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Media Release

For Immediate Release

Zonta International New Zealand marks Suffrage anniversary

Zonta clubs around the country are celebrating the anniversary of Women's Suffrage.

On the 19th of September 1893, Governor Lord Glasgow signed a new electoral act into law which gave all New Zealand women the right to vote. It was a momentous occasion that didn't come without years of hard work by suffrage campaigners throughout New Zealand, led by Kate Sheppard.

New Zealand was the first country in the world to give women the vote.

"Today we celebrate a significant moment in our history – a day we can be proud of those determined women who came before us" says Zonta International District 16 Governor Souella Cumming. "The suffragists paved the way for all New Zealanders to participate fully in our democracy, and to give a voice to issues affecting women and girls. This was a great achievement but, 125 years later, there is still much to be done to ensure gender equality and address violence against women and girls."

Zonta International's work in New Zealand and worldwide focuses on service and advocacy, particularly in the area of raising awareness of, and acting to address, violence against women and girls. One in three women in New Zealand experience some form of abuse, be it physical, mental or sexual. "We have made significant progress since 1893," says Souella, "but we need to continue the example of the suffragists by actively working to reduce all forms of violence against women and girls."

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Background information:

Zonta International was founded in Buffalo New York, USA in 1919. The first Zonta Club in New Zealand and Australia – the Zonta Club of Auckland – was established in November 1965. Since that time Zonta in New Zealand has grown and today there are 28 clubs located from Whangarei to Dunedin, all working together to empower women locally, nationally and internationally through service and advocacy.

Mission & Vision:

Mission – Zonta International is a leading global organization of professionals empowering women worldwide through service and advocacy.

Vision – Zonta International envisions a world in which women's rights are recognized as human rights and every woman is able to achieve her full potential. In such a world, women have access to all resources and are represented in decision making positions on an equal basis with men. In such a world, no woman lives in fear of violence.