

Zoos Victoria

Director Presentation and Assets

Candidate briefing

October 2026

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About Zoos Victoria

An organisation of national and global significance

Zoos Victoria is Australia's oldest wildlife conservation organisation and one of the most recognised zoological institutions in the world. Operating four world-class facilities – Melbourne Zoo, Healesville Sanctuary, Werribee Open Range Zoo, and Kyabram Fauna Park - the organisation welcomes over three million visitors each year and manages one of the most complex, multi-site animal care and conservation operations in the Southern Hemisphere.

What distinguishes Zoos Victoria from many peer institutions is the breadth and seriousness of its conservation mandate. The organisation does not simply exhibit wildlife – it leads recovery programs for threatened species, conducts internationally recognised scientific research, and actively shapes global standards in animal welfare and biodiversity conservation. Its reach extends well beyond the boundaries of its four sites, encompassing field programs, breeding and reintroduction initiatives, and a growing network of scientific and institutional partnerships across the region and internationally.

Zoos Victoria operates as a statutory authority of the Victorian Government, established and mandated under the Zoological Parks and Gardens Act 1995, meaning it carries both a public benefit mission and a responsibility to perform commercially. The organisation delivers approximately \$350 million per annum in economic benefit to Victoria's visitor economy, operates a significant retail operation, and is the State's largest paid membership-based organisation, with over 390,000 members. It functions as a major leisure and cultural destination as well as a conservation institution. This dual identity – mission-driven and commercially active - is central to understanding the organisation's complexity and its leadership requirements.

A new operating model

The organisation has moved from a hybrid model, in which property-based directorates operated alongside corporate directorates, to a functional structure. This is a period of new ways of working and culture building, supported by a high-performing cohort of newly appointed Heads. Teams have achieved a great deal over the years, and the new structure is designed to build on that work through greater consistency and collaboration.

Why this role exists

An investment program of this scale changes what Zoos Victoria asks of its physical environments. Its assets are no longer simply infrastructure to be maintained. They are the primary means through which visitors experience the conservation story, the platform for animal welfare and breeding outcomes, and the foundation for commercial growth. Zoos Victoria sees itself as a "people, animals and assets" business, and its assets are, quite literally, the visitor experience.

As a public sector entity, the organisation must also meet a range of obligations. These include a long-term asset investment strategy, formal asset management accountability requirements, and a commitment to reinvest in its existing capital base at or above the rate of depreciation. The portfolio spans a heritage inner-city zoo established in 1862, a large open-range park and a bushland sanctuary. Stewarding this diverse and historically significant asset base, and planning its long-term renewal, is central to the role.

The Director Presentation and Assets is a new role and the first Director position Zoos Victoria has had in the assets area. Until now, asset management, maintenance, capital delivery and landscape presentation have sat across separate functions and sites. For the first time, one leader will be responsible for the presentation of assets holistically across all properties. Bringing these functions together will provide consistent standards, long-term lifecycle planning, disciplined prioritisation of investment and clear accountability for delivery, while preserving each property's distinct character. The Director will also serve as property champion for one site.

The role offers the opportunity to establish a fresh, standardised and consistent approach to asset management across four highly distinctive properties, building on the strong foundations and collaborative effort already in place. It is also an opportunity to mature how the organisation thinks about asset lifecycle and investment. The Director will be expected to drive cultural change, moving the properties toward standardisation, consistency and holistic thinking.

As a key member of the Senior Executive Team, the Director will work closely with colleagues across visitor experience, conservation, animal care, finance and corporate services. Zoos Victoria needs a leader who can ensure its assets enable, rather than constrain, its purpose, keep zoo environments safe for visitors and animals, and prepare the organisation to deliver its most ambitious capital program while remaining financially sustainable.



DIRECTOR PRESENTATION AND ASSETS

- Key people leadership role, capital delivery and asset renewal
- Shape presentation and customer experience
- Enhance animal welfare and conservation.



Zoos Victoria is a world-leading conservation organisation and Victorian Government statutory authority operating Melbourne Zoo, Werribee Open Range Zoo, Healesville Sanctuary and Kyabram Fauna Park. Welcoming more than three million visitors annually, a paid membership base of over 390,000 and caring for over 5,500 animals, the organisation combines a powerful conservation mission with significant commercial scale and community impact. With ambitious plans for growth and a commitment to creating a future rich in wildlife, Zoos Victoria is enhancing its conservation outcomes, visitor experiences and long-term sustainability.

