1917–2017

100 Years of Women in Policing in Western Australia
CHRIS DAWSON APM
COMMISSIONER OF POLICE

2017 has shone a spotlight on the journey of women in policing. It is fair to say that while there have been many achievements, there have also been many obstacles to the progress of female employees in policing – something which is of course far from unique to just our profession.

The opportunity to look back over 100 years of women in WA policing has been both a celebration of how far we have come, and a way of strengthening our resolve going forward to ensure both our policies and practices are inclusive and fair. I want to continue to drive the necessary changes in improving the diversity of the Western Australia Police Force - retaining and developing the potential of our people with the necessary insight and understanding to achieve equitable outcomes.

It has been an honour to serve as Police Commissioner during this commemorative year and I am fully committed to ensuring our people have the tools they need to perform their duties and that the WA Police Force reflects the communities it serves.

COMMANDER JOANNE MCCAIBE APM
CHAIRPERSON 100 YEARS OF WOMEN IN POLICING MARKETING COMMITTEE

I always knew I wanted to be a police officer. I joined the WA Police Force to give back to the community – it never occurred to me that I was different because I was a female. I just wanted to be a police officer.

Women in policing is about recognising that this is more than just a gender issue. While the year afforded us the opportunity to pause and reflect on the progress we have made since our very first policewomen commenced in 1917, we still have a way to go in creating an equitable workforce for the diversity that makes the WA Police Force the great agency that it is today.

It has been an honour and privilege to work alongside the men and women who have helped celebrate this commemorative year – from the district contacts who have organised local professional development events to recognise their staff, to the marketing committee who have spread the message far and wide. I thank each and every past and present member of the WA Police Force who have had a role in celebrating the importance of this milestone.

2017 has ignited great conversation and I believe this is only the beginning of bigger and better things to come for the WA Police Force.
A LONG ROAD

Traffic Patrol Officer
Bridget Bachs, 1977
The Western Australia Police Force was established in 1853 but it was 64 years before women could join the WA Police Force. World War I had brought with it concerns over the moral and physical wellbeing of the women and children of WA that male officers were not resourced or trained to address.

Two years of concerted effort from women’s groups, urged on by the appointment of female police officers in New South Wales and South Australia in 1915, finally brought change to WA.

In August 1917, Helen Dugdale, 40, started as WA’s first female officer, with Laura Chipper, 38, starting the following month.

Women Police Constables (or WPCs) Dugdale and Chipper were employed under the Police Act with full constabulary powers but, officially, their commission was to “patrol slum neighbourhoods”, “look after drunken women” and “obtain assistance for their neglected children”.

As the years and society progressed, women were afforded greater and more equal employment within the WA Police Force. The number of policewomen progressed from two constables to four, then ten and beyond until, today, women account for 23% of the 6,800-strong force of sworn officers and 65% of police staff.

With the growing numbers of policewomen, they were assigned to the female-only Women Police Office and assisted male-only units as required. It was not until the equal opportunity era of the 1970s that the Women Police Office disbanded and they were integrated into all aspects of policing.

The evolution of equality for women in the WA Police Force was challenging at times for those at the forefront of change. Sworn female officers who had successfully integrated into active roles felt the need to constantly prove themselves in a male-dominated profession.

However, policing in the new millennium has made enormous strides in equity and the WA Police Force continues to work towards a future embodying the values that the Western Australian community expects and can take pride in.

This book commemorates 100 years of women in policing. The WA Police Force acknowledges the significant contribution women have made to safeguarding WA over the past century, and looks forward to continued change toward greater inclusivity and fairness in the next.

1. *The West Australian*, 3 December 1917
2. WA Police Force, 30 December 2016

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**WPC HELEN DUGDALE**

Helen Blanch Dugdale (nee Ryrie) was born on 21 November 1876 in Scotland. She married George Dugdale in Perth, WA, in 1912 but was widowed soon after. Dugdale worked as a trained nurse and inspector for the State Children’s Department prior to her employment with the WA Police Force in 1917 at the age of 40. She patrolled the streets of Perth until being transferred to Kalgoorlie in 1933, where she served until her retirement in 1939. Dugdale died in Kalgoorlie on 27 December 1952.

**WPC LAURA CHIPPER**

Laura Ethel Chipper was born on 16 April 1879 in York, WA. Prior to joining the WA Police Force, Chipper undertook social work for the Salvation Army and served as a teacher and matron for boys’ and girls’ homes in Victoria, South Australia and WA. At 38-years-old she joined the WA Police Force and was stationed in Perth, Fremantle and Kalgoorlie. Chipper retired in 1939 and died on 27 July 1978.
OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Mother and daughter officers, Nicole [L] and Alex Hill [R], 2016
“Applications are invited for the position of woman constable from persons under 30 years of age. Applicants must be fully qualified nurses and prepared to undergo medical examination for physical fitness.”

THE WEST AUSTRALIAN
1938

Even more surprising than the appointment of policewomen in WA was the fact that the WA Cabinet awarded pay equal to that of the male officers. This was virtually unheard of in 1917. However, equal pay did not, at first, mean equal opportunity.

