



SISTERS IN CRIME 23rd SCARLET STILETTO AWARD CEREMONY
St Kilda Town Hall, corner Brighton Road & Carlisle Street
6.15pm Saturday 19 November 2016

6.15pm: SUE TURNBULL

Sisters in Crime/Brothers-in-Law,

My name's **SUE TURNBULL** and welcome to Sisters in Crime's 23rd Scarlet Stiletto Award ceremony for best crime and mystery short stories by Australian women.

This is the climax of today's amazing *SheKilda3: One Day Crime Spree*. We're might be a bit tired but we're triumphant.

It's especially wonderful to see so many crime fans gathered here tonight to celebrate 23 years of top crime and mystery short stories by Australian women – and the presentation of the first Silver Stiletto to mark our 25th silver anniversary.

Please put your hands together to welcome **NICOLE DA SILVA**, star of *Wentworth*, to discuss her life in crime and much more with me...

6.55pm: SUE TURNBULL:

On with the show. These are Sisters in Crime's 23rd Scarlet Stiletto Awards.

The name, Scarlet Stiletto Award, is in the grand tradition of crime writing awards (such as the Silver Dagger in the UK) and we've always loved the way the name combines the femininity of the stiletto shoe with the deadly speed of the stiletto knife and the sauciness of scarlet women.

In 23 years, 3084 stories have been entered with 22 Scarlet Stiletto Award winners and other category winners going on to have novels published. Please stand up if you are here tonight: **Cate Kennedy, Annie Hauxwell, Tara Moss, Angela Savage, Josephine Pennicott, Ellie Marney, Sara Evans, Inga Simpson, Alex Palmer, Liz Filleul, Margaret Bevege, Patricia Bernard, Bronwen Blake, Jo McGahey, Cheryl Jorgensen, Kylie Fox, Simmone Howell, Sandi Wallace, Amanda Wrangles, Emilie Collyer, Aoife Clifford and Anna Snoekstra.**

This year **158** short stories compete for **15** awards and a record **\$10,000**. This year, we were proud to announce that **Text Publishing** is for the first time offering sponsorship of the \$1500 first prize.

Simon & Schuster is the new sponsor for 2nd prize (\$1000). **Every Cloud Productions** has offered the inaugural Mystery with History Award.

And to celebrate our Silver anniversary we offered a special Silver Stiletto Award, open only to previous trophy (first-prize) winners. **Kerry Greenwood**, a founding member of Sister in Crime, has sponsored the \$1000 award and will also be presenting it.

I now call on **Michaela Lobb** to present the Judges' Report.

MICHAELA LOBB: (to come)

SUE TURNBULL:

We won't keep you in suspense much longer. I just need to outline the judging process:

- All 158 stories were judged blind.
- There were 10 judges. Each judge had a co-judge in arriving at a first short list. Every story in this first shortlist was read by each of the 9 final judges over a weekend at McCrae. It was so busy they didn't even get a walk on the beach!
- Stories came from right across Australia
- All finalists will receive a framed certificate.

I will announce the author, the name of the short story and give a very short synopsis provided by the author. When your name is announced please make your way up here.

As you are doing so, **NICOLE** will tell us a little about you and then present the award. We will be also joined by a few sponsors.

We will announce every winner but bios and story synopses will only be read for those who are actually here tonight.

At the end, we'll also call all short-listed authors up here for a group photo with **NICOLE**. 16 of the 23 shortlisted authors are here tonight – give them a big hand!

Please note that we not presenting The **Liz Navratil Award for Best Story with a Disabled Protagonist** this year.

We're starting with the Highly Commended stories.

Apologies from:

- **Pamela Rushby** (Seventeen Mile Rocks, Qld) for "Meryet and The Mystery of the Plundered Tomb". Pam kindly supplied the notes from the pitching workshop she runs to today's pitchers.
- **Ann Penhallurick** (Lilyfield, NSW) for "Broken Grass". Like Pam, Ann is a serial offender in these awards.
- **Zoe Downing** (Hillside, NSW) for "Old People".
- **Sarah Evans** (Bridgetown, WA) for "Lethal Love". Sarah is another serial offender.
- **Morgan Schatz Blackrose** (Nundah, Qld) for "No Fairytale".

