



ROBIN MCDONALD SCHOLARSHIP



2011 Scholarship Winner

The 2011 Scholarship has been awarded to Communications Honours student **Ngaio Stobbs**. Ngaio's thesis will seek to identify factors to assist sporting organisations in their relationships with players from Melanesian, Micronesian and Polynesian (MMP) backgrounds.

Ngaio, who is a Maori woman born in Huntly, New Zealand, will investigate whether the relational perspective of public relations can inform recruitment, induction and support mechanisms of MMP players, particularly in the National Rugby League (NRL) competition.

"In my culture we rely on extended family for support," Ngaio explains. "When I got a call from New Zealand last year, asking if I would keep an eye on a family member who had been recruited to play NRL in Australia, I began to think about what support mechanisms are in place for young players like him."

Ngaio hopes that her honours study will identify and address gaps in knowledge about the effect of cultural understanding on relationship management in sports and result in recommendations for sporting bodies to improve the image and understanding of MMP players. While her study will focus on Polynesian players in the NRL, she believes the findings of her study will encompass difficulties faced by players from a range of different cultural backgrounds and in many sports including soccer and netball.

"My project aims to identify ways of improving relationship management strategies to encourage players from Melanesian, Micronesian and Polynesian backgrounds to be committed members of their club and of the Hunter community." She will use her scholarship funding to develop her research project in ways she would otherwise not have been able to consider. "It will allow me to hire premises to conduct my interviews if necessary, as well as visiting other NRL clubs to observe their practices, and to travel to access resources from a range of sources, which would not have been possible without it."

Ngaio has extended her Honours study period into 2012 to complete her thesis.