**Zonta International Convention Orlando 2014**

**This was my first international convention and I was excited to attend representing our club and carrying proxies for Hervey Bay and Maryborough.**

**Total attendance was 1592 including 11 International Board, 9 PIP, 31 District Governors and then delegates and guests(167).**

**Total club number 1189 of whom 621 were represented by delegates , 474 by proxy and 94 not represented.**

**The opening and flag parade was a grand spectacle, Australia entering in 1966 was well down the list of countries which stands at 63 . 4 new countries have been added this biennium – Nepal , Lebanon, Macua and Uganda. Membership has grown to 30643. This is the first time since 2006. There is rapid growth in Africa (15%) and South America (28%) while in most other areas about 4%. Retention needs addressing as 31% new members resign within 2 years. D23 gained 104 new members.**

**Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka , UN Under-secretary and Executive Director UN Women spoke at the opening giving an insight into her past work in South Africa and ongoing struggles in improving education for girls and opportunities for women.**

**The business sessions were long with 71 by-law changes up for discussion. The aim of many was to remove operational and procedural issues to manuals and to modernise some terminology. There was intense debate on some issues with concerns by some that removal of some by-laws would give too much control to International as manuals and procedures can be changed without vote at convention. The debate on membership went for over an hour with eventual vote to remove need for invitation to membership and remove the statement “decision making capacity . It was felt too many young women particularly were excluded by this (including many bursary winners still studying) and that they needed to be encouraged. Many clubs have been not actively applying this in any case.**

**The need for extra time meant Sunday was 11 hours in length and Monday’s workshops were missed by delegates entirely. This was disappointing.**

**There was quite a long debate on limiting future conventions to 3 days to maximise attendance. I suggested that even longer days would not be good for the important social interaction that convention provided. This vote was not passed.**

**The venue was a long way from town which meant the potential to explore was limited. This was felt by many to be less than ideal. The next convention is in Nice and right in town- Sounding good! A day registration is likely to be offered.**

**The Zonta Says No campaign is to be continued by almost unanimous vote (99.5%)**

**The only 100% vote was for the Biennial Goals : Living up to our mission: Conviction-Commitment-Courage.**

**All proposals for ZIF funding were passed – Eliminating Obstetric Fistulas in Liberia and HIV-Free Generation in Rwanda are to be continued. New projects are Gender Responsive schools in Vietnam, Delaying Early Marriage in Niger and Voices against Violence. The last sounds interesting and involves interaction with Girl Guides. The potential to introduce young women to Zonta sounds promising.**

**Over $155 800 was raised for ZIF at convention.The most contributions from Districts 21,30 and 26. D18 (Africa) had the highest weighted contribution and also the most attendee(70) at convention.**

**The Rose Walk raised $45 000 with D27 and D31 outstanding .**

**76 clubs and 23 districts made submission for the Service awards. Club projects recognised included the Brisbane Breakfast Zonta Walk (5th place) and Adelaide Hills Expect Respect.(6th) . District 23 won the district prize for Birthing Kits, with a third to D4 for another Birthing Kit project . Second place was D17 Education Strategy for Gender Equality.**

**The closing ceremony was inspiring with the official handover to new District Governors and International Board of Zonta and ZIF. Cirque de Soleil closed the event with a fantastic show creating collective grasps from the audience at times.**