

ZONTA AUSTRALIA

2024-2025 REPORT



ZONTA
INTERNATIONAL
AUSTRALIA

**BUILD A BETTER WORLD
FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS**

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**ZA COMMITTEE CHAIR MESSAGE**

It is with great pride that I present Zonta Australia's inaugural Annual Report—an historic milestone that reflects our collective energy, passion and purpose. This year, we have established a strong and unified national voice for women and girls, while recognising and celebrating the vital work of Zonta Clubs within their local communities. The efforts of the National Committee have not only elevated advocacy to the highest levels of government—where lasting policy is shaped—but have also inspired clubs across the country to raise their voices locally with renewed confidence and clarity. Together, we have shown that meaningful change occurs when advocacy is both community-led and nationally coordinated.

While advocacy is central to our mission, we also acknowledge the critical role of service in addressing the consequences of policy gaps. When policy fails to protect or empower women and girls, it is often service that steps in to meet their immediate needs. Zontians remain deeply committed to this dual approach—advocating for long-term change while also delivering hands-on support to fill the spaces where systems fall short. This balance between advocacy and service is a hallmark of Zonta's strength.

As a proud part of Zonta International, with consultative status at the United Nations, we are committed to aligning our work with global priorities—particularly the Sustainable Development Goals that promote gender equality, education and safety. Our national advocacy this year focused on reminding government leaders of these vital commitments, ensuring that policies remain grounded in the advancement of women's rights and opportunities in Australia.

Importantly, our advocacy extended beyond government, recognising that influence and responsibility exist in every sector. A notable example was our formal letter to Cricket Australia, in which we expressed deep concern about the inclusion of the Afghanistan men's team in international competition, despite the ongoing and unlawful exclusion of Afghan women and girls from public life, education and sport. This advocacy action sent a clear and powerful message: silence in the face of injustice is not acceptable, and organisations must uphold the principles of equity, dignity, and inclusion.

We were also deeply honoured to receive the patronage of Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC, who assumed office as Australia's 28th Governor-General on 1 July 2024. Her endorsement affirms the value of our mission and provides national recognition of Zonta Australia's role as a leading voice for gender equality and systemic reform.

This report captures the spirit, progress, and promise of our collective work. I extend my heartfelt thanks to every Zontian across Australia for their commitment, passion and belief in a better future. Together, we are building momentum—and we are only just beginning!

Bridget Mather, PSM, Chair, Zonta Australia Committee

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ZONTA AUSTRALIA

A UNIFIED VOICE FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

In a landmark step forward for coordinated advocacy and impact, Zonta Australia was established in June 2024 as a unified national voice for Zonta clubs in Australia at the Zonta International Convention held in Brisbane.

Zonta Australia brings together the collective strength of more than 100 clubs in Districts 22, 23 and 24, amplifying Zonta influence on critical issues affecting women and girls in Australia.

Zonta Australia enhances strategic advocacy, streamlines communication and engages with national policy and decision-makers. It complements the work of Zonta clubs and the three Districts by driving national campaigns, responding to emerging issues and representing Zonta at federal forums and national coalitions.

It aligns with Zonta International's strong global focus on advocacy, led through a Country Leaders network of 15 countries and supported by ZI's International Advocacy Committee. It reinforces Zonta's commitment to influencing policies and legislation across all levels of government and civil society.

Zonta Australia's work is part of a broader international effort to leverage real improvements for women and girls—connecting local action to global change. Zonta's advocacy complements the efforts of the United Nations, where Zonta International holds consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and the Council of Europe, with whom Zonta collaborates to promote gender equality and human rights.

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ZONTA AUSTRALIA

LEADERSHIP AND REPRESENTATION

The Zonta Australia Committee comprises two representatives from each of the three Australian districts, along with the District Governors serving as ex-officio members. The members are:

Chair: Bridget Mather PSM (District 23)

Secretary: Sandra McLean (District 22)

Committee Members:

Marie Stewart (District 22)

Dr Lesley Siegloff (District 23)

Jill Davis (District 24)

Dr Janette Curtis (District 24)

Ex-officio District Governors:

Dr Petra Ladwig (District 22)

Debbie Schmidt (District 23)

Bernardine Guy (District 24)

In addition to the core committee, Zonta Australia includes key representatives who extend its reach and influence:

- Zonta Says NOW Australian Representative: Carol Theobald, (D23) Chair of the Zonta Says NOW Working Group, leads initiatives focusing on gender-equal climate action.
- ESCAP UN Zonta Australia Representative: Sharyl Scott (D24) serves as Zonta International's representative at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), contributing to regional discussions on gender equality and sustainable development.