In a 1916 report ordered from the then-Commissioner of Police Robert Connell, he expressed a preference for a “middle-aged, experienced person of lovable nature” who “should be as little like police as possible”.1

In 1917 Cabinet called for applicants over the age of 21, unmarried or widowed, trained nurses and physically fit. They were required to wear civilian dress, handbags, hats and gloves. Policewomen were restricted to a specific set of duties more akin to child protection than policing; yet despite the limited scope of their employment, Dugdale and Chipper were kept constantly busy.

Their performance led to the appointment of a further two WPCs the following year. By 1940, six women police officers – three stationed in Perth, two in Fremantle and one in Kalgoorlie – laboured to make a difference to the women and children of the largest single police jurisdiction in the world.

Ethel Scott was appointed officer-in-charge of the Women Police Office in 1946 before being made sergeant. She was the first policewoman to do so in WA. The unit gradually expanded – with much persistence from Scott – and policing became more of a career option for Western Australian women.

In 1957, the requirement to be a trained nurse was removed. Until the 1970s, in-service training was delivered by the officer-in-charge and experienced women police sergeants.

By 1967, Scott had been promoted to the rank of inspector and, within a few years, to superintendent. In 1976, Wilma Currie finalised the disbandment of the Women Police Office and the integration of approximately 40 female police into the broader police force.

Earlier the same year, a stoush had erupted between Police Commissioner Athol Wedd and the Police Union over five engaged policewomen who were refusing to resign once they married. Commissioner Wedd publicly vowed to put women in uniform, subject them to country transfers after their weddings and make them work three shifts – “the same as policemen”2 – if Cabinet amended the legislation.

Regardless, the restriction on marriage status was eventually lifted and uniforms for women were introduced.

Endorsing this new direction for women in policing, the Academy’s two graduating classes of 1976 included 12 determined and proud female recruits. As Dugdale and Chipper had before them, these 12 were at the forefront of culture change in the WA Police Force.

As legislative barriers to women joining the police force fell away, operational ones still hampered the strive for equality. Military-style training exercises during recruitment and height restrictions meant the number of female recruits who made it through the Academy lagged behind other Australian jurisdictions.

Change came as one century gave way to the next. In the early 2000s a drive to resolve gender discrimination saw more flexibility in recruitment requirements and fairer employment conditions (including part-time status, paid parental and carer’s leave) that made policing a more accessible and attractive option for women. Finally, sworn officers of either gender no longer had to choose between their jobs and their families.

1 The Daily News, 7 February 1916
2 The Sunday Times, 24 November 1974
OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

“There were even fewer women back then, particularly young females, but you know what, it helps you build resilience, it helps you deal with conflict situations so even back then I was learning how to deal with that and if you want to call it, ‘manipulate’ myself around to progress in this organisation. I didn’t necessarily want to be liked, I wanted to be respected. I worked hard so that my work ethic and my outputs were those things that people chose me to be on the team for, not just to make up numbers.”

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KELLIE PROPERJOHN
JOINED 1986

“I was able to join because they had lifted the requirement to have a nursing background. Recruiting took six months of on-the-job training, however, I was part of the first few women who were allowed to sit in the back row of some of the Police Academy recruit courses.”

RETIRED SENIOR CONSTABLE VICKI WRAY-WATTS
JOINED 1974 AND AGAIN IN 1997 | SERVED 25 YEARS

“I enjoyed the wonderful support at the Academy during training and all recruits helped one another. There was some open animosity by a couple of the staff who resented the idea of women in the Academy. I was grateful for a couple of strong women who stood their ground and thus we all benefited.”

FORMER CONSTABLE JAN THOMAS
JOINED 1977 | SERVED 7 YEARS

The West Australian
“My sphere of influence was my father, who committed 39 years of his life to serving the community. His pride and pleasure in being a part of the organisation was a positive affirmation in my decision to join. Another was my sister and only sibling who joined the WA Police Force a number of years prior to myself. These were the catalysts and motivation for wanting to join the blue family.”

SENIOR CONSTABLE MELISSA O’KEEFFE
JOINED 1997

“My father, grandfather and great uncle were police officers. It makes me proud to be the next generation following in their footsteps, but even more so to be the first female in the family. I want to be a role model for children, especially my own.”

FIRST CLASS CONSTABLE
ASHLEIGH MARTIN
JOINED 2010

“I had to fight for the right to teach self-defence at Operational Safety and Tactics Training Unit after being told ‘the boys do that’. After being called ‘proficient’ by a male sergeant and then being told I will only ever be just another female with a voice that’s too loud, I learnt to accept that not everyone will encourage you on your journey, which is disappointing.”

SERGEANT LINDSEY AMESBURY
JOINED 2004
WOMEN IN BLUE

Officers from Mounted Section at the ANZAC Day parade, 2017
“The female police have never, since 1917, worn uniform. There was no reason at all why they should not, and so they have benefited over all these years in drawing a plain clothes allowance denied their male counterparts performing, in broad terms, much the same type of duties, whereas I understand in all other police forces in Australia, they do wear uniform.”

COMMISSIONER ATHOL WEDD
1974

Western Australian police officers were first issued uniforms in 1857, but when women joined the ranks in 1917 they had to dress in civilian clothes. Women were awarded a clothing allowance - something their plain-clothed male counterparts may have considered unfair. Those male officers, however, did not have to wear hat and gloves and carry a handbag on the beat!

