

THE MARG BARRY LECTURE



Organised annually by the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development

DEMOCRACY FROM THE GROUND UP: THE REAL STUFF OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

DR. DALLAS ROGERS, Research Fellow at University of Western Sydney's School of Social Sciences and Psychology

GRAEME STUART, Community Engagement (Teaching & Learning), The Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle

WHEN Thursday, 6th December 2012, 4-6pm
WHERE Redfern Town Hall, 73 Pitt St, Redfern
RSVP admin@innersydneyrcsd.org.au

Light refreshments provided and a chance to catch up and chat.

MARGARET BARRY 1934-2001

“She is gut-strong, mind-quick, moral certain. Therefore formidable. But also light of heart, vivacious, funny and a self-put down merchant... She is single, single-minded, singular”, wrote Craig McGregor in a profile of Marg for the *Good Weekend* back in 1995.

Margaret Barry, one of the founding Directors of Eastside Radio, died suddenly in her home on 28 February three weeks after a serious operation. She was a tireless community activist and advocate known widely in her local community of South Sydney and way beyond. A champion of the importance of community-owned and run media, she was also a founder of CTV1 in Redfern where she read the news every Sunday night for some ten years, and as the force behind *Inner Voice*, a quarterly journal about social justice focused on the inner suburbs of Sydney.

She got involved in community activism in the '70s when the house she shared with her mother in Raglan Street, Waterloo was targeted by the 'slum clearance' policy of the then State Government to make way for public housing high rise. Despite intimidation, legal threats and little hope, Marg and her mother confronted the bulldozers and joined with the Builders Labourers Federation in the now world-famous Green Ban movement and won their fight to save the old terraces of Waterloo after 14 and a half years. The story was subsequently the subject of a documentary feature film by Tom Zubrycki titled *Waterloo*.

While becoming an Alderman on Sydney City council in the '80s, she was best known for her work as the Coordinator of the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development where for twenty years she organized, published, networked and bullied various governments and bureaucrats of the day into listening to the needs of the disadvantaged in the inner city until her retirement in 1999. During those twenty years she helped establish numerous community organisations and services which today are an integral part of inner Sydney. She was constantly attending meetings, serving on committees and seeing information make its way to the places it was most useful.

She worked seven days a week for three days pay, was widely respected and sometimes feared. But those who were not in her firing line knew her to be a warm, gregarious and mischievously funny woman who generously shared her talents and enthusiasm, inspiring all who met her. In 1999 she was awarded the Order of Australia for service to her community.

There is no-one quite like Marg Barry and our city is the richer for the contribution she made. ■

