

REPORT TO THE 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

9.45 pm, Friday 25 October, 2024

Carmel Shute, Secretary

Thank you, Lindy, and thank you everyone for sticking around for our 2024 AGM.

One of our members from Queensland, **Athena Law**, sent a message with her proxy form: “Also kudos to you for having an AGM that runs for approximately the length of a glass of wine, my kind of meeting” so I will endeavour to meet her expectations.

Sisters in Crime has been very active in the last twelve months. Nationally, we now have 577 paid-up members. With supporters, our mailing list for our monthly e-newsletter, *A Stab in the Dark*, runs to 4082. We trust you enjoy the new format Stabby, as we convenors call it, and our Facebook and other social media posts. BTW – at the beginning of lockdown, I started posting about crime shows, nearly all with female protagonists. I am now up to 560 posts. So much TV crime! So much viewing pleasure!

This year we’ve been able to enjoy a second series of *Troppo*, based on **Candice Fox’s** *Crimson Lake*, and a 3rd series is planned. Candice, of course, is presenting this year’s Scarlet Stiletto Awards. Hosting is **Sarah Bailey** whose first novel in her Gemma Woodstock series, *The Dark Lake*, is currently in development with Brouhaha Entertainment and Stan, with **Phoebe Tonkin** to play Gemma. A major network is just about to sign up to screen the debut Davitt-winning crime novel of **Vikki Petraitis** even though it doesn’t have ‘lake’ in the title. Stand by to see *The Unbelieved* in your lounge room. Meanwhile, Vikki will be launching a new true crime podcast, *The Unthinkable*, on 10 November. Her other podcasts have notched up something like 10 million views!

Also on the screen has been Melbourne author, **Katherine Kovacic**, who starred in the 26 September episode of *Great Australian Walks* with **Suzie Youssef** on SBS On Demand. She revisited the unsolved 1930 murder of artist’s muse, **Molly Dean** – the inspiration for her first Alex Clayton mystery novels, *The Portrait of Molly Dean*. Fingers crossed that Alex Clayton makes it to the screen.

We’ve had a stack of events here in Victoria – nine here at the Rising Sun alone.

Last year’s 30th Scarlet Stiletto Award ceremony with **Fiona Egger** and **Deb Cox**, was a fabulous occasion, with nearly everyone in scarlet and pearls, the 30th anniversary gift. In the lead-up to the awards, **Susanna Lobez**, actor-turned-barrister-turned-broadcaster-turned-true-crime-author, began progressively narrating the winning stories in a podcast – Scarlet Stiletto Bites: Scintillating stories by Australian women. She is a fabulous reader – she can do all the voices! They’re free and posted on Fridays on Spotify, Apple, Google, Amazon and other services. Over 60 stories are now available for your listening pleasure.

The Davitt Awards in August were also a sell-out with 153 books battling it out for the six awards on offer. Award-winning author, **Sulari Gentill**, regaled us with amazing stories of her life in crime. Back when she herself won a Davitt Award 12 years previously, she said (and still believes it), that becoming one of the Sisters is reason enough to put a dead body in your novel.

Talking of dead bodies, we were thrilled that Radio National's Big Ideas recorded and broadcast our 18th Law Week event, Postmortem: What bugs, bruises, blood, bones . . . and teeth tell us about suspicious deaths. It is entitled, *Postmortem — Why forensic science is nothing like CSI*, and you can still listen to it online <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/bigideas/postmortem-why-forensic-science-is-nothing-like-csi-/104097104>

Interstate, the chapters in Queensland, NSW, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia have also held several events, though it's been a bit quiet. They could do with more active support from local members. The Queensland Chapter holds events in both Brisbane and the Gold Coast. The Brisbane dinners have been sell-outs.

The Tasmanian Chapter convenor, **LJM Owen** is also the director of the Terror Australis crime writers' festival. Its 2024 professional development program for writers will be starting shortly.

