ZONTA INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT 23
EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH SERVICE & ADVOCACY

ZONTA SAYS NOW

To gender equality and climate action

Zonta Says NOW News - JUNE 2022



Stop clowning about with the oceans

The clownfish in this photo is smiling as it hopes that climate action in Australia will ramp up with the new government and save its coral home.

Many thanks to everyone who stepped up to raise awareness of climate change and gender equality at last month's historic Federal election. Every letter, conversation and petition signed made a difference. Both major parties lost votes, and we saw the emergence of a new wave of independent candidates – many of them women. Who would have thought that climate change, gender equality and integrity would be the central issues determining the new government?

So far, there have been mixed signals with the new government. It has committed to reducing emissions by 43 per cent on 2005 levels by 2030, promised to co-host a future climate COP with a Pacific island nation, and yet approved the controversial massive offshore Scarborough-Pluto gas drilling project…

Our climate is inextricably linked with the oceans. This edition celebrating World Ocean Day will describe a range of 'current' ocean-related issues. Ocean phytoplankton generates over 80 per cent of the world's oxygen and absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere helping to control global warming. With threats from mining, pollution, and overfishing, this is our opportunity to take stock of everything the ocean does for us and reflect on how our actions can protect its vulnerable biodiversity.

Zonta International's tagline for the forthcoming 2022-2024 biennium is to *build a better world for women and girls*. Climate action will feature more prominently with the new Madagascar climate education project, and the rollout of Zonta Says NOW across the Zonta world. Our first step is to showcase Zonta Says NOW at two workshops at the Zonta International Convention in Hamburg later this month.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed so positively to Zonta Says NOW this biennium. We may be acting locally, but our actions are rippling around the world. Through our connections with Zontians from across Australia and overseas, we are more

informed and better understand the challenges and opportunities we have to create a more gender-equal, sustainable world.

Bring on the next biennium!

Carole
Carole Theobald
District 23 Futurist/Leadership Coordinator



World Oceans Day - 8th June

This year's UN World Oceans Day theme is *Revitalization: Collective Action for the Ocean*. On World Oceans Day, the UN is holding a webinar featuring the remarkable scientist Dr Sylvia Earle. She set up Mission Blue to ignite public support for a global network of marine protected areas. Check out the interactive map showing 'Hope Spots' - places that are critical to the ocean's health. Is there a Hope Spot near you?

Our Great Barrier Reef is under threat. At 1.5 degrees of global warming, we lose over 70 per cent of our coral reefs – at two degrees, we lose 99 per cent! One Million Women is campaigning to urge the UNESCO World Heritage Committee to protect the Great Barrier Reef by declaring it '*World Heritage in Danger*'. Over 61,00 people have already signed the petition, including Dr Sylvia Earle. Will you sign too?

On 8th June, spare a thought for the oceans. They cover 70 per cent of the planet, generate half of our oxygen, absorb about a quarter of the carbon dioxide emissions, and capture 90 per cent of the additional heat generated from those emissions. The rising ocean temperatures are causing significant challenges to coral, fish movements, algae production, and habitats and triggering sea level rises, sea current changes and rainfall distribution. As the ocean absorbs more carbon dioxide, it becomes more acidic, dissolving coral and crustacean shells.

Around three billion people depend on the oceans for their livelihoods. Women make up nearly half of the people involved in small scale fisheries and over 70 per cent of the aquaculture workforce. We need everyone, men and women, young and old, to be involved in actions to protect our oceans.