Two WPCs posted to the Police Traffic Branch in 1941 as crossing guards were given uniforms as a trial, but requests for a uniform for the rest of the women police were rejected by the Police Commissioner of the day. As such, in the words of former policewoman Ruth Dunwell:

“Plain clothes meant the full catastrophe!
Yes, a very conservative frock, proper shoes, stockings. With a grateful prayer of thanks from me, a bit later the gloves were waived, later the hat fell by the wayside... oh, those hats... what a collection!”

It was 1976 before all female police officers were issued with uniforms. They had one each for summer and winter - that were individually fitted by a tailor and had to be worn based on the season, rather than the conditions of the day.

In summer, policewomen wore a light blue, belted dress with engraved buttons, and a hat. Some country officers were later issued a khaki uniform. The winter uniform comprised of a dark blue, double-breasted jacket over a knee-length, dark blue dress and matching hat. Each policewoman was also required to carry a police-issue handbag, inside which they tucked their police notebook, whistle, handcuffs. Some even used it to carry their five-shot revolver! The impracticalities of the uniform were not lost on the officers, particularly when wearing heels and chasing “a juvenile absconder down Murray Street.”

In 1986, after a coordinated protest by women officers and a trial at the Royal Agricultural Show, policewomen were approved for a more practical uniform consisting of a light blue shirt, navy skirt, white police cap and a (non-compulsory) tie. The big advancement was the issuing of trousers for policewomen – at first restricted to after dark.

In the years that followed, policewomen who wanted to wear trousers year-round had to endure their thick winter pair unless they could ‘inherit’ a summer pair from a male colleague and personally alter them to suit.

From the late 1990s, policewomen were issued the same uniform as men. This included a blue shirt with police crest and rank sliders on shoulders, blue cargo pants, a navy cap with chequered trim and police crest, an inner and outer belt with accoutrements, hi-visibility vest and boots.

The focus is now on operational practicalities; gone are the days when the uniform is markedly different due to gender.

1 Former Senior Constable Jessica Booth, personal comment
"In accordance with the fashion of the time we wore dresses (with petticoats), or a skirt and blouse, with a jacket or coat. Shoes were of own choice, either heels or flat with stockings, hat, gloves, handbag. We were issued with a whistle and handcuffs but I never used them. Our hats were not needed at night."

RETIRED FIRST CLASS SERGEANT DOROTHY HUGHES
JOINED 1957 | SERVED 27 YEARS

"The uniform was blue body shirt, tie, tunic, dark blue skirt, dark blue stockings and court shoes. Not to forget the handbag to carry our whistle, notebook, handcuffs and five-shot revolver. I remember we had to change from summer to winter uniform, and vice versa, on a set day of the year so it could be 35 degrees and you would still have to wear the winter uniform."

FORMER INSPECTOR ANN HEITMAN
JOINED 1985 | SERVED 26 YEARS

"One of the main reasons I made skirts my primary uniform for so long was the ease and speed in which to complete a toilet break. Whilst others were forced to remove their gun belts, and lay them on the toilet floor to use the facilities, I could just make a few quick and simple moves to complete a comfort break and remain armed and dangerous at all times!"

SERGEANT ALICE COCKRAM
JOINED 1986
“Handbags for traffic duties were a nightmare when directing traffic. I would either have to leave it with a shop owner or have the duty sergeant put it in his motorcycle panniers. I might add that although the uniform was impractical it did command an immediate public respect... often calming tricky situations from developing further. These were quite different times.”

FORMER CONSTABLE JAN THOMAS
JOINED 1977 | SERVED 7 YEARS

“Every woman in school at the Academy had purchased multiple pairs of new navy blue high heel shoes or at least repaired and replaced the heels that were worn out and damaged as we marched and ran around the parade ground in them. Collectively, we challenged the female uniform. By the time we graduated, and with the support of our female instructor and academy staff, women were issued with the same blue shirts as our male colleagues to be worn with our winter uniform skirt, stockings and flat navy blue shoes. This was the beginning of the uniform revolution!”

INSPECTOR KERRY FRENCH
JOINED 1985
The past one hundred years of women in the WA Police Force is full of many moments, both big and small. Every one has helped bring a positive change to ensuring a strong and equal police force for all West Australians. Discover some of the significant people and events that have helped shape our past, present and future.
1829
Swan River Colony Founded
Perth became the capital city of WA. Governor Stirling appointed part-time (male) constables to maintain order in Perth and Fremantle.

1853
WA State Police Force Established
Various types of police were employed in the colony since its founding, however, the force was not formally set up until 1853. John Augustus Conroy became commissioner and wrote a Code of Rules that set out how the WA Police Force should be run with changes made over the years.

1899
Women Can Vote in WA
Western Australian women – those who were British subjects and 21 years or older – became the second in the country to gain the right to vote (South Australia was first in 1895).
1914–1918

World War I

In 1915 women’s groups in WA petitioned the government to appoint policewomen to care for the social and moral welfare of women and young girls.