Our monthly **Murder Monday** one-on-one author interviews continue to be a joy with the exuberant **Jacq Ellem** in Tasmania at the helm. There are 62 Murder Mondays available on our YouTube channel.

The monthly **Crime Stack**, where publishers donate 20 copies of books to members. has proved a big winner. Winners are chosen by algorithm – however, amazingly quite a few members have had two or three wins, sometimes in successive months! One of the quirks, the many quirks, of AI.

I'll close with some thank yous, firstly to the many volunteers who make Sisters in Crime run. We exist on your generosity.

Many thanks to the convenors who have served over the past 12 months:

- President **Kelly Gardiner** has been a fount of sensible advice and we're thrilled she is standing again. And she is a superb chair of sometimes rowdy meetings.
- **Vice-President Lindy Cameron** liaises with interstate chapters and always has bright ideas about programming. She now also videos our events. 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** does an outstanding job in keeping our finances in order and paying our bills. Lesley works closely with our esteemed accountant, **Robyn Young**.
- **Ruth Wykes** has been a champion Davitt Awards coordinator and also administered the Scarlet Stiletto Awards this year.
- New convenor **Leslie Falkiner-Rose** has brought so much knowledge and know-how about funding and the digital world.
- Committee member, **Sara Hood**, has done an outstanding job in modernising Sisters in Crime – updating our website, our association rules, and our membership system. We are so pleased she's come back into the fold after a gap year abroad. She's recently revamped *Stabby*.

I would also like to pay tribute to:

- **Ani Allbutt** who designed graphics for our regular events before she had to withdraw some months ago due to work pressures.
- **Caz Brown**, a former convenor, who has done such a great job in designing our award graphics, and our trophy plaques, t-shirts, tote bags, convenors badges, and medallions to go on the shortlisted and winning Davitt books. She also back to designing graphics for regular events. She has played a

key 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, and her health concerns, we're still to make a formal presentation. This has been going on for more than three years...

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, if possible, help get them here.
- **Deb Force** and the wonderful team at the **Sun Bookshop**, our official bookseller at events, which now offers an online service. Members get a 10% discount from anywhere in Australia. Deb has an encyclopaedic knowledge of crime writing and is a great source of top advice on what's worth reading, though we don't always agree.
- The awesome **Christina Lee** who flies down from Brisbane at her own expense to run the Scarlet Stiletto Award judging weekends.
- The indefatigable **Dr Carolyn Beasley** from **Swinburne University of Technology** which supports the Davitts and the first prize for the Scarlet Stiletto Awards, and helps to program events.
- **Jon** and **Analiese Woolley**, **Jess Scott**, and the wonderful team at the Rising Sun.
- **Mark Barry** from BS Sound who does a sterling job setting up the PA system for dummies at our events.
- And **Jason Steger**, the literary editor for Nine Newspapers. Just before he was made redundant, he paid tribute to us and the Davitt Award in his e-newsletter: "Talking of awards, [Sisters in Crime](#), the admirable organisation that has done so much to bring crime writing by Australian women to the fore, presented its Davitts for the 24th time a couple of weeks ago. When the awards started in 2001, only seven books were entered. This year, there were 153, which by any standard is pretty impressive."

I am not standing again as secretary. Our former president, **Moraig Kisler**, fresh from a year off, is standing for that position. I will still be working on programming but I am aiming to hand over a lot of responsibilities to others on the committee and, hopefully, a raft of volunteers. Over the next few months, we'll be working out who is doing what and where volunteers could assist.

It's 33 years since I helped co-found Sisters in Crime at the Feminist Book Fortnight in Melbourne. We had no inkling that we'd still be going decades later and have members and chapters in all states. I am wont to say that I am a tired old tired tart. Others are keen to take up the cudgels. As for me, I am hoping to clear the decks so that I can write up my late father's life story, improve my photography, do more reading, and maybe even travel. I joke that usually I am lucky to make it from St Kilda to South Melbourne.

And most especially thanks to all of you, our members, for sticking with us through challenging times. Thank you.