



## '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