I'll now announce Highly Commended authors who are here – in no particular order

Gabrielle Gardner (Montmorency, Vic) for “The Trip”.

“The Trip” was inspired by a conversation about manipulative, bullying men and what to do when they eventually show their true colours!

NICOLE DA SILVA: Gabrielle Gardner is an emerging Melbourne writer currently studying in the Professional Writing & Editing program at RMIT.

Her first full length manuscript “The Time of the Lilyweeds” won the HarperCollins Varuna Fellowship in 2013 and she was awarded a 12 month ASA mentorship in 2015 for the same work. Another manuscript was runner-up in the Fellowship of Australian Writers long fiction awards in 2014.

She has had 2 short stories published in separate Stringybark anthologies and this year was one of 6 winners in an international flash fiction anthology called 1000 Words or Less. She was published in *The Big Issue* in March this year.

SUE TURNBULL: Natalie Conyer (Mosman, NSW) for “Public Service”.

Professional thief Nicola Brazil goes undercover in the public service, to save the Energy Minister’s reputation. Will she let the government mine our public parks?

NICOLE DA SILVA: Natalie Conyer is a late-onset writer scrambling to make up for lost time. She’s read and loved crime fiction all her life, so much so she’s now doing a doctorate on it, hoping to finish before she loses her marbles completely. Last year she won The Sun Bookshop 3rd Prize for “New Start” which also took out the inaugural Harper Collins Romantic Suspense Award (\$500).

SUE TURNBULL: Bridgitte Cummings (North Brighton, SA) for “The Hunt”.

“The Hunt” is set in the harsh arid outback where fierce blood-thirsty dogs and marsupial lions roam. But is it the four legged beasts we should fear - or those that hunt on two legs with an unquenchable thirst for revenge?

NICOLE DA SILVA:

Bridgitte Cummings was born and raised in England, but is now living in sunny Adelaide. She has had stories published in the UK and was shortlisted last year in the 22nd Scarlett Stiletto Short Story award. She is a winner of the 2016 Big Issue Fiction Competition, and is currently working on her first novel.

SUE TURNBULL: Richenda Rudman (Kensington, Vic) was highly commended for “Remnant”.

While on stress leave from Victoria Police, a distinctive piece of fabric on a sculpture at an art exhibition throws Miranda into chaos. The remnant is from the dress of a missing child; it is the catalyst for her searching for the child and confronting the suicide of a close colleague in a country town tainted with bullying and family violence.

NICOLE DA SILVA: Richenda Rudman’s stories have been inspired by some of the fast and furious characters she met working as a speechwriter and training consultant. Writing is what she really wants to do and she’s thrilled to have been shortlisted for these awards, as well as winning the People’s Choice Poetry Award at Williamstown Literary Festival this year, and nabbing a Naked Man—not her

husband! {We think she is referring to Robert Gott's cartoons in *The Age*} Richenda won the 2014 Cross Genre Award.

SUE TURNBULL: Also highly recommended Melanie Myers (Ilkey, Qld) for "The Enthusiastic Amateur".

Treating venereal disease was a serious business in World War Two. As a former nurse at Brisbane's Lock Hospital during the war recalls the story of her friendship with one of her patients, her daughter is confronted with a shocking discovery.

NICOLE DA SILVA: Melanie is a writer, actor and academic. Her short fiction and articles have been published in *Kill Your Darlings*, *Arena Magazine*, the *Brisbane Times*, *Overland*, *Hecate*, and various trade publications. In 2014 she won the Scarlet Stiletto Political Edge Prize for her speculative work "Savage Women". She is currently writing a novel set in both contemporary and World War Two Brisbane for her PhD in Creative Writing at the University of the Sunshine Coast. She is the former artistic director of Reality Bites Nonfiction Festival.

SUE TURNBULL: Candice Graham (Ermington, NSW) was highly commended for "Transformations"

"Transformations" is about a little girl who copes with crime via her imagination, which comes to life through simple paper cut illustrations.

NICOLE DA SILVA: Candice Graham won the Scarlet Stiletto Award in 2013. After writing her entries this year, Candice used her postgraduate studies in neuropsychology to secure a position as a child psychologist, which is proving to be very rewarding work. Candice likes to balance her scientific pursuits with a healthy dose of artistic endeavours, such as creating paper cut illustrations for her shortlisted story "Transformations".

