



17th DAVITT AWARD CEREMONY

Thornbury Theatre, 859 High Street, Thornbury

7pm Saturday 26 August 2017

SCRIPT

7.25pm Sue Turnbull: [Ask people to take their seats.]

7.30pm Sue Turnbull: Sisters in Crime, Brothers-in-Law welcome to the 17th Davitt Awards, the night of nights for Australian women's crime...writing.

My name is Sue Turnbull and, for my sins, I am now Sisters in Crime's ambassador. I am delighted that so many of you have joined us tonight for what promises to be a night of fun, food and forensics.

There are over 90 of us here tonight.

Indigenous welcome:

At the outset, on behalf of Sisters in Crime Australia, I would also like to pay my respects to the people and elders, past and present, of the Wurundjeri [Wurr- UND-joo-ree] people and the Kulin {Koo-lin} ation. We acknowledge and uphold their relationship to this land. Thank you.

Our Davitt presenter is the multi-talented **Hilary Bonney** whom I will introduce properly a bit later but given her a big cheer for now. Please stand and take a bow Hilary.

Apart from Hilary and me, we can welcome 25 women authors with crime books under their belts. Some have come from interstate.

When I mention your name, please make your presence known – and, if you have books in contention tonight, get your pens ready for signings later.

- **Robin Bowles**
- **Lindy Cameron**
- **Tania Chandler**
- **Aoife Clifford**
- **Hazel Edwards**
- **Cath Ferla**
- **Kylie Fox ***
- **Anna George**
- **J M (Jennifer) Green**
- **Jane Harper**
- **Megan Jacobson**
- **L A (Louisa) Larkin**
- **P D (Phillipa) Martin**
- **Megan Norris**
- **Carolyn Pethick ***
- **Vikki Petraitis**
- **Shivaun Plozza**
- **Leigh Redhead**

- **Judith Rossell**
- **Janice Simpson**
- **Kimberley Starr ***
- **Emma Viskic**
- **Sue Williams**
- **Ruth Wykes * (*booked but did not attend)**

Have we left anyone out?

The books of all shortlisted authors and some others are on sale here thanks to the Sun Bookshop. Many thanks for your great support.

We also like to welcome the father of **Phoebe Handsjuk: Lorne Campbell**. He decided to come when they learned that Robin Bowles' book, *Into the Darkness: The mysterious death of Phoebe Handsjuk*, had been shortlisted.

It is now my pleasure to introduce **Dr Carolyn Beasley**, the acting department chair of Swinburne University of Technology's Media and Communication Department, the Davitt's major sponsor.

Dr Carolyn Beasley: Swinburne is so very very honoured to be able to support the incredible work of Sisters is Crime and the Davitt Awards.

For us, it's a bit of a no brainer. As flagship members of a diversity organisation called Athena Swan, gender diversity and support for the careers and cultural presence of women is critical for Swinburne, just as it is for the crime writing scene. So we are perfect partners in crime, or 'coies' as we'd be called in the slang of criminal culture.

Having taught in a maximum security women's prison for over 6 years (which many would say it no different to working in a university) and having done my PhD on crime fiction (which again, a PhD is very much like being a prisoner serving a long sentence), I got to work intimately with many female perpetrators and victims of crime. As a result of this, I'm always passionately interested in the ways that we write about women in crime fiction. And I have to congratulate you all on making such an effort to re-dress many of the simplistic assumptions about the intersection of women and crime by bringing a brave authenticity to women's experiences with crime, with victimisation, with police forces, and with social and legal systems. Thank you all so much for giving voice to vibrant, diverse, and hidden voices in your storytelling. You should each be proud of the contribution you've made.

Swinburne would like to continue our relationship with you and your storytelling by offering you free use of our media and communication facilities. We have excellent new radio and podcasting studios that we are happy to offer for use for no fee if you're interested in working on audio projects, we can work with you on television and video related projects, and we have postgraduate and PhD by novel programs that are open to you.

