



REPORT TO AGM

2pm, Saturday 28 May, 2022

by Zoom

By Carmel Shute, Secretary

Thank you Moraig – and thank you everyone for attending our 2021 delayed AGM.

It's been a challenging time, but this report outlines that we have managed our way through it, with some silver linings.

One of the silver linings of two terrible years of lockdowns has been Zoom which has allowed Sisters in Crime to feature authors from all over Australia and parts beyond. It has enabled us to reach a national and indeed global audience, and to hold AGMs such as this where all members can participate, irrespective of geographical location. Temporarily, at least, we have overcome the tyranny of distance.

Looking at the numbers from our YouTube channel, it shows we have reached hundreds and in some cases over a thousand viewers, which is amazing compared with the size of our normal face-to-face events.

The keynote event over the past year was Sisters in Crime's 30th birthday held belatedly a month ago in the magnificent new Victoria Pride Centre in St Kilda, just up the road from Leo's Spaghetti Bar where, for 16 years, we met in the dingy backroom, just past the men's toilets. It was our first proper live event in more than two years. It was thrilling to meet up in person and eat, drink, sing, talk and laugh. **Sue Turnbull**, Sisters Ambassador-at-Large, came from Wollongong to host the event – and was, as always, brilliantly attired. Some surmised she had stepped out of Harry Potter.

We were chuffed to receive birthday greetings from **Sara Paretsky** (her V I books have just turned 40 by the way), **Kathy Reichs** (and her cat **Skinny**), **Shamini Flint**, **Vanda Symon**, **Sigrid Thornton**, and **Cate Kennedy**. You can see their videos on our YouTube channel.

A video of the ceremony will be available on YouTube soon. Seeing **Jane Clifton** and **Chele Cooper** lead us all in singing "Sisters Are Writin' It For Themselves" is worth a watch – and many thanks to short-story guru, **Cate Kennedy**, for the lyrics.

Just a little bit further down Fitzroy Street was my old flat where five of us met on 24 April, 1991 to plan the launch of Sisters in Crime at the Feminist Book Fortnight in September.

We weren't quite "The Famous Five". No dog, no lashings of ginger beer, but our decision did ultimately become famous – or infamous – because Sisters in Crime is still here more than 30 years later. Our organisation now has over 500 paid up members, 3500 followers, and chapters in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and, soon we hope, in Tasmania, and maybe the ACT.

Our Scarlet Stiletto and Davitt Awards have launched literary careers and helped build the reputation of Australian women's crime writing. We have a busy presence on social media and now, as mentioned, a

YouTube channel. We have helped make Australian women's crime writing a global sensation, and one that is increasingly making the transition to the screen.

Let's congratulate Sydney member **Candice Fox** for *Troppo*, the 8-part series based on her book *Crimson Lake*, which has just been on ABC TV, and **Jane Harper**. Production has just started on the film of Jane's second Aaron Falk novel, *Force of Nature*. Jane had her very first literary event with Sisters in Crime in Melbourne in June 2016. The event was entitled, "Making a Killing: How to write a best-selling crime book". Were we prescient or what?

More generally, we have been able to enjoy a busy calendar of events over the past twelve months, despite the pandemic. We've had monthly Murder Monday one-on-one author interviews thanks to former convenor, **Karina Kilmore**. So far, 40 different authors have been interviewed, including leading overseas writers, **Sara Paretsky, Kathy Reichs, Val McDermid, Ann Cleeves, Louise Candlish, Sara Vaughan, Vanda Symon, and Tara Moss**.

In Melbourne, monthly events have been Zoomed, as has the occasional event in Sydney. There's been a lot of fun with everything from "How to Get Away with Murder" and **Jacqui Horwood's** interview with the inimitable **Lynda La Plante** who last spoke to Sisters in Crime in 1997 when she was still riding on the wave created by *Prime Suspect*. We're thrilled that Lynda has joined Sisters in Crime Australia.

The 2021 Davitt Awards and the Scarlet Stiletto Awards were both Zoomed and tarted up with music and graphics thanks to **Kathryn Lamont**, or, as we always say, the *lovely* Kathryn Lamont, a former Swinburne student, now with Crime Stoppers. Both ceremonies were very engaging, featuring the talents of **Debra Oswald, Tara Mitchell, Catherine McClements and Jane Clifton**. So far, the Davitts video has attracted 421 views, the Scarlets 320.

This year, by the way, around 170 books are in contention for the Davitts – what an explosion of criminal talent we have overseen. Back in 2001, when the awards were established, there were seven books in the running, though the awards didn't then extend to true crime.

In Queensland, members have gotten together most months, either face-to-face or on Zoom. The South Australian chapter has hosted several events.

In the past year, we also partnered with Port Phillip Library Services to produce five programs entitled the Bare Bones of True Crime, all available on the library website.

We trust you've enjoyed the monthly e-newsletter, A Stab in the Dark, produced by fellow convenor, **Sara Hood**, and me. Sara and our review editor, **Moraig Kisler**, now put out a mid-month review edition featuring six book reviews and **Siobhan Mullany's** pithy television reviews. Siobhan is a NSW convenor who won the Scarlet Stiletto trophy back in 1997.

