

AT: Welcome to the Infinite Women podcast. I'm your host Allison Tyra and today I'm joined by Dr. Lainie Anderson, author of the new book, *The Death of Dora Black*, to discuss the complex and contradictory story of Kate Cocks, South Australia's first policewoman. So first, can you give us a bit of an introduction to Kate as a person?

LA: So Kate Cocks in 1915, at the age of 40 and unmarried, became the first policewoman in the British Empire employed on the same salary and with the same powers of arrest as men. Now I do make that distinction because a few months earlier New South Wales had appointed the first policewoman. However, they had shocking salary and pension conditions and didn't have the same powers of arrest. So that's the distinction I'm making there. So Kate Cocks was a strict Methodist. She was a teetotaler. She also loved to shop and she loved a tight perm when perms became fashionable. She was incredibly contradictory but she was hand-picked to become South Australia's first policewoman in 1915. She was asked if she wanted six constables to join her on the job. She said, "no, give me one because I don't even know what I'm going to do yet." So they were tasked with preventing immorality and crimes against women and children. They worked 60 hours a week. They had one Sunday off every six weeks, just like their male counterparts. The women learnt jiu-jitsu. In the early days they weren't allowed to have weapons. They also were taught first aid but they had to teach themselves the law. So her earliest court evidence was thrown out. They worked split shifts. So in the morning they would arrive at 9 o'clock in Victoria Square in the women's police office. Kate Cocks was given complete autonomy over whether they had a separate branch or whether they wore uniforms. She decided no uniforms and a separate branch because that would make women and children more likely to want to approach them and make them more approachable as women and probably almost kind of moral mothers. It's not a term she used but it's a term I'm using. So they worked split shifts as I said. So they'd arrive in the morning. Kate Cocks would head to the city watch house to check on any women who might have been arrested overnight and any women who were being brought up from the Adelaide jail to appear in court. They met every train that arrived at the Adelaide railway station to make sure any unaccompanied young women and children were looked after and guided to safe places so they weren't lured to brothels or away by opportunistic men, particularly in the First World War. And then at night they would walk the beat. And Kate Cocks had a five-foot cane, Allison, that she would brandish on young couples she deemed to be lying too close together in the Adelaide parklands and on the Adelaide beaches.

So from the earliest days they had a social worker role. Kate Cocks would wrangle wayward husbands and protect women from men and from themselves whether they liked it or not. But from 1920 the women of the Adelaide or South Australian police force were involved in all investigative work and criminal cases involving women and children. So very quickly really, they took on a much stronger role in policing. In her 20 years as the head of the women's branch, her team grew from two to 14. That compares with New South Wales by 1935 only had seven women police officers, so it was a very successful branch. She was by all accounts good at what she did. She was so contradictory in so many ways. So she was aloof and quite emotionally stunted, you would almost say and yet she had a high EQ and she was known for her empathy. And apart from everything else these women did, the work they did on a yearly level was so monumental, and on top of all of that up to 6,000 women would arrive at the police branch every year for informal counsel. So just an absolute workhorse. She saw herself as being involved in prevention work not in prosecution work. So she actively diverted women and children out of institutions but also women out of jail. That's not to say she didn't have children incarcerated or have women jailed for things that today would raise little more than an eyebrow. She was a very strong believer in the second chance but a third chance, no, not so lenient. So if there were women who for example were repeatedly drunken in public, for the first few times she would take them to the Salvation Army home for women and divert them out of the justice system but then ultimately they would be jailed and spend three months in jail in the Adelaide jail where the conditions were pretty horrific, for three months. So I don't want to make it sound like she was all sweetness and light but she was a woman of her time and of her era, which we can talk about later.

AT: Well that sort of maternalistic attitude towards policing seems very much of its time but ahead of its time. So when we're talking about prevention and getting them help and support before you say, "okay, look I've given you as many chances as I can and now we have to go to jail." But at the same time, as you were saying like there were things that girls were being charged with and that sort of thing and you know couples lying too close together that in our modern era we're just like, "well that seems a bit silly" but at the time was very much part of that moral panic.