Candice was born and raised on the beautiful Mornington Peninsula in Victoria, where she met her husband Matt, and they now live in Sydney with their two rescued Samoyed dogs. Spurred on by the Scarlet Stiletto Awards, Candice has started working on her first crime novel.

SUE TURNBULL: Shannon Todd (Empire Bay, NSW) for "World's Best Mum".

Your life is a constant struggle to pay the bills and provide for your kids. You think you've found a solution but will you be brave enough to follow through?

NICOLE DA SILVA: Shannon is currently undertaking a PhD in Creative Writing at the University of Newcastle. Her area of research is the adaptation of Celtic fairy lore into works of contemporary young adult fantasy fiction and she is currently writing her own young adult fantasy novel as part of this investigation. Shannon also has a passion for writing crime fiction and was fortunate enough to win the Best Film Idea category in the 2013 Scarlet Stiletto Awards and a Special Commendation in 2012. She is thrilled to be included among the shortlisted authors for this year's awards.

SUE TURNBULL:

Irena Sprey (Mons, Qld) for "The Murders at Swaying Palms – A Libby Stark Mystery"

Private detective Libby Stark is hired by some anxious male residents of a small-town retirement village, where the men are dropping off at an alarming rate, the wives are definitely up to something and the police haven't a clue. Faced with a series of seemingly perfect crimes, Libby Stark finds the answer at the intersection of modern science and Greek mythology.

NICOLE DA SILVA: Irena Sprey came to Australia in 1980 aged thirteen, when her family defected from the Soviet Union. She graduated as a Civil Engineer, then worked as a TESOL teacher at UNSW and Sydney University. She has also worked as an interpreter, a dance teacher and a musician and, for the past twenty years, as a technical and freelance writer. Irena has been writing prose and poetry since the age of six. She is currently the president of the Sunshine Coast Writers' group and is completing her Bachelor of Creative Writing degree at the University of the Sunshine Coast.

SUE TURNBULL:

Jenny Chen (Templestowe, Vic) was highly recommended for "Child's Play" for the Allen & Unwin Youth Award, open to writers 18 or under. Jenny can't be here tonight.

And now we come to the prizes. **The Allen & Unwin Young Writer's Award (\$500) and goes to Ellen Vickerman (Carindale, Qld) for "Where Yellow Ends (Starring Eddie & me)".**

A serial murderer's love letter of sorts to one of the final victims of her illustrious career, detailing the beginning of the end as ten years of bloody loose ends begin to weave into net of evidence around her. Spanning several months, she plots her thoughts along the spectrum of the colour wheel, using shades of sensation in place of emotion in a broken mind where empathy has failed to thrive.

NICOLE DA SILVA: 17 year-old Ellen Vickerman currently attends Brisbane State High School, and intends to study Creative & Professional Writing at QUT next year. Fascinated by psychology and criminology, her interest in crime writing has been fostered by previous Scarlet Stiletto competitions and the Roly Sussex award. She is an aspiring novelist, screenwriter, and producer, who hopes to one day write psychological thrillers and political dramas for cable television. Last year Ellen won the Clan Destine Press Award for Cross Genre.

SUE TURNBULL: The Scriptworks Great Film Idea Award (\$200) has been won by Ruth Wykes (Crib Point, Vic) for "Stone Cold". Its sponsor, Karin Altmann, is going to join us on the stage to co-present it.

KARIN ALTMANN: When a seven-year-old boy goes missing from school in East Jindabyne police become suspicious of a man who has been convicted of sex offences. Investigating officers feel the pressure of finding the child and bringing peace back to this small, close-knit community but what they uncover, as they search for the boy, will leave a chill in the town that has nothing to do with its proximity to the Australian Alps.

NICOLE DA SILVA: Ruth is co-author of two true crime collections: *Women Who Kill*, which she wrote with Lindy Cameron in 2011, and *Invisible Women: powerful and disturbing stories of murdered sex workers* which she and Kylie Fox released earlier this year.

She holds down a full-time job, loves writing, gardening, travelling and hanging out with her friends. Recently she was convinced to dust off an unpublished novel and rework it, so that's her current focus – especially now the football season is over and she can't find any reasonable excuses to distract her.

