

# No stranger to halls of power

by **DARRYL JOHNSTON**

AN advocate and stalwart for the elderly, who is credited with convincing the Federal Government to increase pensions, built a senior citizens centre and campaigned for people with lung disease, has passed away in Canberra.

Rusty (Gladys) Woodward was hailed in Federal Parliament by the then Families and Community Services Minister Jenny Macklin, when announcing wide-ranging pension increases in response to the 2009 Harmer Review.

Rusty and Council on the Ageing colleague Janice Petrie undertook a survey of Canberra pensioners and included their disturbing findings in a submission to the review.

"They (Rusty and Jan) heard many heartbreaking stories, including one pensioner who told his local

greengrocer he kept chickens so he was able to get the leftover vegetables which could not be sold. These vegetables and cheap noodles were in fact his staple diet," Ms Macklin told Parliament when announcing the increases.

Rusty was no stranger to the corridors of power. She addressed a Senate inquiry into air pollution and spoke about how wood smoke from slow combustion heaters impacted on her health and that of others with a pre-existing heart or lung condition.

Rusty suffered from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Speaking from her wheelchair she told senators how wood smoke pollution in her neighbourhood forced her to remain indoors throughout winter.

Despite her health problems Rusty was the driving force behind the establish-



**COMMUNITY STALWART**  
– The late Rusty (Gladys) Woodward.

ment of a senior citizens group in Canberra's Tuggeranong Valley.

She successfully campaigned for and oversaw the construction of the 55Plus Club premises in Greenway, and was a member of the ACT Lung Life Support Group and served on the transport and community services committees of the Tuggeranong Community Council.

In December Rusty was honoured for her community service with the unveiling of a plaque in her name as part of Canberra's centenary.

Rusty died in Canberra Hospital on April 11, aged 75. \* Darryl Johnston was Tuggeranong Community Council president 2009-2012.