Wellington Zoo Submission on the proposed National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on this important document.

Conservation is at the heart of what we do at Wellington Zoo. We carry out and support conservation projects internationally, around New Zealand, and within our Wellington community. We are proud that Wellington City Council has already begun its process to engage with landowners and identify SNAs (through the Backyard Tāonga Project).

Our comments are below. Where possible, we have linked these to the questions in your consultation. We do not wish to be heard in support of our submission.

Q1: We agree that a National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity is needed to strengthen requirements for protecting our native plants, animals and ecosystems under the Resource Management Act. We believe this is necessary in order to improve consistency in councils’ approaches and deliver better outcomes for biodiversity.

Q4: We strongly support the underlying concept of Hutia te Rito, recognising the environment’s intrinsic value as well as people’s connections and relationships with it. All of our work at the Zoo is guided by the kaupapa Me Tiaki, Kia Ora! meaning that we must look after our environment so that all things will flourish. Hutia te Rito is our Zoo waiata. We are happy to see the Ministry for the Environment reflecting this intrinsic link in government policy.

Q30: We strongly agree that territorial authorities and councils should promote the resilience of indigenous biodiversity to climate change. The wild populations of many of the animals we care for at the Zoo are now considered to be at risk from climate change impacts, including some New Zealand endemic species. Although we certainly need to improve our knowledge of potential impacts, lack of data should not be an excuse for inaction. We note that the NZ Committee of IUCN is planning a symposium on the impacts of climate change on New Zealand’s indigenous biodiversity, and hope that this could be an opportunity to identify new research that will assist territorial authorities and councils with their planning. As the example of the Chesterfield skink (in your discussion document) illustrates – the potential consequences of climate change impacts include the most irreversible: species extinctions.

Q46: We strongly support the requirement for Regional Councils to develop monitoring plans for indigenous biodiversity inside and outside SNAs, and for monitoring to be carried out according to nationally agreed standards. It will be important that the costs of this monitoring are borne by those most able to pay them, and do not become disproportionate in areas with high levels of biodiversity and low human populations.

Q62: We, and the other members of the Zoos and Aquarium Association (Australasia) stand ready to help councils and local authorities fulfil these responsibilities and protect indigenous biodiversity. We look forward to working
with them and our community to build a positive future for indigenous biodiversity in New Zealand.