

**RE: Global Education Summit and Ending Child Marriage**

Dear Senator Payne

Zonta International envisions a world in which women's rights are recognized as human rights and every woman is able to achieve her full potential. In such a world, women have access to all resources and are represented in decision making positions on an equal basis with men. In such a world, no woman lives in fear of violence.

This letter is an opportunity to alert you to the upcoming [Global Education Summit](#), and in the light of the devastating impact of COVID-19 on girls and their education around the world, I am writing to highlight the pressing need for you to raise the issue of [child marriage and girls' education](#) and consider strategies to address it in your State education plan as a matter of priority.

As members of Zonta International District 22 (Queensland and Northern NSW) we call on you to keep this issue front of mind and not only highlight it within your portfolio but also raise the issue with Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

I am aware of the large volume of work you are involved in with the current COVID 19 response, however I would like to encourage you to not forget the impact that this pandemic is having on women and girls not only across Australia but across the world.

Child marriage disproportionately affects girls and denies them their rights to health, safety and education. Child marriage is one of the main factors leading to girls dropping out of school, and equally important is that keeping girls in school (especially secondary school) is one of the best ways to reduce child marriage.

Although this issue is not as significant in Australia as in some other countries, it can happen anywhere and the pandemic has increased the risk to some girls in our communities. We urge you to demonstrate leadership on this issue by ensuring education polices refer to this risk and have strategies in place to address and eliminate child marriage. The Global Partnership for Education has outlined education as a key driver in reducing child marriage: it has a target of averting 2 million child marriages by 2025. To achieve this target and align with the SDG mission to leave no one behind, governments must consider the implications of child marriage on education in order to make sure ALL girls' have access to 12 years of safe, quality education.

We at Zonta International District 22 stand ready to work with you or your team to make sure that all girls can go to school, not walk down the aisle or partner too early in life before their education is completed.

Yours sincerely,

Bridget Mather

***Bridget Mather PSM***

Board Chair / District Governor

Zonta International District 22 Ltd.

Phone: +61 418 710 643 | Email: [zontad22governor@gmail.com](mailto:zontad22governor@gmail.com)

[www.zontadistrict22.org](http://www.zontadistrict22.org)