LA: Yes so she was appointed as you say as part of almost like a global moral panic that was exacerbated particularly by the First World War where young women were given far more freedom. They were entering the workforce in larger numbers as young men went off to war. Some workplaces in Australia actively disincentivised work for men to try and force them into the army, these poor young men who went off to war. We lost 60,000 of them in the war. So women were being liberated more than ever before and globally as well and also we had young children who were suddenly without fathers. They were either fighting or they'd been killed and so we had this global moral panic around the liberation and increasing freedoms of young women who potentially couldn't be trusted with freedom. So one fact that I found out during my PhD which I found fascinating was the fact that in Australia in the early 20th century, half of all babies were conceived outside of wedlock. So when we look at Kate Cocks and her five-foot cane and making sure women and young men weren't lying too close that was really her major practical means of trying to prevent young women from getting pregnant out of wedlock, which in those days was probably about as bad a situation as a young woman could find herself in. The social stigma was so intense, they were so ostracised. It was a completely different time. The more I studied the era the more it felt almost like a different planet in a social sense, Allison. And particularly as well with the women that Kate Cocks was working with, the married women had almost no rights. In 1917, they were the property of their father until they became the property of their husband. So the husbands still had all the rights to the property, to inheritance. Men could divorce their wives on the ground of adultery but women couldn't do the same. It wasn't even until 1914 that women who lost their husbands and became widows actually assumed the guardianship over their children. So it really was a different time and women had really no choice but to stay in bad marriages so that they could you know keep some control of their children because they had no custodial rights if they left. So yeah, just a completely different time and era that Kate Cocks was working in.

AT: Well and a big reason that she was the one recruited to be that first female police officer to lead her own group of female officers was that she had seen a lot of these societal ills firsthand before she joined the police force. So can you tell us a bit more about her background for that context?

LA: Yeah, it's a great look at South Australian society overall actually. So Kate Cocks was born in 1875 in Moonta to a teacher and a miner. It wasn't long after she was born two brothers came along as well but they moved to Quorn in the southern Flinders Ranges and very soon after that there was seven years of drought up there. So the family were completely broke, completely poverty-stricken. Her mother was forced to go back into teaching which was pretty unheard of in those days, a married woman still teaching, while their father Anthony Cocks went interstate to try and find mining work again. So she basically was brought up in extreme poverty with family separation. Kate was ultimately sent to Victoria for her teenage years to live with relatives and finish her education. So the first time we see her as an adult back in South Australia is in the Education Gazette in 1900 where she's a teacher in a country school in South Australia. And very soon after that, she didn't even finish that year, she is a sub-matron at the Edwards Town Industrial School which was like a state receiving home for delinquent or neglected children. And very soon after that she became mentored by Catherine Helen Spence, who many people would know as a very strong woman in Australian history, in South Australian history, very strong fighter for the suffrage movement and also for children's and women's rights. So she was the head of the State Children's Council and in 1906 she appointed Kate as the juvenile probation officer for

South Australia. So that was one of the first of its kind in the world and Kate very quickly gained a reputation for treating no two children alike. So she believed that every child should be given a chance to excel in their own terms and that it really was a matter of taking a step back to why this child was in trouble or getting himself or herself into trouble and looking at the causes. So she would go into homes and she would work with mothers and fathers on creating a stable home environment. She would teach women to cook, she would make sure the kids had clothing, she would make sure the kids went to school, she would take boys to football matches to incentivize them going to school and not playing truant. So she was very much in a prime position, she had that role for nine years, so she would have been very well known in the policing circles, in the justice circles. So when that moral panic rose up globally as it did here in South Australia, of course we had a very strong reform movement that many years earlier had seen South Australia become the first place in the world to simultaneously grant women the right to vote and run for parliament. And some of those same characters involved in that fight took the fight up to the Labor government of the time in 1915 and said basically "our police force is crap and it's not doing justice to women, not doing justice to anyone really, let alone women and we need some women officers on the beat who can adequately look after women who are finding themselves in the justice system." So Kate Cocks was not, she refused. When I say she was aloof, I think she was probably quite stubborn, she had a very strong sense of self-justice and self. She refused to apply for the role when it was advertised. 200 women did apply but she was hand-picked for the role as I said and started on December 1 1915. As I said she was contradictory and complex and that's what made her a fascinating topic for my PhD and it's why I think she's such a fascinating study for a work of fiction as a fictional sleuth.

