

MEDIA STATEMENT



Minister for Women
Minister for Science and Medical Research
Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)
Minister Assisting the Minister for Climate Change (Environment)

20 February 2008

12 EXTRAORDINARY FINALISTS FOR NSW WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Minister for Women, Verity Firth today announced twelve finalists for the NSW Woman of the Year Award, with women from a wide-cross section of the community nominated.

Ms Firth said the finalists were chosen from a field of 100 nominees and contribute to a diverse range of activities in our community.

Finalists include a high school anti-whaling campaigner, Aboriginal community activists, a harbour master and marine pilot, a support provider for families living with mental illness and a sexual assault survivor.

“The NSW Woman of the Year Awards has highlighted the work that so many extraordinary women in our community are doing every day,” Ms Firth said.

“It is a humbling experience to hear their stories and appreciate the diverse and extraordinary contributions these women make.

“There has been a tremendous response to calls for nominations this year and it is heartening to see so many outstanding women being recognised for their achievements in both paid and unpaid work.

“Nominations were called for women who have achieved outstanding performances in improving workplaces, working conditions and/or volunteering work.”

The 12 finalists are: Pam Boney, Skye Bortoli, Jean Cinis, Josephine Clark, Janny Ely, Dianne Madden, Bev Manton, Melinda Medway, Alice Oppen, Catherine Hall, Tegan Wagner and Ruth Wilson.

The finalists included women from rural and regional NSW. Seven are Sydney-based and the other five reside outside Sydney; two are outstanding young women and three of the finalists are Aboriginal women.

“One of these very deserving women will be announced as the 2008 NSW Woman of the Year at the Premier’s Reception for International Women’s Day on Thursday 6 March.”

All Members of Parliament were asked to nominate a woman from their electorate for the 2008 NSW Woman of the Year Award. Ministers were also asked to nominate one woman from their portfolio areas. For the first time, nominations were sought from the community, peak women’s organisations and the Premier’s Council for Women.

Please see the attached page for more information on the 12 Finalists.

2008 NSW Woman of the Year Award – 12 Finalists

The NSW Woman of the Year Award recognises the outstanding achievements of talented women across the State. The theme for this award in 2008 is **100 years of active women in paid and unpaid work**. A diverse group of 12 finalists have been selected from the 99 nominations that were received. The 12 finalists include:

Pam Boney, a member of the Murrqwari tribe, who has been actively involved in both setting up and contributing to a number of Aboriginal community initiatives, including for example, the 'Bush Babies Program' in **Orange**.

Skye Bortoli, a 15-year-old conservation activist from **Port Stephens**, who is dedicated to ending commercial whaling practices. She headed up a delegation of three Australian schoolgirls who went to Alaska to speak at the International Whaling Commission.

Jean Cinis, a dedicated volunteer worker for the **Western Sydney** Regional Public Tenants' Council, who supports a wide range of housing clients with complex needs.

Captain Josephine Clark, Harbour Master and Marine Pilot of the Port of **Eden**, who is the first woman Harbour Master in NSW and only the second in Australia.

Janny Ely, a Wirajdari woman, who is a pioneer in empowering Aboriginal women in **South Western Sydney** through her tireless involvement in the community and in education and women's services.

Catherine Hall, who gained her Bronze Medallion in surf lifesaving in 1980 and is still actively involved as the Education and Training Co-ordinator of **South Maroubra** Surf Lifesaving Club, and a patrolling surf lifesaver.

Dianne Madden, who is the founder and President of Camp Kookaburra in the **Sutherland Shire**, which provides networking and support for children aged 8 to 12 years old living with a parent, brother or sister affected by mental illness.

Bev Manton, a member of the Worimi nation, who is a strong and respected advocate for community development, particularly in relation to employment, housing, health and education. Bev is currently Chairperson of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council.

Melinda Medway, who has worked to provide new innovative employment opportunities for rural women and youth in the **Gunning** district, which is a severely drought affected area of NSW.

Alice Oppen, who has drawn attention to the issues of family planning and sexual and reproductive health and set up two charitable trusts in the **Sydney region**, including the Women's Plans Foundation.

Tegan Wagner, who, with great determination, courage, and leadership, has used her own experience to change how our society understands and responds to sexual assault.

Ruth Wilson, who is an exemplary worker in unpaid work, an innovator and instigator of exceptional programs, particularly for the NSW Jewish community in **Sydney and Southern Highlands**.

The winner of the 2008 Award will be announced at the Premier's Reception for International Women's Day on Thursday 6 March 2008.

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