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ABC podcast *Trace* leads to reopening of 38 year old cold case by Victorian coroner

In an Australian first, a decades old cold case investigation will be re-opened following revelations uncovered in the ABC's first true-crime podcast *Trace*.

The decision by the Victorian Coroner to reopen the investigation into the murder of Melbourne bookshop owner Maria James comes after [Trace exposed new information](#) about the unsolved case, including revelations about possible suspects and a forensics bungle which meant Police never had the killers DNA to begin with.

Ms James was stabbed to death in the back of her Melbourne bookshop in June 1980.

Journalist and host Rachael Brown started reviewing the case almost three years ago. Tip-offs and fresh leads from listeners have played a crucial role in today's development.

She says this shows the power of journalism to bring about change, and the value of the podcast format.

"It is a powerful and serious reminder that Trace is telling the story of real people and has real-life implications. The audience mobilisation we've had around this podcast is unlike anything we've seen before."

"The intimacy of the podcast genre affords the respect, consideration and anonymity required when confronting these difficult stories, which is tricky or impossible to achieve through other genres."

Victoria Police has also launched its own official review of the cold case.

Former detective Ron Iddles commended *Trace* for its role in reopening the investigation. "Historically, Victoria Police has relied on rewards and some selected media [for case breakthroughs]," [he told ABC NEWS](#). "But the world is changing and when a podcast gets (millions of) downloads that is a new initiative that needs to be seriously looked at as a way of solving unsolved cases."

Trace won the Innovation award at the 2017 Walkley Awards recognising excellence in journalism.

The ABC has built on the success of *Trace* with a new collection of true crime stories, including the Unravel podcast, the first series of which, [Blood on the Tracks](#), won the 2018 Walkley Award for Coverage of Indigenous Affairs.



A new episode of *Trace* will be released early next week. All episodes of the original podcast are available on the free **ABC listen app**, **Apple Podcasts**, or wherever you get your favourite podcasts.

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