1917

WA’s First Female Police Officers

Helen Dugdale became WA’s first female police officer when she enrolled as a probationary constable. WA was the fourth state to employ female police officers. Laura Chipper became the State’s second female police officer the same year. More female constables were added over the following years; however, only in small numbers.

1914–1918

1939–1945

World War II

During the Second World War, WA was on the frontline when the Japanese bombed six northern towns. As well as their regular duties, police undertook security and intelligence work, coast watching, protecting port towns, guarding prisoners of war, and maintaining law and order when Australian and allied servicemen came to town on leave.

1941

A Uniform Response

An approach to the Police Minister was made for a uniform to be provided for women in patrol work. This was refused.

1946

First Female Officer-In-Charge

After seven years in the WA Police Force, Ethel Scott became officer-in-charge of the Women Police Office. She was responsible for organising the unit and coordinating its activities with other branches of the WA Police Force.

1957

Changing Qualifications

The requirement for policewomen to be trained nurses was removed. However, they still were not issued uniforms, and if a woman married, she had to resign.
1971

First Female Superintendent in WA

Ethel Scott became WA’s first female superintendent after 32 years in the WA Police Force.

1975

‘I, Officer Fran Murray, take you...’

Fran Murray joined the WA Police Force in 1963. When she married Alan Dodd in 1975, she became the first policewoman to be allowed to remain in the force after marriage. She served for 32 years and retired in 1995.

1976

Police Academy Graduates

Six women graduated out of a class of 53, becoming the first women to do so in WA. They were Helen Cruthers, Lee Smyth, Bridget Bachs, Annette Shipley, Sheila Smallwood and Robina Raabe. Training included criminal law, police procedures, self-defence, weapon handling and more. During training, women received no special treatment – not even on push-ups – and they performed the same duties as the male recruits.

1977

Women Police Office Disbands

The traditional work of the Women Police Office became redundant with the growth of public welfare agencies. As such, the Women Police Office closed and all policewomen moved into general policing and specialised branches of the force. In 1976 they had been given uniforms (still with gloves and handbags for dress occasions) and married women could now be employed. They took on general duties, ranging from criminal investigation work and accident enquiries to traffic and public relations, first aid and forensics.

1983

Police Officer of the Year Winner

Jennifer Leete became the first woman to receive the award, now known as the Police Excellence Awards.

1991

Recognition of Outstanding Service

Val Doherty became the country’s first female recipient of an Australian Police Medal. She also received the Australian Medal for Distinguished Service in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List. She retired in 1994 after 34 years of service.
2001

Work/Life Balance

The WA Police Force introduced a new flexible work options strategy. The aim was to better allow managers and staff to negotiate suitable options for staff who need different employment considerations such as childcare, part-time work or parental leave.

2010

Police Auxiliary Officers

A new role in the WA Police Force that helps officers with duties at the station. Police Auxiliary Officers undertake custody and release procedures, managing and handling drugs and firearms, and processing property and evidence. 11 women were in the first intake of 17.

2017

Police Star

Introduced in 2017, the Police Star recognises WA Police Force personnel who are killed or seriously injured while carrying out policing duties for the WA community. 78 people received the award in its first year. They included Jane Kennaugh and Cheryl Klumper, who were killed in the line of duty, and Janine Flanagan and Diane Douglas, who were seriously injured.

2017

Constable Clare Joins the Team

Recognising the need for female representation while celebrating 100 years of women in the WA Police Force, the Constable Care Child Safety Foundation introduces Constable Clare and hopes she will inspire the next generation of young women.

2017

Protective Service Officers

Protective Service Officers are civilians who undergo three months of training to keep the community safe and protect government buildings. The first group consisted of 16 men and nine women.

2017

100 Years On

A century after the first women began service in the WA Police Force, there are 1,610 female officers and 1,408 female police staff employed across every area, making up 23% of officers and 65% of police staff respectively. The only positions yet to be held permanently by women are deputy commissioner and commissioner.

Sarah Tofts, Ciara Readings and Barbara Salgado at a women in policing morning tea held by the North West Metropolitan District, 2017
CALLING ALL UNITS
"We do want women to play a greater role as leaders of the police, and our police service should as far as possible endeavour to reflect the diversity of our community."

COMMISSIONER BARRY MATTHEWS
2003

From humble beginnings policing public spaces where immoral acts against and by women and children might be committed, policewomen have reached far beyond their original charter to serve as equal members of the WA Police Force.

Perth, Fremantle and Kalgoorlie were the original postings for women police in the first decades of the twentieth century. The demands of the city were balanced with those of country jurisdictions so that women police would often do a tour of country towns such as Albany, Geraldton and Bunbury.

At first, despite being enlisted with full constabulary powers at their disposal, the work of early policewomen rarely involved making arrests or chasing down criminals. The policewomen were given a list of 11 duties such as “to keep under observation reputed brothels, wineshops, hotels, and other places frequented by women of ill fame.”¹ Just as the domain of women and children could best be handled by women, ‘real’ crime was considered the domain of men and could only be handled by male officers.

However, within a few decades, the types of work women were tasked with expanded naturally as their abilities to the WA Police Force became apparent. In addition to their welfare patrols, women police also conducted interviews, supervised child offenders at court, handled lost children enquiries, searched female prisoners and assisted with cases from the Criminal Investigation Branch (CIB).