We already work with the Historical Novel Society and Writers Victoria on podcast projects that aim to put more writers on the cultural landscape, so we'd love to further our relationship with you as well.

So on that note, thanks to Carmel and the Sister in Crime crew for putting on such an exciting and much needed evening. And again, **thank you** for letting us help keep **Ellen Davitt's spirit** and your own great work, alive.

Sue Turnbull: [Thanks Carolyn.]

And thank you to everyone else who contributed to our appeal through the Australian Cultural Fund. We managed to just meet our \$5000 target.

After the main course, I'll be interrogating Hilary Bonney up here about 45 minutes before we break for tea and coffee and the awards.

Meanwhile you can enter the 'Be Immortalised in Fiction' competition – for \$5 each or three for \$10 you can compete to have your name in the next crime novel by the winner of the Davitt (Best Debut Book).

Slips of paper are on every table and in the intermission we'll be sending **Janice Simpson** around to collect the money (and it may be with menaces!).

There's also Sisters in Crime's traditional book raffle (\$2 a ticket/3 for \$5). There are 3 bags of fabulous crime books on offer for 1st, 2nd & 3rd prizes, as you can see [point].

Later this evening, we'll be having a Sisters in Crime first – an auction!! It's for a photo portrait session donated by Piccoli Portraits, worth \$845. We'll accept a credit or debit card payment.

At Sisters in Crime's front desk you can join, rejoin or put your name on the email event notification list.

Also, on the screen you'll be seeing pics from previous Davitts over the past 14 years. A warning if you're a regular attendee: you may no longer look as young as you used to.

Thank you.

7.45pm **Main courses start arriving**

8.10pm **PLAY VIDEO OF CLIPS FROM HILARY BONNEY SHOWS**

8.15pm **Sue Turnbull:** Please join with me in welcoming the presenter of Sisters in Crime's 17th Davitt Awards – the multitalented **Hilary Bonney**.

Hilary Bonney is a barrister, crime writer and TV producer. She has worked as a prosecuting solicitor for the Office of Public Prosecutions Victoria and also taught at the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, other Australian universities and overseas.

Hilary has written short plays and two true-crime books: *The Society Murders*, which was made into a television movie, and *The Double Life of Herman Rockefeller*, which is the basis for the forthcoming show, *Murder Calls*.

Hilary was Story Consultant and Associate Producer of *Crownies*, an associate producer of the Janet King series, and the legal and story consultant on *Newton's Law*, all screened on the ABC.

[Sue Turnbull and Hilary Bonney in conversation]

8.58pm **Sue Turnbull:** [Thanks Hilary]

Now is your chance to buy raffle tickets (\$5 a ticket/3 for \$10) and enter the 'Be Immortalised in Fiction' competition – for \$5 each or three for \$10 you can compete to have your name in the next crime novel by of the Davitt (Best Debut Book).

You can also buy books at the Sun Bookshop stall. 10% discount for Sisters in Crime members.

Intermission with tea and coffee.

9.30pm: Sue Turnbull

We start the formal award presentations, we're having a quick auction. It's a first for Sisters in Crime and a first for me. It's for a photo portrait session donated by Piccoli Portraits, worth \$845. We'll accept a credit or debit card payment.

[Sue conducts auction.]

As many of you will know, the Davitts were set up at SheKilda 2001 Women's Crime Convention to celebrate the crime writing achievements of Australian women. 17 years later, we're still celebrating and there's a lot more to celebrate – something for which the Davitts can take some credit.

Back in 2001, there were 7 books in contention though the awards then didn't extend to True Crime – or what we're now calling Non-Fiction. This year there are a record 99 books in contention.

For someone involved in teaching about television, it is particularly gratifying to see so many women's crime books translated for both the big and small screen. We have just heard about Hilary's record in this regard. 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**.

