

November 30, 2007



## KINDERGARTEN MURDER MYSTERY WINS SCARLET STILETTO AWARD

"Kill-dead-garten", a story of murder and mayhem at a kindergarten, by brand-new Melbourne writer, **Aoife Clifford**, has won **Sisters in Crime's 14th Scarlet Stiletto Award**. The national short story competition offers \$3100 in prizes and attracted over a record 163 entries. Noni Hazlehurst, currently starring as Bernice Waverley on Channel 7's smash hit, *City Homicide*, presented the awards tonight in St Kilda (30/11).

Clifford took out the **HarperCollins first prize of \$750 plus a trophy**, a scarlet stiletto shoe with a steel stiletto heel plunging into a perspex mount. She is a lawyer by training, and has worked as a public servant and union official with the National Union of Workers. Entering a story in the Scarlet Stiletto Awards was Clifford's New Year Resolution this year.

"I realised that I hadn't done any writing (outside of the odd email) since I left work to start a family and was forgetting how to spell," she said. "It's one of the few New Year's Resolutions I kept. I'm absolutely gobsmacked to win a national competition with my first ever story."

Clifford enjoyed the process so much that she has now written and illustrated a picture book and is currently trying to convince publishers that she is the next Mem Fox.

A ten-year old school girl from Western Australia, **Jane Blechynden** (Mt Hawthorn), won the **Allen & Unwin Young Writers' Award (\$250)** for writers under 21. Her story, "The Key Suspect", was about someone stealing Tim Tams from the school staffroom. Blechynden, who flew to Melbourne for the ceremony, won second prize in the West Australian newspaper Young Writers award in 2005, and first prize in 2006 in her age bracket. The Scarlet Stiletto is her first national prize.

2004 1st prize winner, **Liz Filleul**, won **Kill City 2nd prize (\$400)** for her story "The Write Place" about a scam involving a short story competition. Filleul also won a special commendation for "Go Get 'em Sloothgirl" written in LOLCAT, a form of internet slang. English-born Filleul lives in Melbourne's Dandenong Ranges (Vic). Last month Bettany Press in the UK published her book, *To All Appearance, Dead*, a mystery about school girl fiction collectors inspired by her winning 2004 story. She is currently working on the Australia-based sequel, *Blood for Breakfast*, as well as a series of contemporary school stories, the first of which will be published in the UK next northern summer.

**Linda Tubnor** (Maribyrnong, Vic), a former teacher now working in the stormwater area, won **Readings Books & Music 3rd prize (\$250)** for "Fence Hanger" which is loosely based on the

---

***Fighting for justice for women crime writers; promoting women's crime fiction***

**Sisters in Crime Australia, Inc. ABN 52 728 423 463**

**GPO Box 5319BB, Melbourne, Vic, 3001**

**Webpage: <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~sincosz/>**

experiences, knowledge and frustrations of wildlife rescuers. Linda's young creative writing efforts include a poem about a frog in a pond at age three and a prize in a poetry competition at age 14.



**The Kerry Greenwood Malice Domestic Award (\$500)** went to Ballarat (Vic) writer **Karen Allingham** for her story "Breath of Life", the story of a woman who discovers she is the victim of the ultimate deceit and betrayal by those she loves and trusts most. A mother of four, Allingham finds that writing crime is a therapeutic outlet for her own dark imagination. In more recent times her stories have been published in anthologies and online. In 2002 she won the Queen of Crime Special Section, a Partner in Crime (NSW) award, and in 2003 was shortlisted for the Scarlet Stiletto. She dabbles in other types of fiction, but finds that crime writing still keeps her from checking under the bed.

Brisbane (Bardon, Qld) author, **Elli Housden** took out **Chronicles Bookshop Police Procedural Award (\$200)** for her story "Seventh Heaven". A regular book reviewer for *The Courier Mail*, she has also written text books for secondary students, most often about writing skills. While crime writing is her central focus, she also dabbles in poetry.

Melbourne author (Sunbury, Vic) **Wendy Laing** won the **Pulp Fiction Bookshop Award (\$150 gift voucher)** for the funniest story, "Risqué Retirement" set in a retirement village. Laing, a self-confessed "Jill-of-all-Trades", has been a teacher, curriculum consultant, travel consultant, international airline employee and a professional dog trainer! Her books – two children books, two poetry books, and four mystery /paranormal mixed genre books – are published in e-book, audio and digital POD paperback formats. She was unable to attend the ceremony because today she moved into a retirement village.