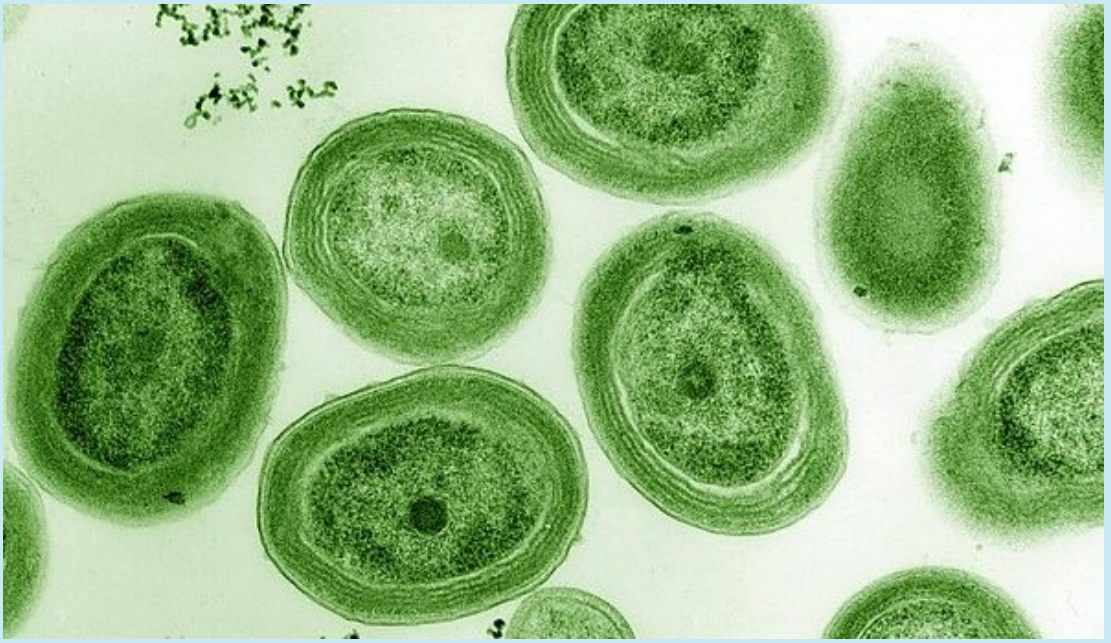
The United Nations has delayed the second part of its Biodiversity Conference of the Parties (COP-15) to October. In Kunming, China, COP-15 will decide on the new Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework that includes a gender plan of action to ensure greater gender equality and empowerment of women.

Two informal groups are also influencing our ocean activities the:

- High Ambition Coalition includes 61 nations led by the Marshall Islands and urges all countries to accelerate their climate action. Members have been pushing for world leaders to follow the science and protect at least 30 per cent of our lands, waters, and ocean by 2030. Over 90 countries have signed on so far, and the 30x30 goal will be considered at COP-15 for adoption globally.
- Friends of Ocean Action, a coalition of over 70 ocean leaders (including the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Ocean and Andrew Forrest), are fast-tracking solutions to ocean challenges – including building a resilient ocean. Their

#BackBlue initiative is investing US$500 million to build the resilience of 250 million people through regenerating mangroves and coral reefs. By 2050, 800 million people will be at risk of storm surges from extreme weather events. Coastal communities in the least developed countries and small island developing states are likely to be severely impacted, with women and girls especially hard hit.

Action: Sign up to see Dr Sylvia Earle at the World Ocean Day webinar – and sign One Million Women's petition to call on the World Heritage Committee to save the Great Barrier Reef.



The micro-lungs of the world

Scientists estimate that 50-80% of the oxygen production on Earth comes from the ocean. Most oxygen is produced by oceanic plankton — drifting plants, algae, and some bacteria that can photosynthesize. One particular species, *Prochlorococcus*, is the smallest and most abundant photosynthetic organism on Earth.

Prochlorococcus produces up to 20 per cent of the oxygen in our entire biosphere - more than all tropical rainforests on land combined - and is essential for maintaining life in the ocean.

Dr Penny Chisholm from MIT explains in a TED Talk that *Prochlorococcus* is the most abundant photosynthetic species on the planet. These bacteria use sunlight to split water into hydrogen and oxygen. The chemical energy produced from this reaction draws carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to make sugars, proteins and amino acids essential to life – making the ocean a huge carbon sink. Without the oceans drawing carbon dioxide from the air, global warming would be far worse.

Another scientist, Dr Sasha Tetu from Macquarie University in Sydney, examined how plastic leachates may affect *Prochlorococcus*. In laboratory experiments, she found that plastic leachates caused lower growth rates, lower photosynthetic output, and major genetic changes. Because photosynthesis generates oxygen, these results suggest that plastic in our oceans may decrease oxygen production. The impacts this may have on the ocean's ability to absorb carbon dioxide is not known and more research is underway.

Action: Keep reading to see how to keep plastic out of the oceans!



Lisa Blair breaks record with Climate Action Now!

in this *United Nations Decade of Ocean Science*, many actions are underway to fill the gaps about the 80 per cent of the ocean that is unmapped, unobserved, and unexplored.

Last month, Lisa Blair was all smiles when she sailed into Albany, WA, completing her record-breaking circumnavigation of Antarctica. Her sailing boat, called Climate Action Now, featured climate pledges on post-it notes from supporters worldwide. In her blogs, she shared every step (wave?) of her 92 days, 18 hours, 21 minutes and 20 seconds journey, during which she braved blizzards, snow storms and waves the size of five storey buildings.