Night and weekend duties also increased, putting a strain on the small numbers of officers in the Women Police Office. Despite the burgeoning workload, repeated requests for resourcing from officer-in-charge Sergeant Ethel Scott fell on deaf ears. Increases were small and infrequent.

A 2% gender quota in the WA Police Force meant that opportunities to recruit the numbers of policewomen that were needed were few. Similarly, a woman could not oversee a male unit. This corralled scores of experienced female officers in the Women Police Office even further and meant no vacancies for new recruits. Promotion was capped at the rank of sergeant for decades.

But with the promotion of a woman first to inspector (1968) and then superintendent (1971), and the full integration of policewomen into the broader force in 1977, barriers to employment and career success started to fall.

Opportunities and vacancies exploded virtually overnight and women started appearing in a range of key roles across the WA Police Force. Policewomen were recruited in key regional towns. While old prejudices meant that some country station sergeants did not believe women could do all the duties required of an officer, it was not long before women were policing right across the largest jurisdiction in the world, posted without consideration of their gender.

New roles, such as Aboriginal police liaison officers, auxiliary officers and protective service officers, proliferated to help expand opportunities for women in the WA Police Force and contribute to the building of strong, lifelong careers.

To date, women have served in all but the two highest ranks in the WA Police Force. The appointment of a woman as Victorian Chief Commissioner of Police (Christine Nixon, 2001–2009) shows that even that ceiling is fragile and not out of reach for some of WA’s most dedicated and experienced women police.

¹ The West Australian, 3 December 1917
“As a bomb technician, I was fortunate enough to be seconded to NSW Police for the Sydney 2000 Olympics. I was at the opening ceremony thinking, ‘I cannot believe this is my job!’ It was awesome.”

SENIOR SERGEANT JODIE PEARSON
JOINED 1988

“One of my best memories was when my brother was transferred to Fremantle Station from Hilton Police in late 1981/1982. We were both on the same shift relief and on a day shift were rostered on van patrol. The humour from VKI when we booked on air at the start of our shift was obvious. What was even better was that although both of us were constables at the time, I was the senior one which made for a very interesting day.”

FORMER SERGEANT MICHELLE PORTEOUS
JOINED 1980 | SERVED 20 YEARS

“My career took a dramatic and unexpected turn when I was summoned to the Commissioner’s Office. With a feeling of dread, and wondering what I could have possibly done to warrant such an audience, I arrived to hear Commissioner Owen Leitch explain he had heard I was an accomplished equestrian rider and he had a view that the Mounted Section would be a great place for women officers to work. He even went so far as to suggest I might be able to teach the blokes a thing or two about horsemanship and so I was to start there the following Monday.”

SERGEANT MERRYN BOJCUN
JOINED 1977

CALLING ALL UNITS

▲ Jodie Pearson, 2014

▲ Women Police Office with Commissioner Athol Wedd, c1972
“I always saw myself as a police officer, not a woman police officer and set my sights on becoming a detective. However, women detectives were unheard of at that time. I applied several times to join the CIB. In response to my first application, the then Commissioner advised me that he had checked the routine orders and could not find a reason why women could not be detectives, but he was not prepared to make an exception for me! In 1975, I was finally appointed as a detective, along with Anna Schaper. We were the first female detectives in the State.”

FORMER SUPERINTENDENT
BRONWYN KEIGHLEY-GERARDY
JOINED 1969 | SERVED 24 YEARS

“Starting at a new position as an officer-in-charge... one of the sworn male staff members asked me how long I had been a customer service officer before questioning me as to how many words per minute I could type. I advised him I could type around 60 words per minute and professionally introduced myself as his new officer-in-charge to which he turned a shade of puce.”

SENIOR SERGEANT SHANDELL CASTLEDINE
JOINED 1987

“In the Wheatbelt you have the opportunity to know the community and to get down on a local level to meet kids, to talk to senior citizens and to really have ownership of the problems and issues you have in your town. I found that really rewarding in Merredin because you could see the results of the policing you did. You became part of the community and you are well respected in the town and people genuinely thank you for what you do. I found it absolutely rewarding as the officer-in-charge, and I know that other officers there find it equally rewarding. It’s a unique way of policing.”

