



## ROBIN MCDONALD SCHOLARSHIP



### 2013 Scholarship Winner

The recipient of the 2013 Hunter Research Foundation's (HRF's) Robin McDonald Regional Research Memorial Scholarship, Kirilly Pursey, aims to develop a weight loss intervention using innovative research and techniques.

Obesity rates in the Region are similar to that of the Australian population, with around 58 per cent of Hunter New England residents classified as overweight or obese. Kirilly's research, being conducted as part of her doctoral studies in nutrition and dietetics through the University of Newcastle, seeks to determine if Australians suffer from food addiction, as some emerging evidence suggests, and if so, how prevalent it is. She will also attempt to establish if there is a link between food addiction and specific foods, weight status, body composition and gender.

HRF CEO Dr Wej Paradice AM said Kirilly's project has the potential to benefit the regional community. "By using innovative research techniques, including functional magnetic resonance imaging, to explore an under-researched area, Kirilly's PhD project could contribute to the development of a targeted weight loss intervention that is more effective than standard therapies," Dr Paradice said.

"Her original study design makes her an ideal recipient of this scholarship, which commemorates the significant role played in regional research by our former Co-Director of Research, the late Robin McDonald."

Kirilly, who moved to Newcastle from Grafton to attend University, plans to use her scholarship to help fund attendance at the Australia and New Zealand Obesity Society annual scientific conference in Melbourne in November and possibly a trip to collaborate with a leading researcher in the Netherlands.