

25 September 2015

Parliament Office  
Private Bag 18888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

Dear Minister Brownlee

This letter is to support your trip to Chengdu next week and to express our interest, depending on the level of external support, regarding the acquisition of Giant Pandas in partnership with the New Zealand and Chinese governments. The project was most recently discussed by the Mayor with the Prime Minister in late 2014 and we're delighted to see a renaissance of interest.

We would like to convey Wellington's excitement and enthusiasm for this project. We believe that Wellington, as New Zealand's capital city is the most appropriate partner city in this endeavour. As a city we are ready to act as soon as possible to ensure this venture is successful for New Zealand. Wellington's sister city relationships include Beijing and we invest considerable energy in pursuing cultural and economic relationships with Chinese cities and provinces..

We have discussed the Panda proposal again with Ross Martin, Chair of Wellington Zoo Trust and Karen Fifield, Chief Executive of Wellington Zoo who is also President of the Zoo Aquarium Association Australasia. They both echo our sentiments that this is an exciting proposal and they are very keen to progress it. They have both shown enthusiasm and commitment previously for the acquisition of Giant Panda.

All the major capital city zoos have had pandas over the last three decades (e.g. London, Paris, Berlin, Washington DC and Tokyo). Given New Zealand's relationship with China, Wellington is well positioned to join these other capital cities in hosting Giant pandas as they play a large part in diplomatic relations between the two countries.

We believe that housing Giant panda is consistent with Wellington Zoo's overall strategy and goals of being the 'best little Zoo in the world'. As the capital city zoo we see the Zoo's long term objective as being a key player in tourism, science, conservation and community engagement for New Zealand.

Wellington Zoo is one of a handful of zoos that have successfully bred and reared Malayan sun bears, evidence of our expertise in bear husbandry. Wellington Zoo is the only zoo in New Zealand that currently holds bears of any kind so we have the husbandry expertise necessary to host such precious

animals as Giant panda. Wellington Zoo also has a conservation relationship with Free the Bears Asia in regard to sun bears and we have provided husbandry and education advice to that organisation in Vietnam and Cambodia.

The Nest Te Kōhanga, the award winning, state of the art animal hospital, is the perfect place for care of Giant panda. Veterinary excellence is one of the conditions required by the Chinese government for panda host zoos. The Nest Te Kōhanga has featured on television's Wild Vets and is staffed by qualified vets and vet nurses. Wellington Zoo also has a three year veterinary Masters programme in Wildlife and Zoo Medicine for qualified vets in partnership with Massey University - the only one of its kind in New Zealand.

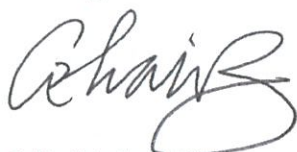
Currently all zoos that have pandas on loan from China have a research focus. Wellington Zoo has strong connections to Victoria University and Massey University in biological sciences and veterinary science; a Giant panda research team would convene to select a research angle that is point of difference for Wellington Zoo. China currently loans pandas to countries for 10 years (they arrive as juveniles) and this results in two-way information exchange about Giant pandas. Since the new era of loans began at San Diego Zoo in 1998, conservation advances have been significant. Researchers (Chinese and loan countries) have unlocked the breeding mysteries, as Giant pandas historically were poor breeders in captivity, and captive births continue to increase each year. Wellington Zoo sees supports this as a contribution to conservation of Giant panda.

We believe there is an appetite in the Wellington community to support Wellington Zoo to host Giant panda. Previously Positively Wellington Tourism has expressed their support as have other supporters of the Zoo in the community such as WWF New Zealand, various Probus and Rotary clubs, and of course, the Zoo's own membership.

We are aware that we will be guided by central government especially in regard to engaging with the Chinese Government and key interests in Wellington to ensure success.

In conclusion we would like to confirm our enthusiasm for the Giant Panda project and look forward to discussing this exciting project further with you. If you require any further information before the next phase of discussions please don't hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards



Celia Wade-Brown  
**Mayor of Wellington**



Justin Lester  
**Deputy Mayor**

## Giant pandas

### Facts for Wellington Zoo

All the major capital zoos have had pandas over the last three decades (e.g. London, Paris, Berlin, Washington DC, Tokyo). Given New Zealand's relationship with China (especially the free trade agreement), Wellington is positioned to join the other capital city's with Giant pandas.

China currently loans Giant pandas to countries for 10 years (they arrive as juveniles) and this results in two-way information exchange about Giant pandas. However some zoos have cared for Giant pandas longer than the original ten years. Since the new era of loans began at San Diego Zoo in 1998, conservation advances have been significant. Researchers (Chinese and loan countries) have unlocked the breeding mysteries, as Giant pandas historically were poor breeders in captivity, and zoo births continue to increase each year. It was only recently that Giant pandas have been released back into the wild.

Wellington has a suitable climate for Giant pandas, similar to their native mountains of Sichuan Province. Wellington has a mild weather thus the giant pandas would not have to be restricted to air-conditioned rooms during the summer.

Wellington Zoo has the staff knowledge to manage Giant pandas. Mauritz Basson is the GM, Animal Care of Wellington Zoo and previous to this was at Johannesburg Zoo where he worked with several bear species, including polar bears, grizzly bears, sun bears, and Asiatic black bears. We have a number of experienced bear keepers on staff and some have worked in the field in Asia with sun bears.