PATRON

Our patron for Zonta Australia

Zonta Australia is honoured to have the patronage of Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, the 28th Governor-General of Australia.

Her Excellency's support underscores the national significance of Zonta's mission and enhances our capacity to advocate for gender equality and women's empowerment across the country.

A businesswoman and community leader, Ms Mostyn is known for her exceptional service to the Australian community. She has a long history in executive and governance roles across diverse sectors, including business, sport, climate change, the arts, policy and not-for-profit. In 2024, Ms Mostyn was appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia for eminent service in the social justice, gender equity, sporting, cultural and business sectors, to reconciliation, and to environmental sustainability. She had previously been appointed an Officer of the Order in 2021.

For her continued contribution as an advocate for gender inclusion and equality, sustainability, and climate change action, Ms Mostyn was awarded the 2020 United Nations Day Honour Award and an Honorary Doctorate of Laws from the Australian National University in 2018.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

In our first year we have worked to raise the Zonta voice for change across key issues both nationally and globally.

- **National Advocacy Campaigns:** During the 2025 Australian Government election, Zonta Australia coordinated efforts across Zonta clubs to engage with candidates and parties, highlighting policy gaps and advocating for supportive measures in areas such as domestic violence prevention, gender-responsive budgeting, climate justice and equitable economic participation for women.

We worked closely with Zonta Says Now as part of their Think Tank series to garner information on the key issues Zontians considered important to advocate for at a national level and developed letters to clubs to provide to their candidates.

- **Global Solidarity on Women's Rights:** Zonta Australia has actively advocated for the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, raising awareness of the systematic erasure of women from public life under Taliban rule. This includes a focused campaign highlighting the barriers to participation for the Afghan women's cricket team and urging Cricket Australia and international sporting bodies to stand firmly for gender equity in sport. Zonta has called for coordinated diplomatic and sporting pressure to support Afghan women's rights to education, expression, and representation—on and off the field.





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- **Representation at National Forums:** Zonta Australia provides a strong voice within the National Council of Women Australia; established a strong relationship with UN Australia; and developed cross-sector alliances, ensuring visibility and influence.
- **Leadership Development:** Shared learning, mentoring and training opportunities have strengthened local and national capacity for advocacy and leadership with a national survey of club advocacy need enabling Zonta Australia to ensure it is aware of club priorities to action at a national level.
- **Amplified Visibility:** A unified digital presence with a new website (www.zontaaustralia.org.au) and national communications strategy have enhanced public awareness and media engagement.

Zonta Australia's establishment marks a significant milestone in our history. It positions us to speak with one voice and act with greater strength in our mission to build a better world for women and girls – locally, nationally, and globally.

(Appendix 1 list of advocacy letters)

APPENDIX 1

ADVOCACY ACTIONS

We have actively corresponded with government and key representatives to raise our concerns across a range of issues that align with Zonta International's objective to build a better world for women and girls.

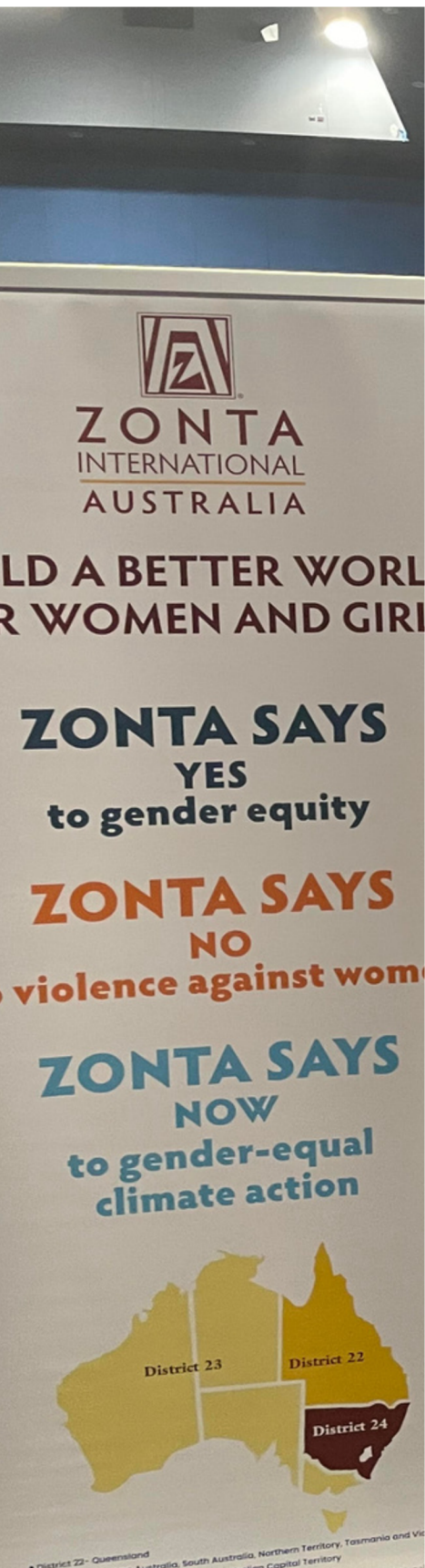
2024

The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP - Minister for Social Services: Support for the ongoing work of the Domestic and Family Violence Commission, cc Michaela Cronin, Commissioner.

