

Task for *The Bodysurfers*

Extract from *The Australian Legend* by Russell Ward (pp. 1–2)

According to the myth the 'typical Australian' is a practical man, rough and ready in his manner and quick to decry any appearance of affectation in others. He is a great improviser, ever willing to 'have a go' at anything, but willing to be content with a task done in a way that is 'near enough'. Though capable of great exertion in an emergency, he normally feels no impulse to work hard without good cause. He sears hard and consistently, gambles heavily and often, and drinks deeply on occasion. Though he is 'the world's best confidence man', he is usually taciturn rather than talkative, one who endures stoically rather than one who acts busily. He is a 'hard case', sceptical about the value of religion and of intellectual and cultural pursuits generally. He believes that Jack is as good as his master but, at least in principle, probably a good deal better, and so he is a great 'knocker' of eminent people unless, as in the case of his sporting heroes, they are distinguished by physical prowess. He is a fiercely independent person who hates officiousness and authority, especially when these qualities are embodied in military officers and policemen. Yet he is very hospitable and, above all, will stick to his mates through thick and thin, even if he thinks they may be in the wrong. No epithet in his vocabulary is more damning than 'scab', unless it be 'pimp' used in its peculiarly Australian slang meaning of 'informer'. He tends to be a rolling stone, highly suspect if he should chance to gather much moss.

In the following pages, we shall find that all these characteristics were widely attributed to the bushmen of the last century, not, primarily, to Australians in general or even country people in general, so much as the outback employees, the semi-nomadic drovers, shepherds, shearers, bullock-drivers, stockmen, boundary-riders, station-hands and others of the pastoral industry.

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