

**The authorities on elephant biology, elephant welfare, captive elephant management, and zoo development, undersigned.**

C/- 17 Ellen Avenue  
Keilor East  
Victoria 3033  
Australia

Mayor Mr. Len Brown *len.brown@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*  
Councillor Deputy Mayor Ms. Penny Hulse *penny.hulse@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*  
Councillor Mr. Michael Goudie *michael.goudie@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*  
Councillor Mr. Wayne Walker *wayne.walker@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*  
Councillor Dr. Cathy Casey *cathy.casey@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*  
Councillor The Hon. Chris Fletcher *chris.fletcher@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*  
Councillor Mr. Des Morrison *des.morrison@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*  
Councillor Ms. Sharon Stewart *sharon.stewart@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*  
Councillor Mr. Arthur Anae *arthur.anae@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*  
Councillor Mr. Alf Filipaina *alf.filipaina@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*  
Councillor Mr. Calum Penrose *calum.penrose@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*  
Councillor Sir John Walker *john.walker@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*  
Councillor Mr. Richard Northey *richard.northey@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*  
Councillor Ms. Ann Hartley *ann.hartley@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*  
Councillor Mr. George Wood *george.wood@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*  
Councillor Mr. Cameron Brewer *cameron.brewer@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*  
Councillor Ms. Penny Webster *penny.webster@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*  
Councillor Ms Sandra Coney *sandra.coney@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*  
Councillor Mr. Michael Lee *mike.lee@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*  
Councillor Ms. Noelene Raffills *noelene.raffills@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz*

**20 May 2011**

Your Honour the Mayor and Councillors,

In September last year we wrote you (copy attached) regarding the Auckland Zoo's plan to acquire additional Asian elephants. We are now writing again to urge you not to support the Zoo's plans, and to express our deep concerns regarding misleading information posted on the Auckland Zoo website.

Of particular concern to us is the Auckland Zoo's statement that it intends to source elephants from Sri Lanka. The situation for elephants in that country is highly complex. There is a range of pressures on wild populations there, against a background of deep cultural engagement with elephants. Sri Lanka is emerging from a long civil war, yet there are many local voices urging strong action to protect elephants.

After lengthy and careful consideration, we are convinced that removing elephants from Sri Lanka at this time, whatever the motives, is not helpful in any way to securing better outcomes for elephants in that island nation. The sense, in much of Asia, that elephants can be treated as livestock, as commodities, works actively against efforts to promote elephant welfare and conservation. On these grounds alone we urge the Council not to support Auckland Zoo's plans.

Furthermore, the importation of young elephants, whether from the wild or captive born, must inevitably involve the breaking of social bonds with family and peers. Such social disruption is highly damaging for elephants, causing them lasting trauma.

The Zoo's failed experiment with providing its sole elephant Burma a horse as a companion animal calls into question its knowledge of elephants.

The Zoo claimed that there is similarity in the social structures of the two species. Current scientific knowledge about the social life of both horses and elephants shows this idea to be entirely fanciful.

Elephants and horses are extremely different; the Zoo was simply misleading the Council and the New Zealand public.

The Zoo states that it now plans to “bring in two elephants” and to build “a family group of 10 elephants through breeding”. The Zoo does not state how it would achieve this breeding objective but plans may include highly manipulative, costly and invasive artificial breeding techniques that do not in any way advance conservation of the species.

It should also be noted that breeding in zoos has produced a disproportionate ratio of male calves to female calves. Bull elephants have different social needs from cows and require different management strategies. No urban zoo in the world has yet succeeded in providing adequate social conditions for the development of young bull elephants, most of whom are consigned to live in social isolation in very costly high-security facilities.

We note here that the Zoo and Aquarium Association of Australasia’s “Guidelines for the management of elephants in Australasian Zoos” requires any facility keeping elephants to have a minimum of 4 cow elephants in order to provide for basic social life. If implemented, Auckland Zoo’s plans could not be expected to meet these standards for many years.

The Zoo argues that in the past its elephants Kashin and Burma have helped raise “three quarters of a million dollars to fund conservation projects for endangered animals in the wild”. Apart from obvious questions about how such a statement can be justified, it indicates clearly the true cost-benefit of holding elephants, at great costs to their welfare, in an urban setting.

- The Zoo estimates the cost of new facilities for elephants to be \$10million and the cost of importation to be around \$3million.
- The annual cost of maintaining an elephant in a zoo is generally accepted to be not less than \$100,000.
- The cost to hold 3 elephants would be at least \$300,000 and, for a group of 10, not less than \$1million.

