

# Quiet achievers make impact

Beverley Hudec

THE Zonta Club of Northern Beaches is a quiet achiever. With its softly-softly approach, the local network of business and professional women promotes the worldwide status of women through community support and international projects.

"Our mission statement is to advance the status of women through service and advocacy," President and long-time member Evelyn Whittaker said.

"If you help a woman, you are helping the whole community."

Zonta brings together 23 like-minded professional women each month, the former Avalon Beach Commonwealth Bank manager said.

"Women need to fit in to a decision-making capacity at work to become a member. We can only have 25 per cent membership of one profession in each club," Ms Whittaker said.

"We are not for everyone, so our membership remains small but active – 65 per cent of our members still work."

Female professional membership includes optometry, real estate, the law and education, bringing mentoring skills, business advice and professional support for peninsula women.

Zonta began 91 years ago in Buffalo, New York, and became Zonta International in 1930 when the first European club was estab-

lished in Vienna. Membership now straddles the globe with more than 33,000 members in more than 1200 clubs in more than 67 countries. Zonta has 27 clubs in NSW and the ACT.

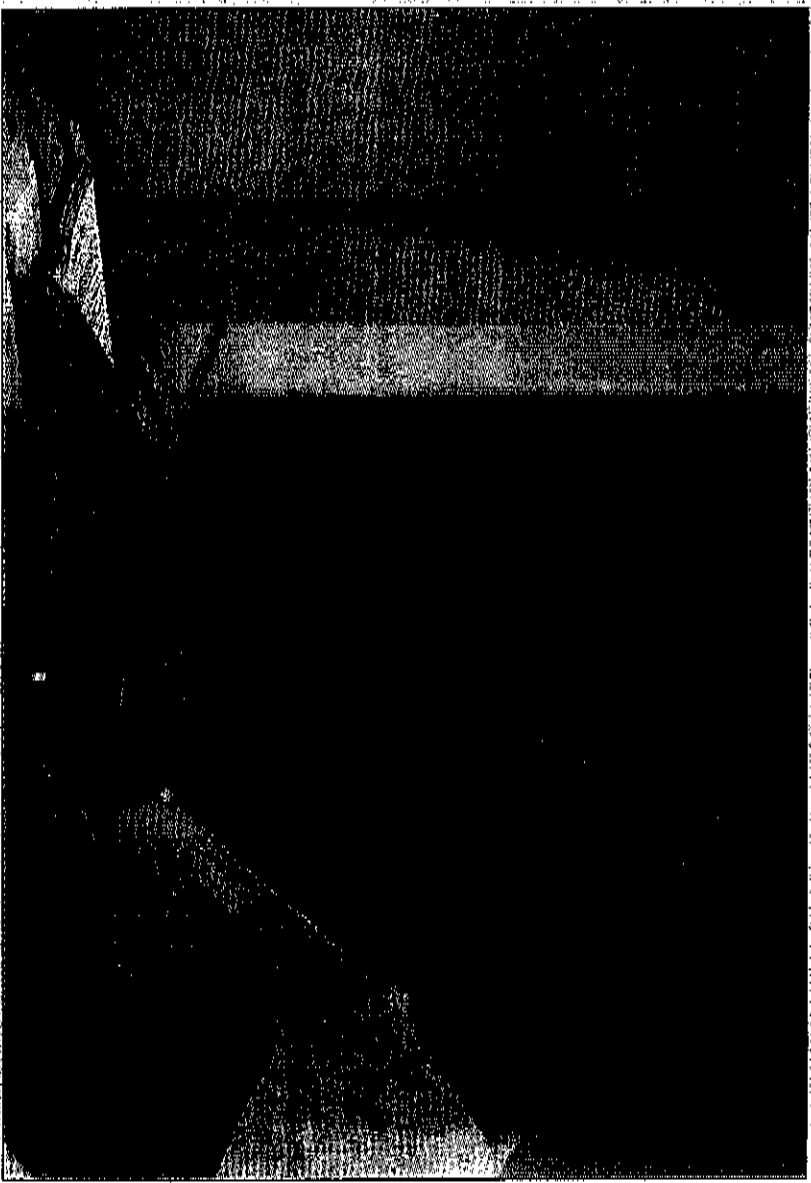
The tiny, 23-member northern beaches club endeavours to punch above its weight with its contribution to numerous projects.

Members sew more than 300 breastcare cushions for women who have undergone breast cancer surgery. And each June members and volunteers assemble thousands of birthing kits, which are shipped to developing countries.

Zonta actively supports women's education through its study grant program. In the two-year period from March 2007 to February 2009, it awarded sponsorships with a total value of \$3583 to one TAFE student and five year 11 students through support grants.

Through Pregnancy Help, the Women's Resource Centre and Centacare, Zonta awarded \$4000 worth of study grants to three local women to retrain in the media, nursing and graphic design, Ms Whittaker said.

"Retraining is essential for women to get back into the workforce. We are setting them up with skills so that they can support themselves. There are plenty of women – often single mums – who need financial support. Our members also step in to provide a



mentoring role for women," she said.

Community service and networking are integral components of Zonta membership, fellow member Tricia Haines said.

Next month, networking and socialising come together at one high-profile community event supported by Pitwater Council. Zonta Club of Northern Beaches is host-

ing the Pitwater International Women's Day Breakfast at Mona Vale Golf Club on March 9. "It is always a sellout and it is a good opportunity to bring the community together to network and socialise," Mrs Haines, co-chairman of the IWD Breakfast Committee, said.

This year's speaker is Marie Dayton, whose career includes

missionary work, helping Mother Teresa care for orphans, education projects in India and superintending of Minda Juvenile Detention Centre.

Pitwater MP Rob Stokes will announce Pitwater Woman of the Year at the event. Tickets cost \$32. To book email [pittwateriwdbreakfast@gmail.com](mailto:pittwateriwdbreakfast@gmail.com), or call 9918 8569.