SUE TURNBULL: Can Lindy Cameron join us on the stage to co-present her Clan Destine Press Award for Cross Genre (\$400)? Lindy is also Sisters in Crime's Vice-President.

LINDY CAMERON: And the award goes to Leisl Egan (West Heidelberg, Vic) for "He was Hers".

An old woman on a self-imposed exile is confronted by the results of her creation that destroyed mankind.

NICOLE DA SILVA: After an unsuccessful career in zoo keeping (that binturong had it coming!), Leisl Egan defected to Melbourne and headed to RMIT to study Professional Screenwriting (binturong free since 2007).

From there, she's worked on various TV shows and projects, and in 2013 her short story "Punchline" was one of five global winners in the Prada Literary Competition. She's been writing short stories since she was five and plans to do so until technology evolves to the point where it allows her to go into her own brain and live amongst the stories there.

SUE TURNBULL: The Award for Best Environmental Crime (\$500), donated by Catherine Leppert, has been won by Fin J Ross (Paynesville, Vic) for "Four Hundred Hectares of Nothing".

When forensic pathologist, Chloe Harper, is faced with a cadaver with bizarre facial burns, her investigation uncovers the bullying tactics used by Queensland's greedy gas companies to frack for coal seam gas on private farming property.

NICOLE DA SILVA:

The co-author of two true-crime anthologies, with her sister Lindy Cameron, Fin J Ross has now turned to writing historical fiction and has recently completed a novel set in 1870s' Melbourne, for which she is now seeking a publisher. She runs a boarding cattery in East Gippsland, breeds Bengal and British Shorthair cats and teaches creative writing in Paynesville – to maintain her sanity.

Fin won the Environmental Crime category of last year's Stiletto Awards and was awarded two prizes, for two different stories, at the 2014 awards.

SUE TURNBULL: Sandi Wallace (Mt Dandenong, Vic) has taken out the Harper Collins Romantic Suspense Award (\$500) for "Busted".

Hooked on 4.00am workouts and earning her promotion to detective, Nessa is happily single, until she falls for uninvited exercise partner, Jake. But is he the crook she's tracking for a string of early-morning home invasions?

NICOLE DA SILVA:

Sandi is a self-confessed crime fiction addict – she loves reading, writing, and watching it. Her debut rural crime thriller *Tell Me Why* won the 2015 Davitt Award Readers' Choice and was also shortlisted for the 2015 Davitt Award Best Debut. The sequel, *Dead Again*, will be out in April 2017. She won the 2104 Scriptworks Great Film Idea Award and the 2013 'Best Investigative Prize' Sandi lives in the beautiful Dandenong Ranges with her husband and furry family and is currently writing the next instalment in her series, along with a standalone psychological thriller.

SUE TURNBULL: The Financial Crime Award (\$500) has been offered by Ann Byrne for the past 4 years and goes to Katie Mills (Doubleview, WA) for "A Good Night's Sleep".

When work stress exacerbates Carrie's sleepwalking, her main concern is the dress sizes she'll gain from her habit of night-time nibbling. But should she be more concerned about the strange nocturnal events affecting her neighbours and colleagues?

NICOLE DA SILVA: Katie Mills is an academic librarian from Perth, Western Australia. In her free time, she enjoys travelling and hoop dancing. Her short stories were awarded prizes at the 2014 and 2015 Scarlet Stiletto Awards and she is currently a finalist in the 2016 Newcastle Poetry Prize.

SUE TURNBULL: Can I call on Fiona Eagger from Every Cloud Productions, the creator of *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries*, to make her way up to the stage, to present the inaugural Mystery with History Award (\$750). And can I just say, Fiona, how thrilled everyone is that there will be 3 Miss Fisher movies?

FIONA EAGGER: And the winner is Liz Filleul (Mount Dandenong, Vic) for "Foul Play". There must be something about that mountain air...

It's 1917 and Fairley's department store in Perth has organised a seamstresses versus shopgirls football game to raise money for the diggers fighting in Europe. When a body is found in the sewing factory stockroom and the seamstresses' best half-forward is accused of murder, two of her teammates set out to clear her name in time for the big game.

