

# **Centennial Anniversary Inter-District Conference & 15<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of Zonta International District 23**

6-8 September 2019, Brisbane QLD

## **Honour and Empower**

With Donna Fabris, Ronda Walker, Annamarie Perlesz, Judy Rothe, Margaret Lynch and Lee-Anne Bowles, I was one of over 800 combined District Zontians and 197 District 23 Zontians at Conference. A total of 41 votes were carried by Delegates and 8 votes were carried by members of District Board. Thank you for trusting me to carry the club's vote as your delegate to our District 23 Conference.

## **District 23 Business Session**

### **Business**

A key purpose of District Conference is to transact the business of the District. As D23 is an incorporated association, Conference doubled as the Annual General Meeting. Business was conducted in a single day and efficiently ran through the acceptance of the minutes of the previous AGM and of reports from the Governor and Treasurer, plus adoption of the District 23 Strategic Plan 2020-2022.

The session then worked through proposed changes to the D23 rules of procedure, which were accepted by delegates:

- Changes to wording around profits from District conferences as this is adequately covered in a separate rule
- Removal of wording relating to voting at District conference as already covered in International by-laws

The Zonta Club of Bunbury proposed a change to the Bylaws of Zonta International to allow for an alternate for a proxy at Convention to cover cases where a club is represented by a single delegate (i.e. no alternate) and that delegate is unable to be present at a business session, a proxy for an alternate is able to carry the club's vote. The two motions related to this proposal were accepted and will now be forwarded to Zonta International Bylaws and Resolutions Committee.

The Conference also enjoyed a rousing speech from Zonta International President Dr Susanne von Bassewitz and the business session concluded with the announcement that the 16<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference to be held in Bendigo from September 10-12th 2021.

### **Elections**

Like any AGM the business of the meeting included election of office bearers for the next biennium. In the morning session, each candidate for election made a brief presentation to the

assembly. Delegates then voted during lunch break. The results were:

- Governor: Sandra Burns (Perth)
- Lt Governor: Kay Stewart (Melbourne on Yarra)
- Treasurer: Lyn Symons (Central Goldfields)
- Area Directors: 1 Trish McLean (Melbourne South East); 2 Dianne McCallum (Mt Barker); Vice Area 2 Chris Frick (Gawler); 3 Tyril Houghton (Bunbury); 4 Eloise Forbes (Kyneton); 5 Vicki Carman-Brown (Devonport)
- Nominating Committee: Alison Martin (Perth Northern Suburbs); Naomi Reschke (Gawler); Ronda Walker (Kyneton)

## Projects

The delegates voted to continue the Birthing Kit and Breast Cushion projects for another three biennia.

Judy Rothe presented the Zonta Club of Kyneton's proposed project to support mental health skills for women in rural and regional areas. Several Zontians spoke in support of the project and the delegates voted to adopt as a District project.

## Awards

Several awards were presented, including Service and Advocacy awards. Highlights included Annette Mouat of the Zonta Club of Bendigo and Charter member of the Zonta Club of Kyneton being one of those named in the Heide Taylor Honour Roll. The District 23 Centennial Award was announced and went to founding Chair of Our Watch, Natasha Stott Despoja OA. The Zonta Club of Kyneton was awarded the PR and Communications Award in Service and Advocacy for the work we do around promoting our International Women's Day Dinner and using that platform to promote our partnerships and support for likeminded organisations.

## Inter-District Conference

### Official Opening

The opening ceremony began with a Welcome to Country from Songwoman Maroochy Barambah, Elder and Law-woman of the Turrbal People, direct descendant of Daki Yakka, Chief of the Old Brisbane tribe. and from a group of Brisbane-based Maori who performed a traditional welcome and Haka. The traditional parade of flags started with those of host country, Australia, flag of New Zealand representing District 16, the flag of Germany in honour of Zonta International President Dr Susanne von Bassewitz, and the flags of Aboriginal Australia, Zonta International and the UN. Flags of the States represented by D23 clubs followed, in the order in which clubs were established. The national anthems of New Zealand, Australia and Germany were sung.

