



People Power

MEDIA RELEASE

7 November, 2006

Ex Sex Worker, Finance Journo and Author for Upper House Candidate in Northern Metropolitan Region

Barbara Biggs, a former sex worker, finance journalist and now author, has been chosen as People Power's Upper House candidate for the South Eastern Metropolitan Region in November's state election.

Barbara, chosen as keynote speaker opening Child Protection Week in Victoria in 2003, has been a campaigner for social change in the area of child protection and helping families since her first book was published that year. *In Moral Danger* and its sequel *The Road Home* tells her extraordinary life story.

At 14 her grandmother sold her to a paedophile barrister

At 16 she was in a psychiatric hospital

At 19 she was a sex worker in Japan

At 21 she received death threats and caused national headlines

She went on to become a classical pianist, journalist and successful property developer.

'People are tired of career politicians born with silver spoons in their mouths and only interested in policies that extend to their term of office,' says Biggs, who claims to understand what families in difficulty need as well as the economics behind the solutions from her own lived experience.

'My mother went to prison twice, two siblings suicided, I had four attempts before I was 20, one sister was a heroin addict, another psychotic and four of the six kids, as well as my mother, were sexually abused as children – all by different perpetrators.

'Yet I survived to author five books, become financially independent and volunteer my time speaking at child protection conferences, to youths, social workers, police and others.' Biggs donated two-thirds of the royalties from her fourth book to a children's charity.

She says long term solutions to social problems, helping the mentally ill, disabled and children, will result in huge savings to the community through reduced need for treatment programs and incarceration.

'My family is a perfect example of this. The cost to the community of the social fallout of my family alone would stretch into the millions of dollars.

'I know what it takes from society to help get people off the dole, out of prison, stopping the cycle of abuse, immobilization by depression to becoming contributing members of society,' she said.

As a former writer for the *Australian Financial Review* she says she joined People Power because it's figurehead, Stephen Mayne, has integrity and a finance background to bring about these social changes.

'One metropolitan paper, in referring to the other minor parties, Greens and Family First, recently referred to the not-so-loopy People Power party,' said Biggs. 'We're now being seen as a middle road alternative for people who have lost faith in the political process and are prepared to gamble on a viable change.'

Some of Biggs' reform commitments are:

- To encourage transparency, outlaw the incumbent government from disadvantaging or financially penalizing public servants and NGOs who 'out' it's shortcomings
- Introduce disclosure laws regarding funding of political parties and change FOI legislation for greater accountability.

-
- Reduce long-term social costs through an independent children's commissioner with a cross government brief and auditing powers to stop the high number of children at risk falling through the net.
 - Provide treatment and other resources for problem teenagers to head off the high cost of dealing with their social fallout and intergenerational cost of dysfunction.
 - Introduce innovative treatment programs for drug addicts (80% of the prison population) to reduce the costly cycle of theft/incarceration with no help.
 - Introduce a sex crimes court with tailored changes in law and specifically educated judiciary and increase treatment program resources for victims and offenders.
 - More appropriate services for the mentally ill. De-institutionalisation has failed us."

"We don't live in a bubble. Raising the quality of life of the most marginalized, disadvantaged and the children who will create our future, results in raising the quality of life for all. History has proved this maxim time and again. We have lost faith in politicians because they behave as if their primary job is to get re-elected. I have already passionately committed to this maxim," said.

For further information

Barbara Biggs
Upper House Candidate for South Easter Metropolitan Region
0408 358 228
www.barbarabiggs.com

Vern Hughes
National President
0425 722 890
www.peoplepower.org.au