks*”, interviewing passers-by outside the Tivoli theatre. When they crossed to him, no one was passing. He kept changing his voice and pretended to interview a bus driver, policeman, housewife, and footballer. One listener said it was the best interviewing she had heard.
- * On 3KZ, Norman Banks once left his mike on while asking Kevin O’Gorman “*has your son been circumcised yet?*”
- * On 3GL, Tommy Goodhall incorrectly thought the transmitter was off the air. While the microphone was on he rang the Chief Engineer, Jack Matthews, and told him in very colourful language what he thought of his equipment.
- * In 1940, Whitfords bought 6GE and 6KG, then ordered all neon signs to be removed from outside their buildings to cut costs.
- * A 3YB church outside broadcast opened too soft. The announcer, wrongly using the on-air broadcast line, asked the engineer to turn up the volume. The engineer said “*This bloody equipment always fails on Sundays. I have done everything I bloody well can. Even Jesus Christ couldn't get this gear to work*”. But He did, because the volume suddenly increased.
- * 6WA technicians were given rifles by the Army in WWII to defend the transmitter in case of attack.
- * About to go on air, the Auntie of a children's program forgot to get a question to ask the children. The Uncle wrote one down for her. She opened it and, without checking, read on air: “*How many testicles does an octopus have?*” (Instead of tentacles).
- * 6PM sacked their Marketing Manager in 1989 for giving out too much cash in a competition.
- * During a 3AW talk-back program, the operator asked a caller to turn their radio off. The caller said “*it's on but it can't be heard*”. The operator said “*I'm sorry but it must be turned off*”. She waited five minutes until the caller returned. The operator said “*That took a while*”. The caller replied “*I live around the corner. I'm ringing from a public phone*”.
- * 5DN applied for a television licence in 1929.
- * ABC's Frank Westaway suffered a complete power failure while on air. An engineer rushed in with a torch and said “*What are we going to do?*” Frank replied “*Run down to the kitchen and make a cuppa before the hot water urn cools down*”.
- * Greg Evans at 3CS was told not to play rock records in breakfast because they upset cows and don't give so much milk.
- * Geoff Manion from 3AW and Jim Wood from 3UZ (arch rivals in the ratings war), once swapped stations for one shift while their Managing Directors were overseas. Confusion reigned supreme in Melbourne with listeners and sponsors.
- * One breakfast announcer claimed he didn't realise what he had said when saying on air “*It's 7 o'clock, come on dad, get up mum*”.
- * 3YB's Harry Fuller was at the local cinema when a screen message asked him to contact 3YB. “*I told those bastards never to disturb me unless 3YB is burning down*” he said. The cinema manager replied “*That's why they want you – 3YB is burning down*”.
- * Denis Gibbons on 3UL once looked up while on air to see a cow stick her head through the studio window.
- * Norman Ellis finished reading the news then found the correct news items on his desk. He had read news one month old.
- * Radio news scripts have included insertions such as “*The Victorian Railways are surprised to announce that the Daylight Express from Sydney is on time*” and “*Forecasters predict scattered showers in the North, with patchy rain in the South*”.
- * From 1970 the 5CK transmitter was remotely controlled by the local ABC television control room.
- * 7HO newsreader John Sheed had a news item rushed to him in the middle of his broadcast. Without checking he read on air “*Well known police identity constable Plod has been shot in Hobart. Noddy is being held for questioning*”.
- * A 5KA newsreader correctly pronounced “*amoebic meningitis*” then mispronounced a word by saying “*this virus was caused by an orgasm in a private swimming pool*” (instead of organism).
- * An A.B.C. newsreader once said “*The weekend road toll rose to ten last night when three people were seriously killed*”.
- * Bob Mahoney on 4GR said “*Here is an important announcement regarding today's Dalby race meeting. Due to heavy rain, this meeting has been cancelled. If you don't have a car radio, call into the nearest pub for further details*”.
- * 8DN took out a court injunction to prevent their sacked manager from entering the station.
- * Ken Guy and Dick Williams once complained to their manager that they could only play four records per hour due to the high number of advertisements. He replied “*That's easily fixed, only play half of each record*”.
