



**ZONTA**  
CLUB OF  
WELLINGTON  
MEMBER OF ZONTA INTERNATIONAL  
BUILD A BETTER WORLD  
FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

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## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Amazing Wellington Women to Lead International Advocacy and Service Organisation**

At a time when some world leaders are stepping down from international affairs, local women in the Wellington Region are stepping up to facilitate strong positions on the world stage.

Recently at the World Zonta Convention in Brisbane, four members of the Zonta Club of Wellington were successful in being appointed to senior leadership roles within Zonta. No mean feat as New Zealand is one of over 60 countries represented at the Convention.

These four amazing women are:

- Souella Cumming ONZM who, unopposed, continues in her role as Treasurer/Secretary on the Zonta International Board
- Helen Bowie who will Chair the Zonta International Advocacy Committee
- Jen McKinlay-Birkin who takes on the role of Governor of Zonta in New Zealand
- Sarah Barclay who is Lieutenant Governor of Zonta in New Zealand

These most capable women all follow in the footsteps of a fellow member of the Zonta Club of Wellington. Lynn McKenzie ONZM was President of Zonta International and Foundation in 2012-2014 – the first New Zealander to achieve this office and still actively involved promoting the Zonta brand, mentoring and guiding its members.

“The Zonta Club of Wellington is very proud of its members” says Belinda Himiona, President of the Club. “They champion Zonta’s local, national and international service and advocacy work, which is underpinned by the mission statement ‘Build a Better World for Women and Girls’”.

“We empower women worldwide, but first, we have to empower ourselves! That includes supporting each other and the leaders who volunteer to carry Zonta forward. And YES I emphasise they are all VOLUNTEERS!”

Belinda Himiona  
President Zonta Club of Wellington

For more information and background on this announcement and these amazing women, please see below.

## These Amazing Wellington Women

### **Souella Cumming ONZM, Treasurer/Secretary, Zonta International and Zonta Foundation for Women Boards**



Serving in her second term as the International Treasurer/Secretary for the 2024-2026 Biennium, Souella has been a member since 2006. She has actively contributed to the effective oversight of Zonta's finances having served as a member and then Chair of the Zonta International Finance Committee.

Souella is a Fellow Chartered Accountant and brings a strong financial background, business acumen, governance and risk management experience, which have enabled her to constructively question Zonta International's long-term position and actively support good financial stewardship.

Souella's goals are to reimagine the future with a world where women can achieve their full potential. She feels that Zonta's success hinges on the development of a longer-term strategy, realigning governance and management to support the execution of the strategy, developing financial strategies to ensure a long-term fiscally responsible organization all while using Zonta's voice to champion women's rights on the global stage. With the launch of the Strategic Plan, she sees a wide range of opportunities to retain what Zonta does well and ensure it is well set up to build a better world for women and girls.

### **Helen Bowie, Chair of the Zonta International Advocacy Committee**



Helen became a member of the Zonta Club of Wellington in 2010. With her passion for advocacy, Helen was honoured to serve as the Zonta Advocacy Chair for New Zealand in the 2018-20 and 2020-22 Bienniums.

Helen was a member of the Zonta International Advocacy Committee in the 2022-24 Biennium. She has now been appointed as Chair of the Zonta International Advocacy Committee for the 2024-26 Biennium. The Committee includes members from the United States, Europe, Côte d'Ivoire, Uruguay and Nepal.

The Zonta International Advocacy Committee focuses on the human rights of women and girls in order to achieve gender equality. The Committee works with Zonta districts and clubs worldwide in promoting Zonta's causes. These include eliminating violence against women and girls, supporting women in decision-making roles, and advocating for climate justice.

In her day job, Helen is a lawyer with over 40 years' experience, practising in Wellington.

### **Jennet “Jen” A. McKinlay-Birkin, Governor, Zonta New Zealand**



Jennet "Jen" A. McKinlay-Birkin has been a Zonta member for 21 years. Although she has spent most of her time with the Zonta Club of Wellington, she was a member of the Zonta Club of Tauranga for 3.5 years after moving to the area in 2018.

