

## WELLINGTON ZOO

### CASE STUDY

**SECTOR: NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION**

**INDUSTRY: TOURISM, ANIMAL CARE, SAFETY, EDUCATION**

#### BACKGROUND:

Wellington Zoo is one of New Zealand's most unique workplaces. Its operations span animal care, hospitality, construction, overnight accommodation, a veterinary hospital, and more. This complexity demands a high level of health and safety oversight to ensure the wellbeing of staff, visitors, and animals alike.

The Zoo's guiding principle, Me tiaki, kia ora – developed with local iwi Taranaki Whānui – captures their commitment to caring for the environment and each other.

But as Director of Safety, Assets and Sustainability Chris Jerram knows, principles alone aren't enough. A zoo is unlike any other worksite, and managing risk here requires constant evaluation, innovation, and structure.



#### THE CHALLENGE

Wellington Zoo was already meeting its compliance requirements through the ACC WSMP audit and had made progress following earlier health and safety recommendations. But the team was looking to go further – to move beyond compliance and develop a stronger, long-term health and safety strategy.

The Zoo had trialled the SafePlus toolkit, a government-supported health and safety self-assessment tool. It provided useful insight into the current safety culture, including how it varied across teams and roles. But after three self-assessments, Chris saw the need for deeper external expertise to turn insights into action.

## THE SOLUTION

Working Wise was brought in to carry out a formal onsite SafePlus assessment. As a certified SafePlus assessor, Working Wise's Managing Director Jeena Murphy worked closely with Zoo staff to observe behaviours, review systems and processes, and conduct in-depth interviews across the site.

The result was a comprehensive evaluation tailored to the unique challenges of a zoo environment. Jeena delivered two detailed reports with around 50 recommendations – all of which were accepted by the Zoo team. These covered a range of issues, from managing critical risks (such as dangerous animal interactions and habitat safety) to improving internal processes and strengthening the overall safety culture.

Chris and his team have since developed a detailed action plan and are now working on a broader strategy to define what success looks like in the health, safety and wellbeing space over the coming years.

## THE RESULTS

### Clear roadmap for improvement

Working Wise provided 50+ tailored recommendations, all accepted and now being actioned.

### A future-focused strategy in motion

The Zoo is developing a long-term health, safety and wellbeing plan to guide ongoing progress.

### Better understanding of critical risks

From animal habitats to construction zones, site-wide risks are now addressed more consistently.

### Improved safety awareness and culture

Staff engagement has increased, with stronger alignment across teams and leadership.



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“Jeena gave us specific recommendations based on improving specific challenges tailored to our organisation. She considered how the Zoo and its structure worked, and didn’t just give us blanket responses. That was incredibly important to us.”

– Chris Jerram, Director of Safety, Assets and Sustainability,  
Wellington Zoo

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### Get in touch with Working Wise for Health and safety solutions

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