INSPECTOR ERICA SILWOOD
JOINED 1997
## FIRSTS FOR WOMEN

Though progress was slow to begin with, the barriers that held women back from participating as full and equal members of the WA Police Force have steadily fallen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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| 1917 | Female Police Officer
Helen Dugdale |
| 1941 | Traffic officers
Amy Millgate and Gladys Johnson |
| 1946 | Officer-in-charge
Ethel Scott |
| 1947 | Sergeant
Ethel Scott |
| 1961 | Awarded Police Long Service and Good Conduct Medal
Ethel Scott and Agnes Brown |
| 1967 | Inspector
Ethel Scott |
| 1970 | Queen’s Police Medal recipient
Ethel Scott |
| 1971 | Superintendent
Ethel Scott |
| 1975 | Officer to marry and continue working
Fran Dodd |
| 1976 | Detectives
Bronwyn Keighley-Gerardy and Anna Schaper |
| 1976 | Academy graduates
Helen Dawson, Lee Smyth, Bridget Bachs, Annette Shipley, Sheila Smallwood and Robina Raabe |
| 1977 | Cadets
Denise Clements and Alida Scott |
| 1977 | Traffic patrol officer
Bridget Bachs |
| 1977 | Mounted police officer
Merryn Bojcun |
| 1978 | Cadets to complete cadet training and commence police academy training
Karen Slater and Denise Clements |
| 1978 | Country traffic officer
Gillian Jones |
| 1979 | Cadets to earn Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award
Leachelle Armstrong, Alison Miguel, Joneen Woodford, Sharron Leonhardt and Kerrie Trigwell |
| 1979 | Members of Water Police
Leonie Webb (part-time) and Sue McAdam (full-time) |
| 1980 | Officer elected to WA Police Union executive council
Bronwyn Keighley-Gerardy |
| 1980 | Supervisor of a Police 
& Citizens Youth Club
Pamela Bayley |
| 1981 | First female officer to work a shift with a sibling
Michelle Porteous with her brother Chris |
| 1983 | Police Officer of the Year Award recipient
Jennifer Leete |
| 1985 | Tactical Response Group members
Jonine Harrison, Linley Taylor, Patricia Lagan and Nicole Hill |
| 1985 | Motorcycle rider
Ann Winton |
1986
Police Pipe Band Musician
Ellen Tattersall

1986
Detective sergeant
Lilly Cvijic

1987
Officer stationed in
Kimberley District
Nicole Hill

1989
Police Negotiator
Sharron Leonhardt

1989
Chief Superintendent
Val Doherty

1989
Regional officer-in-charge
Catherine Bullen

1989
First officer to remain in
service with CIB while
pregnant
Sharron Leonhardt

1990
National Medal recipient
Lilly Cvijic

1990
Police prosecutor
Michelle Porteous

1990
CIB duty sergeant
Lilly Cvijic

1991
Qualified arson investigator
Jennifer Jones

1991
Australian Police Medal
recipient
Val Doherty

1992
Qualified hazardous
devices/bomb scene
examiner
Jennifer Jones

1995
Drill sergeant instructor
and recruit graduation
parade commander
Patricia Lagan

1996
Appointment to the
Internal Investigations
Unit
Michelle Porteous

1996
Detective to receive
a permanent country
posting
Louise Ball

1996
Killed in the line of duty
Jane Kennaugh

1997
Sports Star of the Year
Natalie Morris

1998
Bomb technician
Jodie Pearson

2001
Member of the Bomb
Response Unit
Jodie Pearson

2001
Detective Training School
officer-in-charge
Kellie Properjohn

2002
Member of 79 Division/
Major Incident Group
Michelle Fyfe

2003
Recruit of the Year
Award recipient
Natalie Robertson

2004
Superintendent of
a regional district
Catherine Bullen

2004
Assistant commissioner
Barbara Etter

2006
Dog handler
Lee-Anne Vincent

2006
Bomb scene examiner
Siobhan O’Loughlin

2006
Officer on overseas
deployment
Catherine Bullen

2007
Head of WA Police
Academy
Kellie Properjohn

2007
Officer-in-charge of a
country detective office
Kylie Whiteley

2010
Police Auxiliary Officers
Lisa Armstrong, Emma
MacLeod, Victoria Moore,
Fiona McPherson, Heather
Jones, Fiona Moor, Victoria
Kidd, Vicky Saywell, Amy
Page, Taryna Clark and
Jasmine Hill

2010
Superintendent of a
metropolitan district
Kellie Properjohn

2015
Member of Gold
Stealing Unit
Heather Carter

2016
Tactical flight officer
Elisha Vines
AN EQUAL FORCE
A STRONG FORCE
“Only 10 per cent of Western Australian police are women and only two women have reached the rank of commissioned officer. Merit based promotion will go a long way towards assisting women police break through the glass ceiling.”

EDUCATION AND TRAINING MINISTER KAY HALLAHAN 1992

WA’s first WPCs were given the same establishing pay as their male counterparts, a practice that was almost unheard of in 1917. While equal pay may have been an attractive proposal for women considering joining the WA Police Force, few vacancies, limited career progression, and forced resignations if they married dampened the enthusiasm of many who wanted to serve their community as police officers.

After the restrictions on marriage were lifted in 1975 and the Women Police Office integrated into the broader police force, the number of women in the WA Police Force – and the longevity of their service – began to climb.

Equal opportunity was becoming more mainstream in the late 1970s and 1980s and with it came changes that improved the role of women serving in the police force. Recruitment height requirements were lowered and military-style training regimes at the Academy (which were biased toward the musculature and endurance of males) were modified to be more inclusive. A significant shift followed in 1990 when the promotion system was changed to merit-based rather than seniority-based, which allowed women (who had previously been suppressed in rank) to ascend professionally.

Despite all this, women made up fewer than 10% of the State’s 4,000-strong police force in the early nineties. It was clear that there were still barriers to women joining the WA Police Force.

