



**EMBARGOED UNTIL 6:00am THURSDAY 24 OCTOBER**

## **New Zealand Head of Cricket World Cup 2015 honoured as supreme winner in inaugural Women of Influence Awards**

The inaugural New Zealand Women of Influence Awards were presented before a packed house last night at Auckland's Skycity, honouring women in all walks of life who are making their mark on New Zealand and its future.

The awards - introduced through a partnership between Fairfax Media NZ and Westpac NZ - were judged in five key categories; management & business, local & regional, entrepreneur, community service & social enterprise and innovation & science. The addition of an emerging leader category also identified young women who represent the energy and style of a new generation of leaders.

The judges' panel, which included Sir Ray Avery, Lynley Belton, Peri Drysdale, Dame Rosanne Meo, Simon Power and Kerry Prendergast, had the extremely difficult task of deliberating over a strong group of finalists.

"The breadth and quality of entries was truly impressive, especially in the programme's inaugural year. We are very happy with the success of the launch here in New Zealand, which is reflected in the outstanding group of category winners we've had," said Simon Tong, managing director of Fairfax Media. "The interest in the awards shows that New Zealanders recognise the important role women play in our society and we're proud to have brought that to life with a partner like Westpac."

Wellingtonian and *Board & Management* category-winner, Therese Walsh, stood out as the supreme winner because of her enormous yet understated influence on New Zealand's society.

Judge Rosanne Meo commended Walsh for working in a sector "where women are very much under-represented" and balancing her corporate role with some significant board and advisory roles. "She's obviously very highly regarded by those she works with and for," said Meo.

Walsh continues to break ground as current head of the Cricket World Cup 2015 campaign, and was instrumental in the success of the 2011 Rugby World Cup campaign in her role as chief operating officer.

Simon Power, who sits with Walsh on the NZX board, also deemed her deserving of the Woman of Influence 2013 title, saying her capabilities was evident from the moment one met her.

"You come across people in life who just ooze integrity and she is extraordinarily straight-forward but at the same time, manages to take a group of people with her."



Five category winners were also celebrated for accomplishments in their respective fields. Amongst them, feminist, politician, and human rights and environmental activist, Professor Marilyn Waring received the award for *Innovation & Science*.

Waring's philanthropic efforts span over a number of years, but even in her current role as professor of public policy at AUT University, she continues to strive for change.

"Everyone knows Marilyn Waring, but I think what came through in the [judge's] discussion is she's still working and very involved in research. This is someone who is still in a role where she has the ability to influence," said judge Kerry Prendergast.

Taking home the award for *Community Service & Social Enterprise*, Emeline Afeaki-Mafile'o was praised for her innovative and extraordinary leadership in the South Auckland and Tongan communities. She is the brainchild behind Affirming Works, a mentoring service for at-risk young women, which has to date mentored up to 5,000 students of both sexes.

Also winning in her category, prominent constitutional lawyer Mai Chen was awarded for *Business Entrepreneur*. Chen was recognised for the success of her public law firm, Chen Palmer, and judges were impressed with the way the practice had raised the profile of its chosen field. In addition, Chen also advocates for the strong promotion of ethnic issues in local communities and is a founding member of Global Women, which contributes to corporate women's networking.

Former Wellington mayor - and the first female mayor in the region - Fran Wilde received the *Local & Regional* award for her standout contribution to many spheres, including politics, business, foreign affairs and the arts. Wilde was especially noted for her leadership of the Absolutely Positively Wellington campaign, and her "fearless" introduction of the controversial Homosexual Law Reform bill in 1986.

"In those roles, sticking to what you know is right in fairly tempestuous circumstances...that shows a remarkable level of grit," said Power. Wilde is currently chair of the Greater Wellington Regional Council.

It was finalists in the emerging leader category that certainly gave hope for a bright future for New Zealand, with young leaders hard at work in their local communities. This category had a dual process, with a judging panel made up of Sam Johnson, Keriana Brooking and Annette Fale making an initial selection before the public was able to have its say via [stuff.co.nz](http://stuff.co.nz). The judges were impressed by the significant impact these young women already have at such early stages in their careers.



In the end it was programme leader and lecturer of the Department of Computing at Unitec, Mahsa Mohaghegh, who took home the prize as this year's *Emerging Leader*. Mohaghegh is known for making waves in the technology and science industry. In 2012 she was awarded the Google Anita Borg Scholarship - an award aimed at encouraging women to pursue careers in computing and technology.

Westpac CEO, Peter Clare encouraged more people to get involved next year and nominate women who are catalysts for change in New Zealand. "We congratulate all the winners on their achievements, not only in receiving these awards, but for their ongoing contribution to the community. We hope to have more nominees next year."

For more about the finalists and category winners, [click here](#).

Ends.

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