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## Crime (writing) on the rise – Sisters in Crime Australia announces the longlist for its 25<sup>th</sup> Davitt Awards

Sisters in Crime's Davitt Awards for the best crime and mystery books by Australian women turn 25 this year and it plans to celebrate in style.

Award-winning crime short story writer, **Ruth Wykes**, is again the Judges' Coordinator, and said Australian women's crime writing is riding a huge wave that has left our shores and is now sweeping around the world.

"This year 150 books have been entered in Sisters in Crime's 25<sup>th</sup> Davitt Awards – a testimony to its richness and depth. Back in 2001, when the awards were established, only seven books were in contention," she said.

The longlist includes 29 books – fifteen adult novels (out of a possible 114), three non-fiction books (out of nine), five Young Adult novels (out of 11) and six children's novels (out of 16).

Wykes said that this year's longlist is a stunning and diverse collection of stories.

"Judges were searching for those unforgettable characters, thought-provoking or funny stories, settings that felt organic to the story - and for those stories that stayed with us long after we finished the last chapter. We are also looking for quality in writing and originality in storytelling that raises the bar even higher for our wonderful Australian crime and mystery writers," she said.

"It was heartening to see some of the contemporary themes that were explored by the longlisted authors. In *Highway 13* Fiona McFarlane imagined the long-term impact of a serial killer on people who were directly and indirectly affected by his rampage several years ago. Shankari Chandran's *Safe Haven* set us squarely in an offshore detention centre in a story that enraged us, broke our hearts and shone a light on this important issue.

"Vikki Wakefield sent us *To the River* – the Murray River – where we joined a young woman and her dog in hiding after being accused of murdering her family. Glenna Thomson haunted us in *Gone* when we watched a family, stuck in a void of grief and hope after their child went missing."

The landscape often vied with plot and character in importance, Wykes said

“A cave featured in Donna M Cameron’s evocative novel, *The Rewilding*, described as a ‘love letter to our planet’. It shone a spotlight on greed and power and the urgent need for change. We went on a road trip with Anna Downes in north-west WA in *Red River Road*, where the search was for a missing sister, an Instagram influencer. In Riley James, *The Chilling*, we voyaged to Antarctica, the most stark, unfriendly place on the planet.

“The mountains, not Australia’s dusty plains, were central in Claire Sutherland’s *The Crag* and Margaret Hickey’s *The Creeper*.”

Wykes said that the longlisted non-fiction works – *In Bad Faith*, *Crimes of the Cross*, and *The Lasting Harm* – also concerned the abuse of children.

“The longlisted YA and children’s novels do deal with some serious issues but they are also great fun. There is a missing dog, a missing parrot, missing exotic animals and no end of quirky adventures. In Emily Gale’s & Nova Weetman’s timeslip novel, *Outlaw Girls*, Kate and Ruby live in the High Country in Victoria. They’re both daring, quick-thinking and prepared to break the rules, and they’re both brilliant horse riders—they’d probably be great friends. But they live in different times, more than 140 years apart. In Kate Emery’s YA murder mystery, *My Family and Other Suspects*, Holly Jackson meets Agatha Christie . . .”

Some of the longlisted books have already taken out awards – *Highway 13*, for example, has won NSW and Victorian Premier’s Literary Awards, and the Story Prize. Dervla McTiernan stand-alone novel, *What Happened to Nina?*, took out the General Fiction Book of the Year award at the May Australian Book Industry Awards.

Apart from McTiernan, several other shortlisted authors are repeat offenders when it comes to the Davitt Awards – Vikki Wakefield, Amy Doak, Charlie Archbold, Judith Rossell, and R.A. Spratt.

