



women for women for 100 years

Zonta is an international organisation empowering women through service and advocacy.

Zonta was founded in New York in 1919 by a small group of college-educated women. They were some of the first North American women to vote, and made up a handful of the women who were entering the workforce in those years. Now Zonta boasts 33,000 members, and has a seat in the United Nations, campaigning for equal rights and lobbying governments to abolish child marriage.

What does Zonta mean? Toowoomba Area Club President, **Kathryn Galea**, says: The Zonta emblem was inspired by Sioux Indian symbols – First Nations people of North America, where Zonta started. The Z means way of life and sunshine. The other elements represent the idea of banding together for a purpose and giving shelter or help to people in need.

Who are the women who make up Zonta? K: In our Toowoomba Area Club our members are school teachers, accountants, hairdressers, nurses, doctors and retired women. There's a great diversity of experience, age and backgrounds. It makes for a very interesting club!


Zonta is made up of districts around the globe. How does this work? K: Zonta exists in about 66 countries around the world. Countries are divided into districts which are further divided into areas, which have clubs – women who live in those areas get together to do workshops, discuss policies and so on.

Sharon Campbell, Chair of the Service Committee for Zonta Club of Toowoomba Area, explains: We're in district 22, area 4. So, we have meetings

with the smaller groups of the clubs to talk about local issues. Then, we have our district 22 meeting, where we look at broader matters.

Congratulations on 100 years of fighting for women's rights! How did you celebrate? K: We hosted a black-tie centenary dinner in May. In September, districts in Australia and New Zealand are coming together in Brisbane for a large conference. The International President of Zonta will be visiting, so it's a huge deal!

What's an example of a policy you're trying to change? K: Internationally, we're advocating for the abolition of child marriage. There are ten countries where child marriage is legal – Niger, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Uganda, just to name a few – so we're looking at



working with nine of those. A lot of the girls in these countries are married before the age of 18, which impacts on their education and health.

How do you fundraise? S: We have different ways, including running various events. One of our biggest ones is 'Cooking for a Cause', held every second year, where people gather to see renowned chefs give cooking demonstrations. Recently, we asked our members to clean out their cupboards of any winter goods – beanies, scarves, jumpers, warm blankets and duvets. We then donate them to a local service who ensure the homeless don't go cold during the winter months. Zonta members are keen to make a difference in the lives of women and girls in the local community and around the world.

How do you choose which organisations you will support? K: The club board, in consultation with the members, decide on one organisation or a particular project. The bulk of our fundraising is then directed towards that, although we do side projects as well, depending on the needs of our areas. At this time we're supporting City Women, an organisation who help women and girls in our area who are hurting or at risk, with school programs, mentoring and Girls Getaway camps as well as providing support for unexpected pregnancy, for settling refugees and for women wanting to exit the sex industry. When my term of presidency ends, the next board may choose to

fund another organisation or continue with City Women. A past organisation we've funded is Manna House – a shelter protecting women exposed to domestic violence.

S: We have made birthing kits for women and girls in developing countries. We have co-sponsored with Blush Cancer Care by providing morning tea at their forum and we help make breast cushions for women who've had mastectomies.

What about your 'Zonta Says No' campaign? S: We are trying to stop domestic violence, and our 16-day campaign reflected that.

K: We plastered stickers all over our area which read, "Zonta says NO to violence" with a helpline number. We hope it helped someone in need.

How can we as individuals combat domestic violence? K: We need to call it out if we see it, and support those who might be involved in it. I think there's still quite a way to go, but we can work away at it, especially as a collective.

S: Let women know they're not alone – there is always someone who will help.

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A big thank you to the Zonta Club of Toowoomba, who raised \$15,000 for bella rae last year! This covered printing costs for two issues of the magazine. This little independent publication could not continue without the support of our community and corporate sponsors. Three cheers for Zonta!