NICOLE DA SILVA: Liz Filleul won the Scarlet Stiletto Award in 2004 and was runner-up in 2007 and 2011. She has had numerous short stories, in various genres, published in magazines and anthologies in Australia, the UK and US. Her published books include a murder-mystery set in the world of vintage book collecting, an anthology of her award-winning crime stories, and a children's picture book. Liz has recently started writing again after a hiatus, and "Foul Play" is the first crime story she has written for four years. She is currently working on a series of children's books aimed at Middle Grade readers.

SUE TURNBULL: And now for the Kerry Greenwood Malice Domestic Award (\$750). And the award goes to Jenny Blackford (Wallsend, NSW) for "Cooking up a Murder".

Apollo's prophetic priestesses at Delphi advise empires whether to go to war, and kings who they should marry. But when the priestesses disagree whether a man's death is natural causes or murder, they need help from the naiads to solve the puzzle.

NICOLE DA SILVA: Jenny's stories and poems have appeared in *Cosmos*, *Westerly* and *Going Down Swinging*, and in many anthologies, including Year's Bests. Kate Forsyth described her historical novella set in Athens and Delphi, *The Priestess and the Slave* (Hadley Rille Books, 2009), as "Completely fascinating – a vivid and evocative glimpse into the life of the past, with its terrors and joys so strange and yet so familiar," and Alison Goodman called it "A compelling blend of vivid storytelling and meticulous research. Fascinating and thoroughly enjoyable." In 2013, award-winning Sydney imprint Pitt Street Poetry published her first book of poetry, *The Duties of a Cat*.

SUE TURNBULL:

We now come to the Athenaeum Library Body in the Library Award which is always popular.

The Athenaeum Library has once again generously sponsored two "Body in the Library" Awards and we are delighted that **SUE WESTWOOD**, the manager, is here tonight to co-present them.

SUE WESTWOOD: The \$500 runner-up prize is awarded Ellen Vickerman (Carindale, Qld) for "Where Yellow Ends (Starring Eddie & me)". What an achievement!

Please put your hands together for Ellen.

SUE WESTWOOD: The Body in the Library First Prize of \$1000 goes to: Catherine Moffatt (Lake Munmorah, NSW) for "The Team from Information Services".

Ginny has 'the best looking body in the library', Mia provides the brains and Eddy the entertainment. Like the Famous Five, the Team from Information Services intend to go on holiday, but instead, while trying to avoid the fearsome eye of Great Aunt Agnetha, end up solving a mystery.

NICOLE DA SILVA: Catherine Moffat lives on the NSW Central Coast and has been published in literary magazines including *Australian Book Review* and *Australian Short Stories*, on Radio National, and in a number of anthologies. She has won the Katharine Susannah Prichard Speculative Fiction competition and the Wyong Short Story award, and been shortlisted or commended for other prizes including the Newcastle Short story prize, the Elizabeth Jolley Short Story competition and the Margaret River Short Story prize. Catherine recently won the inaugural Brotherhood of St Laurence Hope prize, and the last time she entered the Scarlet Stiletto, in 2007, Catherine was commended for her story, "Dark Drive."

SUE TURNBULL:

Third Prize (\$500) is sponsored by long-time supporter, Sun Bookshop, and goes to Jenny Blackford (Wallsend, NSW) for "Cooking up a Murder" which, of course, also took out the Kerry Greenwood Malice Domestic Award.

NICOLE DA SILVA:

Another serial offender. A great achievement! Let's congratulate Jenny!

SUE TURNBULL: The Simon & Schuster Second Prize (\$1000) goes to Liz Filleul (Mount Dandenong, Vic) for "Foul Play", the story about the 1917 football match which was actually a real event.

Please give Liz a huge round of applause.

SUE TURNBULL: The Text Publishing 1ST Prize of \$1500 for the 2016 Scarlet Stiletto Award and the shoe go to... [drum roll please]

Ruth Wykes (Crib Point, Vic) for "Stone Cold".

Please welcome Ruth again to the stage! We don't think she saw this coming!!

[Ruth Wykes speaks.]

SUE TURNBULL:

And now for the presentation of the Silver Stiletto Award, open only to the previous shoe winners. A special panel of 3 judged the entries. I call on SANDRA NICHOLSON to report:

SANDRA NICHOLSON: Ann Byrne, Honey Brown and I knew that judging the Silver Stiletto entries was not going to be an easy task, as all of the entrants were previous Scarlet Stiletto winners, so had a proven track record. There were 14 entries and as we predicted, selecting just one winner was difficult, although the final decision was unanimous.

