

# Australian author Liane Moriarty on Big Little Lies, her Emmys snub and landing Meryl Streep for Season 2

**YOU'VE** might not have heard of her, but Sydney author Liane Moriarty is one of our most successful Hollywood exports. Not that the people running the Emmy's give a toss about that.

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IF YOU saw Liane Moriarty walking along her quiet suburban street in Sydney, you wouldn't think she was anyone out of the ordinary.

But the softly spoken, self deprecating Australian writer is our most successful literary exports.

The author of *Big Little Lies*, the hit novel adapted into the widely successful, Emmy Award-winning television series starring Reese Witherspoon and Nicole Kidman, has written 10 books and sold more than 10 million copies worldwide.

For context, Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History in Time* and Yann Martel's classic *Life Of Pi* have both sold the same number of copies.

At one point, Moriarty had three books on *The New York Times* bestseller list, a feat no other Australian author has achieved, nor has anyone else debuted at number one on the list, like she did with *Big Little Lies*.



Australian author Liane Moriarty. Picture: David Wheeler/Stellar Magazine. Source: News Corp Australia

But Moriarty, 51, is refreshingly normal for someone of her unparalleled success. She lives with her husband, a stay-at-home father, and their two primary school-aged children on Sydney's north shore.

She rarely gives interviews and is uncomfortable doing publicity, but agreed to speak to a room of 600 at a charity fundraising lunch for the [Children's Medical Research Institute](#), which runs the Jeans for Genes campaign, in Sydney on Friday afternoon.



Nicole Kidman, author Liane Moriarty, Reese Witherspoon, and executive producer Bruna Papandrea attend the premiere of HBO's "Big Little Lies" in February 2017 in Hollywood. Picture: Kevork Djansezian/Getty Images  
Source: Getty Images

When asked about the “delightfully normal” demeanour she’s maintained despite rubbing shoulders with A-list celebrities in Los Angeles, Moriarty joked that her status in Hollywood is never up for discussion.

“It’s not really a big part of my life,” Moriarty said of the LA scene.

“Going to the Emmys with my husband [they attended the recent awards in September, where *Big Little Lies* won five awards], there was always

somebody there to remind you of how important you are,” she said.

“In the car on the way to the Emmys, we were all glamorous and dressed up in our limousine. We got stopped on the road on the way by a policeman who said to the driver ‘Have you got a celebrity in the back there?’ And the driver said ‘Nope!’ So the policeman points and says ‘That way’ and we had to go all the way around [to the venue].

“So yes we were invited to the Emmys but it was made very clear to me many, many times that I wouldn’t be invited to all the parties and balls. I got

emails saying ‘You weren’t invited to such-and-such a party. It was really emphasised: ‘Don’t think you’re getting invited to this party’. I just said, ‘OK’, and signed it ‘Cinderella’.’”



Nicole Kidman and *Big Little Lies*' Australian author Liane Moriarty on the Emmys red carpet in Los Angeles last year. Picture: Peter Mitchell/AAPSource:AAP

After an overwhelming response from fans, HBO commissioned a second series of *Big Little Lies*, which is set to premiere in 2019.

Last month, it was revealed Meryl Streep has signed on to play Mary Louise, the mother of Nicole Kidman’s character Celeste.

But because the first season ended at the same point as the book finished, viewers were curious to know if Moriarty would be involved in writing the new chapters. She did not write the screenplay for the first series, but has a producing credit.

“I kept saying ‘No, I don’t want to be involved. But then I said ‘If you did do it, you could do this’,” Moriarty joked.

“My sister said ‘Wouldn’t it be fun to do it? You could write a role for your favourite actress’, which is how I then came up with this character of Mary Louise who is Celeste’s mother,” she said.

“Meryl Streep’s real name is Mary Louise. So in my head, I imagined if Meryl got to play this character. It was my own little secret calling her Mary Louise and then incredibly they got Meryl Streep. It was extraordinary.” Moriarty is famous for books that shed a light on the common, everyday experiences of women. She has explored IVF, domestic violence, infidelity and lust, all in a way that seems grounded in reality, rather than dramatised like a soap opera. She says inspiration mainly comes from her own everyday life, or from stories from women around her.



Big Little Lies author Liane Moriarty. *Source: Supplied*

The main plot driver in *Big Little Lies*, involving a young boy and his mother who are ostracised after he is accused of biting one of his female classmates, was inspired by a true story.

“*Big Little Lies* was inspired by a story a girlfriend told me,” Moriarty said. “Her little girl had started school and the children all came out at the end of the day and two children had big bite marks on their forearms. The mother was horrified and said ‘What happened?’ and the little girl said ‘A little boy bit us’. Because it was the first day, the schoolteacher didn’t know anybody’s

name the teacher got all the little boys to line up so that the little girls could point out who the culprit was,” she said.

“As I was hearing this story, I was just loving the drama of imagining you as a mother thinking ‘Please don’t let that be my child’. The little girls finally admitted that they had bitten their own arms just to see what mark they had made but I kept thinking ‘Imagine if those little girls had pointed at a random boy and said ‘He did it’. So that’s the scene that they used in the series.”



THAT scene in Big Little Lies. *Source: Supplied*

If you’ve been a fan of Moriarty’s for years and bristle at the mainstream international success of your favourite author, don’t worry. You’re not alone. Moriarty was a hit in the US long before Australian bookworms caught on. She frequently encounters fans who are baffled it took years for her to get noticed here.

“I do think that was the case for many years but not so much these days,” she said.

“It’s true that the rest of the world discovered me first. I do get a lot of readers saying ‘I’ve been there from the beginning, I knew you before you were cool’.”

**Children's Medical Research Institute (CMRI)** is a not-for-profit, funded by competitive grants and a community of supporters who participate in events like Jeans for Genes Day. **To donate, click here.**  
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