Melbourne true crime author (East Brighton, Vic), **Vikki Petraitis**, won the inaugural **Cate Kennedy Best New Talent Award (\$350)** for "Side Window" where murder comes to Kath of Fountaingate. Petraitis has been writing true crime since the early 1990s and her best-selling book *The Frankston Murders* about serial killer, Paul Denyer, was published in 1995. Petraitis's last book was the very successful *Forensics*, which examines Australian cases where forensics played a part in their solution. Her latest book, *Crime Scene Investigations*, is due out in January 2008. A number of Vikki's stories have been adapted for television and she has appeared on episodes of *Sensing Murder* hosted by Rebecca Gibney. She is also contributes stories to the Australian Police Journal.

"Xenos", a story about animal-human hybrids by **Evelyn Tsitas** (Canterbury, Vic) was awarded the **Dorothy Porter Award for Innovation (\$250)** (formerly a verse award). Tsitas is completing her Master of Arts in Creative Writing at RMIT University and the story she co-wrote with Caroline van de Pol was highly commended at last year's awards. A former senior journalist at the Herald Sun,

---

***Fighting for justice for women crime writers; promoting women's crime fiction***

**Sisters in Crime Australia, Inc. ABN 52 728 423 463**

**GPO Box 5319BB, Melbourne, Vic, 3001**

**Webpage: <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~sincosz/>**



Tsitas has been a regular guest commentator on 774 ABC Melbourne's Drive show. Her children's operas *Software* and *Bookworm*, for which she wrote the libretti, have been performed by Opera Australia and the Victoria State Opera in schools throughout Victoria, ACT and NSW, as well as New Zealand and the United Kingdom as part of the school's program. Her play, *Springs Eternal*, was produced by the Melbourne Writers Theatre and performed at the Carlton Courthouse.

Special commendations also went to:

- **Mary Shuttleworth** (Port Melbourne, Victoria) for "The Price" (Youth category)
- **Linda Westrupp** (Oakdale, NSW) for "Saturday Night at Opus Club"
- **Jo McGahey** (Belrose, NSW) for "A Private Family"
- **Brook McReynolds** (Mackay, Qld) for "Murder Most Fine"
- **Natasha Molt** (Kambah, ACT) for "The Spinster Killer"
- **Catherine Moffatt** ( , NSW) for "The Dark Drive"
- **Lois Murphy** (Brighton, Victoria) for "Proof"
- **Inga Simpson** (Landers Shoot, Qld) for "Ferny Ridge Road"
- **Danielle Whish-Wilson** (Adelaide, SA) for "Would You Hide It From Me"

Sisters in Crime spokesperson, **Phyllis King**, said this year there were several protagonists speaking from beyond the grave and quite a few female serial killers.

"We are unsure about what is happening in those retirement villages but seniors featured prominently in all sorts of criminal activity. Most perturbing, however, was the lack of sisterly affection – sisters did all sorts of things to each other, to their partners and to family members," she said.

"Last year, Sisters in Crime was unable to award a prize for the funniest story. However, this year we had some great laughs and it was a lovely, hilarious, challenge to find the funniest."

Ms King urged future entrants to remember that not all bad people have curly red hair.

***Scarlet Stiletto – The First Cut*** (Mira), an anthology of prize-winning stories from the previous 13 years of the competition, was launched in August by Sigrid Thornton. The 374 page large-format paperback includes 26 stories by **Tara Moss, Cate Kennedy, Kerry Munnery, Josephine Pennicott, Julie Waight, Jacqui Horwood, Louise Connor, Margaret Pollock, Dianne Gray, Christina Lee, Liz Cameron, Roxxy Bent, Sarah Evans, Inga Simpson, Ann Penhallurick, Liz Filleul, Margaret Bevege, Phyl O'Regan, Bronwyn Blake, Ronda Bird, Janis Spehr** and **Siobhan Mullany**.

---

***Fighting for justice for women crime writers; promoting women's crime fiction***

Sisters in Crime Australia, Inc. ABN 52 728 423 463

GPO Box 5319BB, Melbourne, Vic, 3001

Webpage: <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~sincoz/>

The 15th Scarlet Stiletto Awards close on August 31, 2008. The entry fee is \$10. Entry forms will be available next year by writing to Sisters in Crime, GPO Box 5319, Melbourne 3001 or on its website:

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~sincoz/>

Print quality photos can be emailed on request.

**Further info: Contact Phyllis King on 0409 885 587**



---

***Fighting for justice for women crime writers; promoting women's crime fiction***

**Sisters in Crime Australia, Inc. ABN 52 728 423 463**

**GPO Box 5319BB, Melbourne, Vic, 3001**

**Webpage: <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~sincoz/>**