- * Race caller Ken Howard was once banned from Randwick racecourse. He then called the races from a flat outside the course.
- * 2GB planned to open 3GB, 4GB, 5GB, 6GB, and 7GB. This proposal failed due to projected costs.
- * One religious station manager used to record a weekly religious program. On one occasion it was tampered with. The script had the words “*Some people worship the false god of wealth; the false god of lust; the false god of greed*”. The altered program then played “*Cigarettes and Whisky and Wild Wild Women*” before continuing as normal.
- * During 3MP's opening, Dean Matters was put off the air when the sprinkler system flooded the studio.
- * John Pearce on 3SH had to do a Ball commentary. Describing the participants, he said “*her frock has frills around the bottom*”.
- * A 7HO technician was inspecting a microphone installed inside the Town Hall clock to broadcast the hourly chimes, but locked himself in. Just as the chimes were about to start he spoke into the microphone informing the station (and listeners) about his plight.
- * An announcer called Harry on 7HO was sacked after awarding a jackpot competition prize to his girlfriend.
- * 2FC was issued with licenses for six NSW country towns, plus a second Sydney licence for 2FL, none of which went to air.

- * A 7HO technician once ducked for cover when a bullet was fired into their transmitter hut.
- * In 1933 7LA had fifty permanent landlines installed for outside broadcasts.
- * 7HO was once denied entry to broadcast the local football league. They then broadcast live from a tree outside the ground.
- * A 3SH technician had a few drinks then climbed their tower. He then sobered up and was too scared to descend.
- * 3LO was issued with another Melbourne licence as 3FC which never went to air.
- * 2GZ was issued a licence at Narrabri as 2IN which never went to air, despite the studio being installed in the "Courier" newspaper.
- * A 3SH manager decided to grow vegetables under their tower. He then used a rotary hoe to prepare the soil and dug up the copper earth mat which dramatically reduced their coverage area.
- * John Pearce opened the wrong fader. Instead of the news, listeners heard an announcer in the next studio chatting up his girlfriend.
- * John Pearce once hosted a live children's program where they were encouraged to speak. One girl put up her hand then said "*my little brother just did wee-wee behind the piano*".
- * When 2UE started, weekly operational costs were nine pounds, and advertisements cost 1/-.
- * 2GB used to be near the Assembly Hotel; a popular hang-out for 2GB staff. A special telephone was illegally installed under the bar with a wire across three buildings. If the phone rang, it was for 2GB staff.
- * A Melbourne announcer once put some callers to air before talkback was legal and without any delay. A prostitute said "*I'm Victoria and I'm lonely. Give me a call if you are generous. I'm waiting for you on 28-1234*".
- * The 2KY toilet, next to their production studio, couldn't be used during recordings due to no sound proofing.
- * On 2GB John Pearce told a caller "*Why don't you shut up, you damn bore?*" Another caller then said "*How dare you speak to a lady like that, you cur*". John replied "*And the same goes to you, you old goat*".
- * Bob Rogers, while interviewing John Singleton, allowed a naughty word from John to go to air.
- * Australia currently has four broadcasting stations in Antarctica.
- * The ABC and 3DB both rejected an application from John Laws when his career was starting.
- * 2FC broadcast an interview with Adolf Hitler in 1932.
- * Moss Vale used to have its own commercial radio station (2MV).
- * Studios of 2GZ Orange, 2KA Katoomba, and 2LE Meadow Flat used to be in Sydney. (Despite their studio, 2LE never opened).
- * 2CH banned liquor and gambling advertisements, and any mention of the Melbourne Cup.
- * 4WK lost a Grand Piano when it fell through the studio floor while being played live to air, thanks to termites.
- * 3SR created a record by broadcasting 40 commercials in one hour.
- * All the fish in the 2KA reception aquarium died on the opening day of their Penrith studios.
- * Towers at 6WA, 2LT, 2LF, 2RE, 2KO, 2QN, 2WL, 3DB, 3XY, 3TR, 3YB, 3CS, 4EL, 4GR, 4BU, 4BH, 4AY, 4HI, 4LG, 5UV, and 5RM all collapsed.