Zonta has given Jen many leadership opportunities. She served as Wellington Club President and Board Member and became Vice Area Director and Area Director from 2018 to 2022. Jen has been involved in service and advocacy activities in both clubs throughout her time as a member. In her working life she is a quality practitioner in the health and disability sector.

Leading the New Zealand Board has allowed Jen to give back some of what Zonta has given her. She lives by the motto, "*Ma mua ka kite a muri, ma muri ka ora a mua*," which means, "Those who lead give sight to those who follow. Those who follow give life to those who lead".

### **Sarah Barclay, Lieutenant Governor, Zonta New Zealand**



Sarah has been an active member of the Zonta Club of Wellington for nearly 15 years. She cherishes her club and the impactful service and advocacy work they do in alignment with Zonta's vision. Throughout her tenure, Sarah has served as both treasurer and president of the Wellington Club. At the Zonta New Zealand level, she has held roles including Area 2 Director and Advocacy Chair. During her term as Area 2 Director, she received tremendous support from her Wellington club members and other local clubs, including Mana, Manawatu, and Hawkes Bay. Collaborating with board members like Jen McKinlay-Birkin, who is being elected as Governor, has been a highlight, as their complementary skills drive their success.

With a strong background in engineering, Sarah retrained in law and now works as a patent attorney, merging both disciplines. Her experience in male-dominated fields inspired her to join Zonta, where she combines her technical and legal expertise to make a difference.

As Lt Governor, Sarah's goal is to uphold the legacy of the remarkable women before her and ensure Zonta New Zealand's readiness for future members. She believes in focusing on each club's strengths in service and advocacy to naturally attract new members and secure a prosperous future for Zonta New Zealand.

## **ZONTA INTERNATIONAL**

Founded in 1919, Zonta is a leading global organization of professionals focused on making the world a better place for women and girls through service and advocacy. Zonta International members volunteer their time, talents and money to local and international service programmes. In addition, they provide scholarships and award programmes aimed at furthering women's education, leadership and youth development.

Zonta International envisions a world in which women's rights are recognized as human rights and every woman can achieve their full potential. It also awards Honorary Membership to individuals who have helped to change societal attitudes about women or have improved conditions for women beyond the national level. Since 1970 forty-three women have been recognised for their significant contributions to advancing the status of women worldwide. New Zealand is proud that The Right Honourable Helen Clark, ONZ SSI BC, Dame Silvia Cartwright, ONZ PCNZM BBE QSO and Dame Marilyn Waring, DNZM are included.

Zonta International has a long and well-respected history of partnership in conjunction with the United Nations Agencies and maintains consultative status on women issues with the UN and Council of Europe Committees.

## **ZONTA in NEW ZEALAND and the ZONTA CLUB OF WELLINGTON**

There are 28 clubs in New Zealand from Whangarei through to Invercargill.

The Zonta Club of Wellington has a membership of 55 and meets monthly in downtown Wellington. The second oldest club in New Zealand, its initial membership was drawn from the arts (Dame Kate Harcourt, Tanya Askin, its founding President, Beverley Shore Bennett, the late Inge Wolfe and the late Dame Pat Evison, to name a few).

Today members come from a diverse group of women drawn from business and profession who come together to take action (advocacy, undertake projects and provide education awards) to support, local, national and international initiatives that will make the world a better place for women and girls.

The Wellington Club signature project is the biennial Zonta Science Award directed to encouraging women to make a career in science. The Award supports New Zealand early career women scientist with a PhD. This year's winner is Dr Hadee Thompson-Morrison. Hadee was awarded a monetary prize together with a specially designed Zonta Science Award broach.

Our local projects are the Wellington Women's House, Te Whare Awhi Wāhine that provides a safe and comfortable home for women in need. The "Grandparents Bringing up Grandchildren Trust" and "Teen Parent School" in Upper Hutt, Titiro Whakamua Teen Parent Programme.

If you wish to give back to your community, then Zonta could be just what you're looking for. Contact us at [wellington@zonta.org.nz](mailto:wellington@zonta.org.nz)

The club website is <https://www.zontawellington.org.nz>

The club Facebook Page is <https://www.facebook.com/ZontaClubOfWellington/>

