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Media Release:

ANNOUNCING THE WINNERS OF SISTERS IN CRIME'S 6th DAVITT AWARDS



The Butterfly Man (University of Queensland Press), by Tasmanian writer and businesswoman Heather Rose, has won the Davitt Award for the best (adult) crime novel by an Australian woman in 2005. *Age* journalist and true crime writer, Karen Kissane, presented the awards in Melbourne tonight on behalf of Sisters in Crime Australia.

The Butterfly Man was shortlisted for the Nita B Kibble Award in 2006 and is currently long-listed for the 2007 IMPAC Awards in Ireland. Rose's first novel was *White Heart*. She is the 2006 recipient of the Eleanor Dark Fellowship. Rose leads a double life as co-founder and chairman of communications and advertising agency Coo'ee Tasmania. She won the Telstra Tasmanian Business Woman of the Year in 2004 and was named as one of BRW's top 50 female entrepreneurs in 2006.

Sisters in Crime's spokesperson, Katrina Beard, said that *The Butterfly Man* wasn't a traditional whodunit.

"*The Butterfly Man* begins in the opposite direction to most, more traditional crime novels, and asks, long after the crime, if redemption is possible and if transformation and regret are enough justice for the dead, and for the living," she said.

"Based on the sensational Lord Lucan case, Heather Rose's novel asks what would happen if John Bingham, 7th Earl of Lucan, had made his way onto a mountain in Tasmania and made for himself a new name and a new life, as Henry Kennedy, builder and carpenter.

"However, Rose hasn't abandoned the conventions of the crime genre entirely, so although the prose is deceptively limpid and the pace almost placid, the central mystery is cleverly uncovered in a series of revelations which are both truthful and deceptive in the best traditions of classic mystery writing.

"While Henry Kennedy goes about the business of dying, he ponders the nature of memory, and the ways in which we both reveal and conceal ourselves from those we love. Whatever the truth of Lord Lucan, *The Butterfly Man*, is a wholly satisfying and very moving novel, which offers an imaginative insight into a still-notorious crime."

The Davitt award (young adult) went to Blue Mountains writer, Catherine Jinks for *Evil Genius* (Allen & Unwin), about a young computer hacker. Jinks is the author of many children's and young adult books as well as several novels for adults. She is a three-time winner of the Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year award, and has also won a Victorian Premier's Literature Award, the Ena Noel Award for Children's Literature, and an Aurealis Award for Science Fiction. In 2001 she was presented with a Centenary Medal for her contribution to Australian Children's Literature.

According to Beard, "*Evil Genius* is a complex, noirish, SF thriller, which balances precariously, but skilfully between surreal humour and genuinely engaging characters. A delightful book with dark and nasty edge, aimed at older teenagers, but deserving of a much wider readership."

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

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Many of Jinks' books have been published in the UK, the United States, Canada, Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, Poland and New Zealand. She was unable to attend the award ceremony as she is on a trip to the US, to discuss the marketing plans for *Evil Genius* with Harcourt, the American publisher that intends to release the book next May.



This year, for the first time, Sisters in Crime presented a Davitt Award (true crime). It went to Melbourne true crime writer, Robin Bowles for *Dead Centre* (Random House) about the Peter Falconio disappearance. Bowles is the only author of any of the five books on the subject to have had access to Bradley Murdoch, now in jail for life for the murder. Bowles has written six other true crime books and has a novel under consideration by a publisher. Her book on the Jaidyn Leiske murder caused an inquest to be held while her investigation into the Jennifer Tanner death prompted the reopening of the inquest.

"Robyn Bowles relentless investigation, including over 40 hours spent interviewing Bradley Murdoch, reveal not only the complexities of a case investigated over thousands of kilometres, but realities of people and places which are almost alien to those of us who hug the green shores around the dead centre and populate that landscape with our deepest fears and worst imaginings," Beard said.

The Davitt (Readers' Choice), voted by Sisters in Crime members, was a tie and jointly awarded to Brisbane's Leigh Redhead for *Rubdown* (Allen & Unwin), the second in her series featuring Simone Kirsch, stripper turned private eye, and Kerry Greenwood for *Heavenly Pleasures*, the second in her Corinna Chapman, baker sleuth series.

Last year, Redhead won the Davitt (Readers' Choice) Award for her debut novel, *Peepshow*. Redhead herself turned to stripping after she left university and couldn't get a job despite a communications degree. Her series set in St Kilda/Elwood area where Redhead herself has lived.

Kerry Greenwood has written 39 novels, including the famous Phryne Fisher mystery series set in 1928 St Kilda. She has also edited two true crime books, *On Murder* and *On Murder 2* and in 1996 published a book of essays on female murderers called *Things She Loves: Why Women Kill*. Kerry has worked as a folk singer, factory hand, director, producer, translator, costumer-maker, cook and also most often as a legal aid barrister.

Beard said that the Sisters in Crime established the Davitts in 2001 to give some recognition to the growing body of Australian women's crime fiction.

"In 2001 seven crime novels written by Australian women competed for the award whereas this year 18 adult crime novels, seven young adult crime novels and, for the first time, nine true crime books, have fought it out. Australian women are writing a new chapter in crime fiction and true crime," she said.

The judging panel composed Katrina Beard (Sisters in Crime national co-convenor, and reviewer), Jane Sullivan (Sunday Age literary columnist), Dr Shelley Robertson (forensic pathologist), Rosi Tovey (former owner of Chronicles Bookshop in St Kilda) and Vivienne Colmer (Sisters in Crime national co-convenor, and reviewer).

The awards are named after Ellen Davitt (1812-1879) who wrote Australia's first mystery novel, *Force and Fraud*, in 1865.

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