Support for Country-Based Structure

- The move from district-based to a country structure aims to unify Zonta “Country” Australia's approach on a national level.
- Zonta Australia Advocacy Committee (established 2024) functions as a national advocacy collective voice rather than a formal organisation but could be a foundation for future development of national committees.
- Transparency in setting up the country structure and filling leadership roles is essential for trust. The roles and responsibilities of the proposed country boards need to be clearly defined.
- Communication tailored to individual clubs at the country level is crucial and should be properly supported and resourced.

State/Territory Coordination in Australia

- Australia’s vast geography and federal governance system (federal, state/territory, local) require a layer between local clubs and a national board.
- The existing district setup is fragmented: eg NSW clubs are split across two districts, and another district covers multiple states and a territory, complicating local governance.
- Coordinating via states/territories could improve responsiveness to national policies and needs.
- A state/territory model could have a light, focused role mainly on advocacy, project coordination, and communication with Zonta “country” Australia.
- A regionalized model within Australia, aligned with current districts (Northern, Southern, Western Australia), might offer a practical solution.
- Concerns about losing the personal relationships and support structures currently fostered by districts.
- Electronic communication should be enhanced but not at the cost of losing personal connections critical for member retention and motivation.

Transition and Retaining District Functions

- Gradual transition recommended to retain positive momentum, such as ongoing district-level advocacy groups and community actions.
- Some district roles (advocacy coordination, awards administration, treasurer) may need to remain temporarily alongside emerging state-based functions.
- Area-level coordination roles currently seen as less valuable and could be phased out without major impact.

Challenges with Current District and Proposed Country/Territory Model

- Existing districts have adapted flexibly to local needs, indicating a one-size-fits-all model is impractical.
- Australia’s large size and diverse clubs demand regional flexibility rather than a single central board.

- Concerns that a single national body could be too remote and complex to effectively represent or support all clubs, especially in large countries like Australia, Germany, and the US.
- Comparisons with Rotary International governance are not appropriate due to differences in organisational purpose and structure. Soroptimists seem to be a more appropriate model for somaprison.
- The Blueprint does not clearly articulate how the new structure will tackle core challenges like membership decline, financial sustainability, and leadership succession.
- There are benefits and challenges to different Board models in Australia eg geographically-based membership; skills- based membership; elected v appointed.

Financial Considerations

- A key priority is ensuring structural changes reduce costs rather than increase burdens on members.
- Fees at the country level should ideally be lower than current combined district fees to ease financial pressure on members and clubs.
- No detail on how finances would work for a "country" structure eg how generated; how distributed?
- Concern from members about the distribution of District finances if Districts are dis-established eg how to do this equably? Given that the three current Districts have different governance models eg incorporation, company limited by guarantee, how are members' interests to be taken into account with regard to monies that have accumulated from members' efforts?

Zonta International Governance Board Reform

- Support for creating a smaller, strategic board focused on competency rather than traditional representation.
- International leadership pathways should broaden beyond district governors to include demonstrated skills and leadership experience from diverse backgrounds.
- Leadership selection needs transparent, merit-based processes with clear criteria and diversity goals.
- Longer terms for leadership roles could improve continuity and reduce costs associated with frequent elections.
- Leverage digital platforms for remote participation and online voting to enhance democratic decision-making.
- Modernise language around leadership titles to remove colonial/military connotations and promote inclusivity.
- International board reforms are positive but should explicitly require commitment to Zonta's core mission and values.
- Clear mechanisms for member and club representation at the international level are needed to maintain connection and trust.

Meetings and Leadership Structure

- Suggest reducing the frequency of international conventions from every two years to every four to cut costs and volunteer fatigue.
- Regional or country conferences could fill the gap between international meetings.
- Managing volunteer workload carefully is essential to prevent burnout and maintain engagement in leadership roles.

Membership Experience and Expectations

- Members seek meaningful volunteer roles with flexibility, acknowledging they are volunteers balancing other commitments.
- Preference for contribution opportunities that fit their lives, with less pressure to constantly escalate involvement.
- Strong emphasis on social connections and personal relationships as the basis for belonging and engagement.
- National support might ease club tasks by providing shared resources, training, and administrative help.
- Members want local projects supported while also having visible connections to national and international goals.
- Leadership should be responsive and transparent, with communication channels that make members feel heard.
- Members want clear evidence of Zonta's impact to feel their contributions matter and to aid learning between clubs.

Transition and Implementation Concerns

- The transition process must be transparent, inclusive, and involve all stakeholders to build confidence. How will the role of District Nominating Committees change in this process?
- Proposals could build on existing collaboration mechanisms (eg Zonta Australia Advocacy Committee) rather than starting from scratch.
- A competency-based board model with a clear distinction between governance and operations is preferred by some respondents.
- Maintaining local identity and state/territory engagement is vital even as governance is streamlined.
- The 2027 district conference should provide a crucial opportunity for member consultation and feedback on the transition.

Volunteering and Communication Challenges

- Volunteer numbers are declining due to broader societal factors like time pressures and cost-of-living increases.
- Diverging member preferences—older members favour face-to-face; younger prefer digital—require hybrid communication strategies.
- Electronic communication helps but cannot fully replace face-to-face interaction, which is essential to combat isolation, especially in remote areas.

Overall Position

- Support for reform is tempered with caution, emphasizing a flexible, staged approach to avoid disruption.
- Governance changes should balance efficiency with preservation of local engagement and identity.
- Transparent consultation and safeguarding member interests must guide transitions.
- Australia’s experience positions it well to contribute to and test governance models that reflect diverse member needs.