However, we may not all know that **Reese Witherspoon** and her Australian co-producer, **Bruna Papandrea**, have also optioned **Jane Harper's**, *The Dry. Only Daughter*, the debut novel of another shortlisted author, **Anna Snoekstra**, has been optioned in the US by Universal Pictures.

The trophies were again crafted by convenor Lindy Cameron's real-life brother-in-law, Steve Ross.

On behalf of Sisters in Crime, I'd like to thank the judges for all their hard work: **Maggie Baron**, **Deborah Crabtree**, **Jacqui Horwood**, **Michaela Lobb**, **Sylvia Loader** and **Debbie Stephen**. Could you all please stand except for Sylvia who lives interstate?

Special thanks to **Maggie Baron** and **Deborah Crabtree** who are retiring as judges to spend more time on their crime novels and to **Sylvia Loader** who is returning to live in the UK.

I'll now hand over to Jacqui Horwood who will present the judges' report:

9.35pm Judges' Report from Jacqui Horwood:

With the judging panel this year, we lost a Deb but gained a Sylvia. We had the mammoth task of reading and assessing 99 books. As always, each book is initially read by two people. Throughout the process we talk constantly and the books that are potential short listers are read by the other judges along the way. Once books are shortlisted, we ensure these books are read by all judges.

As always, the judges are amazed by both the quality and quantity of crime books being written by Australian women. Every year we need to read more and more books, and every year these books get better and better. In particular, the self-assuredness of the debut writers is a joy to behold.

Plots and topics for books cover an array of social and emotional territories – from gambling and drug use to family violence and missing relatives. The main characters driving these stories have pushed past the typical police officer or private detective scenarios. Even those who do use these templates have created characters who are well-realized and challenging. The crimes take place all over Australia and all over the world.

The judges loved that there were lots of brilliant crime and mystery books for children and young people, ensuring the next generation of crime readers. The same with the non-fiction – we were lucky to have such a fabulous array of books to read.

Thank you to all the writers here tonight – those just starting out, the emerging and the emerged – thank you for all your hard work. Keep writing and keep pushing the envelope. I truly believe we are in a new Golden Era for Australian women crime writers.

Sue Turnbull: [Thank Jacqui.]

9.45pm DAVITTS PRESENTATION

DAVITT (BEST NON-FICTION CRIME BOOK)

Sue Turnbull: 14 books competed this year for the Davitt (Best Non-Fiction Book) with 4 shortlisted.

- Robin Bowles, *Into the Darkness: The mysterious death of Phoebe Handsjuk* (Scribe Publications Australia)

- Rachel Landers, *Who Bombed the Hilton?* (Newsouth Books)
- Megan Norris, *Look What You Made Me Do: Fathers who kill* (Bonnier Publishing Australia)
- Ruth Wykes and Kylie Fox, *Invisible Women* (Bonnier Publishing Australia)

Hilary Bonney: It is now my great pleasure to announce the Non-Fiction winner – **Megan Norris** for *Look What You Made Me Do: Fathers who kill* (Bonnier Publishing Australia, previously Echo).

Megan Norris's passion for crime writing began as a young journalist covering police rounds and courts for a busy provincial evening newspaper in the British Midlands.

After emigrating to Australia in 1990, Megan established her own news agency supplying exclusive court stories to national and international print and TV media where the devastating first-hand accounts of the survivors of some of the nation's most notorious and horrific crimes have made headline news.

In more than 35 years in news, Megan has covered everything from the Port Arthur shootings and Bali Bombings to Melbourne's infamous gangland wars as well as a string of high profile murders and cold cases. Her stories have made the front pages of national women's magazines, and secured ratings for TV shows including *Sixty Minutes* and *Sunday Night*. Her crime features have appeared worldwide in publications like the *UK Mail on Sunday* to *National Inquirer* and *US magazine*.