Reporting to the CEO as a member of the senior executive team, you will lead a central portfolio of more than 130 staff spanning asset presentation, capital projects, and facilities management across four properties. This role brings together long-term asset strategy, master planning, and precinct development to ensure the built and natural environments across all sites are safe, functional, and aligned with each location's character. You will also act as property champion for one zoo, overseeing its operations while advising the Executive and Board on asset risk, condition, and capital investment priorities. Ultimately, your leadership will ensure that physical assets effectively support daily visitor engagement, animal welfare, and core conservation outcomes.

You are tertiary qualified in engineering, asset management, construction, or a related field, and bring an established executive track record leading complex infrastructure, facilities, or property portfolios. You have successfully managed both maintenance operations and large capital works across multi-site environments and have a proven hand in implementing asset management frameworks, systems, and lifecycle planning. Strong commercial acumen, a tight grip on infrastructure risk, and the ability to steer substantial budgets and contractor networks are essential. Beyond technical depth, you lead with a coaching mindset and a clear, strategic vision. You bring the communication skills and political nous needed to advocate credibly at Board, Government, and industry levels, as well as the capability to steer large-scale change. Backgrounds in the public sector, non-profits, or high-visitation public destinations will be well regarded, alongside a genuine appreciation for balancing commercial realities with a conservation-led mission.

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Position description



1. Position Details

Role Title:	Director Presentation and Assets	POS NO.	
Function:	Presentation and Assets	Department:	Presentation and Assets
Location:	Zoos Victoria (multi-site)	Reports to:	CEO
EBA:	Salaried Staff EA	Tenure:	Maximum term
Executive Band:	PESES 1 - TBC	Employment Type:	Full time

MORAL PURPOSE

Fighting Extinction and creating a future rich in wildlife

2. Context

Victoria is a not-for-profit, State Government statutory authority which is established and mandated under the Zoological Parks and Gardens Act 1995. We proudly operate Melbourne Zoo, Werribee Open Range Zoo, Healesville Sanctuary and Kyabram Fauna Park and have over 5,500 animals in our care. We are committed to ensuring no Victorian terrestrial animals goes extinct on our watch.

Our vision is to be a world leading zoo-based conservation organisation supported by our moral vision, our values and our five focus areas: - Working for Wildlife, Living with Wildlife, Creating Special Places, Thriving Ethical Business and Valuing our People. Our important work includes conservation, breeding and recovery programs, emergency wildlife response and we've built partnerships and capacity with local communities, fellow conservationists, like-minded organisations and several sister zoos — close to home, interstate and internationally.

Our 2030 Strategy and Corporate Plans guide everything we do, and our Development and Growth Plan focuses on expanding our already significant contribution to the Victorian economy, maximising our size, reach and core capabilities, strengthening our ability to deliver on our core purpose of fighting extinction, and ensuring the organisation's long-term financial sustainability.

3. Role Purpose/Statement

The Director Presentation & Assets is a key member of the Senior Executive Team (SET), providing strategic leadership of Zoos Victoria's physical environments as a core enabler of visitor engagement, conservation storytelling and organisational performance.

Across Melbourne Zoo, Werribee Open Range Zoo, Healesville Sanctuary and Kyabram Fauna Park, this role shapes how visitors experience Zoos Victoria through the quality, functionality and presentation of its built and natural assets. From major exhibits and infrastructure to landscapes and public spaces, the Director ensures environments are not only safe and reliable, but engaging, cohesive and aligned to the organisation's purpose of inspiring action for wildlife.

The role leads a centralised Presentation & Assets function, integrating asset management, maintenance, capital delivery and landscape presentation into a single, high-performing portfolio. It establishes clear standards, systems and long-term asset strategies, while ensuring delivery is responsive to the operational realities and distinct character of each site.

The Director Presentation & Assets is responsible for the following areas:

- Asset Presentation
- Capital Project Management
- Asset Management

As an executive leader, the Director works in close partnership with colleagues across visitor experience, conservation, operations, finance and corporate services to ensure asset planning and investment decisions are informed by organisational priorities and audience needs. Success in this role relies on strong cross-functional collaboration — aligning planning, removing silos, and ensuring that assets actively enable, rather than constrain, operational delivery and visitor outcomes.

Through disciplined asset stewardship, clear prioritisation and integrated delivery, the Director ensures Zoos Victoria's environments remain safe, sustainable and compelling — supporting both day-to-day operations and the long-term strategic ambition of the organisation.

The Director of Presentation and Assets will be the 'property champion' for one of the zoo properties and has the additional responsibilities to oversee all aspects of the operation of that property. Working closely with the other Directors to ensure that the strategy, policies and expected high standards of presentation, animal care, safety, staff culture and visitor experience are being achieved.

Working closely with the property Compliance Officer and Reception & Administration Officer ensuring that all aspects of operational compliance are met.

They will be responsible for the delivering the property report to the monthly Operational SET meeting.