The longlist is:

#### **Adult Fiction:**

Donna M. Cameron, *The Rewilding* (Transit Lounge Publishing)  
 Shankari Chandran, *Safe Haven* (Ultimo Press)  
 Sherryl Clark, *Woman, Missing* (HQ Fiction/HarperCollins Publishers Australia)  
 Anna Downes, *Red River Road* (Affirm Press)  
 Amanda Hampson, *The Cryptic Clue: A Tea Ladies Mystery* (Penguin Random House Australia)  
 Georgia Harper, *What I Would Do to You* (Penguin Random House Australia) Debut  
 Margaret Hickey, *The Creeper* (Penguin Random House Australia)  
 Riley James, *The Chilling* (Allen & Unwin) Debut  
 Fiona McFarlane, *Highway 13* (Allen & Unwin)  
 Dervla McTiernan, *What Happened to Nina?* (HarperCollins Publishers Australia)  
 Hannah Richell, *The Search Party* (Simon & Schuster Australia)  
 Claire Sutherland, *The Crag* (Affirm Press) Debut  
 Glenna Thompson, *Gone* (Penguin Random House Australia)  
 Vikki Wakefield, *To the River* (Text Publishing)  
 Lee Winter, *Vengeance Planning for Amateurs* (Ylva Publishing)

**Non-Fiction:**

Dassi Erlich, *In Bad Faith: Inside a secret ultra-orthodox sect and the brutal betrayal it tried to hide* (Hachette Australia) Debut

Anne Manne, *Crimes of the Cross* (Black Inc Books)

Lucia Osborne-Crowley, *The Lasting Harm: Witnessing the trial of Ghislaine Maxwell* (Allen & Unwin)

**Young Adult Noven:**

Amy Doak, *Eleanor Jones Can't Keep a Secret* (Penguin Books Australia)

Kate Emery, *My Family and Other Suspects* (Allen & Unwin)

Jane Godwin, *Look Me in the Eye* (Hachette Australia)

Erin Gough, *Into the Mouth of the Wolf* (Hardie Grant Publishing)

Krystal Sutherland, *The Invocations* (Penguin Books Australia)

**Children's Novels:**

Charlie Archbold, *The Sugarcane Kids and the Empty Cage* (Text Publishing)

Joe Featherstone, *Queen of Dogs* (Walker Books) Debut

Emily Gale and Nova Weetman, *Outlaw Girls* (Text Publishing)

Jacqueline Harvey, *Willa and Woof: Best Idea Yet* (Penguin Books Australia)

Judith Rossell, *The Midwatch* (Hardie Grant Publishers)

R.A. Spratt, *Friday Barnes 12, Collision Course* (Penguin Books Australia)

A shortlist will be announced in July.

This year the Davitts are again supported by the [Swinburne University of Technology](#).

The Davitts are named after **Ellen Davitt**, the author of Australia's first mystery novel, *Force and Fraud*, in 1865.

The awards are handsome wooden trophies featuring the front cover of the winning book under perspex.

The judging panel for 2025 comprises **Ruth Wykes**, 2016 Scarlet Stiletto Award winner, author, editor and review editor; **Professor Emerita Christina Lee**, 1994 and 1996 Scarlet Stiletto Award winner; **Moraig Kisler**, Sisters in Crime's Secretary, and former review editor; **Romany Rzechowicz**, 2023 Scarlet Stiletto Award winner and communications manager; **Dr Philomena Horsley**, winner of the 2018 Scarlet Stiletto Award and medical autopsy expert; **Ashleigh Meikle**, blogger; writer, editor, proofreader, book reviewer; and **Cecile Shanahan**, editor, proof-reader and curator of the Bendigo Writers Festival.

Six Davitt Awards will be presented at a gala dinner in Melbourne in late August – Best Adult Novel; Best Young Adult Novel; Best Children's Novel; Best Non-fiction Book; Best Debut Book (any category); and Readers' Choice (as voted the 600+ members of Sisters in Crime Australia).

Voting for the Davitt (Readers' Award Choice) by the 600+ members of Sisters in Crime will open shortly and closes Sunday 27 July, 11.59 pm.

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