

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2020 – 2021

by Meryl Strand

This year 20/21 is my last year as President and is one in which there have been many trials and tribulations worldwide. However, our Zonta members have risen to the challenge of the Covid year and continued our communication both internally with our members and externally with our international family. At the end of my term I have pleasure in presenting this President's report.

I would like to thank all of our members for their contribution to our club throughout the year. It has not always been easy with the various changing restrictions but it truly became a time when we were there for one another.

As our fundraising and social face-to-face activities were severely curtailed, our members logged into Zoom calls at both district and international level to stay up to date.

Our AGM in 2020 was also held via Zoom and all Board members remained in their current positions, however our June Changeover dinner was able to return to our normal dinner meeting format at the Criterion Hotel.

The club again donated funds this year to Days for Girls for the purchase of several bolts of flannelette to produce sanitary packs for girls in developing countries to allow them to attend school during their monthly cycle.

June also saw the International Convention scheduled for Chicago changed to a number of Zoom meetings. All necessary voting components were lodged online which allowed our club to be involved in the normal way.

Due to Covid restrictions, the Jumpers and Jazz festival was cancelled in 2020 and we were therefore unable to host our Blue Dinner which was a wonderful first event for us in 2019.

The annual planning day was held in July with much discussion on what could be achieved for the year. There were a number of ideas put forward which we voted on to pursue.

One of those proposals was a “What the Heck” breakfast for no other reason than to meet with members and our Zonta friends to celebrate our club. The club combined this with a “Top to Toe” raffle where we approached local businesses for a voucher donation for items from the Top (hairdressing) to the Toe (footwear). Many businesses donated vouchers and the winner was drawn on the first day of the 16 Days of Activism in November. A most successful fundraiser for the club.

The club also had two guest speakers in September, Michelle Ferdinand and Yalda Ahmadi. Michelle from the Warwick State High School proposed a wellbeing programme as the needs of girls at the school were escalating due to difficult family circumstances exacerbated by drought and Covid. This programme is still on our Zonta list and is being evaluated.

Yalda Admadi, a graduate of the Queensland STEM Academy spoke on her involvement with the Zonta Club in Brisbane and her time in regional areas to assist where necessary. A very generous person.

As in previous years, we continued organising care packs which were distributed to Headspace, St Vinnies, Warwick State High School, Cornerstone, the Lighthouse community and SDIEA. All were gratefully received and it is good to see we in Zonta can assist in this way, though humbling that many women cannot easily afford simple necessities.

One of our new members Marianne Whitby lodged an application for a fast grant to the Southern Downs Regional Council in August. The application was successful and we were therefore able to produce a new brochure along with ongoing work to our webpage and facebook. At this point a new “Grants and Funding” committee was formed.

As we were not able to schedule our normal birthing kit assembly day under Covid restrictions our members met in their homes to pack birthing kits. In total 1,000 birthing kits were packed and returned to the Birthing Kit Foundation Australia which is one of the very worthy causes we support.

Over the Christmas period we joined the Chamber of Commerce Downtown Christmas festivities and decorated a tree in the main street.

The club again supported Safe Haven by donating funds towards the printing of Domestic Violence information cards.

Our club was asked by Southern Downs Regional Council to present on the 16 Days of Activism which I did at the November Council meeting. It was well received by all councillors. As part of the Red Bench project for local councils, the Council placed one red bench in Federation Park in Warwick and the other in Quart Pot Creek Reserve in Stanthorpe. These benches are to encourage people to take a stand against domestic violence and one of our orange ladies was placed next to the bench in Federation Park for a number of days. Many businesses, churches and organisations in Warwick, Allora and Killarney also welcomed our orange ladies.

Our annual guest dinner meeting was held in November and Sandy Venn-Brown, ex-Governor District 22, spoke on Zonta’s ideals and explained to our guests and current

members what the 16 Days of Activism entailed. Sandy also inducted our newest member, Yve Stocks who was welcomed warmly.

To end 2020, our members met for a Christmas breakfast at the Coffee Club in December, all wishing for a safe, healthy and successful 2021.

Unfortunately, our extremely popular Australia Day breakfast did not happen this year due to the onerous Covid restrictions which the club would have been required to meet. Hopefully next year we will be back bigger and better.

In March this year the club created a new “Constitution” and a new “Bylaws” document to replace the old “rules” document which was registered on 17 June 1999. The new formats allow for changes to be made to the Bylaws document only which contains the day-to-day running of the club. Both documents were approved by members at the March 2021 meeting.

This year there were two excellent girls deserving of the Young Women’s Scholarship. However due to our limited fundraising it was not possible for the club to fund both. However, in a truly generous offer one of our members, donated funds to enable both girls to be awarded.

International Women’s Day 8 March – we were fortunate this year to be able to hold our breakfast as it is a highlight on our calendar. Given the restricted numbers and layout to comply with Covid restrictions we held our breakfast at the Coffee Club. It was a huge success with the restricted number of 90 tickets selling out really quickly. Our guest speaker, Amanda Dalton who spoke at the district conference in 2020 was our guest speaker for the morning.

Amanda is the Founder and CEO of Protea Place whose mission is to provide a safe and welcoming environment for vulnerable women who may be experiencing homelessness or disadvantage. The centre is there to support all women. Amanda was a truly inspiring speaker and our club made a donation to Protea Place in appreciation.

From the applications for the Young Women in Public Affairs Award, Lauren Hutchinson was chosen. Lauren was a very worthy recipient and her award was presented to her at the International Women's Day breakfast. However, Lauren was so touched by reading details of Zonta International's Obstetric Fistula cause on the Zonta International website that she very generously returned her award money as a donation. Our club made the donation to Zonta International in her name.

Throughout the year the club continued distributing breast cushions as this is a vital service to those women recovering from breast cancer and it also helps the ladies who make them in prison to feel part of the community. The cushions are delivered to Toowoomba Base Hospital, St. Andrew's and St Vincent's in Toowoomba as well as to the breast care nurse at the Warwick Hospital.

Sandy Venn-Brown retired as Governor District 22 at the end of her term and our club made a contribution on her behalf to Zonta International.

As mentioned earlier our activities this year have been severely curtailed, however members have kept busy. Funds that have been raised from our IWD breakfast, which was assisted by donations of goods by businesses for a raffle on the day, our "What the Heck" breakfast and "Top to Toe" raffle as well as generous donations by club members have been distributed via scholarships or to organisations selected by our club, all of which have been appropriate and within the guidelines of Zonta International. The club also made a direct contribution to Zonta International.

As I said last year, our members are truly the backbone of our club and who make it what it is and it is therefore with great pleasure that I present this report.

Thank you

Meryl Strand

President