

LIFESTYLE

Read all about it: Politics, greed and corruption in a new book by Canberra author Hugh Watson

Sally Hopman 11 January 2022



Canberra author Hugh Watson has just published his second book, *The Silo*. Photo: Supplied.

Hugh Watson did well to heed the advice from his second-grade teacher at Bega Primary School.

He'd written a composition and when she gave it back to him, she said he wrote well and that he should keep it up.

He did, and today his second novel, *The Silo*, is drawing wide praise among readers and critics.

“I suppose I’ve always written,” says Hugh, who lives with his family at Hall, on the outskirts of the ACT.

“I’ve been writing songs for about 25 years.”

Hugh plays in band Willie and the Correspondents with former ABC chief foreign correspondent Philip Williams and former media adviser and correspondent Greg Turnbull.

He also wrote for a number of other book genres before deciding on fiction, having worked as a teacher, academic, political adviser, public servant, consultant and Sydney Olympic Games executive.

For Hugh, writing fiction is different.

“I remember thinking, ‘I could do that,’” he says in reference to when he read the first book, *The Omega Scroll*, by his friend, best-selling Australian writer Adrian d’Hage.

READ ALSO: [Children’s book that goes to the heart of life on the farm](#)

In *The Silo*, based in a fictitious rural electorate in northern NSW, Hugh has used his experience in the political sphere to create a ripping yarn focusing on the life and crimes of corrupt politician Barry Kingscliff.

In the novel, there is a killer, and in a twist you know who it is from the start. But what makes you keep turning the page is

Hugh's skill in unpacking the mind of the villain. You know he committed heinous crimes, but you need to know why.

The idea for the crime novel came in 2016 when Hugh was visiting some friends on their property at Wallendbeen.

"While we were there, a grain truck pulled up and we all watched as the silo was being filled up," he says.

"I remember saying to my friends at the time, that it could be dangerous. They said, 'Yes, a lot of accidents can happen in grain silos.' For me, it was an 'aha' moment. I had it."

The Silo is Hugh's second novel. He self-published his first, *Home Grown*.

"In that first novel, I had a hero-type person," he says. "In *The Silo*, I wanted to write about a character who is thoroughly despicable.

"It's not based on anyone in particular. Yes, I have met some despicable people in my time, but they're not in the novel.

"Being close to politics, you see an amazing variety of behaviours, but the character of Barry is more of a composite of people I've known."



Author Hugh Watson visited The Yass Book Store recently to sign copies of his new novel, *The Silo*. Photo: Supplied.

Hugh saves his strong characters for the women in his book, particularly Detective Susan Swift.

“I based her character on the strong country women I have been surrounded by all my life,” he says.

Hugh says he was also inspired by Senator Susan Ryan, who he worked for as private secretary at Old Parliament House.

“I love writing fiction because as a writer, you don’t always know where it is going to take you,” he says. “It might take you a while, but then you wake at 3 am and think, ‘Now I know how it’s going to end.’”

The Silo is published by Halstead Press. For more information, visit [here](#).

Tags [adrian d'hage](#) [greg turnbull](#) [hugh watson](#) [philip williams](#) [the silo](#) [wallendbeen](#)