AT: And given the context of what we're talking about with her background, I almost kind of feel like any police officers today should also have to spend at least a year doing social work and have to be trained in social work because I feel like even today that is a big problem where that focus on prevention and seeing people as people often gets lost among law enforcement. So I kind of wish that they had learned more from Kate Cocks, is what I'm saying.

LA: When I was studying my PhD there were lots of times where I thought "wow, we are experiencing such massive rises in the incarceration rates of women and children and maybe we should go back to basics." Of course I'm not an expert in contemporary policing, so it wasn't something that I wanted to make a big deal of but I do wonder whether just that simple focus and I know that lots of people do talk about this, just going back to the root causes and dealing with the families and saying "why is this child constantly ending up back into the jails justice system." And yeah, maybe back to basics is a lovely way to go or at least one option.

AT: And as we're talking about the fact that she was not a saint, it's a bit ironic in the context that a lot of the things that she did that I would personally have found problematic seem to be tied to her staunch Methodism. So things like she had a home for girls and babies, which was called the Methodist Home for Girls and Babies, but she didn't believe in birth control. So she wanted to help these women but she didn't want to help them prevent the pregnancy in the first place. And so there's things like that where, as you say, there are these contradictions but when you look at it from that religious lens you can see where these contradictions are coming from.

LA: Yeah, it is so complex. Like don't forget when she started as a policewoman in 1915, birth control, by and large the only proven form of birth control was abstinence. It's not like today where we have a lot of means of actually safe birth control. So lots of women, the birth rate had halved from the 1800s to the time she started policing. And that was by and large because wives asserted control over their bodies and just abstained. The world was a different place, Allison. And yeah, I think it does seem so contradictory to everything she stood for, in terms of prevention that she wasn't in favour of birth control. If I had been hit with her five-foot cane I would have been livid. I can't begin to imagine how it travelled and how some women thought about her, particularly

like as we went into the roaring '20s. And women really did get some great, amazing freedoms. And yet there she was still walking with her five-foot cane. So yeah, fascinating, fascinating woman.

AT: And so when we're getting into what she did after she left the police force. So when she was 60, she founded this refuge that, as I mentioned, became known as the Methodist Home for Girls and Babies. And it was actually renamed in her honour around her death in 1954. But again, when we're getting into things that would have been considered acceptable at the time, but today are questionable at best. In 2011, the Uniting Church of South Australia and Uniting Care Wesley Adelaide issued an unreserved apology to mothers and children for the past practice of forced adoptions from the Kate Cocks Memorial Babies Home between 1937 and 1976. So for anyone who's not aware of the Stolen Generation, so any of our non-Australians, this was a larger issue where Indigenous children and infants were removed from their families and adopted into generally white families, or they were basically trained into servitude to try and erase Indigenous cultures. So my impression is that Kate herself would not have been involved in that, but her home that was named for her was. Would that be accurate?

