

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Rock-solid effort from medal-winning Engineering student

For the first time, the winner of the prestigious Rod McGee Medal has been awarded to a Tasmanian student.

University of Tasmania Engineering student Sally Atherton is the 2014 recipient and has been presented with the medal at a ceremony in Adelaide.

The medal is the most significant national award in Australia for civil engineering students and is named in memory of Dr Rod McGee, a skilled Tasmanian-born engineer and University of Tasmania graduate who passed away at just 47.

Miss Atherton, age 22 of Hobart, has just finished her Engineering degree with Honours.

“It’s an absolute shock to be selected. I’m really grateful and I feel very fortunate,” she said.

Her Honours project looked at the viability of using glass-fibre reinforced concrete for rainwater tanks by examining the market demand for tanks (now and into the future) in addition to the suitability of the material itself.

“I’m sort of following in Rod’s footsteps as well, because he was involved in a lot of concrete innovation in Tasmania. In some sense, I was inspired by that to look at different types of concrete and their applications for my Honours project.”

Miss Atherton also completed work experience at Department of State Growth, where Dr McGee worked for the majority of his life.

“Engineering has always been a natural path for me because I always loved my maths and science. In high school we worked on lots of projects, including the science and engineering challenge, and I found that really rewarding,” Miss Atherton said.

“In college I studied housing and design and started to get an affinity for creativity and problem-solving skills. The fact that my dad is an engineer as well means I have been exposed to it all my life. Having some of that inside knowledge persuaded me to study engineering.”

After graduating, Miss Atherton will begin work with a Hobart-based engineering consultancy firm.

Professor Margaret Britz, Dean of the University's Faculty of Science, Engineering and Technology, congratulated Miss Atherton on her achievement.

"It is always wonderful to see one of our students achieving in this way, but in this instance it is particularly pleasing. Dr McGee was an alumnus of the University, who went on to a successful career in engineering in our state, whose great promise was sadly cut short by his early death.

"As Sally's research interests align with Dr McGee's, that too is a great indication of the inspiration his career has provided.

"We congratulate Sally on this excellent achievement- we have no doubt her career in Engineering will be both successful and rewarding."

About the Rod McGee Medal: The Medal recognises and encourages engineering students to engage in career opportunities in public works engineering. One award is offered each year to undergraduate students in their final year Civil Engineering. The winner receives an engraved medallion, \$2000 and a certificate conferred by Engineers Australia.

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