



## Chapter 41

### Zonta in Australia and New Zealand – An Overview<sup>1</sup>

#### Development and early Zonta clubs

Year	New Clubs	Closed Clubs	Gain/loss	Active Clubs
1960-69	6		6	6
1970-79	46		46	52
1980-89	41	2	39	91
1990-99	66	16	50	141
2000-09	15	20	5	136
2010-18	10	13	3	133
Total	185	52	133	

The history consists of the following periods:

- The early club in Sydney, New South Wales
- The non- districted period from 1965–1974
- District XVI encompassing clubs in Australia and New Zealand from 1974 to 1990.
- District 16 encompassing clubs in New Zealand from 1990 to 2016.

#### Zonta in the Southern Hemisphere 1923–1935

Zonta International was introduced to the Southern Hemisphere in the 1920s with the establishment of the original Zonta Club of Sydney by Rosalie Slaughter-Morton, charter president of the Zonta Club of New York, who was married to an Australian. There are no details of the precise date of the organizing meeting.

The Zonta Club of Sydney is mentioned in the lists of club presidents in issues of *The Zontian* from 1929 through 1935. It received club number 109, which indicates 1930 as the charter year.<sup>2</sup> The club officers list in *The Zontian* from 1929 mentions Lily Elliot Smith being club president, followed in 1930 by Ruth Bedford and in 1931 by Dorothea McKellar. The 1935 entry reads, “Officer to be announced later”.

<sup>1</sup> Research compiled by Eva Nielsen

<sup>2</sup> Eva Nielsen’s research.

In her book, *Empowering Women, A History of Zonta District 16, 1965 – 2016*, Jennifer A. Loughton shares these reflections:

Dr. Judith Dey discovered that Chicago records revealed that a Zonta Club of Sydney had been established in 1928, chartered as club number 109 in 1930. With 32 members at its formation, the original Zonta Club of Sydney was one of the first to be established outside the United States and Canada. Early Australian Zontians probably joined Zonta for the same reasons as their North American counterparts. A foundation member of the Zonta Club of Sydney stated that ‘...to be an independent career woman in Australia in the 1920s and 1930s demanded considerable courage and determination and [Sydney Zontians] welcomed one another’s support and encouragement’....The famous Australian poet Dorothea McKellar was the Sydney club’s president in 1931, a role she continued until at least the mid-1930s. Although no precise disbandment date has yet been found, no further mention of the Sydney Club is made in *The Zontian* after 1935. It is possible that the club may have existed until World War II when wartime restrictions, isolation and difficult travel conditions are likely to have contributed to its demise.<sup>3</sup>

An International Relations Committee chairman’s report to the District I conference, held 27–28 April 1935, notes “In Australia, the people of Sydney, after 12 years of isolation, have asked if they cannot temporarily surrender their charter; but still they are very eager to meet anyone going from America to Australia”.<sup>4</sup>

This suggests that the Zonta Club of Sydney started as early as 1923 and disbanded at the beginning of 1935.

In her book *A History of Zonta International 1919 – 1999*, Theresa De Langis mentions a Zonta Club of Auckland.<sup>5</sup> Such a club is never included in the lists of club presidents in *The Zontian* issues from 1928 to 1935.<sup>6</sup>

## Australia

Year Chartered	Club Number	Club Name	Closed
1930*	0109	Zonta Club of Sydney	1935

\*As noted above, there is evidence that the club may have been established as early as 1923.

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<sup>3</sup> *Empowering Women, A History of Zonta District 16, 1965 – 2016*, p. 16-17

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Loomis, chair of the International Relations Committee report to the District I conference, 27-28 April 1935, Zonta Club Ithaca, N.Y. records, #3441, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

<sup>5</sup> *A History of Zonta International 1919 – 1999* p. 18, 23.

<sup>6</sup> Eva Neilsen’s research 2017