Lastly, we would particularly like to draw your attention to a decision taken recently by city authorities in Toronto, Canada. There the City Council faced a very similar situation to the one you are facing: the need to decide whether to incur the high cost of the redevelopment of expanded elephant facilities necessary for minimum acceptable living conditions, or to place the Zoo’s last three remaining elephants in better facilities, in a more hospitable climate elsewhere. The Council and the Zoo have decided that the most prudent course of action is to send the elephants elsewhere and for the Toronto Zoo to no longer keep elephants.

**We urge the Council not to proceed to support the acquisition of Asian elephants by Auckland Zoo. The elephant Burma should be sent to live with other elephants in an open-range zoo or sanctuary.**

Yours sincerely,

**Mr. Will Travers**, Chief Executive Officer, Born Free Foundation, Horsham, UK  
[will@bornfree.org.uk](mailto:will@bornfree.org.uk) <http://www.bornfree.org.uk/>

**Mr. Adam Roberts**, Executive Vice President, Born Free Foundation USA, Washington DC, USA  
[adam@bornfreeusa.org](mailto:adam@bornfreeusa.org) <http://www.bornfreeusa.org/>

**Dr. Cynthia Moss**, Director, Amboseli Trust for Elephants, Kenya  
[cmoss@elephanttrust.org](mailto:cmoss@elephanttrust.org) <http://www.elephanttrust.org/>

**Dr. Keith Lindsay**, Amboseli Trust for Elephants, Oxford, UK  
[wk Lindsay@googlemail.com](mailto:wk Lindsay@googlemail.com) <http://www.elephanttrust.org/>

**Dr. Joyce Poole**, Director, ElephantVoices, Norway and Kenya  
*jpoole@elephantvoices.org* <http://www.elephantvoices.org/>

**Mr. Petter Granli**, Director, ElephantVoices, Norway and Kenya  
*pgranli@elephantvoices.org* <http://www.elephantvoices.org/>

**Ms. Pat Derby**, President, Performing Animals Welfare Society, California, USA  
*patderby@sbcglobal.net* <http://www.pawsweb.org/>

**Ms. Carol Buckley**, Chief Executive Officer, Elephant Aid International, Tennessee, USA  
*carol@elephantaidinternational.org* <http://www.elephantaidinternational.org/>

**Ms. Catherine Doyle**, Director, Elephant Campaign, In Defense of Animals, Los Angeles, California, USA

*davidkca@earthlink.net* <http://www.idausa.org/>

**Ms. Isabella McCrea**, Oceania Regional Director, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Sydney, Australia

*imccrea@ifaw.org* [http://www.ifaw.org/ifaw\\_asia\\_pacific/](http://www.ifaw.org/ifaw_asia_pacific/)

**Mr. Eliot Pryor**, SAFE, New Zealand  
*eliot@safe.org.nz* <http://www.safe.org.nz/>

**Mr. Bob Kerridge**, Executive Director, SPCA Auckland, New Zealand  
*Bob.kerridge@sPCA.org.nz* <http://www.sPCA.org.nz/>

**Ms. Bridget Vercoe**, Country Manager, WSPA, New Zealand  
*BridgetVercoe@wspa.org.nz* <http://www.wspa.org.nz/>

**Dr. Mel Richardson**, Captive Wildlife Veterinary Consultant, Paradise, California, USA  
*Doctormel1950@sbcglobal.net*

**Mr. David Hancocks**, Architect and Design Consultant, Melbourne, Australia  
*dhan8403@bigpond.net.au*

**Ms. Lisa Kane JD**, Coalition for Captive Elephant Wellbeing, Seattle, Washington, USA  
*lisafkane@hotmail.com*

**Ms. Amy Mayers**, Vision Communications, Washington DC, USA  
*ammcomms@rcn.com*

**Mr. Peter Stroud**, Zoological Consultant, Melbourne, Australia  
*pcstroud@mac.com* <http://www.zootica.com>

17 Ellen Avenue  
Keilor East  
Victoria 3033  
Australia

20 September 2010

Dear Councillor,

We the under-signed are writing to you about the recent decision of the Auckland City Council to support the expansion of the Auckland Zoo to allow the acquisition of additional Asian elephants. We urge you to reconsider this decision in light of the following information:

