

## Kookaburra Song

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Imagine a campfire without the traditional songs, Kumbaya, the Ants go marching and of course the Kookaburra Song, it just wouldn't be the same. Because of copyright the ordinary park ranger's job could potentially turn into a collection agent. The Kookaburra Song (also known as the first line of the lyrics- Kookaburra sits in the old gum tree) is a favourite world wide.

The history of the song starts off at Toorak College a Melbourne school based in Toorak then later moved to its current location in Mt Eliza. The student involved, Marion Sinclair was a boarder and then later became a music teacher.

Marion Sinclair went on the first girl guides interstate camp to Camden in 1926 and described it as "a more perfect spot for such a ceremony as a campfire it would be difficult to imagine. In spite of travel weariness, one felt the thrill of a united Australia, united in hope of building strong foundations of empire and of world- wide fellowship".<sup>1</sup> Marion Sinclair went on to pen the Kookaburra Song in 1934 and from then it became a favourite song, sung all over the world. Marion Sinclair died in 1988, aged 91.

Without even thinking this song is used countless times. Every kindergarten and primary school in Australia uses it. Copyright protected the lyrics after the song was written in 1934. The lyrics are protected until 2058, under the current copyright laws in the Australian Copyright Act 1968. The copyright is currently owned by Larrikin Music Publishing.<sup>2</sup>

The royalties are collected by APRA. So don't be caught with your pants on fire next time APRA's newest employees visit you at your camp fire.

(Footnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Coleman M & Darling H, From a Flicker To a Flame, The Story of The Girl Guides in Australia, Girl Guides Association Of Australia Incorporated, Sydney, 2000, at 148-149.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.kididdles.com/lyrics/k003.html>