Sara Hood also had the bright idea of The Crime Stack where 20 members are chosen at random each month to receive a free book donated by publishers. It's yet another reason to be a member.

The pandemic has also meant we put much more of an effort into social media – Facebook (which I mostly do), and Twitter and Instagram (which Sara Hood does).

It also delivers value for writers and for publishers, as well as for us. So it's a win on many levels.

If you haven't already liked us on Facebook, please do. We post a lot of items – partly because our members feature in the media a lot and partly because there are a lot of crime shows on television! 3,671 people currently follow us. Please also follow us on Twitter and Instagram.

Though opportunities have necessarily been limited, members have been able to participate in festivals such as the International **BAD Sydney Crime Festival** (which is very, very good), the **Clunes Booktown Literary Festival**, and some library events.

We have a lot to look forward over the next year – we're partnering with women in Cobargo in southern New South Wales to produce a one-day festival on 27 August. In Melbourne we're partnering with Bayside City Council over August and September to produce Crime Wave Hits Bayside and Beyond.

Tomorrow, if you're in Melbourne, we'd love to see you at the Dicks Vs Dames debate at the St Kilda Army & Navy Club at 5pm, the topic: "The female of the species is deadlier than the male". You can warm up with Crime on the Couch author interviews, starting at 1.15pm. The ticketing system is a bit clunky (not our fault!) but you can pay with your credit card at the door.

I'll close with some thank yous, firstly to the convenors who have served over the past 12 months:

- President **Moraig Kisler** keeps our meetings in order – no mean feat – and does a splendid job organising our reviews. Moraig is also a Davitt judge and is desperate to find enough time to finish her police procedural novel, *The Salt Works*. She is also on the programming sub-committee with Carolyn Beasley, from Swinburne University of Technology, and me.
- **Vice-President Lindy Cameron** liaises with interstate chapters and always has bright ideas about programming. She works with Sara Hood on the communications and membership sub-committee. She has made an outstanding contribution to Sisters in Crime since 1992. Lindy is a great trouble-shooter and her enthusiasm remains contagious.
- Our treasured Treasurer **Lesley Gillis** is fabulous in keeping our finances in order and paying our bills. As I said last year, we love a woman who knows numbers. Lesley works closely with our wonderful accountant, **Robyn Young**.
- Committee member, **Sara Hood**, has helped modernise our association rules (which were voted at last year's AGM), and has been in charge of revamping the Sisters in Crime website. We hope you like the new look, and find it easier to find out what's happening. We also hope that joining or re-joining is much simpler. Managing all this change has been a big challenge but Sara has been able to ease our transition. Hooray!

Two convenors resigned last year:

- **Karina Kilmore**, who continues to do an outstanding job in hosting Murder Monday interviews, and other initiatives such as the Bares Bones of True Crime.

And

- **Tara Mitchell**, who did fantastic job with coordinating events, especially our big events, like the Davitts and the Scarlet Stiletto Awards. She also presented last year's Davitt Awards.

I would also like to pay tribute to:

- **Caz Brown**, a former convenor, who has done such a great job in designing most of our graphics, and trophy plaques, t-shirts, tote bags, convenors badges, and medallions to go on the shortlisted and winning Davitt books. Her output during the pandemic has been prodigious. She has designed all the frames for our online events and all the graphics used for the website and social media. She has played a pivotal role in creating Sisters in Crime's 'look'. Caz has been made a life member as she served on the national committee for 10 years but, because of the pandemic, we're still to make a formal presentation. Hopefully, it will happen next month.

I do admin, programming, event coordination, sponsorship, PR, and publisher liaison.

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, which now offers an online service. Deb has an encyclopaedic knowledge of crime writing and is a great source of top advice on what's worth reading.
- Former convenor **Chele Cooper** who has administered the Scarlet Stiletto Awards, a huge job, but is standing down this year. We are seeking a volunteer.
- **David Ryding** and **Panda Wong** at the City of Literature Office which has hosted scores of our Zoom hook-ups, at no cost.
- **Sue Westwood** and the team at the **Melbourne Athenaeum Library** for their event partnership.
- The indefatigable **Dr Carolyn Beasley** from **Swinburne University of Technology** which supports the Davitts and the first prize for the Scarlet Stiletto Awards.
- **Nyadol Nyuon** from om the **Sir Zelman Cowen Centre** at **Victoria University**, the co-host for our annual Law Week event.
- **Tanya Wakefield** and the wonderful team at the Rising Sun. We are looking forward to going back there in July.
- **Mark Barry** from BS Sound who does a terrific job setting up the PA system for dummies at our events when we can have them live. It was wonderful to see Mark last Friday night at our 16th Law Week event at VU.

And most especially thanks to all of you, our members, for sticking with us over tough times. We came through! And we have learned a lot of new skills such as Zoom which we will continue to use. I'm very much looking forward to returning to our face-to-face events.



Thank you.