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## The Cosmos and beyond . . . no limits for Kiara!

KIARA Olrich is an exceptional young woman. This PLC Armidale HSC candidate studies cosmology – a university distinction course - while also studying HSC chemistry, mathematics extension 2 and English extension 1. She also accelerated to sit her HSC physics while in Year 11, achieving a mark of 92. Wow!

These are just a few of the reasons why Kiara has been selected as the winner of the prestigious *Zonta Club of Armidale \$1,000 Science, Mathematics and/or Engineering Award for 2008*.

Kiara was also a previous winner of Zonta's *Young Women in Public Affairs Award* (2007-8) and the (PLC) *Zonta Prize for Excellence in Science and Mathematics* in Year 10.

Engineer (and friend of Zonta) Judith Burns, and Zontian Eve Woodberry (UNE Pro Vice Chancellor Academic) judged the applications.

Award coordinator Helen Gee said "we thank them for the time and expertise they were able to bring to the task. I am assured it was a very pleasant job and one which they hope to be able to continue their involvement with for many years".

Encouraging young women to study science, mathematics and engineering is a major goal of Zonta. Founded in 1919, Zonta International is a global organisation of executives and professionals working together to advance the status of women worldwide through service and advocacy. Zonta believes education is critical to improving women's status in all aspects of society.

Zonta Armidale Club President Anne Parnell explained that this is the third year that the *Zonta Club of Armidale Science, Mathematics and/or Engineering Award* has been conferred, having been initiated in 2006. She said, "Our club has had a long-standing interest in fostering the talents of young women who show an interest in, and aptitude for, careers which are traditionally male dominated."

Mrs Parnell pointed out that on 5 May 2008 Zonta International released a Position Paper on *Improving the Access of Women and Girls to Science, Mathematics and Technology Education*.

"This paper emphasises that, although female enrolment at all levels of education is increasing, women and girls continue to face barriers to education in science, mathematics and technology and are under-represented in these areas of study and employment. Encouraging women and girls to study these subjects is essential to achieving gender equality, advancing economic development and scientific discovery, and addressing the increasing shortage of skilled scientists, engineers and mathematicians worldwide," she said.

Kiara, who is Deputy Head Girl at PLC Armidale, intends to study environmental, biomolecular and/or chemical engineering in Sydney.

She has altruistic goals in mind and hopes to use the skills developed through an engineering degree in developing countries.

Award coordinator Helen Gee said "Kiara will be presented with a certificate at the PLC speech day later this year, and will receive her \$1,000 on confirmation of enrolment in her selected university course in 2009 or 2010."

"We will watch her progress with much interest – she is an amazing young woman", said Mrs. Gee.

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