4. Reporting Lines & Key Stakeholders

Number of Direct Reports:	3	Total Workforce Accountability:	130+
Key Internal Stakeholders:	• Senior Executive Team • Functional leadership across the organisation		
Key External Stakeholders:	• Contractors and service providers (maintenance, construction, landscaping) • Consultants (engineering, design, asset planning) • Government and regulatory bodies • Local councils and authorities		

5. Accountabilities

Accountabilities & decision making relating to:	
Strategic	• Lead the end-to-end management of Zoos Victoria's asset portfolio, including asset strategy, maintenance delivery, capital works and presentation standards, ensuring delivery is aligned to organisational frameworks, governance requirements and standards • Establish and oversee asset lifecycle planning, including long-term asset strategies and renewal programs • Lead the development and ongoing refresh of site-based property masterplans, in collaboration with cross-functional stakeholders, to guide long-term asset planning, precinct development and investment prioritisation • Ensure the design and evolution of built and landscape assets maintains and strengthens the distinct identity, character and visitor experience of each property, while operating within consistent organisational standards
Operational	• Ensure effective planning and delivery of maintenance services across all sites, balancing preventative and reactive works • Oversee the planning and delivery of capital projects, ensuring alignment to organisational priorities, budget and delivery standards • Set and maintain presentation standards across all sites, including landscaping, cleanliness and visual quality of precincts • Oversee horticulture and open space management across all sites, ensuring alignment to presentation standards as well as

Accountabilities & decision making relating to:	
	operational requirements including browse production, nursery management, and the stewardship of natural reserve areas supporting biodiversity and conservation outcomes • Enable consistent, coordinated delivery across sites while supporting site-specific operational needs
Risk Management and Governance	• Ensure all assets and infrastructure meet safety, compliance and regulatory requirements • Establish and maintain asset management frameworks, standards and governance processes, aligned to organisational governance requirements • Oversee asset risk identification, prioritisation and mitigation, including critical asset management • Ensure asset-related risks are proactively managed in a zoo environment, including risks to visitor safety and animal welfare, with appropriate controls embedded in design, maintenance and operational practices • Ensure robust contractor management, including safety, performance and compliance oversight • Maintain clear audit trails and documentation across asset, maintenance and capital activities
Senior Executive Team (SET)	• Actively participate in the development and operation of ZV as a member of the SET • Actively support SET members and the functioning of the SET as an effective leadership group • Provide sound and timely information to the ZV Board and relevant Board sub-committees
Stakeholder Management	• Partner with functional leadership to align asset priorities with operational needs • Provide clear advice to the Executive on asset condition, risks, investment priorities and trade-offs • Build effective relationships with external contractors, consultants and delivery partners • Collaborate with Finance and Procurement to align planning, funding and delivery approaches • Work closely with Corporate Planning, Governance & Assurance to ensure alignment with organisational frameworks, governance processes and reporting requirements
People and Culture	• Strategic Leadership & Culture: Provide executive leadership to the multi-disciplinary Presentation and Assets function, fostering an inclusive, high-performance culture that models Zoos Victoria's values and Code of Conduct • Performance & Capability Development: Drive workforce capability planning and performance management frameworks (including performance planning), ensuring clear role definitions,

Accountabilities & decision making relating to:	
	contemporary skill sets, and robust succession planning across multi-site teams • Cross-Functional Collaboration: Champion cross-site collaboration and knowledge sharing to eliminate silos, ensuring consistent delivery standards and operational alignment across all zoo properties • Team Stewardship: Develop and coach a cohesive, results-oriented leadership team focused on delivering the organisation's vision for animal welfare, visitor engagement, and safety.
Financial	• Develop and manage asset-related operating and capital budgets • Lead long-term capital planning, including prioritisation of investment based on risk, compliance and service levels • Monitor and control expenditure across maintenance and capital programs • Identify and deliver efficiencies in asset management, maintenance delivery and procurement • Ensure resource allocation supports organisational priorities, long-term species sustainability, and operational efficiency • Identify opportunities for cost optimisation, reduction of duplication, and shared procurement across sites without compromising welfare
Safety	• Promote a proactive safety culture through training, incident reporting, risk assessments, and continuous improvement processes. • Support Heads of to identify and mitigate emerging safety risks linked to animal welfare, visitor behaviour, and asset utilisation • Ensure all asset teams and contractors meet the highest standards of workplace health and safety. • Ensure compliance with Safety Circle, all WHS legislation, internal safety frameworks, and audit requirements. • Oversee implementation of safe-work practices and emergency response readiness.
Continuous Improvement	• Implement and optimise asset systems and processes, including asset registers and maintenance systems (e.g. CMMS where applicable) • Improve data quality and consistency to support decision-making and planning • Drive standardisation of processes, templates and reporting across sites • Identify opportunities to improve service levels, cost efficiency and delivery performance

Other Reasonable Management Direction - In addition to the duties outlined above, you are also required to perform such other duties as may be directed by your manager provided these are within your competency or training.

