

LONG BAY

Prison, abortion and women of the working class.

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student:

Date:

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ABSTRACT

In 1909 Rebecca Sinclair and her husband Donald Sinclair were found guilty of manslaughter in Sydney's Central Criminal Court. She was sentenced to three years Hard Labour at Long Bay Women's Reformatory and he to five years penal servitude. Rebecca and Donald Sinclair had been performing illegal abortions with Epsom Salts and a syringe when their patient – a mother of three children – died. After six months in prison Rebecca was taken to the Royal Hospital for Women in Paddington where she gave birth to a daughter. When her daughter was two weeks old, they returned to prison together. *Long Bay* is the story of how Rebecca Sinclair became involved in the burgeoning illegal abortion racket and how she was drawn into Donald Sinclair's world. Her husband's mother was a known abortionist called Nurse Sinclair who advertised her services in the back of the newspapers, and always managed to escape conviction.

The creative portion of my Doctorate of Creative Arts is an 86,000 word novel *Long Bay*, based on Rebecca and Donald Sinclair's story. The exegesis consists of an introduction (including an examination of my research process) and three separate essays about aspects of Rebecca Sinclair's experience. The first essay details the rise of the Women's Reformatory movement within the conceptual framework of Foucault's work on prisons, and the creation of Long Bay Women's Reformatory as the first purpose built women's prison in Australia. The second looks at the demand for abortion in the early twentieth century and the medicalisation of abortion as traditional midwife providers were legislated against and replaced by doctors profiting from the illegal market. The essay examines how this also led to inexperienced criminal abortionists with no medical training (like Rebecca and Donald Sinclair) filling the gap left by experienced midwives. The final essay examines the representation and expectations of working class women, and how often the most vivid representations of working class women at the time exist because their subjects have failed to fulfil traditional expectations and have come under public scrutiny as a result.

