

CHRISTINE SYKES – Author Background Material

In February 2021, Christine Sykes' novel, *The Changing Room*, received the fiction award from the Society of Women Writers NSW. *The Changing Room* was inspired by her work with the women's charity Dress for Success Sydney (DFSS). DFSS provides a clothing and support service for women entering the workforce. Christine's second publication, *Gough and Me*, is due in May 2021.

Christine grew up in Cabramatta, worked at Fairfield City Council and served as a Senior Public Servant for 30 years. Now retired, Christine lives with her partner in the Illawarra.



The Changing Room (Published 2019)

Vain trifles as they seem, clothes have, they say, more important offices than to merely keep us warm. They change our view of the world and the world's view of us.'

- Virginia Woolf

Anna is in her sixties with her dream job and the man to match. Claire is a forty-six-year-old philanthropist with a picture-perfect family. And then there is Molly, who has seen more strife in her twenty years than anyone should, but has more love to give than most.

When their lives are turned upside down, these women must discover how to start over amid a world of pain. Guided by Suitability, a clothing and styling service for disadvantaged women, Anna, Claire and Molly find the courage to rebuild their lives – with a few outfit changes along the way.

Inspired by the experiences of the women behind the charity Dress for Success, *The Changing Room* proves that sometimes losing everything leads you towards freedom, and that hope can be found even in the unlikeliest of places.

Gough and Me: My journey from Cabramatta to China and beyond (for release May 2021)

When Gough Whitlam moves into her street in Cabramatta in 1957, eight-year-old Christine has little idea how her new neighbour, one of the most visionary and polarising political leaders of Australia, would shape the direction of her life. Born to working-class parents and living in a fibro house built by her truck-driver father, Christine simply dreams that one day she might work as a private secretary like her aunt.

But when the reforms Whitlam championed give Christine the chance to go to university, her world expands. She experiences the transformative power of education, struggles to balance motherhood with being the family breadwinner, and faces her own mental health battles. She follows a path forged by Whitlam, from scholarships he fought for, to local community initiatives he generated, and even as far as China, where Whitlam crucially initiated Australia's relationship when he visited the country in 1973.

Written with genuine heart and humour, *Gough and Me* is a nostalgic and deeply personal memoir of social mobility, cultural diversity, and the unprecedented opportunities that the Whitlam era gave one Australian working-class woman.

