



The Hon Barry O'Farrell MP

Premier of NSW

Minister for Western Sydney

MEDIA RELEASE

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WINNERS ANNOUNCED FOR 2012 NSW WOMEN OF THE YEAR

NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell and Minister for Women Pru Goward today announced the winners of the new NSW Women of the Year Awards for 2012, at a special reception in Parliament House.

Mr O'Farrell said he was delighted to be able to celebrate and acknowledge the extraordinary achievements and contributions that women make to the NSW community through the 2012 NSW Women of the Year Awards.

"All three winners are exceptional women who are doing incredible work. Not only do they have outstanding achievements in their chosen field, they have also made extraordinary contributions to the lives of many others in the community."

Premier's Woman of the Year Award

Fran Rowe, from Tottenham, was announced as the winner of the Premier's Woman of the Year Award, for her pioneering work in establishing one of the first rural financial counselling services, which provides voluntary counselling services to farming families facing financial difficulties.

"Fran has devoted decades to helping rural families across the nation who are doing it tough. Her voice has influenced agricultural policy, legislation and assistance measures for farmers in times of financial hardship, environmental disaster and drought," Mr O'Farrell said.

Ms Rowe was chosen by the judging panel from a shortlist taken from public nominations.

People's Choice Community Hero

Founder of Reach for the Rainbow and dedicated volunteer with Hear the Children, Yvonne Keane of Kellyville, was announced as the People's Choice Community Hero winner, the category nominated and voted by the NSW public.

"After her son was diagnosed with a hearing impairment, Yvonne gave up a successful media career to volunteer full-time to improve early intervention services for hearing impaired babies and pre-schoolers, helping countless other children and families beyond her own," Ms Goward said.

Ms Keane was voted by the NSW public from a shortlist of public nominations, chosen by the judging panel.

Lifetime Achievement Award

A special additional award was also announced this year, sponsored by *The Daily Telegraph* for an outstanding nominee who has dedicated her life to helping thousands of women.

Internationally recognised reproductive and sexual health expert Dr Edith Weisberg, of Vaucluse, was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award, for her 40-year commitment to research, education and clinical practice in the areas of women's health, reproductive health and family planning.

"These three women are fantastic role models and all highly deserving of this recognition. I would like to congratulate them on receiving their awards and thank them for contributing so much to our state," Ms Goward said.

Ms Goward also thanked the NSW public for supporting their local heroes by nominating and voting for their People's Choice Community Hero.

"More than 200 nominations from across NSW were received for the new NSW Women of the Year Awards this year - a record number of entries. In addition, thousands of votes were cast by the NSW public for the People's Choice Community Hero award.

"It was an inspiration to read all of the stories and find out about the great work that so many admirable women are doing in regional and metropolitan communities across NSW.

"The NSW Government is committed to recognising the work and dedication of women around our state, ensuring they are well supported to continue their work even further.

"These awards are just one of the many ways the NSW Government is supporting women and working to increase the opportunities available to them," Ms Goward said.

The judging panel was led by the Minister for Women, Pru Goward and included:

- Jodie Fox - Co-founder of Shoes of Prey and Sneaking Duck, Telstra Businesswoman of the Year 2011, Hudson Private Award
- David Gallop - Chief Executive Officer, Australian Rugby League Commission
- Major Paul Moulds AM - Director Mission and Resources Social, The Salvation Army
- Jeni O'Dowd – Editor at Large and Saturday Editor for the Daily Telegraph
- Cath Webber – Editor, thetelegraph.com.au.