

Press Release

Attention: Literary Journalists
For Immediate Release, May 12, 2020

***Paradise Earth* author Amy Barker and publisher Stormbird Press rise from the ashes of Kangaroo Island's deadly wildfires to win Gold in the Australia/NZ/Pacific Rim Best Regional fiction category in the 2020 Independent Publisher (IPPY) Awards.**

The 2020 Independent Publisher Awards bring increased recognition to the deserving but often unsung titles published by the independent book publishing industry, during a time when many publishers have pushed back the release of hundreds of titles in the hope the effects of the coronavirus outbreak will wane.

Stormbird Press, however, forged ahead with the launch of *Paradise Earth*, which could not have been timelier.

Planned in mid 2019 for release on April 28, 2020, to mark the 25th anniversary of the 1996 Port Arthur massacre, neither author nor publisher could have predicted an unthinkable year where the offices of Stormbird Press, and co-founders Geoff and Margi Prideaux's home and farm, was burned to the ground, or that any swift recovery would be hampered by a global pandemic.

Rebuilding their lives in the months following the fire, the Prideauxs not only experienced deep personal trauma—depression, sleeplessness and night terrors—they have witnessed the collective trauma of an island community in a state of shock, akin to that of the Tasman Peninsula community in the wake of the Port Arthur Massacre. Both events left the Prideauxs and Barker asking, 'whether our psyches are remade by trauma, or revealed by it?'

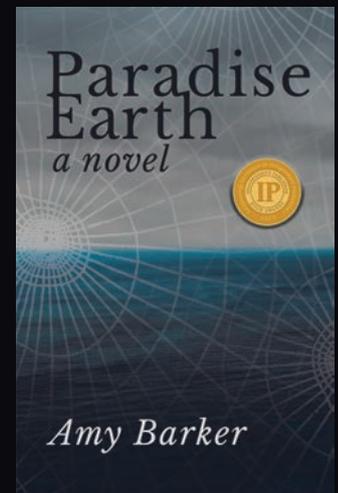
Working from a surviving farm shed the Prideauxs managed to meet the book's release target.

Presenting the Port Arthur massacre not only as a national tragedy but also as, perhaps most poignantly, a personal trial for individuals and communities having to learn to survive after an unprecedented and life altering event, Barker delivers insightful life lessons on the complexities of human nature exploring why some people surrender to fate, others disregard what is dealt them, and some find the strength to survive and see potential for a better world.

While the perpetrator, Martin Bryant looms in *Paradise Earth*, Barker doesn't dwell on the scale of the atrocity. Instead she creates a host of powerful characters who died or survived, witnessed the shooting, or helped in the aftermath, and explores the complexities of damaged relationships and routines that defined life for generations, a community's struggle to find purpose, and how it became disconnected in ways that outlasted the effects of individual psychological trauma. Returning constantly to the reactions of those who found themselves under fire, those who attended to the dead and the wounded, and those who sought to change gun laws in the wake of the disaster, *Paradise Earth* teaches us important lessons about collective trauma—experienced during events including the Port Arthur Massacre, Australia's horrific bushfire season, and the current Coronavirus pandemic.

After such events, novels such as *Paradise Earth* play a crucial role in building resilience to overcome what one is faced with, enhancing empowerment to fight on regardless, and breeding hope that life continues on and can get better.

Amy Barker and Margi Prideaux are available for interviews. High resolution author shots, book cover artwork, and images of the Stormbird Press office are available on request.



Praise for *Paradise Earth*

'A task fraught with dangers: to be an honest and unflinching guide to this most terrible of Australia's hauntings. Amy Barker reminds me of the young Dostoevsky, how in his novel of a Siberian prison camp he could descend the ladder of humanity step by step because even in the most degraded there must still be the divine spark. Not a safe place for writer or reader—but a novel of blazing and humbling integrity.'

— Peter Bishop, writers' advocate and formerly Creative Director of Varuna, the Writers' House.

'In a masterful follow-up to her award-winning debut novel Omega Park, Amy Barker has created a simple and beautiful tapestry of lives lived in the shadow of the unthinkable violence of the Port Arthur Massacre. Set against the backdrop of the Tasman Peninsula's raw and rugged natural beauty, and its tragic legacy, Paradise Earth recounts a series of separate but interconnecting stories that explore the vicissitudes and fragility of the human condition. The result is both lyrical and provocative.'

— Chris Nyst, Crook as Rookwood (winner Ned Kelly Crime Fiction Award 2009).

Paradise Earth Meta

Author:	Amy Barker
Release date:	April 28, 2020
RRP:	AU\$29.99 (pbk), \$9.99 (ebk)
Territory:	English language market
Format:	Paperback and eBook
Size:	203 x 128 mm
Pages:	324
ISBNs:	978-1-925856-22-4 (pbk) 978-1-925856-23-1 (ebk)



Stormbird Press: *defending nature and empowering communities through the power of story.*

PO Box 73, Parndana, Kangaroo Island, South Australia, 5220
Phone: +61 (0)8 8121 5841
ABN 15 161 185 351

Media contact: Margi Prideaux
+61 (0)476 109 875
production@stormbirdpress.com