



12 May 2016

Yarra Ranges teen awarded \$45,000 Macpherson Smith Rural Foundation tertiary scholarship

The board and management of the Macpherson Smith Rural Foundation (MSRF) are pleased to announce that former Upper Yarra Secondary College student Georgia Rokicki has been selected as a 2016 Macpherson Smith Rural Scholar.

The MSRF Scholarship includes \$45,000 of financial aid plus comprehensive, wrap-around support provided through mentoring, leadership development and individual counsel.

Georgia was awarded the scholarship for her outstanding leadership potential, courage and commitment to her local community.

She is a Bronze Duke of Edinburgh award recipient, University of Melbourne Kwong Lee Dow Young Scholar, five time College Dux and all round A-grade student.

Despite her accomplishments, Georgia's journey has not been an easy one. Facing battles of isolation, financial hardship and the tragic loss of her father in her final year of school, she is admired and respected for her resilience, commitment and strength.

Georgia was selected from over 200 applications from all across regional Victoria to receive one of four scholarship prizes in 2016.

The MSRF Future Rural Leaders Scholarship Program was established in 2010 to recognise regional and rural teens with demonstrated leadership potential and a commitment to their communities, and to support them with their tertiary education.

The Program aims to provide access to tertiary study to outstanding rural Victorian youth by reducing or removing financial barriers. The prestigious scholarships are awarded to students who plan to return to a rural Victorian community after graduation, therefore improving the availability of needed skills.

Chairman of MSRF Rob Knowles said "without the scholarships, amazing young people like Georgia may not have reached their full potential.

"She may have missed out on a tertiary education, or worse, not realised her dreams of making a significant life-long difference to her local community in rural and regional Victoria."

Media enquiries and more information:

Please contact Carla Murone, PLUM Communication at carla@plumco.com.au or 0411 458 731 for media interviews. Georgia's full biography also follows this media release.

For photo opportunity:

Media are invited to attend the scholarship presentation event on Friday 13th May at 10.30am during a special Upper Yarra Secondary College assembly. Please contact Carla Murone at carla@plumco.com.au or 0411 458 731 to confirm your attendance.



About Macpherson Smith Rural Foundation (MSRF)

The Macpherson Smith Rural Foundation was established in 2009 with a \$5.75m grant from the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, an independent philanthropic trust created by the late Helen Macpherson Schutt (nee Smith).

The Foundation is dedicated to the welfare and educational opportunities of regional and rural communities across Victoria.

The Macpherson Smith Rural Future Leaders Scholarship Program supports and develops future leaders in Victorian rural and regional communities by providing scholarships for Year 12 students who demonstrate leadership potential and a passion for rural Victoria, to study at a Victorian university.

Recipients of the scholarships are nurtured during their undergraduate university course to develop their leadership skills and connections with rural and regional leaders, organisations and communities.

Since 2011, MSRF has awarded scholarships with a cash value of over \$1 million and provided over 300 places in its rural mentoring and leadership development programs.

According to research by the University of Melbourne, 15.7% of regional Victorian school completers deferred a place at university in 2007, two and a half times the rate of deferral found amongst metropolitan students.

The school leavers in the study cited cost related issues and financial barriers as their key reasons for deferring.

The MSRF scholarships inspire optimism and hope in many rural students, particularly those who might not be able to afford a university education.

For more information about MSRF and to gain insights into what the Scholarships mean to previous recipients, please visit www.msrf.org.au



Georgia Rokicki

When life is challenging and success seems impossible, look to Yarra Ranges teenager Georgia Rokicki for inspiration.

A recipient of a prestigious Macpherson Smith Rural Foundation scholarship awarded to outstanding rural teens, Georgia grew up in the small town of East Warburton and has experienced first-hand the challenges faced by young people in regional communities.

A former Captain of Upper Yarra Secondary College, she was raised in a supportive and close knit family environment. But with financial hardship looming, Georgia's dream of affording a university education was in serious doubt.



Adversity wasn't going to stand in her way. Georgia remained focused and passionate, achieving A-grade results and taking out Top of Class awards, several Dux honours and excellence recognitions in a range of subjects.

In 2013, she received the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award, a reward for her outstanding commitment to her personal development and service to her local community. Impressively, in the same year, she was accepted into the University of Melbourne's Kwong Lee Dow Young Scholars Program, giving her a further boost to pursue her dreams of university study.

Admired and respected by her peers, Georgia's supportive nature meant she was always first to help her school and community, forever willing to assist friends, other students, teachers and local groups wherever possible.

Despite her accomplishments, Georgia's journey has been far from easy. In late 2014, her father was diagnosed with brain cancer and she spent much of her VCE year caring for him, travelling to and from hospital and studying by his bedside. With a heavy year 12 workload, she held down a part time job to help support her family and maintained her involvement with local community groups.

Her father passed away in June of her final year of Secondary College.

While the world as she knew it dissolved around her, Georgia stood strong. She used her grief to drive her, knowing her success would make her father, her community and her family proud.

Her incredible strength saw her achieve excellent final results and achieve a place in a Bachelor of Arts Degree at Burwood's Deakin University, where she is now studying to one day pursue a career in politics.

At the end of her tertiary study, Georgia plans to return to her local community and influence positive change, particularly in the area of youth education and support to disadvantaged students.

"Many students, whilst facing hardship, lose sight of their ability and potential, and it is important they have access to proper support and facilities that allows them to realise what they are capable of," she said.

"Young people in regional communities need strong political figures giving them a voice, and that is a role I hope to one day fill."