Much had changed from forty years earlier when Acting Commissioner James O’Brien declared married women “unable to give undivided attention and loyalty to police work” and were “therefore unsuitable” to positions as police officers.1 Women — with spouses or not, with children or not — were now deemed a vital facet of modern policing. More needed to be done to retain them in the workforce.

In 2001, Commissioner Barry Matthews established a Women’s Advisory Network (WAN) to respond to the needs of women working in the police environment. The Network identified recruitment and retention of women officers as key areas for improvement. Integral to addressing both challenges was the introduction of flexible work practices such as part-time work, paid parental leave and carer’s leave. These practices revolutionised – yet again – the experiences of women serving in the WA Police Force.

In 2009, the WAN was replaced with the Executive Committee for Women which built on WAN foundations with the implementation of strategic initiatives to increase the advancement of women in policing. The Executive Committee oversaw implementation of a Women in Leadership Strategy, internal secondment structures for female staff (to enhance their personal and professional development) and mentoring for female officers ahead of promotion.

The WA Police Force has made progress towards achieving equality within its workforce, however, the work does not stop here. To achieve a diverse and inclusive workplace, the WA Police Force is developing a Gender Equality Strategy. This will see the WA Police Force move into the future with increased representation of women in leadership roles and strategies to boost the percentage of women in frontline policing.

1 Letter to Victorian Chief Commissioner of Police, 16 December 1957
“I think older women in particular have some very hard stereotypes to overcome in this job. I was 45 when I joined the force, and it took time to prove to my workmates that physically I was able to handle myself in tough situations, especially with highly aggressive and combative detainees at the Watch House.”

POLICE AUXILIARY OFFICER JULIE LACEY
JOINED 2014

“The worst part about being a female officer was always feeling like you had to prove yourself worthy so much more than the boys. The agency has come so far with equality compared to 20 years ago. I believe we now all work together as equals.”

SENIOR CONSTABLE KAREN CREALY
JOINED 1996

“I became a detective in 1988 and it was only then that the agency, culturally, was starting to recognise that women officers, and particularly in those detective crime roles, were actually of value. Women bring a different perspective to the table... the world is different to me than it is for my male counterparts – we may ultimately agree, but I just see it from a different perspective.”

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MICHELLE FYFE
JOINED 1984
“After approximately six months in the Women Police Office, I was transferred initially to Central Police upon integration where we commenced foot and van patrols with the guys. The first day I went out to a van with my partner he didn’t know what to do and stopped at the passenger door to open it for me. I very nicely said that we were not on a date, we were partners and I would open and close my own doors. There was a look of relief on his face. But, what a gentleman! So yes, it did take a couple of days before the male officers got the hang of working with us.”

FORMER SENIOR CONSTABLE JESSICA BOOTH
JOINED 1977 | SERVED 15 YEARS

“I was pregnant with my third child when I was promoted to senior sergeant, and after 17 months leave I became the first part-time senior sergeant after changes in policy enabled me to return to work part-time. Being a mother of three young children in a large regional WA district, whilst both parents work full-time, is very challenging. I live in a country town with no family support and extremely limited child support opportunities whilst doing the job I love – that’s a challenge!”

SENIOR SERGEANT SHARON BIRD
JOINED 1988

“At about the same time [1981] the women detectives at CIB had taken their case to court to be paid whilst they were off duty and on call. In days before mobile phones it meant staying home and not consuming alcohol in case they were called in. They won the battle and lost the war. It meant that there were only a couple of women detectives available and due to the shortage, a few uniformed girls, including myself, were seconded to CIB.”

FORMER CONSTABLE MONIKA KLEIN
JOINED 1980 | SERVED 4 YEARS

“I wanted to be able to help create a positive change within the Aboriginal community and to also provide a role model and leader status as an Aboriginal female police officer. I am proud and passionate about my Aboriginal culture and our people.”

FIRST CLASS CONSTABLE TATUM GIBSON
JOINED 2013

Tatum Gibson

▲ Tatum Gibson
ABOVE & BEYOND

The Western Australia Police Star Medal
The families helped in the early years knew the value policewomen provided, yet it would be 40 years before community – and organisational – attitudes changed to officially recognise the significant contribution of policewomen.

In 1961, women in the WA Police Force were publicly recognised for the first time through the awarding of the Police Long Service and Good Conduct Medal to then-Sergeant Ethel Scott and WPC Agnes Brown. Nine years later Sergeant Scott also accepted the Queen’s Police Medal. Both these medals were precursors to today’s Australian Police Medal (established 1986).

There is no doubting the commitment that all police officers – male and female – demonstrate in the conduct of their duty. Every day, officers put themselves on the frontline to protect and serve the community while acting with the highest standards expected of the WA Police Force.

There are, however, police officers who consistently serve in a manner that goes beyond the already high standards set by the WA Police Force and, of course, women officers are no exception. In 1983, Jennifer Leete became the first woman to win WA Police Officer of the Year, recognising her performance excellence, compassion, devotion to duty and outstanding work done to raise the public’s perception and confidence in policing.

In 1990, Lilly Cvijic became the first policewoman to receive the National Medal which recognised her long and diligent service in risking her life to protect the community. In 1991, Val Doherty was recognised for outstanding service when she became Australia’s first female recipient of an Australian Police Medal. Since then, 22 more Western Australian women have received Australian Police Medals.