Megan's insight into the criminal justice system and the impact of violent crime on survivors and their families naturally evolved into writing true crime books. Her first book, *Perfect Victim* co-written with the mother of murdered Melbourne dancer, Rachel Barber, is now a movie starring Guy Pearce, Sam Neill and Miranda Otto, and like her subsequent books, *On Father's Day* and *Love you to Death*, received exclusive coverage on TV and in the weekend press.

A respected crime commentator, Megan has appeared on Foxtel's *Crimes that Shook Australia* and *Sunday Night* speaking about the Robert Farquharson case. She has been a return guest on the popular podcast *True Crime* hosted by radio personality Mishel Laurie and fellow crime writer, Emily Webb, also a member of *Sisters in Crime*.

Look What You Made Me Do is Megan's sixth book. She is currently working on book number seven.

Sue Turnbull: The Davitt judges report notes:

"We are all too familiar with the scenario: a woman is missing; hours/days later her partner is found dead by suicide and the interpretation of the circumstances shifts to murder/suicide. But if taking your partner's life wasn't enough, for some men they inflict a more enduring agony: murdering their children.

"In this book Megan Norris focusses on what is deemed 'spousal revenge'. She takes us through seven instances, involving 13 innocent children who died at the hands of their fathers who were seeking to punish their mothers. The scenarios are similar. The mothers chose to end abusive relationships with those men. The fathers have then taken the lives of their children in revenge.

"Through this book, Megan Norris has shone a light into this very dark recess. She advocates the use of Apprehended Violence Orders, to restrict these 'at risk' men from having unsupervised access to their children. More importantly, she has allowed these serious crimes to be better understood and ultimately to inform new approaches to managing these complex and deadly situations."

[Hilary Bonney presents trophy to Megan Norris.]

Megan Norris: It is an incredible honour being here tonight as part of a 'sleuth' of crime writers who share the same fascination for the darker side of the human psyche and a passion for writing books about it.

Being acknowledged as a 'real' crime writer is really flattering for someone who continues to view herself as a court reporter – a behind-the-scenes journo who has the privilege of being entrusted with the stories of people who have survived some of Australia's most horrific crimes.

It is very humbling to know my book has been chosen for an award. But I think it belongs as much to the courageous mums who have shared the gut wrenching experience of mourning children who have been murdered by a vengeful ex, as it does to me.

When I embarked on this project, I hoped that the voices of several Australian women, telling their stories together in a single book, would impart a message so powerful it would be impossible to ignore.

It appears their voices have finally been heard, first by my fellow sisters who helped the book find its way onto the short list, and again by the Judges who grappled with an impressive line-up of worthy contenders in this year's True Crime category.

So, on behalf of the mother's and myself, thank you so much.

True crime is never easy to write because there are no happy endings to any of my stories. So your recognition is encouraging after the countless nights I spent typing when the faces of thirteen little casualties who will never grow up kept me awake.

Thanks to **Julia Taylor**, my former Commissioning Editor at Echo [now Bonnier] for supporting this book, and a special thanks to my husband, **Steve**, who can't bring himself to read a single word I write, but believes in me anyway.

DAVITT (BEST CHILDREN'S NOVEL)

Sue Turnbull: This year 11 crime books have competed for the Davitt for Best Children's Novel. 4 were shortlisted:

- Catherine Jinks, *Theophilus Grey and the Traitor's Mask* (Allen & Unwin)
- Jessica Miller, *Elizabeth and Zenoba* (Text Publishing)
- Judith Rossell, *Wormwood Mire: A Stella Montgomery intrigue* (book #2) (HarperCollins Australia)
- Jen Storer, *Truly Tan: Hoodwinked* (HarperCollins Australia)

Hilary Bonney: And the Davitt for the Best Children's Crime Novel goes to **Judith Rossell** for *Wormwood Mire: A Stella Montgomery intrigue* (book #2).

Judith Rossell is the multi-award-winning author-illustrator of the bestselling Stella Montgomery series (*Withering-by-Sea*, *Wormwood Mire*). *Withering-by-Sea* took out this award in 2015.

