



'I wrote about the Social Security Scandal to bring justice to the victims and present the truth'

Writer, poet and teacher Yota Krili talks about her play *Christina's Case*, inspired by the 1978 Social Security Scandal - and its traces in today's Australia

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This year marks the 40th anniversary of one of the darkest pages in the history of Greeks in Australia; the 'Social Security Scandal'. On 1 April 1978, the then Commonwealth Police (COMPOL) raided 160 homes and five medical practices in Sydney and arrested people, accusing them for conspiring against the Commonwealth to

commit a large-scale welfare fraud. The case eventually collapsed, proving to actually be one of the landmark cases of large-scale racial profiling on the part of authorities. Acclaimed writer and poet Yota Krili, a passionate advocate of Greek literature in Sydney, wrote a play at the time which was finally published in 2016. Speaking to *Neos Kosmos*, she talks about it – and about the deep

trauma that this case left to the Greek Australian psyche.

How did you decide to write this play? What was the spark?

Let's go back to 1978, in Sydney. On the 1st of April, that April Fool's Sunday, media started making noise about the 'Social Security Scandal' - or 'kolpo' - branding it as "the biggest conspiracy in the history of Australia." This incident had

created a turmoil in the Greek community and has been the inspiration for the play. At the time, I tried to meet some of the people involved in the case and I interviewed two men and a woman. Two of these interviews were printed in 1979 in *Giofyri* magazine.

I was shaken and infuriated by the victims' tragic stories. These were helpless people, who got arrested at daybreak, without a warrant, dragged

into detention and courtrooms, going through suffering and humiliation without knowing the reason, without having proper grasp of English, so that they could understand what was happening. I wrote about the case to do them justice and present the truth. In retrospect, of course, I realise that my intention was naive. My play *Christina's Case*, which I wrote at that time, in haste, did not go anywhere, it was never

staged. It stayed shelved for almost 40 years and I lost touch with these people, being busy with work and other obligations, so I don't know what happened to them. What matters for me, personally, is that this play pays tribute to these victims. I also consider it a significant contribution to the history of the broader Greek Australian community. The usual tendency is to acknowledge and reward