We were treated to stories set in the future, the past and present, but the main theme was the female sleuth of a 'certain age' proving that detecting is not just for the young.

The following comments from the judges sum up our reasons for choosing our winner.

"From the very first sentence I was hooked. The writing was clear and uncluttered and engrossing. I found myself turning into a greedy reader, wanting to read it quickly to get to the next sentence to see where the story was taking me – and what a journey! The 'off beat' sense of humour added to the

enjoyment of the reading and we all like a hero who overcomes the odds. I'm sure that there is a book in this story." (me – Sandra)

"The clarity and clean prose pushed (this story) to top spot... an engaging sassy story that creates a great sense of character and place within a few short pages. ...the action played out with such immediacy on the page. The dialogue rang true and the strong and uncluttered narrative pulled me along. Congratulations to the winner - no mean feat amongst a classy stack of stories from already celebrated writers." (Honey)

"(This story stood out as the classic short story in my first read of the Silver Stiletto entries, when I came to it on the second read I was excited. The protagonist is a fearless woman looking to change her life. The story has a good sense of place and incorporates the required "silver" word cleverly. The writing is clear with a quirky sense of humour, which the writer incorporates into (the protagonist's) decision-making - "Fearless women don't dwell". (The protagonist) does get herself into some murky situations but the writer cleverly manages the exit... A well-deserved winner for an excellent story. (Ann)

The Silver Stiletto Award sponsor, Kerry Greenwood, was unable to make the presentation as planned and **JUDITH RODRIQUEZ** kindly awarded the trophy.

JUDITH RODRIQUEZ: And the winner of the 25th Anniversary Sisters in Crime Silver Stiletto Award is [*drum roll please*] Jacqui Horwood with her story, "Diving for Pearls".

In "Diving for Pearls, Natalie is determined to break free of her rut and take more chances. But a one-night stand with the mysterious Dale doesn't end the way she expected. Now with Dale missing and the unsettling Razor sitting outside her house, will Natalie risk everything for the opportunity to change her life?

NICOLE DA SILVA:

A librarian and denizen of the inner west, Jacqui is a former Sisters in Crime convenor and current Davitt Award judges' wrangler. Her crime stories have appeared in e-zines and anthologies, and been shortlisted for various competitions. She likes her crime hard boiled and her eggs sunny side up. Jacqui won the 2003 Scarlet Stiletto Trophy.

SUE TURNBULL: We're almost there. **Angela Savage, who won the 2011 trophy, is doing us the honour of launching 6-ebooks of winning Scarlet Stiletto stories from 2011-2016 which have been published by Clan Destine Press.**

ANGELA SAVAGE: To help celebrate 25 years of Sisters in Crime, it's my pleasure today to launch six new e-books comprising the winning stories across all categories of the Scarlet Stiletto Awards from 2011 to 2016. This includes tonight's winners, all of whom I'd like to sincerely congratulate.

The e-books are published by Clan Destine Press, and a great job they've done of it, too. The anthologies start with *Scarlet Stiletto's The Third Cut* in 2011, which features the winning story by yours truly, and continues through the *Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh* and *Eight* cuts respectively, the latter featuring tonight's winners. These anthologies showcase the breadth of talent, imagination and – let's face it – murderous fantasies that fuel women's short crime fiction writing in Australia.

A couple of years ago, I conducted research for an article to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Scarlet Stiletto – you can find it on the Sisters in Crime website if you search for 'Red Shoes'. What came through overwhelmingly as I interviewed past winners was the role of the Scarlet Stiletto Awards and the Sisters in Crime in giving us the confidence to write, to dare to call ourselves writers.

Of course, supporting women crime writers and readers is the *raison d'être* of Sisters in Crime. That support takes all kinds of forms. When founding member and co-convenor Carmel Shute recently asked

her sisters to shoot her if she ever suggested holding another SheKilda women's crime writing convention, for example, several sisters helpfully revealed that they had firearms training and, before you knew it, Carmel had assembled her own personal firing squad. That's the kind of practical and moral support the Sisters have always provided for each other. But I digress...