Before beginning her career in children's books, Judith worked as a government scientist (not a mad scientist, a normal kind of scientist) and also for a cotton spinning company (that made threads for T-shirts and denim jeans and mops and teabag strings).

Judith has written thirteen books and illustrated more than eighty, and her work has been published in the US, UK and has been translated into more than twenty languages. Judith lives here in Melbourne with a cat the size of a walrus.

Sue Turnbull: This is what the judges had to say:

"*Wormwood Mire* takes off from where *Withering-by-Sea* ends. Young Stella is sent away by her appalled aunts to stay with her cousins in a sprawling and mysterious house that may or may not hold the secret to her identity. The judges loved being taken away from the present to a quirky, imaginative world filled with unusual characters, secret doorways and mysterious beings. This is the book we would have loved to have read when we are young."

[Hilary Bonney to present trophy to Judith Rossell]

Judith Rossell: Thank you so much! It's such an honour to be accepting this award tonight. Thank you to the judges and all the Sisters in Crime. It's great to be here, and to be part of this lovely celebration. And thank you especially for recognising children's books in these awards.

I'd like to thank the people at ABC Books/HarperCollins, **Chren Byng, Kate Burnitt** and **Hazel Lam**, and my agent **Jill Corcoran**. A big thank you to everyone who has had to listen to me tell you yet another interesting bit of Victoriana over the last few years. You've all been very patient and tolerant.

And finally, I would like to thank the readers who have enjoyed Stella's adventures. Writing for kids is such a privilege. I loved reading when I was younger, and it feels brilliant now to be able to create books for the next generation of readers.

DAVITT (BEST YOUNG ADULT NOVEL)

Sue Turnbull: This year's Young Adult field was strongly competitive with the books just getting better and better. 11 books were in contention with 3 shortlisted:

- Megan Jacobson, *Yellow* (Penguin Random House Australia)
- Shivaun Plozza, *Frankie* (Penguin Random House Australia)
- Nova Weetman, *Everything is Changed* (University of Queensland Press)

Hilary Bonney: The winner of the Davitt for Best Young Adult is **Shivaun Plozza** for *Frankie* (Penguin Random House Australia).

Frankie, which has been published in both Australia and the US, is a darkly funny novel exploring the disappearance of a young graffiti artist and the angry, smart-mouthed girl willing to defy her friends, family and the law to find him. *Frankie* was highly commended in the Victorian Premier Literary Awards and is currently shortlisted for the CBCA Book of the Year and longlisted for the Gold Inky Award.

Shivaun's second novel, *Tin Heart* (Penguin Random House Australia), will be released in March 2018. Her short fiction, flash fiction, essays and poetry have appeared in anthologies and journals including *Where the Shoreline Used to Be*, *ELLE Australia*, *Above Water*, *Text*, *Vivid* and *The Victorian Writer*. When she's not writing, Shivaun works as an editor and manuscript assessor.

Sue Turnbull: And now for the judges' report:

"From the opening pages this tough, gutsy teenager named Frankie impressed the judges. Frankie Vega is angry, smart, sarcastic, full of attitude but not without vulnerabilities. The writing is assured, the (mean) streets of Collingwood ring true, the relationships feel real, the story itself is not without pain and adversity, and it takes the reader into some dark places at times.

"The attitude of society and the authorities towards missing persons of a particular socio-economic group is explored with tragic consequences. Families are fractured, people are broken but there's a whole lot of love and heart in this novel. This was a standout novel for the judges."

[Hilary presents trophy to Shivaun Plozza.]

Shivaun Plozza: There were a number of reasons why I wrote *Frankie* but few were as clear to me from the inception of the novel as my desire to create a modern, teenaged, female version of the typical noir detective voice. I wanted my main character to be like Philip Marlowe except seventeen, living in Collingwood and, well, a girl. I was trying to mix YA contemporary realism with a modern, feminist take on hard-boiled detective fiction.