LA: This is certainly the most complex part of her legacy, Allison. And yes, I think in general, you're right. So I'll just take a step back and give it a little bit of context. So she finishes as policewoman in 1935. In 1936, she approached the Methodist Church about a home for unmarried mothers and their babies. So it was down in Brighton by the seaside, and she was in charge of the mothers and babies home for a period of 15 years. So under her supervision, babies could remain at the home for up to three years while their mothers got themselves into a position where they could take them home. All mothers, regardless of whether they chose to have their babies adopted out, were asked to breastfeed their babies for six weeks to bond with their babies and Kate Cocks believed that was the best chance for a child in its infancy. And under her supervision, women were given agency over the decision whether to have their baby adopted. So in 15 years of about 1,500 babies born at the home, it was 560 who were only adopted. So that was about 37%. So Kate left in 1951 and she died in 1954. As you said, the home was named in her honour after her death as the Kate Cocks Memorial Babies Home. Now by one record that I found by 1971, 17 years after her death, the number of babies adopted from the home had risen to 90%. So even that is a little bit complicated because by that stage, it was around the time of Gough Whitlam announcing the single parent pension which erased sort of the stigma around unmarried women having babies. So quite a lot of the women would have come to the Kate Cocks Mothers and Babies Home by the early 1970s knowing that they were going to have their babies adopted. Not all though, clearly, because many did speak to the 2011 inquiry and say that they had been forced or coerced into having their babies adopted, which is an incredibly sad situation. And as you said, Uniting Care Wesley Adelaide and the Uniting Church in South Australia issued an unreserved apology. And in my author's note, in *The Death of Dora Black*, I also make note of this and put on record my personal abhorrence for those past policies, sadly, Allison, many of which were societal values as well as government policy. But they led to the Stolen Generations, they led to the Forgotten Australians. And I'm so very sorry for people who associate the Kate Cocks Memorial Babies Home with sorrow and loss. And I want to say that very sincerely.

AT: In terms of the records that we have from that time, it's also a bit difficult to tell a lot of the time, I would think, because I don't know how many records survived, how many records were meticulously kept in the first place. So when we're actually trying to say, "this person had these attitudes and had these practices, the further back you go, the more difficult it is to determine that."

LA: When all this became apparent to me during my PhD, which obviously it very quickly did, I tried to go back into the archive to find anything involving her attitudes towards Aboriginal people, because even though I was writing a fictional character, I wanted to do justice, not just to her, but to anyone invested in her story. So I

wanted to try and find out anything that might give me an insight into how she felt and her personal values and thoughts and views and opinions about Aboriginal people. In 1924, interestingly, from the state records, I found a letter that she wrote to her then-police commissioner after members of her team had been told to take an Aboriginal baby from his mother at the Adelaide railway station for no reason other than the fact that the baby was Aboriginal. She wrote to her police commissioner complaining about the apparently harsh law and that was her words, "apparently harsh law" and requesting clarification and the little boy was ultimately returned to his mother. In 1936, after she had retired from the police force, therefore was no longer a public servant and was free to speak her mind, she told a reporter that Australia had nothing to be proud of in its treatment of Aboriginal people and would not progress as a big nation until it did justice to them. So I think from that, I feel comfortable in assuming that she was probably ahead of her time in many ways on those issues. We do know that from newspaper records and also from records kept by the Methodist church and are now in the Uniting Communities archives, that there were Aboriginal children at the home while she was in charge. Sadly, as with so many institutions like this, no records remain. They were either destroyed intentionally or they were burnt in a fire many decades ago, which is very sad of course for anyone trying to trace their families and just heartbreaking. But I found no evidence of Kate Cocks actively seeking to bring Aboriginal children to the home. They did receive Aboriginal children from the Northern Territory and I found one reference to her receiving approval from federal authorities to have an Aboriginal child adopted. So she wasn't acting, clearly wasn't acting unilaterally on that, but again it's a shocking, shocking chapter in Australia's history that went from the 1800s to the mid-1970s when I was born. It beggars belief that it happened. And it's a part of her legacy, it's true.

