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Women's crime writing is world-class: Sisters in Crime Australia announces the shortlist for its 25th Davitt Awards

Australian women's crime writing is proving yet again that it is world class, says **Ruth Wykes**, the Judges' Coordinator for Sisters in Crime's 25th Davitt Awards for the best crime and mystery books by Australian women.

"During the marathon of reading 150 crime books, we judges were bowled over by the sheer inventiveness of the storytelling, the unforgettable characters, and the keen sense of Australian place. The only drawback is that so many outstanding books missed the cut," she said.

Thirteen books made it to the shortlist –five adult novels, three non-fiction books, two YA adult novels, and three children's novels. Three of the books in contention are debut works. All 34 debut books are under consideration for the Debut Award.

Wykes said that the diversity of the issues explored is impressive – from climate change and institutional sexual abuse to kidnapped dogs and mysterious orphanages.

"**Georgia Harper's** *What I Would Do to You* examines what can happen if the death penalty is back with a catch – if the victim's family wants the perpetrator to die, they have to do it themselves. In *Highway 13*, **Fiona McFarlane** imagines 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," she said.

"A cave is featured in **Donna M Cameron's** evocative novel, *The Rewilding*, which is described as a 'love letter to our planet'. In **Vikki Wakefield's** *To the River*, the Murray River is itself a character, almost rivalling the complexity of the goodies and baddies."

Wykes said that two of the longlisted non-fiction works – **Dassi Erlich's** *In Bad Faith* and **Anne Manne's** *Crimes of the Cross* (Black Inc. Books) – are concerned with the sexual abuse of children.

“**Lucia Osborne-Crowley’s** *The Lasting Harm*, takes a different approach to the trial of Ghislaine Maxwell by concentrating on her victims. She attended every single day of the trial and brings heft to the task,” she said.

Wykes said that the judges admired the way that the shortlisted YA and children’s novels tackled some tough issues but brought so much humour and fun to the task.

“In *Look Me in the Eye*, **Jane Godwin**, explores how young teens navigate friendship and trust in a post-pandemic world of surveillance and control. **Erin Gough’s** *Into the Mouth of the Wolf* is part dystopia, part eco-thriller and part queer romance, all tied up in a ripping mystery,” she said.

“In **Emily Gale’s** and **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. The story brings a new perspective to the Kelly Gang.

“Three-time Davitt winner, **Judith Rossell**, is back with *The Midwatch*, which she has also illustrated. This time the adventure takes us to a mysterious orphanage. **Joe Featherstone’s** *Queen of Dogs* features a girl whose dog disappears. In her search, she discovers she can understand everything the neighbourhood dogs are saying. It is a surprisingly moving book that made me both laugh and cry.”

A swag of Davitt Award winners has gone on to have global success – **Jane Harper**, **Liane Moriarty**, **Emma Viskic**, **Sulari Gentill**, **Ellie Marney**, **Jacqueline Bublitz**, **Sally Hepworth**, **Dervla McTiernan**, **Alison Goodman**, **Hannah Kent**, **Malla Nunn**, **Heather Rose**, and **Judith Rossell**.

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 co-curator of the Bendigo Writers Festival.

Six Davitt Awards will be presented at a gala dinner in Melbourne on Friday 5 September – Best Adult Novel; Best Young Adult Novel; Best Children’s Novel; Best Non-fiction Book; Best Debut Book (any category); and Kerry Greenwood Readers’ Choice (as voted the 600+ members of Sisters in Crime Australia.

Voting for the Davitt (Kerry Greenwood Readers’ Award Choice) closes on Thursday 31 July, 11.30 pm.

The Davitts are again supported by the [Swinburne University of Technology](https://www.swinburne.edu.au/).

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The shortlist follows:

SHORTLIST

Adult Novels:

Donna M Cameron, *The Rewilding* (Transit Lounge Publishing)

Shankari Chandran, *Safe Haven* (Ultimo Press)

Georgia Harper, *What I Would Do to You* (Penguin Random House Australia) Debut

Fiona McFarlane, *Highway 13* (Allen & Unwin)

Vikki Wakefield, *To the River* (Text Publishing)

Non-Fiction Books:

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 Novels:

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

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

Children's Novels:

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

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

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