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WALKING THE TALK AND TALKING THE WALK – AUCKLAND ZOO'S HOLISTIC JOURNEY TO AUTHENTIC SUSTAINABILITY

By

¹Claudine Gibson & ¹Kevin Buley (featuring multiple staff from across Auckland Zoo)

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ABSTRACT

Auckland Zoo's mission is 'To bring people together to build a future for wildlife'. This mission is actioned via seven interconnected strategic commitments, informed by several key strategic frameworks, which help guide our operational priorities and move towards our vision of, 'A future where people value wildlife and species are safe from extinction'. One of our commitments is 'Whakawhanake i te tōpūtanga kia ora - Evolving our organisation sustainably' which influences activities across all zoo departments.

Auckland Zoo has been actively managing its environmental footprint to some degree for more than twenty years. One of our key areas of focus in recent years has been our approach to environmental sustainability. As a wildlife conservation organisation we are all kaitiaki (guardians) of the Zoo and the environment, and it is fundamental to us that we not only talk the walk, but also walk the talk – that our conservation advocacy work is reflected in all aspects of our sustainable operation of Auckland Zoo.

Since 2016, Auckland Zoo has been using our carbon emissions as a leading indicator of our environmental footprint. We are now into our seventh year of carbon zero certification and have achieved a 36% reduction in emissions since our baseline year. Our emissions reduction plan focuses on priority areas of our operation, including waste, water, electricity, and fuel. Additional initiatives across the zoo address sustainability in other ways which reduce our overall operational impact and highlight our sustainability journey through our conservation messaging. Such initiatives include the elimination of single use plastic bottles, sustainable procurement and responsible consumption, green innovation in our capital work projects, staff and community engagement, and our conservation learning, interpretation and volunteer programmes. Furthermore, as Auckland Zoo is part of the wider council-controlled organisation Tātaki Auckland Unlimited, our journey is helping to catalyse and inspire the sustainability journey in other cultural organisations within Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland.

Like wildlife conservation, sustainability is at the heart of everything we do and engages all our staff, from all departments across the Zoo. Reflecting this whole-of-zoo approach, this thirty-minute session is brought to you by multiple staff from across Auckland Zoo all of whom are instrumental in expanding our sustainability journey.

BIOGRAPHY

Claudine Gibson is the Environmental Initiatives Advisor at Auckland Zoo. Starting as a zookeeper at Jersey Zoo over 20 years ago, she has since worked in various conservation roles for zoos, government

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advisory agencies, NGO's and IUCN SSC Specialist Groups, where project co-ordination, facilitation and multiple stakeholder engagement have been a major focus of her work. Claudine is continuously inspired by Auckland Zoo's evolving environmental sustainability journey. She is passionate about every aspect of her role at Auckland Zoo, particularly having the opportunity to collaborate and engage with staff and departments from across the Zoo to further embed environmental sustainability within the organisation.

Kevin Buley has been at Auckland Zoo since 2010. Initially as Head of Life Sciences and then as Director since 2018. Prior to moving to New Zealand, he spent seven years at Chester Zoo (2003-2010) and eight years at Jersey Zoo (1995-2003). Although now having spent over a quarter of a century working in zoos, Kevin still looks much older than he is. He has been an elected member of the ZAA Board since 2018.