AT: And one of these controversial aspects that, especially today when we're looking at something like sodomy, which would have been part of that whole moral panic, but today, assuming everybody is a consenting adult, sodomy is kind of, "what's the big deal?" I would hope for most people. But there was a particular sodomy case where Kate Cocks's professionalism and I would say ethics were really drawn into question. So she rifled through the belongings of a witness to find her diaries when she wasn't at home. She interviewed the witness alone and the witness later said that Cocks had added things into her witness statement and she was also described as so evasive during the initial hearing that the magistrate described her as "a most difficult witness." So this is much shadier than the Kate Cocks that I feel like we've been talking about so far. Do we know why she was so focused on this one and potentially doing sketchy things?

LA: So this was a very fascinating case. One of the most controversial cases, particularly of her policing career. She was working with four male officers on this case and it involved a man by the name of Bert Edwards. Now he was a prominent and very controversial publican. He owned pubs, he was a philanthropist and a labour politician. So he owned a Newmarket hotel, which lots of people in South Australia would know. It's right on the corner of North and West Terrace. It's still there today. So he had been born and raised in Adelaide's West End, which readers of *The Death of Dora Black* will get to know very well. It was where all the brothels were. It's where all the working class work, lots of the sly grog shops were set up around there. Lots of the women's refuge, the Gilbert Street Women's Refuge, Salvation Army Home was there as well. So he was brash, he was flamboyant, he was a champion of the underdog. An incredible philanthropist, actually gave all of his money at the end of his life to men's shelters. But he was also very well known as a politician for asking very informed but also very embarrassing questions of the South Australian elite, so the conservative politicians. So he was not loved by a certain set in Adelaide society, shall we say.

So in the very early 1930s, he was arrested and subsequently imprisoned for an "unnatural offence" with a 15-year-old boy, nearly 16, bearing in mind that it wasn't even until 1975 that sex between consenting males over 17 became legal. So back then, no sex between men was legal, which again, different world, different era, abhorrent today, very, very glad that the laws have changed. They were very much trying to get Bert Edwards brought to trial and she, as you said, rifled through the belongings of a young witness when she wasn't at

home. She also took a statement from the witness without anyone else being there, which proved problematic when Doreen Haskett did later change her testimony. It was a very shady sort of situation. Lots of people even then said that Bert Edwards was being framed. But crucially, it was, I think, more to do with the fact that three weeks before the police set out to have him brought to trial for this unnatural offence, he had raised a matter in Parliament that greatly embarrassed the police force over an alleged murder perpetrated by a police constable. So there was a lot of pressure on the police officers involved. And as I said earlier, from the 1920s, women officers were involved in all of those criminal investigations involving women and children. So it was Kate Cocks's job. She was policing. She was enforcing the law. I think it's very telling that all five members of the police force involved in the investigation received honourable mentions even before the trial began. So the police wanted him brought to trial. They wanted his name up in lights. It's not pretty for the police force. It doesn't put the police force in a good light, I don't think, nor Kate Cocks. And sadly, it's another chapter that adds to her complexities, and as a woman of contradiction.

AT: And so when we're getting into the complexities, one of the things that we see in people who have told Kate's story is this idealization. And you see this with a lot of historical figures, we either want them to be complete villains or complete heroes. And any nuance tends to be lost in the storytelling, depending on the bias of the people telling the stories. So when we're talking about, clearly she wasn't *everybody's* friend, as was claimed about her. And she is shown as being highly empathetic, but her actions make it clear that this empathy only extends so far if you go outside of what her strict moral code says is okay. So when we're talking about your PhD, which focused on re-presenting history through fiction, and that's how we got this fabulous book, *The Death of Dora Black*, how did you sort of grapple with those complexities and making sure that even your fictionalized version of her was not being idealized, that you were conveying that nuance?

LA: So my PhD explores how a murder mystery can do justice to a significant and complex figure in South Australian history. And Kate Cocks was basically my case study. So as I said, while we sort of went down the avenue of looking at her views on Aboriginal people because of that, the contemporary lens that we're looking at and the Stolen Generation link through the Kate Cocks Memorial Babies Home, even though I was looking at her policing, I wanted to make sure I was very comfortable with what I had her saying, even though it's not in any massive detail, but even tiny references to Aboriginal people in my book, I wanted to make sure I could defend absolutely everything that I said and had her saying. She is, in my book, a fictional character. *The Death of Dora Black* is obviously a fictional murder mystery. Far be it from me to try and put words in the mouth of an 1875-born strict Methodist teetotaler. Clearly, I am not that person.