- * 2SM banned the song "Itsy Bitsy Teeny Weeny Yellow Polka Dot Bikini".
- * 7QT sacked one announcer for only playing Hillbilly records, and another for singing along with the records.
- * 3LO commenced operation with all equipment powered by batteries.
- * When 4MI Mount Isa opened, their manager asked Head Office for some publicity. He was told that the ABC wasn't in Mount Isa.
- * In 1940, 4BC listeners raised enough money to buy 26 training aircraft for the WWII war effort.
- * In 1950 4KQ, 4BK, and 4BC sacked all their female announcers.
- * Bob Rogers banned the Elvis hit "Heartbreak Hotel" on 4BH.
- * 4AY charged 2/6 for requests, which was their main revenue source.
- * 4IP announcers raced elephants up the main street of Ipswich for a circus promotion.
- * 4BU paid the court bail for their breakfast announcer so he could do his shift.
- * The first 2UE studio was in in the owners' dining room and his 150 watt transmitter on his veranda, with all equipment home-made.
- * When 2UW was launched, they broadcast three hours daily on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.
- * 2KY used to place a metronome near the microphone while changing records, to let listeners know that they were still on air.
- * John Laws once said on air "*I am sick and tired of rating number one on a station that rates number four*" (2UW).
- * Jack Davey put a transcription serial to air then ran to a newsagency to buy a paper. The newsagent was listening and told Jack that he had put the second half on. Jack dashed back and turned the record over, not realising that the technician had already done so.
- * 2GB suspended announcer Mike Carlson for saying on air that he was "*pissed as a fart*".
- * Doug Mulray allegedly said on air "*A.M. Stereo is like having two black and white TV's and pretending that it's colour*".
- * According to official police records, Marilyn Monroe, when being questioned by police re a break-in at her apartment, stated "*It wasn't true that I had nothing on - I had the radio on*".
- * In the 1920s/1930s 2BL, 2FC, 2UW, 3LO, 3DB, 3UZ, 5AD, and 6WF also used shortwave transmitters to relay their programs.
- * Commercial licenses issued to 2SI Singleton, 4CH Charleville, 4MB Brisbane, 5EP Port Lincoln, 5MA Adelaide, 5MC Adelaide, 5MG Mount Gambier, 2FL Sydney, 3FC Melbourne, and 6XY Perth are among several that never went to air.
- * 2KM used to broadcast Balls but only had one microphone. At 7-45 the announcer would put on a serial, then take their microphone to the hall. He would return to the studio and put the microphone to air at 8-00 with dance music until he could return to the hall. At 10-00, with the band playing to air, he would return to the studio and put on another serial. Then he would return to the hall and retrieve the microphone.
- * 2UE, 3UZ, and 3DB all experimented with using their transmitters for transmitting television in 1929.
- * 2SM and 3UZ switched announcers for one week in 1959.
- * A Brisbane announcer was suspended in 1948 for saying on air "your hand is frozen, and so is my arse".
- * A 3MA announcer played a hospital request song "I didn't know the gun was loaded" for a pregnant lady.
- * A 3SH technician lost his trousers half way up their 300 feet tower. He kept going, fixed a problem, then returned to much applause.
- * Rod Muir on 7HO introduced Miss Tasmania with the first name Caroline by playing "I'd like to be in Carolina in the morning".
- * A QSL (reception confirmation) card was sent by breakfast announcer Andrew Talbot to a Netherlands listener reading in part "*The transmitter you were listening to is located between Mossman and Port Douglas. Program is fed via a landline which runs through a mangrove swamp. Occasionally the program is cut when a crab severs the line. The mangrove swamp is also home to a saltwater crocodile so our engineer cringes whenever we go off the air*".
- * Ian Richardson on 3BO Bendigo put a religious program to air then ducked downstairs to a milk bar for a milk shake. His frantic mother rushed into the milk bar to inform him that the record was stuck on "Jesus Christ Said, Jesus Christ Said, Jesus Christ Said".