



Media release

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“Goodification” judged the worst word of 2012

The Plain English Foundation has voted **goodification** the worst word of 2012.

Fast food chain KFC chose “goodification” as the slogan for its marketing campaign in February, serving it up with lashings of “gooderer”, “goodest” and “goodify”.

“These are not real words and they violate English grammar,” said Foundation Executive Director Dr Neil James. “This is junk language to sell junk food.”

“And with rates of obesity and eating disorders spiralling, describing KFC’s chicken as ‘good’ is insincere at best,” Dr James said. “Fast food may be convenient, but you cannot seriously describe it as good for us, even if you do dress that up with humour.”

Each year, the Plain English Foundation collects dozens of examples of doublespeak, corporate jargon and fancy pants language via television, radio, newspapers, the internet and social media. The Foundation’s staff vote on the shortlist and winner.

As usual, politics featured on the 2012 list. During the US election, Senator Todd Akin’s reference to **legitimate rape** rightly offended voters, who legitimately threw him out of office. At home, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship referred to **IMAs (Irregular Maritime Arrivals)** to avoid the more humanising terms “boat people” or “asylum seekers”.

The corporate world maintained its presence on the list when Citigroup described the sacking of 11,000 staff as **repositioning actions**. This was little comfort to the “repositioned” people.

Then the 2012 Olympics organisers asked Londoners to **re-mode** during the games, while Qantas started asking passengers about **premiuming** of their bags. And people with part-time eating disorders were labelled **semi-remic**.

“We call these examples Frankenwords,” Dr James said, “because they are cobbled together from existing words to create something monstrous—Frankenstein words.”

The Foundation’s list also highlighted how technical language too often complicates everyday life. A Council Fire Order described a door handle as a **single handed downward action latching device**. Under new workplace laws, employers became **PCBUs (persons conducting a business or undertaking)**, while trackwork on a rail line was due to a **coordinated possession regime**.

The list rounds out with the worst **mixed metaphor**, straight from the world of sport.

Worst Words of the Year is part of the Foundation’s campaign to improve the quality of public language in Australia by raising awareness of poor language use.

The Plain English Foundation’s full list of 2012’s worst words and phrases follows.

Dr Neil James is available for interview over the Christmas period.

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Worst word of the year 2012

goodification

KFC and its ad agency decided it was time to sell junk food with junk language:

The 26th of February 2012 is a good day for KFC. In fact, it's our goodest day ever, because we've set out on a mission to improve everything we do. We call it 'The **Goodification**'. It's simple; you take a good thing, goodify it, and voila! It's gooderer.

Doublespeak

IMAs

"Boat people", aka "asylum seekers" or "refugees", are **Irregular Maritime Arrivals (IMAs)** to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. The term moved from bureaucratic reports to the department's website headlines.

An honourable mention went to Defence Minister Stephen Smith, who referred to the interception of Indonesian people-smuggling operations as **disruption events**. And the cliché **human tide** washed up far too often in mainstream media headlines.

legitimate rape

Dubious science and dubious language helped Republican Todd Akin lose his Senate seat after he said that women rarely get pregnant as a result of **legitimate rape**:

If it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down.

repositioning actions

When Citigroup announced that 11,000 workers would lose their jobs, it called the move "a series of **repositioning actions** that will further reduce expenses and improve efficiency across the company while maintaining Citi's unique capabilities to serve clients, especially in the emerging markets".

Frankenwords

premiuming

Boarding a Qantas plane in September, the Foundation's Executive Director was asked "Do you want to **premium** your bag?" He couldn't let his bag be subject to such a Frankenword.

semi-rexic

Apparently a part-time anorexic. **Semi-rexic** was used very loosely in blogs to describe someone so slim they must be indulging in a little bulimia. Let's stop this one taking off.

re-mode

To ease congestion during the Olympics, the British Secretary of State for Transport urged civil servants to **re-mode** during the Games. She meant walking or cycling to work, or working from home. People didn't feel better about the inconvenience of re-moding.

Techspeak

single handed downward action latching devices

When doors in an apartment building had knobs instead of a handle, the local Council issued a serious Fire Order with comically convoluted language.

An honourable mention went to a Victorian Parliament maintenance notice, which cited disruption to the **access control equipment**. These are known as doors to most of us.

PCBU

While new laws on “Work Health and Safety” replaced the 5-syllable term “occupational” with the simpler “work”, they then introduced an unnecessary 4-part acronym. No longer is an “employer” responsible for safety: from here on an employer is a **person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU)**.

coordinated possession regime

Wollondilly Shire Council announced to rail users that the Southern Highlands Line would close temporarily as “part of the new **coordinated possession regime**”. It apparently meant the trains had to stop while RailCorp worked on the track to improve service.

Management speak

enhanced proposition

International company Lion Nathan took over an independent New Zealand brewer, promoting an **enhanced proposition** to drinkers. Thanks to Kate Dowling who sent this one in after a reviving beer:

[The takeover] complements Lion’s existing beer portfolio well and allows us to offer our customers an **enhanced proposition** with a leading portfolio of brands across the specialty, boutique and popular craft market.

risk appetite

Hardly a new management term, but in the lead-up to the Olympics, a UK security expert used it to justify the arrest of terrorist suspects:

There wasn’t any specific threat ... [but] **risk appetite** is diminishing rapidly as we reach closer and closer to the Olympic Games.

Mixed metaphor of the year

Sporting journalists always lead in this contest, but a cricket journalist was a clear winner with his coverage of the West Indies tour in April:

Michael Clarke **dipped into his bag of tricks** to **pull another rabbit out of the hat**, but it was Michael Hussey who **led his team out of jail** as Australia **wiggled free** of West Indies hold **to take control** of the second Test on Monday.

And yes, it did actually read ‘wiggled free’, although there was no record of the players wearing colourful skivvies.