The narrative arc is also completely fictional, but to do her justice, I have woven in her cases, some of the real life cases that she solved and worked on, I've woven those into various chapters that still pull us along in the overall narrative arc. But her work, arresting deceptive clairvoyants who were preying on the lives of grieving mothers and widows of World War I soldiers, that sort of thing. So all of that is sort of built in to give the book some authenticity and some gravitas because lots of what she did was stranger than fiction. One of the major ways that I did that was to introduce her sidekick, Ethel Bromley. So Kate Cocks, just like she was in real life, in *The Death of Dora Black*, she is strictly Methodist. She's a teetotaler. She walks around with a five foot cane rescuing women from men and from themselves, whether they like it or not. By her side is Ethel Bromley, a far more progressive, sassy, more free-spirited than spiritual, jujitsu expert, junior constable. In essence, Ethel is us and she has almost 100% been designed to allow us to meet Kate Cocks without my own, as an author, my own 21st-century judgment. So through Ethel, we talk to Kate about her views on birth control. Ethel doesn't share them, but as a loyal woman who knows Kate very well, they've been working together for 13 months when our murder mystery takes place. So it's in the summer of 1917. We meet Kate through Ethel's eyes. So we learn about birth control. We learn that she thinks abortion is evil. We learn that she has had young women incarcerated for things that we would barely raise an eyebrow over now. But then we also learn just how harrowing it is for the policewomen when they've been involved with some of these horrendous crimes against

young women who have got themselves into trouble. And so basically the way I did justice to her was to introduce her through the eyes of Ethel as her contemporary and a loyal supportive woman who feels like and thinks like we do, but lives in Kate's time. So Ethel is us. Miss Cocks is fascinatingly flawed. She's complex. She's aloof. She's emotionally challenged in so many ways. And she's a window to another era, which as I said, is almost like a different planet.

AT: On a previous episode, I talked with Kiera Lindsey about her own book, which she describes as, I believe it's narrative nonfiction. So very much looking at filling in the gaps, for her about the artist Adelaide Ironside. And one of the things we talked about there was this need for flexibility when it comes to telling a lot of women's stories, because we don't have the records, we don't have the documentation, especially the further back you go, because just women's stories and lives have not been considered as important as men's. And so they have not been as well documented at the time. And what documentation there is, isn't necessarily preserved or highlighted or made accessible in terms of what you can readily find in archives and everything. So I feel like these fictionalizations or semi-fictionalizations or narrative nonfiction, however we want to put that, where we are trying to tell someone's story while acknowledging that we are filling in some of this as we go to the best of our knowledge, that seems like it's a really important aspect of women and other marginalized histories, because we just don't have these documentations. We can't hold those marginalized histories to the same rigorous standard of being able to prove absolutely every single thing, because they are marginalized histories and we don't have all of that.

LA: Yep, for so long, history was written about men by men. So this is what we're dealing with as scholars today, particularly of women's histories, as I'm sure you know better than anyone, Allison. So I love Kiera, she's just probably Australia's foremost writer in speculative biography. I studied that so much and leant into that so much while I was studying Kate Cocks's story. And probably at the outset thought that I would go down a similar line of speculative biography. But when I realized I wanted to write a word of, a work of murder mystery, I knew that I was stepping even further away from fact into fiction. So I didn't want to blur the lines with speculative biography. So that's why I'm very, very at pains to say my murder mystery is a work of fiction. It's inspired by the true life of Kate Cocks, but my Kate Cocks is very much a fictional character. She's my fictional character. But yes, when I was looking at her life there are so many gaps and you're left with what the archive tells you.