Senator the Hon. Katy Gallagher, Minister for Women, Minister for Finance, Minister for the Public Service: co-signatory on letter seeking update on funding for national women's alliance.

The Hon Bill Shorten, Minister for Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services: Request that menstrual products NOT BE included in the Supports that are not 'NDIS supports' under the category of Day-to-Day Living Costs; Minister Shorten responded and request supported.

Senator The Honourable Penny Wong Minister for Foreign Affairs: provide the full support of Zonta Australia to the recently announced Action against Afghanistan over violations of human rights of women and girls announced on 26 September 2024 to take unprecedented action to hold Afghanistan to account under international law for the Taliban's treatment of women and girls.



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2025

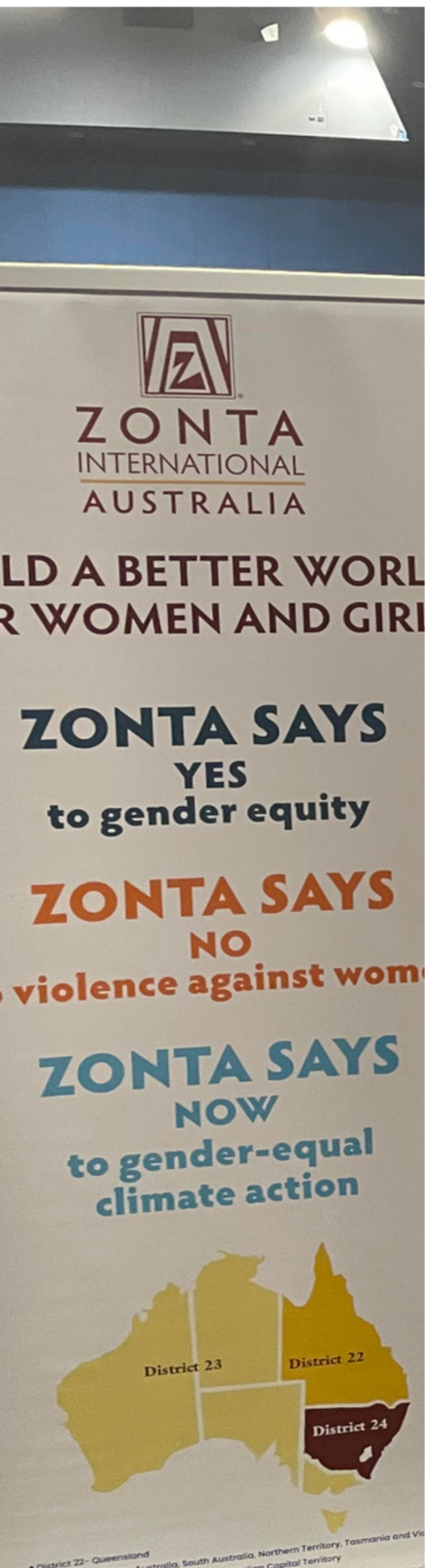
Chief Executive Officer, Cricket Australia: Urging Cricket Australia to reconsider its position on competing in tournaments where the Afghan men's cricket team is allowed to participate.
Minister for Aged Care and Minister for Sport, the Hon Anika Wells MP: Cricket Australia's position on human rights in Afghanistan. ZA received a response from her office.

Hon Sussan Ley MP and Senator Penny Wong: reaffirming commitment to Sustainable Development Goals; Penny Wong responded with a commitment to sustain goals.

Senator the Hon Dr Jess Walsh Minister for Early Childhood Education: concern about allegations of child abuse and neglect in some commercial for-profit child care centres.

Hon Amanda Rishworth MP Minister for Employment and Workplace Relation; Hon Tanya Plibersek MP Minister for Social Services; Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher Minister for Finance Minister for Women Minister for the Public Services; Congratulatory letters following Federal Election. Response from Senator Gallagher.

The Hon Chris Bowen MP, Minister for Climate Change and Energy: Elevating Gender Justice in Climate Policy and Australia's COP31 Nomination. Joint signee: letter to UN Secretary General's UN80 initiative and impact work at the CSW and the lives of women and girls globally.



APPENDIX

AFFILIATES