In the 23 years to 2016, over 3,000 stories have been entered in the Scarlet Stiletto Awards, with 22 winners, including category winners, going on to have crime books published. Twenty-two books in 23 years – that's an astonishing hit rate, no pun intended. Come to think of it, the hit rate is even higher when you factor in that many of us have published multiple books. Some of those books even feature characters who first appeared in Scarlet Stiletto award entries. Believe me, I know this first-hand.

The success of the Scarlet Stiletto Awards in supporting the emergence of Australian women crime writers is all the more remarkable when you consider that the whole thing is a labour of love. The convenors and former convenors who do the judging do so in a voluntary capacity. That they say it is one of their favourite things to do doesn't abnegate the time and effort involved in keeping those red shoes polished till they sparkle. Let's take a moment to thank the Scarlet Stiletto Award judges, past and present, for their generosity and commitment to this venture.

Reading through 'the Cuts', as I'm nicknaming these six e-books, is guaranteed to satisfy all of us with an appetite for reading great women's crime fiction, as well as inspiring both the emerging and established writers among us. The stories are genuinely engrossing. Trust me: I read them on the train to and from Waurin Ponds and completely missed 90 minutes each way of uninspiring scenery. With stories that range from the dark and disturbing, to the comic and cosy, you may well discover a new favourite author – or, if the Sisters' track record is anything to go by – a favourite future author among those contributing to these anthologies.

The other thing that strikes me about these stories is the diverse range of voices, and the imaginative risk taking of the featured women writers. Women imagine themselves inside the heads of criminals and killers, vengeful victims, diligent detectives, even non-human animals on occasion. These experiments in creativity and empathic imagining can only be encouraged. In these dark political times we seem to have entered, the ability to imagine ourselves in another's shoes, and to encourage our readers to do likewise, becomes increasingly important.

All the *Scarlet Stiletto Cuts* are available now from the Clan Destine Press website in both ePub and Kindle formats, as well as from Amazon, Kobo and iTunes. They will also be available later next week from Booktopia.

Perhaps the most apt metaphor for what the Scarlet Stiletto Awards have meant for so many of us comes from my daughter. She was seven years old back when I was researching my 20th anniversary article and as I pulled the Scarlet Stiletto trophy I won in 2011 down from the bookshelf, she confessed she and her BFF ('Best Friend Forever') had a game they played with it.

"We pretend it's a magic shoe," she told me. "You put your foot in it and make a wish and it takes you wherever you want to go."

Thanks to the Sisters, and to the Scarlet Stiletto Awards, for taking me where I wanted to go.

And I commend the Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Cuts of award winning short stories to you all. Thank you.

SUE TURNBULL:

That concludes the presentation of the 23rd Scarlet Stiletto awards. I would like to acknowledge the generous support of our sponsors:
Text Publishing

Simon & Schuster
Sun Bookshop
The Athenaeum Library
Kerry Greenwood
Every Cloud Productions
Allen & Unwin
Harper Collins
Ann Byrne
Catherine Leppert
Clan Destine Press
Scriptworks
The Qld Chapter of Sisters in crime
Please join me in thanking them.

Finally I'd like to ask **NICOLE DA SILVA** to draw our last raffle for SheKilda3.

Draw raffle (3bags of books)

I would like to again thank **NICOLE DA SILVA** for her contribution to this special evening and present her with some gifts, including Scarlet Stiletto books, t-shirt, cards and the stiletto champagne stopper.

[Present NICOLE with gifts – pose for photos]

Big thanks also to **MICHELE COOPER** for her administration of the awards and to **MICHAELA LOBB**, our event manager, plus **CARMEL SHUTE, LINDY CAMERON**, and **CAZ BROWN** for their work in getting this ceremony together.

Start don't forget to writing now if you want to get your stories in for the 24th Scarlet Stiletto Awards by 31 August, 2017.

Thank you all for coming. We hope you've enjoyed SheKilda3.

Please leave your name tags in the box as you go out.

See you again next year!

Could all short-listed authors now join us on the stage for a group photo with **NICOLE and me?**

MICHAELA LOBB intervenes [Thanks and presentation of gifts to SUE TURNBULL]

{Surprise presentation of Doing Time Silver Stiletto trophy to CARMEL SHUTE, co-founder of Sisters in Crime.}

Thank you everybody!

ENDS