

Sisters are Doing It for themselves
Report to AGM, 9.45pm Friday 19 October 2018
Rising Sun Hotel
By Carmel Shute, Secretary

Thank you Lindy.

Sisters in Crime turned 27 in September and our hard work over all those years are really bearing fruit.

Our Davitt Awards, which were presented this year by the fabulous Danish thriller writer, **Sissel-Jo Gazan**, are becoming a springboard to global success.

Emma Viskic who won an unprecedented 3 Davitts in 2016 for her debut book, *Resurrection Bay*, and another at this year's Davitts for *And the Fire Came Down*, has been shortlisted for two top UK crime awards, the CWA Gold Dagger and the John Creasey Debut Dagger for the same book.

The 2017 CWA Gold Dagger was won by **Jane Harper**, who won 2 Davitts last year for *The Dry*, her debut novel, and another Davitt this year for *Force of Nature*, won the US Barry Award for Best First Novel in September.

Dervla McTiernan has been shortlisted for *The Guardian* UK's Not the Booker Prize 2018 for *The Ruin*. Just being shortlisted in the 2015 Scarlet Stiletto Awards was enough to keep her persevering through five drafts of the novel.

All Our Secrets, the debut novel by Australian ex-patriate crime writer, **Jennifer Lane**, won the Ngaio Marsh First Novel Award in New Zealand in September. It's just been rebirthed by Australian genre specialist, Clan Destine Press run by Sisters in

Crime's President, **Lindy Cameron**, who is here tonight despite it being her 60th birthday.

We all probably know about the 2015 Davitt winner, **Liane Moriarty**, whose book, *Big Little Lies*, has been made into a hugely successful TV series, produced by and starring **Reese Witherspoon** and our **Nicole**. A second series based on a novella of new stories by Liane is currently filming, and **Meryl Streep** has joined the cast. Reese and Co are also doing a series on Liane's subsequent non-crime book, *Truly Madly Guilty*. Reese is also filming *The Dry*.

Only Daughter, the debut novel of **Anna Snoekstra**, which was shortlisted last year, has been optioned in the US by Universal Pictures. **Erin Cressida-Wilson**, who wrote the script for *Girl on the Train*, is on her final draft of the adaptation.

Another feather in our collective cap are the Scarlet Stiletto Awards which turn 25 this year. We're thrilled that the ceremony will feature **Cate Kennedy** who won the first 2 awards and went onto become one of Australian most revered short-story writers. Cate, and another 22 winners of the awards, have gone on to have books published. For many – just think of **Tara Moss** and **Angela Savage** for instance – the awards have been life-transforming. We hope you will join us for these important celebrations, now back at Thornbury Theatre.

Sisters in Crime has a hugely busy calendar of events this year – not just here, but at numerous libraries – St Kilda (which is fairly regular) but also at Geelong, Frankston, Hastings, Mornington, Hawthorn, Prahran and Traralgon.

We produced three events for the recent St Kilda Writers' Week. Sisters in Crime will also be represented in two events at the Word for Word festival in Geelong, 16-18 November.

Despite all this, we can't have events for every author – there are just too many of you! There were 101 books in contention for this year's Davitts.

This year we again partnered with the Sir Zelman Cowen Centre at VU for Law Week in May. Yet again, our event was totally sold out.

Big thanks also go to the indomitable **Dr Carolyn Beasley**, Course Director of Writing and much else at Swinburne University. Swinburne kindly provided the venue for last year's Scarlet Stiletto Awards and this year's Davitts. Thanks to Carolyn, Swinburne also offers the No. 1 prize for the Scarlet Stiletto Awards.

We've put a huge effort over the past few months in getting members to renew and there has been a commensurate increase in the money we get from membership fees. However, this is not reflected in the balance sheet for the last financial year.

Finally, I just wanted to say that one thing that keep me going as a convenor is the generosity of spirit amongst our members. Yesterday I got a call from Wild Dingo Press who have published *Missing Pieces*, the second crime novel by Cairns member, **Professor Caroline de Costa**, to say Caroline was donating 10 copies to us. And when I turned The World Today back on the radio, who should I hear but Caroline commenting on the Queensland Parliament's historic decision to remove abortion off the criminal code after 100 years. Our Sisters just don't entertain us. They make the world a better place.

If you have already liked us on Facebook please do. We post a lot of items – especially links to RN program on crime books. This week, for instance, you could have heard Emma Viskic on The Hub on Books discussing the growth of the rural crime genre. As Emma pointed out, this was very evident at this year's Davitt Awards with 5 out of 6 shortlisted adult novels set in the country.

I'll close with some thank yous, firstly to my fellow convenors:

- **President Lindy Cameron** who does her best to chair the often unruly convenor meetings. Lindy also organises author blogs for the website and edits our e-newsletter, *A Stab in the Dark*. Lindy also works on programming and has organised a lot of the library events this year;
- **Vice-President Robyn Walton** who does so many regular, insightful Q&As with authors and top-rate reviews. She's also reviews for *The Australian* and helps program events;
- **Treasurer Lesley Gillis** who kindly stepped in the breach following the sudden resignation of former treasurer **Carmel Boyce** in June. Sisters in Crime's budget isn't quite on a par with the Department of Defence budget of \$1.4Billion that Lesley used to used to manage but we're working on it;
- **Michaela Lobb**, our event coordinator, who has done such a fantastic job, getting events, especially our big events, like the Davitts, the Scarlet Stiletto Awards and Law Week. Michaela has a new job and is not standing as a convenor this year.

However, she has kindly agreed to organise our 25th Scarlet Stiletto, happening next month, and will do special projects. She is already planning to do a special e-book of Youth stories from the Scarlet Stiletto Awards. The Youth Award celebrates its 25th anniversary next year. Back in 1995 Deborra-

Lee Furness presented the inaugural Allen & Unwin Youth Award to eight-year-old Carolyn Harding-South for her (heart-felt) story, “The Axe-Murderer Casualty Teacher”. Carolyn will now be 32 and we’re hoping she still has a copy!!

Michaela will also stay on a Scarlet Stiletto judge.

- **Caz Brown**, who designs our event notices trophy plaques, convenors badges and whatever needs doing.
- **Moraig Kisler** who has the onerous job of review editor and has really boosted the number of reviews going on our website.
- **Pauline Meaney** who has been on a mission to podcast our events. Unfortunately, burglars recently broke into her house and stole the computer with the podcasts on it. A Sister in Crime who was sadly the victim of crime.

The WA Chapter continues to meet as a book discussion group. The Queensland chapter is still active but I regret to report that the NSW Chapter has still not gotten off the ground.

Finally, many thanks are also due to:

- Australian publishers who generously support both the Davitt and Scarlet Stiletto Awards, donate books for our raffles and approach us re authors to speak at our events and help get them here.

- **Deb Force** and the energetic team at the Sun Bookshop, our official bookseller at events. Deb has an encyclopaedic knowledge of crime writing and is a great source of top advice on what's worth reading.
- Former convenor **Michele Cooper** who administers the Scarlet Stiletto Awards, a huge job.
- Former convenor **Jacqui Horwood** who was the judges' wrangler for the Davitt Awards – another massive responsibility;
- **Amanda, Mal** and the wonderful team here at the Rising Sun.
- **Mark Barry** from BS Sound who does a terrific job setting up the PA system for dummies here at our events.

And most especially thanks to all of you, our members, for sticking with us. Thank you for coming. I trust you're still having fun which is our main reason for existence. Thank you.