

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Dedication to improving the lives of others drives 2016 Rhodes Scholar

University of Tasmania law student Emilie McDonnell, 23, has been awarded the 2016 Rhodes Scholarship for Tasmania.

Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Kate Warner AM, Governor of Tasmania, presented Emilie with the award at a ceremony at Government House today.

“I’m very excited to receive the scholarship,” Emilie said.

Emilie is currently completing a Bachelor of Law with first-class Honours and a Bachelor of Arts. Her Honours research focused on the execution of the Bali Two and the relevance of international human rights law to the death penalty.

She plans to undertake a Bachelor of Civil Law at the University of Oxford followed by a Master of Philosophy in Law. Her long-term goal is to use her legal training to make a difference in the lives of asylum seekers.

“I have a real desire to make a difference and at Oxford University I’ll have the chance to learn from the best in the field,” Emilie said.

Emilie’s commitment to social justice led her to co-found the Refugee Legal Service, of which she is currently a Director.

She has also volunteered with the Oaktree Foundation and was the Tasmanian University Law Society’s Social Justice and Welfare Officer.

Her dedication to improving the lives of others was recognised in 2014 when she received the Tasmanian Human Rights Youth Award and the Sandy Duncanson Social Justice Bursary.

She has also received numerous academic awards including the Zoe Ewart Memorial Scholarship in Law (2012-2015).

Further to her academic and community activities, Emilie enjoys singing (she trained as a classical opera singer) and playing hockey.

University of Tasmania Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen congratulated Emilie on her success in receiving the prestigious scholarship.

“The Rhodes Scholarship program hosts one of the world’s most prestigious awards, and over time the University of Tasmania has proudly produced 109 Rhodes scholars,” Professor Rathjen said.

“The program honours the years of dedication and commitment a student devotes to their academic studies, and the invaluable personal achievements undertaken in their own time.

“Emilie’s academic success is to be commended, and so too are her efforts beyond academe where she has been instrumental in helping to improve legal protection for asylum seekers.”

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. Each year, there are nine Scholarships available in Australia (including one offered by each state). The Scholarship allows the recipient to study at the famed University of Oxford in the UK.

The Rhodes Scholarships were created during 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.

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