As Lisa was sailing between latitudes 45 South and 60 South, where few vessels go, she collected valuable ocean health data for the Clean Ocean Foundation. She monitored salinity, dissolved carbon dioxide, chlorophyll and bio optics, took microplastic samples and gathered meteorological data. She deployed eight weather drifter buoys to feed data back to the Bureau of Meteorology. Researchers are analysing the data, and the findings should be ready early next year!

Lisa thanked supporters as she passed through lines of longitude, including Zontian Dawn Newman at 080°West! (Dawn is a member of the Zonta Club of Perth Northern Suburbs and has been a long time supporter of Lisa, telling her about Zonta's work. Lisa mentioned in her blog that she is pleased to see Zonta International has a Statement on Climate Change!)

Lisa Blair will also be part of the UN World Ocean Day webinar event with Dr Sylvia Earle.

Action: Sign up for the webinar and re-live Lisa's voyage through her diary and videos in her blog!



Internalising our plastic problem

It is not just *Prochlorococcus* that is having a problem with plastic. Plastics do not rot - they break up into smaller and smaller pieces. Pieces less than 5mm in diameter are called microplastics. In 2022, scientists detected microscopic microplastics in human blood for the first time. They estimated that babies fed using plastic bottles could be swallowing millions of microplastic particles a day.

Research commissioned by the World Wildlife fund in 2019 found that globally, we ingest on average 5 grams of plastic a week, equivalent to the weight of a credit card.

According to the UNEP, the impacts of plastic production and pollution on the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature loss and pollution are a '*catastrophe in the making*'.

Plastics threaten all marine life, the climate, and human health and well-being, potentially affecting fertility, hormonal, metabolic and neurological activity, while open-burning of plastics contributes to air pollution.

The UNEP estimates that every minute, the equivalent of one garbage truck of plastic is dumped into our oceans. Their report, *From Pollution to Solution*, provides a sobering global assessment of marine litter and plastic pollution. Among its findings, it notes that, unless we act now, plastic waste may triple by 2040.

Tides and ocean currents have caused marine litter and plastics to accumulate in five ocean 'garbage patches'. This story map shows the primary sources of garbage forming giant garbage patches in the Indian Ocean, North Pacific Ocean, South Pacific Ocean and two in the Atlantic Ocean.

Researchers have found that washing clothes made from synthetic materials adds to the microplastic load. Washing releases over 700,000 fibres from an average 6kg wash load of acrylic fabric.

The good news is that governments around the world are taking action. UN members have agreed to forge an international, legally binding agreement by the end of 2024 to '*End plastic pollution*'.

Closer to home, Australia's *National Plastics Plan* aims to make 100 per cent of packaging reusable, recyclable or compostable by 2025 and phase in microfibre filters on new residential and commercial washing machines by 1st July 2030. The government supports the industry to voluntarily phase out microbeads in rinse-off cosmetics, personal care and cleaning products sold in Australia. However, Choice has concerns that microbeads may still be present in many cosmetic products and urges consumers to be informed.

Action: Check your personal care products using the Beat the MicroBead database and join the #DaretoCare Campaign



Be part of the solution - join Plastic Free July

Plastic Free July was started in Western Australia in 2011 by Rebecca Prince-Ruiz with 40 people. In 2021, about 140 million people from 190 countries joined the challenge.

To take part, all you have to do is sign up to stop using single-use plastics for the month of July. You choose how many plastics you stop using and possibly start a new habit for the rest of the year – or your life!

It is easy to stop using single-use plastic straws, bags, spoons, and water bottles with a bit of planning. Consider taking the next step and get plastic packaging out of your life by purchasing fruit and vegetables at farmers' markets, dry goods at bulk food stores, switching from plastic food wrap and swapping liquid soap for bar soap. There are many ideas on the website – have some fun checking them out.

Why not plan to host a Plastic Free Morning Tea in July and share food, fun and conversations about plastic-free solutions. Tell your friends and colleagues about the actions you are taking through Zonta Says NOW.

Action: Sign up for Plastic Free July and use the Pesky Plastics Quiz Tool to learn how to set yourself up for success.



Right Here, Right Now is coming soon

Natalie Isaacs from 1 Million Women has just completed her second book called Right Here Right Now, and this will be available from 20 July and can be pre-ordered.

The book focuses on how women can lead the way in the climate emergency – sounds right up our street!

Action: Pre-order your book today!



What is your Present for the Future?

Zonta's education and advocacy programs educate girls, support women's participation in decision-making processes and inspire them to take on leadership roles in their communities.

Every dollar you contribute to the Zonta Foundation for Women's Endowment Fund will help us create a more gender-equal, sustainable world.

Action: *You can celebrate a birthday or special event by giving a Present for the Future to support Zonta's Endowment Fund and send a colourful e-card to acknowledge the occasion.*

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