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# **REGIONAL VARIATION IN THE LEXICON OF AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH**

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
of the Australian National University**

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Except where due acknowledgement has been made, all the work described in this thesis has been my own.

*Pauline Bryant.*

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Australia does not fit neatly on an A4 page. Victoria Grounds redesigned it from the large map on which Michael Braund had placed the location numbers. She also produced the 'b' series maps in Chapter 5, and Map 5.74, and gave advice on layout in other parts of the thesis.

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## ABSTRACT

This is the first study of regional lexical variation in Australian English. It explores the existence, nature and history of regional lexical variation in Australian English.

Before it was undertaken, only a few examples of regional lexical items were known, and no systematic attempt had been made to discover whether there were patterns of regional distribution. The survey covers the whole country in order to find the location and extent of the usage regions.

The work has been carried out within the framework of dialectology, and while constraints of finance and resources led to some innovations in methodology, the findings are comparable with findings in other countries.

The major part of the work gives a synchronic picture of regional lexical use in Australia in the late 1980s. It finds that there are four major lexical usage regions in Australia, two of which have two sub-regions, as well as minor sub-regions and local regions. The survey results are presented on both raw data and interpretive maps. There are two classes of regional words in Australia - elective regional words and obligatory regional words. Hence there are two types of regional distribution patterns.

A diachronic study uses historical and lexical evidence to evaluate and expand on theories on the origins of Australian English, and to trace the development of the uniformity and the regional diversity of the language. Evidence, both direct and deduced, is produced that the use of regionalisms arose early in the development of the language.

The findings of the survey add to the world-wide body of empirical data on regional language varieties, and allow comparisons to be made with the nature of regional variation in other countries.

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