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In this chapter, we provide an account of antipodean swearing patterns, drawing on examples from existing written and spoken data banks. As part of this investigation, we consider general questions to do with swearing: what it is, why speakers do it and how swearing patterns have changed over the years. We identify four overlapping functions of swearing: the expletive, abusive, social and stylistic functions. We also consider the shift in social attitudes toward swearing and the repercussions of this for the law. Swearing has always been characterized as an earmark of Australian and New Zealand English. We conclude that it remains an important feature of these varieties, but question just how uniquely antipodean it is.
