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Barry O'Keefe: A life of public service for

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Barry O'Keefe delivering the occasional address to graduates of the Faculty of Education at the ACU graduation ceremon

BARRY O'KEEFE, 1933-2014

Summing up Barry O'Keefe's life of work and community service is a job in itself. As well as being a barrister, a QC, a judge, a judge in commissions, he was head of the National Trust of Australia in NSW, the second head of the Independent Commission on the Environment in Mosman, where he rebuilt the public face of the suburb.

Barry Stanley John O'Keefe was born on May 20, 1933, the first of three children to Ray O'Keefe and his wife Thelma (neé Thelma was later mayor of Waverley, while Thelma was reputedly the first woman to surf at Bondi Beach. For the rest of his life, he was a man of the world he was, and always cited Ray's gentleness as a model for how a man could be.

Barry was educated by the Christian Brothers at Waverley College, battling debilitating bouts of rheumatic fever but winning a Menzies Scholarship to study law at the University of Sydney. By his own admission, he was a relatively ordinary, if conscientious, student. He maintained himself by working as a bowser boy at a garage, as a taxi driver, as a porter at the Darling Harbour Railway Goods Yard, and finally as associate to Mr Justice Hardie of the NSW Supreme Court.

After O'Keefe went to the Bar in 1957, he also taught at the University of Technology (now UNSW), often delivering his lectures from the stage of the Phillip Street Theatre with the dramatic sets for its latest productions behind him. He was popular with his students, who dubbed him "the Mild One", in contrast to his brother Johnny O'Keefe, "the Wild One" of

Australian rock'n'roll.

O'Keefe also met Janette Markovina, a legal secretary to the floor of barristers on which he had his chambers, and they married in 1962.

After O'Keefe took silk in 1974, he appeared frequently before the NSW Supreme Court, the High Court of Australia and the Privy Council. He was a formidable cross-examiner, renowned for his ability to manage and analyse sprawling masses of complex facts. He was counsel in a number of high-profile state and Commonwealth royal commissions. He also served as president of the NSW Bar Council from 1990 until 1991, and sat on the executive of the Law Council of Australia from 1992 to 1993. In 1993, he was appointed Chief Judge of the Commercial Division of the NSW Supreme Court.

But O'Keefe's career then took an unexpected turn. In 1994, he accepted a five-year appointment as commissioner of NSW's Independent Commission against Corruption. Under his tenure, ICAC not only exposed wrongdoers but also took a leading role in corruption prevention and education. ICAC became a model for other Australian states and for several foreign jurisdictions. O'Keefe later became chairman of Interpol's International Group of Experts on Corruption and chairman of the International Anti-corruption Conference, and he was a driving force behind the establishment of the Austrian-based International Anti-corruption Academy, a body for the global promotion of justice, anti-corruption and the rule of law.

After ICAC, O'Keefe returned to the bench as a judge of the Common Law Division of the NSW Supreme Court and of the NSW Court of Criminal Appeal. As an acting judge in the NSW Court of Appeal, he presided over several precedent-setting cases, including on the care that hospitals must provide to terminally ill patients and to patients in a persistent vegetative state. On his retirement as a judge, he became a consultant to the law firm Clayton Utz.

Throughout his legal career, O'Keefe also gave himself to the service of his community. He sat as an alderman on Mosman for 10 years as mayor. When he was needed, he was there. When a local group found the library locked one evening, a phone call opened the door so the meeting could go ahead.

O'Keefe was the principal architect of Mosman's town plan, oversaw the building of the Mosman Library and Mosman Square in the area as well as defending Mosman's open spaces and foreshores.

O'Keefe served as president of the Local Government Association of NSW, and in 1989 he was made a Member of the Council of the Trust of Australia in NSW from 1991 until 2006. Under his leadership, the Trust emerged from bankruptcy and built up a large portfolio of land. From 1998, O'Keefe was an energetic member of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust. Applying his vast planning expertise to the management masterplans for the lands vested in the Trust, he helped to ensure public harbourside amenities for future generations. In 2005, for his service, he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the Australian Catholic University just a month ago.

Beyond its more public expressions, O'Keefe's ethos of service expressed itself through countless acts of decency and kindnesses to them as struggling students, as new arrivals in Australia, or as those who had simply fallen on hard times.

O'Keefe's private interests were numerous and diverse, and the strength of his enthusiasms was remarkable. As he often said, from art, to opera and ballet, to travel, to donning regalia, to the purchase of a vintage steamboat (which after its maiden voyage in the Sydney Harbour, he donated to the Sydney Maritime Museum), O'Keefe plunged into every passion with immense energy and curiosity. But beyond his many enthusiasms lay deeper devotions that underpinned his whole life. Firstly, O'Keefe derived enormous satisfaction from his work, which took a very practical form, from charitable works with the Knights Hospitaller of St Lazarus of Jerusalem, of which he became a member in 1998, to complete the spires on St Mary's Cathedral, to simply stepping in as reader at mass when the designee failed to show. His religious faith was embodied in a search for something deeper in life.

Second was his loving devotion to his immediate family, and to his extended family, for whom he was a constant source of support and encouragement. Although terminally ill in 2013, O'Keefe agreed, at the request of the Australian Catholic Bishops to take the chair of the Tribunal to coordinate the Church's submissions to the Royal Commission on Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. He was un-



Barry O'Keefe as ICAC Commissioner.

and injustices of the past, develop policies to protect young people, and respond to future issues by putting the needs of
Two days before O'Keefe's death, Pope Francis created him a Knight Grand Cross (First Class) of the Order of St Gregori
layperson can receive. Typically, O'Keefe sat up in bed, removing the ventilator that was keeping him alive, to make a sp
Barry O'Keefe is survived by Janette, children Philip, Vanessa, Roger, Andrew and Sophie, seven grandchildren and sist

Philip O'Keefe and Kevin McCann

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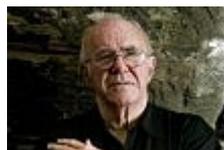
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