To be of service to the community, however, can mean giving your all in a far more literal sense. In 2017, the WA Police Star Medal was introduced to recognise WA Police Force personnel who are killed or seriously injured while carrying out policing duties.

The Police Star acknowledges the unique and unpredictable dangers of policing and the sacrifices officers make serving the community of WA. Of the 78 police officers retrospectively awarded the distinguished Police Star in 2017, four were women: Senior Constable Jane Kennaugh, Constable Cheryl Klumper, Senior Sergeant Janine Flanagan and Sergeant Diane Douglas.

Senior Constable Jane Kennaugh was killed in a traffic crash at the Madora Beach Road–Fremantle Road intersection in 1996 when the car driven by Senior Constable Glenn Murray hit a tree on a median strip. Murray was seriously injured. Kennaugh joined the WA Police Force in 1986 and served in the America’s Cup Division, the Prosecuting Branch, Central, City and Canning police stations. She was 32 years old when she died. Kennaugh’s mother, Dorothy, helped raise her children and became an honorary member of the WA Police Widows Guild.

Constable Cheryl Klumper was killed in the line of duty on 28 August 1998 also as a result of a traffic accident. She was stationed at Traffic Operations Group at the time. Klumper joined the WA Police Force in 1996 and was 28 years old when she died.

Senior Sergeant Janine Flanagan was awarded the Police Star for injuries sustained while working in Broome in 2003, and she continues to serve in the WA Police Force.

Constable Diane Douglas was recognised for being injured in the line of duty, and developed post-traumatic stress disorder from attending a horrific suicide incident in 2001. She was medically retired in 2003 after serving 23 years in the WA Police Force.

As well as recognising the impact on the lives of officers, the Police Star also acknowledges the family members who have supported the recipients both during and after their careers. Policing is a challenging profession and support of family is critical in being able to carry out the duties to the highest level.

“Being a frontline police officer can be dangerous, unpredictable and at times stressful, and we should never forget the sacrifices our fine police officers make every day, to protect us and keep the community safe.”

POLICE MINISTER MICHELLE ROBERTS 2017
“My injuries initially made me very wary of a return to operational policing, however, I pushed myself beyond expectations to achieve my dream of working as a trainer at the Operational Safety and Tactics Training Unit. Being brave and making that decision ultimately led to promotion and the opportunity to further my career by fulfilling different roles. I have enjoyed nine years of operational policing since my accident in 2003 and only this year, in my 20th year of service, been made non-operational again due to ongoing medical issues from my injuries. I still embrace a positive outlook everyday knowing that the work I do as a police officer, now and in the future, still supports the frontline and continues to allow me to serve the community of Western Australia.”

SENIOR SERGEANT JANINE FLANAGAN
JOINED 1996

“Cheryl Klumper and I met in the Police Academy and we became very close after we both graduated. Cheryl’s policing service was cut short in the line of duty, but while she served, she served with passion. As a result of Cheryl’s death whilst on duty and in a police vehicle, the maintenance of police vehicles rightly became a priority, particularly the tread depth on tyres. Sadly, her death in 1998 was a wake-up call to both myself and other police officers, that we were not invincible. It made me think differently about the risks of police duties. It was not just the ‘bad guys’ we had to be afraid of, we could be seriously injured or killed in many different ways. Such is the inherently dangerous nature of policing.”

SENIOR SERGEANT JANINE FLANAGAN
ON THE DEATH OF CONSTABLE CHERYL KLUMPER
“My best memory was when a colleague approached me to tell me that nominations had opened for the ACWAP Excellence in Policing Awards (2016) and wanted to nominate me for one of the awards. My colleague went on to say why he thought I deserved to be nominated. My eyes welled up with tears and this was truly my proudest professional moment.”

SERGEANT KAREENE SANTORO
JOINED 1996

“Constable Cath Bullen and Constable Peter Lindsay were presented with special commendations by Police Commissioner Brian Bull for services above and beyond the call of duty. Constable Bullen was involved in the apprehension of one of Australia’s most wanted men last August. She and Constable Lindsay arrested Garry Raymond Pryor, wanted in connection with an armed robbery in Perth. Pryor had holed himself up in a house in the tiny wheatbelt town of Minnivale, near Northam. The officers believed Pryor was armed. A modest Constable Bullen said she never considered the danger to herself but only thought of the possible risk to the town if Pryor had escaped.”

THE SUNDAY TIMES
21 JANUARY 1990

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**Australian Police Medal Recipients**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Val Doherty</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Lilly Cvijic</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>Maria Coyne</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>Catherine Bullen</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>Rebecca West</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Kellee Walters</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>Jennifer O’Connell</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>Sharron Leonhardt</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>Barbara Etter</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>Kellie Properjohn</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>Jane Gillham</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>Joanne McCabe</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Michelle Fyfe</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Merryn Bojcun</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>Kylie Whiteley</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>Noreen O’Rourke</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>Kim Travers</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>Jodie Pearson</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>Kerry French</td>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>Laura Russ</td>
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<td>Bernadette Plane</td>
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<td>2017</td>
<td>Susan Young</td>
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<td>2017</td>
<td>Kathryn Taylor</td>
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