So to have won an award like this – an actual crime-writing award, an actual crime-writing award for women – makes me feel that perhaps I succeeded in this intention.

So my first thanks go to the amazing Sisters in Crime for being the supportive, proactive and progressive organisation that they are. And thanks to the judges of this award for loving my sassy, dry-witted, world-weary anti-heroine as much as I do.

I would also like to thank everyone at Penguin Random House. **Lisa Riley, Susie Gibson, Deb Van Tol, Amy Thomas, Kristen Gill** and everyone in sales, **Dorothy Tonkin, Tina Gunnior** and everyone in marketing and publicity, **Marina** for the amazing cover, and finally, most importantly, to **Michelle Madden**, the best editor *Frankie* could have asked for.

Big thanks to everyone at Writers Victoria and the Grace Marion Wilson Trust. Also thanks to my writers group **Sarah Vincent, Cathy Hainsock, Rosey Chang** and **Marie Davies**, and to my agent **Cheryl Pientka**.

Lastly, thanks go to my friends – particularly **Alexis Drevikovsky, Rebekah Pluekhan** and **Peta Twisk** – and to my family, especially Mum and Dad.

DAVITT (BEST ADULT NOVEL)

Sue Turnbull: Tonight, a record, astonishing 63 novels compete for the Davitt Best Adult Novel for the best crime novel of 2016 with 5 books shortlisted:

- Tania Chandler, *Dead in the Water* (Scribe Publications Australia)
- Cath Ferla, *Ghost Girls* (Bonnier Publishing Australia)
- Jane Harper, *The Dry* (Pan Macmillan Australia)
- Melina Marchetta, *Tell the Truth, Shame the Devil* (Penguin Random House Australia)
- Holly Throsby, *Goodwood* (Allen & Unwin)

Hilary Bonney: Drum roll please...

And the winner of the 2017 Davitt Award for Best Adult Novel is **Jane Harper** for *The Dry* (Pan Macmillan Australia).

This novel has already won a swag of awards including the 2015 Victorian Premier's Literary Award for an Unpublished Manuscript, the 2017 Indie Award Book of the Year and the 2017 Australian Book Industry Awards Australian Book of the Year Award. *The Dry* is Jane's first novel, with rights sold in 27 territories worldwide, and film rights optioned to Reese Witherspoon and Bruna Papandrea.

Jane worked as a print journalist for thirteen years both in Australia and the UK and lives in Melbourne. Her next novel, *Force of Nature*, will be released next month.

Sue Turnbull: And here's what the judges report says:

"*The Dry* grips the reader from the opening page and doesn't let go until the climax. Set in the dry landscape of a country town filled with secrets and long-held grudges, *The Dry* is an atmospheric and claustrophobic read that explores the complexities of life in a rural community through the lens of a devastating crime. The judges were impressed Harper's tight control of the narrative and her well-realized characters. A well-crafted and delivered crime novel."

[Hilary Bonney presents trophy to Jane Harper]

Jane Harper: Thank you so much to Sisters in Crime and the judging panel for this Davitt award. It's an honour for *The Dry* to be recognised in this way.

No-one knows crime quite like the Sisters in Crime, so I'm thrilled that my novel has been singled out by such a discerning group. *The Dry* has been embraced in a way I never could have imagined when I started writing it, and I'm so grateful to the Sisters in Crime for championing not only this novel but

all crime writing by Australian women writers. There are few groups more committed to their chosen genre and your enthusiasm breathes life and energy into books you support.

I would also like to recognise and congratulate the other shortlisted authors, it is an honour for my book to be included among such fantastic company.

Thank you again to the judges. I'm beyond thrilled, and especially thank you to everyone who has read and enjoyed the book over the past year."