The Conference was officially opened by representatives of the Queensland State Government, who recognised the work of Zonta but reflected on how much work is yet to be done in advancing gender equality and ending violence against women. The Keynote speaker for the Friday evening was Dame Therese Walsh DNZM, FCA, who gave a lively and highly entertaining talk on her path to success, along with plenty of digs at Australia and New Zealand's healthy sporting rivalry.

The opening night cocktail party was a great opportunity to mingle and meet other Zontians, with plenty social media activity coming off the custom-made photo booth frames!

## **Saturday sessions**

Saturday started with an on-stage interview with Dame Quentin Bryce AD CVO, with much reflection on her work on the 2015 “Not Now, Not Ever” report from the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland. All of the recommendations from that report were accepted by the Queensland Government, including an implementation strategy to ensure accountability. She also reflected on how little headway seems to have been made into to problem of family violence, with startling figures on the daily number of reports and family violence order breaches we are currently witnessing. She went on to discuss her new book, containing correspondence and their backstories from her time as Governor-General.

We then heard from Zonta International President Dr Susanne von Bassewitz – many of you may not know that Susanne instigated the Zonta Says NO campaign – and she spoke on membership and how Zonta International is looking to adapt in order to meet the expectations and needs of future membership.

Val Sarah of the Ballarat club was honoured as a Past International President and took the stage to promote the Centennial Endowment Fund, which aims to reach \$10 million USD and ensure the future of Zonta International Service Programs. Zontians who have donated to the fund were recognized, including a very generous donation from one of our own club.

Concurrent workshops on Advocacy, PR, Membership and Leadership brought Zontians from the different Districts together in smaller settings. I attended Leadership and thoroughly enjoyed the presentation and interactive style of the session. Donna attended the PR session and it's really no coincidence that shortly after, our club social media posts were peppered with more hashtags and videos than we've seen before!

Dr Airlie Chapman, a two-time Amelia Earhart Fellow and current director of the University of Melbourne Flight Lab, presented on her academic career and her advocacy for women in STEM. She spoke not only of the opportunity for women in STEM from a career perspective but also how the imbalance in these areas affects design and as a consequence, the health, comfort and safety of women in general. She cited examples of car safety equipment being designed for the male body resulting in more significant injuries to women involved in crashes. Even air-conditioning is designed for men, explaining why we were all quite cold in the Conference centre!

The final session, an expert panel discussion on Ending Child Marriage, brought together Zonta International President Dr Susanne von Bassewitz, Laura Vidal and Rebecca Hatcher Anderson. The three women each gave a unique perspective on the challenges around ending child marriage – with both local and international contexts.

Our Gala Dinner on Saturday evening was a glamorous affair and hugely enjoyable. The dance floor was rarely empty, and we even managed to capture a little recognition for our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary from everyone there. It was great to cut loose with fellow Zontians and Margaret Lynch's reputation as the ultimate dancefloor companion remains unchallenged.

## **Sunday sessions**

My thanks to Donna Fabris for providing the following information on the Sunday session, from which I was absent.

The last day of the conference was organised by District 16 (New Zealand). Sunday morning started with the Ceremony of Remembrance, acknowledging the Zontians from Districts 16, 22, 23 and 24 who have passed in the last 2 years. Thirty-four members' lives were honoured.

This following presentations had a youth theme and were focused on the future. The first guest speaker to kick off session was the very talented and inspiring Professor Lisa Harvey-Smith. Lisa is an award-winning astronomer and is the Australian Government's Women in STEM Ambassador. A great insight into the world of STEM, and the lack of girls entering these fields. We then had an amazing presentation from the 2018 International YWPA recipients from each district. Four inspirational young women who told of their journey before and after receiving the award, and how Zonta has changed their lives. Finally, 2018 Jane M Klausman Scholarship recipient Emma Beal spoke about her studies, her volunteering and hopes for the future.

Before the close of the conference we had the presentation of the Australian and New Zealand Centennial Awards which were given to Julia Gillard (Australia), and Dr Marilyn Waring CNZM (New Zealand). Both women have been, and continue to be, champions for women and girls.

The conference closed with an invitation to the 2020 International Convention in Chicago. It is bound to be another inspiring event.

Eloise Forbes

12 October 2019

