



HUNTER RESEARCH FOUNDATION

The late **ROBIN MCDONALD**

Former Co-Director of Research Hunter Research Foundation

The HRF established the Robin McDonald Memorial Scholarship at the University of Newcastle to celebrate the legacy of the late Robin McDonald, HRF's former Co-Director of Research, who died unexpectedly of a heart attack in August 2009, at the age of 54.

In 2015, the \$5,000 annual scholarship evolved to be two shared University/HRF scholarships offered to an Honours or research higher degree student enrolled in the Newcastle Business School.



Robin McDonald was born and raised in a coal mining family in Abermain and attended Kurri Kurri High School. She graduated with First Class Honours in a Bachelor of Commerce (Economics) from the University of Newcastle in 1977 prior to undertaking her Masters at Monash University.

Robin joined the research team at what was then the Hunter Valley Research Foundation in 1991 following a career at the United Nations in New York and the Reserve Bank of Australia. She immediately began to make her mark as a key spokesperson on economic issues facing the Hunter Region. As a local girl and resident of Maitland she was able to speak with authority on the many issues facing the Hunter from both a local perspective and, because of her international experience, a broad global perspective.

Robin worked on many research projects at the Foundation but was best known for her delivery of the quarterly economic updates. Not only did she review conditions here in the Hunter but she also oversaw the compiling of economic reviews for the Upper Hunter and the Central Coast. In 2003 Robin was appointed as Director of Research, a position she shared with Andrew Searles. Together they made a great team developing and implementing the research program of the Foundation.



As well as lamenting the loss of Robin's expertise and knowledge, her friends at the Foundation miss her forthright, supportive and fun-loving personality. The University of Newcastle alumni's Newton-John Award was posthumously awarded to Robin McDonald in October 2009.



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Newton John Award

Robin McDonald's enormous contribution to the Hunter Region was recognised posthumously by the University of Newcastle alumni organisation Convocation with the 2009 Newton-John Award.



The award, named after former Vice-Principal of the University, Professor Brin Newton-John, was instituted in 1974 and is awarded to the nominee who has displayed innovation or creativity in any field that improved cultural life, particularly in the Newcastle or Hunter Region. Open to all University of Newcastle alumni, the Newton-John Award recognises the nominee's creative approach to their field with an emphasis on originality, lasting or aesthetic value, or cultural or social benefit to the community.

The award was accepted, with a mixture of pride and sadness, by Robin's daughter Susie Omar (centre) and her sister Sue McDonald (left), pictured with the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor Nick Saunders.

Citation for Newton-John Award read by Dr Bernie Curran - 14 October, 2009

The late Robin McDonald was an admirable member of the Newcastle community, who displayed innovation, originality, knowledge and professionalism throughout her work as Co-Director of Research at the Hunter Valley Research Foundation. Ms McDonald graduated with First Class Honours in a Bachelor of Commerce (Economics) from the University of Newcastle in 1977, with a thirst for creating innovative ways to benefit the Hunter region's economy.

For the past 15 years, Robin published the Foundation's *Hunter Economic Indicators* publication, and managed the biennial publication, *Newcastle and The Hunter Region*. This 400-page publication provides an essential starting point for understanding the Hunter region's people, economy and resources.

She was a well respected public speaker, having delivered hundreds of presentations to government, business and service organisations in the Hunter area. She was regularly consulted by the media to give insightful comments on regional economic issues. Her work through the Foundation has helped to direct the orderly development of the Newcastle region. Mr Andrew Searles, Senior Economist at the Hunter Valley Research Foundation and friend of Robin, said that she "had a razor sharp mind and was a role model, not just in the workplace but in life".