DAVITT (DEBUT AWARD)

Sue Turnbull: The judges shortlisted 8 books for the Davitt (Best Debut Book) from a record 30 debut books across all 4 categories:

- Cath Ferla, *Ghost Girls* (Bonnier Publishing Australia)
- Jane Harper, *The Dry* (Pan Macmillan Australia)
- Megan Jacobson, *Yellow* (Penguin Random House Australia)
- Rachel Landers, *Who Bombed the Hilton?* (Newsouth Books)
- Melina Marchetta, *Tell the Truth, Shame the Devil* (Penguin Random House Australia)
- Jessica Miller, *Elizabeth and Zenoba* (Text Publishing)
- Shivaun Plozza, *Frankie* (Penguin Random House Australia)
- Holly Throsby, *Goodwood* (Allen & Unwin)

Hilary Bonney: And the winner is **Cath Ferla** for *Ghost Girls* (Bonnier Publishing Australia)

Cath Ferla is a multi-platform writer with experience in journalism, television screenwriting and educational publishing. She holds a Graduate Diploma of Education and has taught in Melbourne, Sydney and Beijing. Cath is currently undertaking a Graduate Diploma of Mandarin Chinese.

Sue Turnbull: The judges said:

"*Ghost Girls* is a highly original story that takes the reader into the darker side of Sydney and the world of the international student. The judges enjoyed Ferla's evocation of place which took them into the sights, smells and sounds of Sydney's Chinatown. Ferla impressed with her deft handling of pace and intrigue, and the judges are sure she will continue to deliver exciting and readable crime books. A superb debut."

[Hilary Bonney presents trophy to Cath Ferla]

Cath Ferla: Thank you.

I'd like first to acknowledge and thank the wonderful Sisters and Crime and the community this organisation has built over many years. Thank you in particular to the formidable Carmel Shute and convenors and co-convenors past and present. You have built a community of women (and men) who love crime writing, whether as readers or writers or both and who work to push women's crime writing, both mainstream and independent, to the forefront of public consciousness. You are an almighty organisation and I am very thankful.

Thank you to the judging panel for your hard work in reading the many wonderful crime novels written by women in the past year. These awards push women's writing and the focus on women's writing, forward and that is why they are important. But they could not happen without your dedication.

I'd like to thank my publisher Bonnier Australia, with particular thanks to the wonderful **Angela Meyer** who swooped in and connected with this manuscript and gave me the astute structural advice to help me make it better. I'd also like to thank **Kirstin Corcoran** and all the many others at Bonnier for their hard work in making this book become real in the world.

Big thanks to Angela Savage for acting as a mentor and for introducing me to Angela Meyer and Bonnier and for just being a true friend and support through a lot of the process of publishing GG.

In receiving this award for a debut novel I'd like to speak to the writers listening who are yet to publish their debut. It will happen. In most cases, after years and a lot of second-guessing. But a word of advice. It is very different, to hold your book close to your heart and to share it with one or two, or even a handful of people, to putting it out into the world.

A novel is different to a piece of journalism or even a screenplay, and I've done these things too. In these other mediums, your heart is less on show – in a novel, you are alone and in writing it you wrench a part of your soul and put it on display. Nearly all of us put so much of what we want to say in our life into our first book. It is an expression that has often taken years in its development.

That, combined with the sudden explosion of calendar dates and requirements to talk from the heart about why and how and who in relation to a work that had previously felt very private, can be difficult. This was something I encountered but hadn't anticipated. My skin was thick in relation to editorial feedback and comment, but less thick in terms of how I would actually feel having my words out there in print, to be interpreted in multiple different ways.

What helps is keeping grounded, remembering how much love you put into your book, realising that sometimes you need to be brave in order to say something different, be very careful about your quotes and take some time to breathe, before going at it again.

Lastly, when you sign your book for the very first time, pay careful attention to the requirements of the person asking for the signature. I signed my first ever book, before I even had my own copy, for the wonderful Carmel Shute. She left a copy at my table place at a Sisters in Crime event early last year. I conferred with author Candice Fox, sitting beside me, and she said 'sign it on the title page and get the spelling right!' I was so, so careful to sign Carmel's name right. Unfortunately, when I handed her the book, my first ever signing, she opened the title page and said: 'It was supposed to say "dear Little Peach!!"'. Apparently, there was a post-it note on the front cover and Carmel had asked me to sign it for her sister. Mistake.

