The Hon. Bill Shorten MP,

Leader of the Opposition

P.O. Box 214

Moonee Ponds Vic. 3039

Dear Mr. Shorten,

I am writing to you as District Governor, District 22 of Zonta International – an international service organization which has a primary focus of improving the legal, political, economic, educational,health and professional status of women ( see [www.zonta.org](http://www.zonta.org)). In carrying out its goals, our organization upholds CEDAW Articles 1-16, the Beijing Platform for Action – 12 Critical Areas for Concern, and the Millennium Development Goals ( MDGs) 3 and 5.

Zonta International is now the only international women’s organization which focuses solely on status of women issues in accordance with CEDAW ( the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women).

Our organisation believes firmly in strengthening laws to prevent discrimination against women and the girl child, and we are constantly vigilant for opportunities to advocate for change or for new initiatives to promote our objectives.

In Australia, Zonta International is represented by three Districts- Districts 22, 23, and 24.

In response to the Beijing +20 review of the Platform for Action, 12 Critical Areas of Concern, we have prepared a submission to the government , reviewing each of the Platform’s Strategic Objectives. We have looked at some available data and reports to assess progress in Australia on each of these, and make a number of observations as well as recommendations for government action.

Zonta International’s United Nations Committee participates in a number of UN Meetings in New York, Geneva, Paris, and Vienna relevant to women and the girl child. Zonta International always participates in the CSW Meetings held in New York each year, and I attach their statement relevant to the forthcoming 59th Session to be held in March 2015.

In addition, Zonta International has been very active, since 2012, in supporting the UN Say No- UNiTE campaign by its own Zonta Says No program which is run at District and club level. ( Refer to <http://zontasaysno.com>). Zonta International’s ZISVAW ( Zonta International Strategies for Violence Against Women) Program supports actions at the global level to reduce violence against women and the girl child ([www.zonta.org/WhatWeDo/InternationalPrograms/ZISVAWProgram.aspx](http://www.zonta.org/WhatWeDo/InternationalPrograms/ZISVAWProgram?ZISVAWProjectArchives.aspx)).

These programs addressing violence have been supported by Zontians for many years .

( [www.zonta.org/WhatWeDo/InternationalPrograms/ZISVAWProgram/ZISVAWProjectArchives.aspx](http://www.zonta.org/WhatWeDo/InternationalPrograms/ZISVAWProgram/ZISVAWProjectArchives.aspx)).

I have attached the submission from Zonta International Districts 22, 23 and 24 ( Australia), which we have sent to the Prime Minister and relevant Ministers, for your information. It has also been copied to your relevant Shadow Ministers as listed below.

One matter we would really like the government to address is the lack of a Women’s Budget Statement for 2014-15. For more than 30 years this document has been produced by the government as part of the Budget Papers. Such a document allows a level of analysis which is necessary for the civil society, particularly women’s groups like Zonta which is dedicated to improving the status of women and eliminating discrimination which is the result of unequal treatment/opportunity. It is necessary to apply a ‘gender lens’ to all policy areas.

Attached to our submission is an analysis of the 2014-15 Budget produced by the National Foundation for Australian Women which uses publicly accessible documents and data to identify how women have been disproportionately affected .

Zonta has used a similar process in preparing our review of the BPFA. However, an ‘outsider’ analysis can never be as comprehensive as one conducted by ‘insiders’, hence our three major recommendations which recur in the document:

* That the Office for Women conducts/compiles gender disaggregated data analyses across all portfolio areas and publishes this information;
* That the Women’s Budget be reinstated as part of the Budget Paper series; and
* That the Gender Indicator series ( Gender Stats) produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics be expanded to the most comprehensive collection possible and that all such data be compared to international ‘country’ lists ( where possible) to show Australia’s global ranking.

We hope that our analysis , observations and recommendations will be helpful to you and to Opposition members in assessing the government’s BPFA +20 review of the 12 Critical Areas of Concern for women and girls.

All Zonta Districts in Australia ( 22, 23, and 24) strongly support all action to prevent discrimination against women and the girl child, particularly the need for action to protect their human rights. Your Party’s participation in debates on these matters, as well as in relevant Parliamentary Committees addressing these issues, is crucial to ensuring the best outcome for Australia with respect to its obligations in meeting treaty obligations.

Yours Faithfully

J T-H

District Governor, District 22

On behalf of Zonta International Districts 22, 23, and 24 ( Australia).

cc. Shadow Attorney-General

cc. Shadow Ministers for :

   - Foreign Affairs

* Women
* Education
* Indigenous Affairs
* Employment and Workplace Relations
* Families and Payments
* Defence
* Environment, Climate Change and Water
* Health

Attachments:

Zonta International Districts 22, 23, and 24 Submission

NFAW Budget 2014-15- A Gender Lens

Statement Submitted by Zonta International to the 59th Session of CSW, March 2015