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The other fascinating thing I found was that even though there are, very little known about her, by and large she's actually one of the better-known women. There are at least letters that she sent to the police commissioner that we can read in state records. There were three short biographies written about her even though they sort of tended to treat her as a saint and not mention the five-foot cane or the three feet apart nickname, that sort of thing. But the other women of World War I Adelaide were almost completely written out of the narrative as well, like a whole gender written out of the World War I narrative, which sort of made me shitty. So that's why I wanted to write a work of fiction so that I could take tiny little snippets of known women and little newspaper reports and blend them into one fictional character to make this really amazing strong woman who was little parts of women that we know about. And I loved doing that. I love bringing the women of World War I Adelaide to life because, of course, it's right that we focus on the 60,000 young Australians who lost their lives, but women in World War I were doing the most incredible things. Like they raised 14 million pounds in the Red Cross alone across Australia. There were 10,000 women's volunteer groups across Australia in World War I. They were sending 14,000 care packages to soldiers overseas every month. Yet we don't know any of this stuff. We don't know about the women's traveller societies that were always at the railway stations making sure everyone was looked after and everyone could find their place to an Adelaide hostel, because there were so many people on the move. And I just wanted to bring all that to life. And I thought the most accessible way, the way that I could get that out to the widest possible audience, because

people deserve, the women of World War I Adelaide deserve to be celebrated and known. I decided the quickest, easiest, most accessible way to do that was with a murder mystery. And that's why I went down that avenue, despite the fact that Kiera is just a huge role model, a huge influence on my work. And I hope that what I have done is true to the values of Kate Cocks, and ergo, true to what we try to achieve with speculative fiction, which is to, yes, look at the gaps, but to be informed by what we actually do know and the evidence that we do find. It's not to just be gratuitous and to make something up because we think it's sexy and fun and will sell. It's to actually, okay, what I might not know what she was doing in those 10 years, but what was the rest of the family doing and what were other women doing around that time and what were her values later in life? And before that happened to try and be informed what actually happened in the gaps. So it's always to be informed by the evidence that is there and the archive that is available.

AT: I have to say, I really love this focus on, this is not one woman's story. This is many women's story. There is never just one woman because that is something else we see, apart from the media where there were just no women around. Huh. How did that happen? But you also get these stories where there's only the one woman and this may be a weird comparison, but I've been seeing all of these trailers for the new *Mad Max: Furiosa* movie that's coming out, right? And I look at the cast list and at least from what I can see, Furiosa is the only woman in the movie other than like her mom who she almost immediately gets taken away from, right? And I feel like they've missed that the reason we loved *Fury Road*, the movie that introduced Furiosa as a character, that movie was all about multiple women. So she is the lead, but it's also about her saving other women, about getting back to a community of women. And I feel like they've sort of lost that the reason we loved the first one was because it was not just about one woman, not just that woman. It is about all of these women. It is about the community of women and women helping each other. But I do feel like you see this situation where they justify instead of it being, "well, there's no women here." "Oh, look, we have a woman." She might even be the title woman, but if she's basically the only woman, that's still not a book or a movie or whatever it is about *women* and *women's* stories.

LA: I think to portray one woman authentically, she needs to be surrounded by women because universally that's how we work. It's interesting. One of the reasons I ultimately decided not to write a biography on Kate Cocks was that it would focus almost entirely in on her and not allow me to explore this incredible old girls network of Adelaide society who propped one another up often, sometimes just because it was convenient for whatever cause they had. But women don't operate in a vacuum without other women. Neither do men ever operate in a vacuum without other men. You know, we make up 50% of society. In World War I, we made up substantially more because so many men were away or off training in, they weren't actually in theaters of war. They were off training and training other troops. So to have a story without other women would have just been absurd.

AT: The Death of Dora Black is available now from Hachette. Join us next time on the Infinite Women podcast and remember, well-behaved women rarely make history.