

# ROBIN BOWLES

WRITER AND INVESTIGATOR

## About myself.

I am a former director of a public relations and management consultancy, specialising during 18 years in consulting to businesses in the process of change. In 1986 I was nominated as Businesswoman of the Year and in 1989 won the prestigious public relations' National Golden Target Award for the Most Outstanding Project of the Year. I have been a newspaper columnist, executive producer of a morning radio talk show, guest lecturer in strategic planning and marketing at TAFE, and a member of the Australian Institute of Management, the Public Relations Institute of Australia, the Melbourne Press Club and Women Chiefs of Enterprises International.

I have four grown up sons and I have worked in paid employment all my adult life, starting as a nurse, moving to public relations and am now a full time writer. I've undertaken a few other 'mini-careers' in the process, and have always been involved with various social justice issues as a volunteer—eg, blind and deaf people, drug addiction and elderly and homeless people.

Other than the writing of countless press releases, brochures, communications audits, annual and other reports, I had no training as a writer. However, marketing is a tough taskmaster and if you don't get your copy right, you lose your client. So I guess I've learnt, as I've learnt most things, by intuition and experience. I have no tertiary qualifications other than nursing and a Swinburne University Diploma in Investigation, which I thought might be a fun thing to do, in view of my new career as an investigative writer. As a result, I obtained a Private Investigator's licence, which I used from time to time to supplement my meagre writer's income.

I am in some demand as a public speaker, partly because people like to hear about my 'adventures' in some of the odd places I frequent and share in the experiences I've had with some pretty scary characters along the way. However, there is a serious undertone to all my presentations. I only write books about social justice issues—examining an institution which has been established to look after us and which has fallen down on the job. Police, the justice system, international rights of children, and so on. My drawers are brimming with pleas from people asking me to 'write their story next.' My books are like the TV label of 'infotainment'—they are serious and extensively researched, but written as narrative non-fiction, to ensure a wider readership. Until quite recently, this genre was unique in Australia and earlier on my publishers had a bit of trouble 'classifying' me. I am usually put in the 'True Crime' section. I am now often referred to as 'Australia's True-Crime Queen.'

As I have no formal training, I don't feel bound by legal or journalistic conventions, which upsets both lawyers and journalists at times. (Not to mention the police!). I have been threatened, my dog has been poisoned, our car was vandalised several times in the driveway of our former house and I've had a private detective following me on more than one occasion. Following the release of my second book, *Justice Denied*, my husband and I moved to a safer location, on the third floor of a block of security units. My husband has supported me in every imaginable way to achieve my wish to become a serious writer. My approach to investigation has been described by Jon Faine, 774ABC, as 'thorough, persistent and at times, courageous'. I see my new career as being a concerned member of the community who holds a mirror up to institutions that are supposed to be looking after us and asks, 'Why has this gone wrong?'

I believe my books and lectures strike chords with people in the community who are concerned with injustice in its many forms. Almost everyone you meet has a story to tell about some event in their lives which genuinely 'wasn't fair.' I also receive a huge amount of satisfaction and mental stimulation from finding, meeting and sharing the experiences of people whose stories contribute to the success of my books. It is enormously rewarding and challenging to try to present an 'unfair' situation in an unbiased manner. I seem to tap into a vein with my books and have developed a loyal readership, who give me the opportunity to do what I've wanted to do most of my adult life—write books.