1. **No urban zoo in the world can adequately cater to the needs of elephants.** Sound science tells us that elephants are social animals that spend their lives in and around families of closely related individuals, moving across vast areas. Family life cannot be created in a zoo and there is growing evidence that simply placing unrelated elephants together does not simulate natural social life. Urban zoos can neither provide sufficient space for elephants, nor sufficient environmental complexity.
2. **Importation is highly expensive and logistically complex.** Auckland Zoo could only acquire additional elephants by importing them from overseas. The only sources are existing zoo breeding programs or populations of elephants in the Asian countries in which elephants live naturally.
3. **Removing elephants from existing zoo programs will neither assist the sustainability of zoo elephant populations nor assist the welfare of the elephants involved.** Existing zoo populations of Asian elephants, internationally, are not self-sustaining because of a combination of insufficient genetic diversity and skewed age structure.
4. **Removing elephants from Asian countries is unethical.** The recent importation of elephants from Thailand to Australia revealed a range of issues including the current impossibility of proving that imported elephants are actually captive born and not plundered from the wild.
5. **The attempted importation of elephants to New Zealand would generate great international controversy.** The good name of both the City of Auckland, and of New Zealand as a country, will be damaged.
6. **Building for urban elephants is always more expensive than initially estimated.** Even attempting to create basic living conditions for a “herd” of elephants in Auckland Zoo will be extremely expensive. The estimate of \$NZ13 million is almost certainly an under-estimate. The National Zoo in Washington has recently spent an astonishing \$US50 million on basic and inadequate facilities for a proposed total of nine elephants. In Australia, the Melbourne Zoo and Sydney’s Taronga Zoo each spent in excess of \$AU15 million.
7. **Elephants are very expensive to keep.** The ongoing maintenance of elephants in urban zoos has been estimated to cost not less than \$NZ100,000 per specimen per year, not including the maintenance of facilities and capital depreciation. To maintain a “herd” of 10 elephants, not less than \$NZ1,000,000.00 per annum should be allocated.
8. **Urban elephants are NOT a sound investment.** It has been demonstrated that elephants in an urban zoo are not a permanent draw-card sustaining high zoo visitation over time. The birth of elephant calves can result in peaks in visitor numbers but over time such attractions fade and in the long-term they are not cost-effective.
9. **Elephants do not fit the Auckland City “brand”.** Elephants can be readily experienced in many places around the world and their presence in Auckland Zoo would not enhance Auckland or New Zealand as a destination for visitors.

We urge you to reconsider the Council’s decision to support the acquisition of Asian elephants by Auckland Zoo. The elephant Burma, should be sent to live with other elephants in an open-range zoo or sanctuary.

Yours sincerely,

**Mr. Will Travers**, Chief Executive Officer, Born Free Foundation, Horsham, UK  
*will@bornfree.org.uk*

**Mr. Adam Roberts**, Executive Vice President, Born Free Foundation USA, Washington DC, USA  
*adam@bornfreeusa.org*

**Dr. Cynthia Moss**, Director, Amboseli Trust for Elephants, Kenya  
*cmoss@elephanttrust.org*

**Dr. Keith Lindsay**, Amboseli Trust for Elephants, Oxford, UK  
*wklindsay@googlemail.com*

**Dr. Joyce Poole**, Director, Elephant Voices, Norway and Kenya  
*jpoole@elephantvoices.org*

**Dr. Robert Atkinson**, Head of Wildlife, RSPCA, Horsham, UK  
*ratkins@rspca.org.uk*

**Ms. Carol Buckley**, Elephant Aid International, Hohenwald, Tennessee, USA  
*elevisions@aol.com*

**Ms. Catherine Doyle**, Director, Elephant Campaign, In Defense of Animals, Los Angeles, California, USA  
*davidkca@earthlink.net*

**Mr. Don Elroy**, Stop Animal Exploitation Now, Ohio, USA  
*Jetsonboy1@charter.net*

**Ms. Glenys Oogjes**, Executive Director, Animals Australia, Melbourne, Australia  
*googjes@animalsaustralia.org*

**Mr. Jorge Basave**, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Sydney, Australia  
*jabasave@ifaw.org*

**Ms. Verna Simpson**, Humane Society International, Sydney, Australia  
*verna@hsi.org*

**Mr. Hans Kriek**, SAFE, New Zealand  
*hans@safe.org.nz*

**Mr. Bob Kerridge**, National President, RNZSPCA, New Zealand  
*Bob.kerridge@sPCA.org.nz*

**Ms. Bridget Vercoe**, Country Manager, WSPA, New Zealand  
*BridgetVercoe@wspa.org.nz*

**Dr. Mel Richardson**, Consultant Wildlife Veterinarian, Paradise, California, USA  
*Doctormel1950@sbcglobal.net*

**Mr. David Hancocks**, Architect and Design Consultant, Melbourne, Australia  
*dhan8403@bigpond.net.au*

**Ms. Lisa Kane JD**, Coalition for Captive Elephant Wellbeing, Madison, Wisconsin, USA  
*lisafkane@hotmail.com*

**Ms. Amy Mayers**, Vision Communications, Washington DC, USA  
*ammcomms@rcn.com*

**Mr. Peter Stroud**, Zoological Consultant, Melbourne, Australia  
*pcstroud@mac.com*