

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Friday 7 November 2014

Firm focus on the environment for latest Rhodes Scholar

The University of Tasmania is celebrating the presentation of the 2015 Rhodes Scholarship for Tasmania to Rebecca Byrnes.

Rebecca, 23, has completed a Bachelor of Economics/Laws with Honours from the University. Her Honours thesis focused on charity law as a mechanism for protecting the environment, and her ultimate goal is to “make an impact on the future of our planet.”

“My true passion, and the issue to which I hope to dedicate my career, is climate change. I know for certain I want to work in the area of climate change mitigation, to protect the world’s most vulnerable people,” she said.

“The University of Oxford, with its Environmental Change Institute conducting world-class research into climate change, is the perfect location for me to pursue this goal.”

Post-university, Rebecca hopes to eventually work or intern at an international environmental organisation and to one day establish her own climate change law practice.

Rebecca’s academic achievements have seen her placed on the Dean’s Roll of Excellence in the Faculty of Business several times. She has received several academic awards and scholarships, including the WA Finlay Prize in Law, the LexisNexis Prize, the Federation Scholarship in Law and the Zoe Ewart Tasmania University Scholarship in Law.

In 2013, Rebecca was awarded the University Foundation Overseas Exchange Scholarship, which allowed her to study at the University of Lucerne in Switzerland, an experience she found very rewarding.

Throughout her studies, Rebecca has still found time to volunteer with the Oaktree Foundation and the Environmental Defender’s Office.

Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor Peter Rathjen, congratulated Rebecca on her excellent achievement.

“The Rhodes Scholarship is recognised around the world for the quality of scholar it supports - true ‘all-rounders,’ individuals who excel not only in academia, but also in volunteering, community engagement and in their own personal growth and development.

“These are traits to be greatly admired, and emulated.

“Rebecca’s commitment to environmental issues and their impact on the future of our planet and population, demonstrates a keen insight and strength of character. I am sure she will go far in her academic career, and beyond,” Professor Rathjen said.

“Every year it is an honour for the University community to celebrate the recipient of the Rhodes. These scholars provide a stellar example of what can be achieved with perseverance, a generosity of spirit, and a commitment to excellence.”

Rebecca’s interests also include a variety of sports, travelling, playing and teaching the viola, violin and cello, learning German, and reading and writing fiction.

About the Rhodes Scholarship: The Rhodes Scholarship is awarded yearly to gifted students who have completed their undergraduate degree and achieved First Class Honours in their chosen field of study. One recipient from each state in Australia is selected. The Scholarship allows the recipient to study at the famed University of Oxford in the UK.

The Rhodes Scholarships were created under the will of Cecil John Rhodes in 1902. Rhodes scholars are chosen not only for academic excellence but also for sporting and leadership abilities and community involvement.

For images of Rebecca, please contact the University’s Media Office, details below.

Information released by:

University of Tasmania, Communications and Media Office

Phone: (03) 6226 2691 or 0447 537 375

Email: Media.Office@utas.edu.au