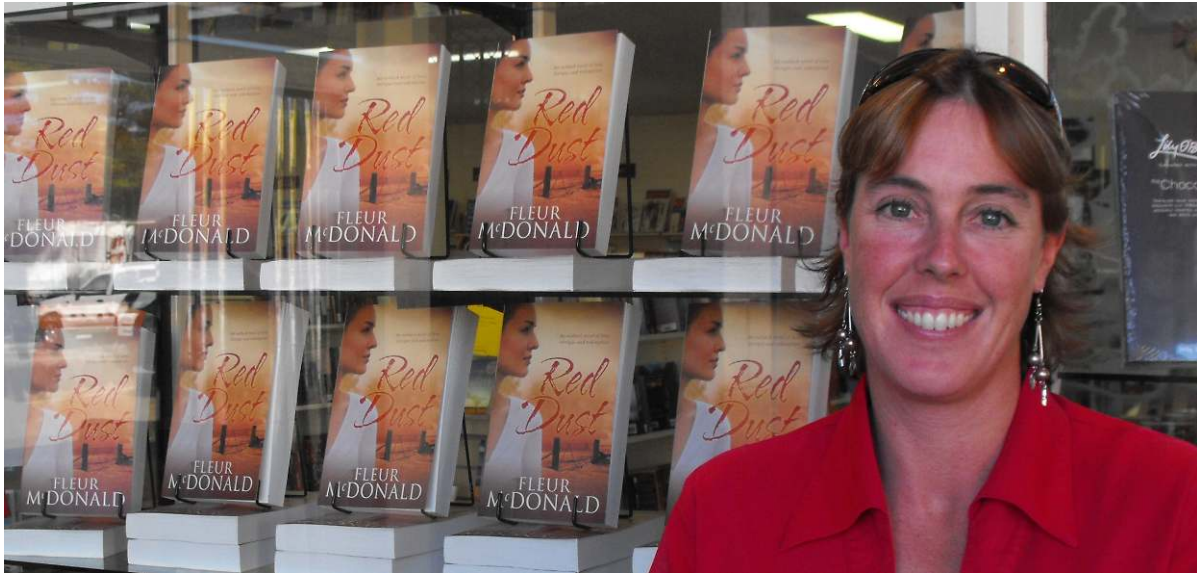


## Fleur dusts up a storm

By Fleur McDonald



*Fleur McDonald's novel Red Dust sold out at her Esperance launch in May*

**I have always loved reading and writing, to the extent that on my first day of school I came home grumpy because I hadn't been taught to read!**

As time went on I was always reading or writing something. I drove my classmates mad when our teachers asked if we would like to read out what we'd written in creative writing, because I always did!

Writing fell off my radar after I left school. I was making my way through the 'learning years' and then I met my husband Anthony. We bought a farm that needed a lot of work to make it profitable so, until my children were born, I worked alongside him. Reading was my escape!

About five years ago, I decided I wanted to write a book that I would like to read. Without too much thought, I decided on the topic of stock stealing. I still don't know why I thought of it, particularly at a time when I was completely sleep deprived with two littlies, but I thought I could develop intrigue and mystery around this subject.

I set about writing. Once I had written five chapters, I asked a friend to read it to see if it was any good. I also sent it to my writing mentor for his opinion. The responses were brilliant and overwhelmed me. I decided I needed to keep writing.

Patience has never been my strong point! When I had written about a third of the story, I thought I'd try Allen and Unwin publisher's 'Friday Pitch'. This offers first-time authors a chance to have their first chapter and a synopsis read and considered by its publisher Louise Thurtell. I wanted to know what she thought about it—never mind finishing the manuscript!

Her response was just as encouraging as others I had received, although it wasn't what she was looking for at that time and she encouraged me to try another publisher. I didn't want to now I had established contact with Louise. So I waited about a year, tweaked it a bit more, and resent it—but I did little work on finishing the manuscript.

Suddenly, not only was there was a phone call saying 'Yes! We want your manuscript!', there was a contract and ... an unfinished manuscript!

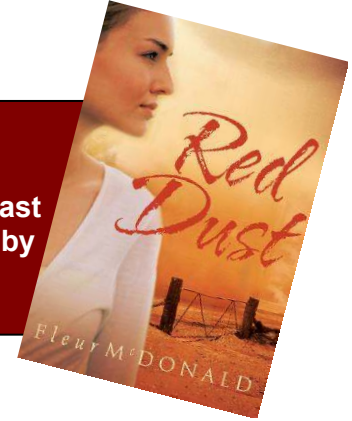
I got to work quick smart and finished the rest of the story in about six-months.

My journey to get to this point has been amazing. It blows me away whenever I think about it. I don't have any writing qualifications or experience in writing for publishers. I just wrote the book I wanted to read. From that, I was picked up from the 'slush pile', handed a contract, signed a contract for a second book, and have also sold the rights of *Red Dust* for publication in Germany next year.

Through sheer determination and hard work to write the best story I possibly could, the little idea I had has exceeded well beyond anything I dared to dream.

### ***Red Dust***

**After the tragic death of her husband in a light-plane accident, Gemma Sinclair is left with the daunting task of managing the vast outback station he's bequeathed her. But she remains haunted by Adam's dying words, not to mention persistent whispers that Adam's death was not an accident ...**



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