

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA concerned about relocation of National Zoological Garden's last elephant
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is concerned about the recent decision to relocate the National Zoological Gardens (NZG) in Pretoria's last remaining elephant to a private game lodge.

The PSA recognizes the importance of providing the best possible environment for wildlife, but the intended relocation raises significant issues that must be addressed. Elephants are integral to the educational mission of zoos. For many learners and members of the community who lack the means to experience wildlife in its natural habitat, the NZG serves as an essential resource. Elephants, in particular, play a critical role in this educational experience, offering visitors a unique opportunity to learn about these majestic animals, their behaviours, and the vital role they play in the ecosystem.

The removal of elephants from the NZG threatens to diminish the educational value that the institution provides to countless visitors. Without these iconic animals, the NZG's ability to inspire a love of wildlife and an understanding of conservation in the next generation will be significantly undermined. The relocation of this elephant may signal the start of a broader trend to remove animals from zoos altogether. This possibility is alarming, as it could lead to a significant reduction in the educational and cultural resources available to communities. Zoos have long played a crucial role in conservation education, offering accessible opportunities for people of all backgrounds to connect with wildlife. Removing key species from zoos could set a precedent that endangers the future of these institutions as centers for learning, conservation, and public engagement. Zoos, when properly managed and maintained, are vital to fostering an appreciation for wildlife and promoting conservation efforts.

The elephant has been a major attraction, drawing visitors to the NZG and generating essential revenue that supports its operations and educational programs. The absence of such a significant drawcard is likely to result in a decline in visitor numbers, negatively impacting the zoo's financial stability. This, in turn, could lead to job losses, affecting the livelihoods of zoo workers and their families. The impact on workers who have dedicated their lives to caring for these animals and educating the public cannot be understated. Job losses would not only harm these people but also weaken the broader community depending on the NZG for employment and economic activity.

The PSA advocates for the upgrading of enclosures to meet and exceed required standards, ensuring that elephants and other animals at the NZG receive the highest standard of care and welfare. The PSA further calls for measures to protect the jobs of zoo workers, ensuring that the relocation of animals does not lead to job losses.

The PSA believes that with the right investments and commitment, the NZG can continue to be a place where wildlife thrives, where the public can learn the importance of conservation, and where workers can rely on stable employment. The PSA stands ready to support any efforts to achieve these goals and urge all stakeholders to work together to preserve the educational, cultural, and economic value of zoos.

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