

2007 NSW Woman of the Year

Catherine Burn, Assistant Commissioner with NSW Police, is the 2007 Woman of the Year.

Catherine's work and leadership in the Redfern Local Area Command, where she was the Local Area Commander in 2005, led to her nomination.

Catherine began her career in the NSW Police in 1984. She has spent much of her career working as a criminal investigator — with general detectives, homicide strike forces and Special Crime and Internal Affairs. In 2002, she was appointed as the Local Area Commander at Burwood and was transferred to Redfern in 2005. In December 2006, Catherine was appointed Assistant Commissioner, Professional Standards.

Mick Mundine from the Aboriginal Housing Corporation said that Catherine was well respected in the Redfern community.

She was known for her hands-on approach — taking daily walks through neighbourhoods, and developing programs to reduce family violence, and promote relations between the Aboriginal community and police. She accompanied Aboriginal children to State of Origin games, as part of the community's youth mentoring programs.

Catherine said she was proud to be nominated and honoured to be recognised as NSW Woman of the Year.

She sees it as recognition for the police in Redfern who are working hard to improve relationships with the community.

'Being nominated for this award demonstrates that we have achieved positive things in the area.

'It shows there is a genuine willingness by both the community and the police to work together to achieve change,' she says.

Since Catherine joined NSW Police, the number of women police officers has increased — from 10% in 1989 to 30% today.

'There has been a great culture change, which has had a positive impact on women, with more women in senior roles, which in turn means more role models for other female officers.'

Leadership is very important to her and she believes it is about being ethical, knowledgeable, consistent and fair.

'My catchphrase is that you need to be professional, lawful and ethical in everything you do, and if you are, everything will fall into place.

'There is room for mistakes, and room for risk, but there is no room for unethical behaviour.

'I think women have a special capacity for leadership as we have a willingness to listen and to strive for genuine improvement. We still have a long way to go, but I

am encouraged by the women leaders who are around today, and by those who will be here tomorrow.'

Assistant Commissioner Burn has received many accolades during her career — she was recognised as Burwood Citizen of the Year 2005, she received the Australian Police Medal in 2007, and before that, two Commissioner's Commendations. Catherine holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree, an Honours Degree in Psychology, and a Masters of Management.

Each year, Ministers and Local Members of Parliament are invited to nominate someone in their electorate or portfolio as their candidate for Woman of the Year. Catherine was nominated by both the Minister for Police, the Hon John Watkins MP, and also by Kristina Keneally, Member for Heffron. The ten finalists and winner of the NSW Woman of the Year award were announced at the Premier's Reception held at Government House on International Woman's Day, 8 March 2007.



The Hon Kistrina Kenneally MP, Minister for Ageing and Minister for Disability Services, Catherine Burn, 2007 NSW Woman of the Year, and the Hon John Watkins MP, Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport and Minister for Finance.

Photo by Peter Solness