

Rikki Swannell

2017 recipient of The Michael Barnett Scholarship

A multi-skilled, experienced radio and TV broadcaster, looking to share stories beyond the scoreboard and groin strains.

The last year has been one of gamble, ambition and reward for Rikki Swannell.

Having given up a coveted role as head of sport at Radio Sport and Newstalk ZB, Rikki moved into a contracting role with Sky TV to allow her to be open to opportunities within Sky but also to allow herself time to pursue roles in media leadership, governance and administration.

She immediately put **The Michael Barnett Scholarship** to good use for this purpose by attending a 'leadership and governance in sports media' conference in Australia.

"Having made the gamble to move into freelancing, this conference really increased my confidence and awareness of the valuable transferable skills I have to offer the sports industry - beyond my sports writing and commentating," says Rikki.

Her scholarship application mentioned her intention for it to support the next phase of her career. Well, that career received a well-deserved boost earlier this year when Rikki was announced as Sky TV's first female Super Rugby play-by-play commentator. It was ground breaking stuff for Rikki who has now commentated on sports ranging from cricket to the winter Olympics.

Although Rikki knows it's 'newsworthy' being the first woman to land a SKY TV rugby commentary role within a heavily male-dominated industry, she also wants to shift the focus of her achievements away from the gender angle.

"I want to be thought of as a good sports broadcaster, not 'just' a good female broadcaster."

Beyond this goal, Rikki has focussed ambitions - and renewed confidence - in knowing she has skills and expertise for sports governance and administration. She is already on a board that offers mentoring programmes to empower and promote women into sports media.

Rikki's love of sport and story-telling is what inspired her into journalism, and in the last year since being awarded **The Michael Barnett Scholarship** she has continued to make great strides in writing a very special story of her own.