Wellington Zoo is one of a handful of the Zoos that have successfully bred and reared Sun Bears, evidence of their expertise in bear husbandry. Wellington Zoo is the only Zoo in NZ that currently hold bears of any kind so we have the husbandry expertise. Wellington Zoo also has a relationship with Free the Bears in regard to sunbears and we have provided husbandry and education advice to that organisation in Vietnam and Cambodia.

Currently all zoos that have pandas on loan from China have a research focus. Wellington Zoo has strong connections to Victoria University and Massey University in biological sciences, conservation psychology and veterinary science; a giant panda research team would convene to select a research angle that is point of difference for Wellington Zoo.

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#### Wellington Zoo Trust

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Wellington Zoo previously had discussions and exchanged information with other zoos who house Giant panda, particularly Adelaide Zoo, which is an excellent comparative study in terms of size and visitation levels. Our Board Chair and the Strategic Management Team have visited Adelaide Zoo to see their Giant panda exhibit and Wellington Zoo paid for Dr Chris West, then CEO of Zoos South Australia, to visit Wellington to discuss Adelaide Zoo's Giant panda experience with us and local and central government officials.

Our state of the art animal hospital, The Nest Te Kōhanga, is unique in the world. It houses a number of veterinary experts and we have a three year masterate in zoo and wildlife medicine in partnership with Massey University- a unique qualification in the world.

Wellington has a suitable climate for growing bamboo, especially two of the giant panda's favourites (*Bambusa oldhami* and *Phyllostachys* spp.). The NZ Bamboo Society is located in Wellington and Wellington Zoo would explore partnering with the Society. We have advice from them before regarding the red panda diet.

Wellington Zoo has global connections with other zoos which house Giant panda, particularly Ocean Park in Hong Kong, The National Zoological Park in Washington (Smithsonian), San Diego Zoo and Adelaide Zoo. Collaborative projects could be developed to assist with panda research as well as any we undertake alone.

Wellington Zoo has already designated an area of the zoo to be developed for a Giant Panda exhibit. This is within our Asian precinct (with Sumatran tigers, Malayan sun bears and Snow leopards) which is located next to the NZ precinct, Meet the Locals He Tuke Aroha, which would be a link for this project. We have long term relationships with world renowned zoo exhibit designers and local project and construction firms who would be more than willing to assist us with this project. We have also had ongoing success with fundraising and commercial relationships which would also be key components for this project.

Wellington Zoo has won number of prestigious awards for exhibit design, sustainability initiatives (we are the the world's first carboNZero certified zoo) and business leadership over the past nine years. Wellington City Council and Wellington Zoo Trust have invested heavily over the past nine years to create a world standard 21st century zoo in the capital. Visitor numbers have been increasing at an average annual rate of 3% and the Zoo is an excellent financial position.

Wellington Zoo aims to connect people with animals, have people love and support and the Zoo, save animals in the wild and lead the way. The success of Wellington Zoo comes from immense community support, funder satisfaction, excellence in animal care and world leading visitor experience.

Wellington Zoo has won a number of prestigious awards over the last seven years for sustainability and environmental and business leadership and our new capital projects have also won architectural and construction awards at the highest level.

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Some of these awards are listed below. We consider Wellington Zoo to be a first class zoo.

2008	Winner DOC Conservation Education & Advocacy Award, Wellington Region	
2009	Winner of the Central & Southern Sustainable Business Network Awards - Sustainable Business of the Year Award and Not for Profit Award	
2009	Winner of the NZI National Sustainable Business Network People's Choice Award	
2009	Karen Fifield, Winner HER Regional Wellington Businesswoman of the Year Awards - Sustainability Award and Outstanding Corporate Leadership Award	
2010	Zoo and Aquarium Association Best Large Exhibit Award - The Nest Te Kōhanga (a first for a NZ zoo)	
2010	Winner Green Gold, Wellington Gold Awards – Positive Sustainability Practices	
2010	Karen Fifield, Winner Bloom HER Business Awards – Outstanding Business Leader	
2010	Winner Business Environmental Leadership Award, Encore Awards	
2011	NZ Zoo and Aquarium Association Conservation Award - The Nest Te Kōhanga	
2010	Finalist Ministry for the Environment Green Ribbon Awards for Small businesses making a difference	
2011	Dr Lisa Argilla, Veterinary Science Manager, Wellingtonian of the Year, Environment	
2009-2013	Construction and Architecture awards for The Nest Te Kōhanga, Wild Theatre, Kamala's Function Centre	
2013	Winner, Vibrant Gold (events, hospitality & visitor activities), Wellington Gold Awards	
2013	Sustainable 60 Winner - Marketplace	
2013	First carboNZero certified Zoo in the world	
2014	Amy Hughes, GM Community Engagement, finalist in the Wellingtonian of the Year Awards- Education	
2014	Zoo and Aquarium Association Best Small Exhibit Award from a Large Institution – Hero HQ.	
2014	Oli du Bern, Visitor Experience Manager, finalist in the NZIM Eagle Technology young Executive of the Year	

For further information please contact:

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