It was so embarrassing. I glared at Candice. She gave me a sympathetic look and moved off to check the microphones. So it was Carmel and me. 'I'll buy you another one,' I said (while thinking, Jesus, I'm supposed to be giving my first author talk in 4 minutes...). Carmel took the book and waved a hand 'Don't worry darling,' she said, 'just take me out to dinner.'

That's the kind of sister Carmel is. We did go out for dinner, ate far too much Sichuan food and ended up having drinks at the Toff quite a bit later. It was worth getting it wrong the first time... and I never got it wrong again.

READERS' CHOICE AWARD

Hilary Bonney: It's now our great privilege to present The Davitt (Readers' Choice) award. All 99 books competed for this award as decided by the 600 members of Sisters in Crime.

And the winner is ... **drum roll please...**

Jane Harper for *The Dry* (Pan Macmillan Australia).

[Hilary Bonney presents trophy to Jane Harper]

Jane Harper: I think there is nothing better for an author than readers telling you they enjoyed your book, so I am absolutely delighted to have won this award. When I first started writing *The Dry*, I set out to write the kind of book I enjoy reading myself. To hear that other people have enjoyed reading it as well is all I really wanted for the novel, so for it to be recognised in this way is very special. I can't even imagine how many crime novels the Sisters in Crime members and supporters must read each year, so I am very grateful to everyone who voted for *The Dry* and I'm so thrilled that you enjoyed it.

Hilary Bonney: *The Dry* is also shortlisted for a Ned Kelly First Fiction Award on 1 September so keep your fingers crossed everyone.

Jane has kindly donated an advance copy of *Force of Nature* so check under your chair for a card and bring it up. Naturally Jane would be delighted to sign it.

[Photo op – Jane Harper and winner.]

10.20pm Sue Turnbull:

- [Hilary Bonney to draw raffle winners –3rd, 2nd, 1st]
- [Hilary Bonney to draw the ‘Be Immortalised in Fiction’ competition]
- [Thank Hilary – present gifts.]

Sue Turnbull: Thank you all for coming. Special thanks to Sisters in Crime convenor, **Michaela Lobb**, who has managed tonight’s event; plus **Caz Brown, Ann Byrne, Robyn Byrne, Lindy Cameron, Pauline Meaney, Janice Simpson, Robyn Walton** and **Carmel Shute**; and the judges – **Maggie Baron, Deborah Crabtree, Jacqui Horwood, Michaela Lobb, Sylvia Loader** and **Debbie Stephen**.

And now for some announcements:

- **Emma Viskic** [Vis-kitch], who won 3 Davitts last year, is launching her 2nd novel tomorrow, 4pm, Beer deluxe, at Fed Square. You are all welcome. Free!
- The **Ned Kelly Awards** - 6pm, Friday 1 September at Toff of the Town, 252 Swanston Street. A number of Sisters in Crime authors are shortlisted. Free!
- **8pm Friday 29 September: Dangerous deceptions and delusions with Sulari Gentill, Sarah Schmidt, and Megan Goldin at the Rising Sun Hotel.**
- **Friday 27 October, 8pm: Sensational seconds with Emma Viskic** [Vis-kitch], **Anna Snoekstra** and **J. M. Green, also at the Rising Sun Hotel. (Followed by Sisters in Crime’s AGM.)**
Book in through Eventbrite on the Sisters in Crime website.

It’s not too late to buy books and get them signed by the authors. 10% discount for members at the Sun Bookshop stall.

Please also put your hands together again for Hilary Bonney.

Grab a notice on your way out.

Thank you. See you again next year.

Could all the winners come up here for a group photo with their trophies.