6. Selection Criteria

6.1 Essential Qualifications

- Relevant tertiary qualification in asset management, engineering, construction, facilities management or a related field

6.2 Essential Experience

- Significant leadership experience in asset management, infrastructure, facilities or property functions
- Proven experience managing complex, multi-site asset portfolios
- Experience overseeing both maintenance operations and capital works programs
- Demonstrated experience implementing asset management frameworks, systems and lifecycle planning
- Experience managing contractors and external delivery partners at scale

6.3 Essential Skills, Knowledge & Attributes (specialised fields)

- Asset & Financial Stewardship: Expert knowledge of asset lifecycle management and infrastructure risk, underpinned by strong commercial acumen and the ability to manage complex budgets and prioritise investment
- Strategic & People Leadership: Proven ability to articulate a "big picture" vision and lead multi-disciplinary teams toward strategic goals using an approachable, coaching-based leadership style
- Stakeholder Navigation & Communication: Exceptional communication, negotiation, and political acumen, with a demonstrated capacity to build strategic partnerships and advocate for organisational objectives at the Board, Government, and industry levels
- Operational Excellence: Highly developed ability to balance long-term strategic planning with day-to-day operational delivery, ensuring the successful management of multiple, time-sensitive projects and high-quality outputs

6.4 Desirable Criteria

- Experience in public sector, not-for-profit or complex stakeholder environments
- Familiarity with asset management systems and maintenance platforms
- Experience working in environments with high public visitation or environmental considerations

6.5 Other Criteria

- Appreciation of the role of zoo, conservation and environmental issues in a commercial setting

7. Inherent Requirements

Employees are expected to take ownership and pride in maintaining presentation standards that meet Zoos Victoria expectations, and to proactively report any areas where these standards are not being achieved

Zoos Victoria endeavours to provide a safe working environment for all staff. The below describes the critical inherent requirements associated with this job.

7.1 Physical Travel & Site Coverage

- Travel regularly between four organisational sites as part of core duties.
- Undertake overnight stays when operational requirements demand.
- Plan travel schedules to ensure availability across sites while maintaining operational continuity.
- Maintain a current driver's licence and the ability to travel independently between sites.

Fatigue Management & Safety

- Proactively manage personal fatigue in accordance with organisational policies and WHS legislation.
- Apply safe work practices during travel, including adherence to rest breaks and driving protocols.
- Proficiency in remote site monitoring and digital collaboration tools
- Maintain awareness of WHS responsibilities, particularly in remote or off-site environments.

7.2 Cognitive & Psychological

- Leading large-scale organisational change.
- Sustained periods of concentration, decision-making and problem-solving.
- Ability to manage multiple tasks simultaneously in a fast-paced environment.
- Sophisticated stakeholder navigation.
- Strategic foresight in climate resilience
- High-stakes crisis cognitive processing
- Adaptability to changing priorities and varying site needs.

Emergency Response and Safety Responsibilities

This role may include responsibilities and duties in accordance with Zoos Victoria's Properties Emergency Response Plan and applicable safety standards. As a senior leader within the organisation, the incumbent is required to maintain a strong awareness of these requirements and ensure they are carried out with diligence and authority, either directly or through appropriate delegation, while ensuring full compliance with all relevant safety and regulatory standards.

Contact

Zoos Victoria is partnering with SHK on this key appointment and has appointed SHK, **Partner, Evan Willen** to lead this search.



Evan Willen is a Partner at SHK.

Evan is a senior search consultant with in excess of 20 years' experience within the engineering, project delivery and operational management sectors, both here in Australia and the United States. During his time in the United States, he worked for a technical recruitment company focused on the global sourcing of senior engineering professionals for nationwide organisations.

His career has seen him work both in-house with the engineering/project delivery firms of Fluor and Barclay Mowlem (now Laing O'Rourke), and for a number of specialist executive search firms. He has recently recruited at both the senior management and technical levels within local government, higher education, state government and the management consulting sectors.

Recently Evan has recruited senior specialists within the project delivery and planning sectors for a range of clients within the local government, university and state governments sectors. Successful placements include the Director, State Planning Services, and he augmented the search for the Deputy Chief Planning Member for Planning Panels Victoria. Evan has also placed the Head of Infrastructure and Project Delivery for the City of Whitehorse; the Director of Infrastructure Program Carlton Connect Initiative; and the Project Director – Student Precinct for the University of Melbourne.

Evan holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from La Trobe University and a Graduate Diploma in Industrial Relations from Queensland University of Technology.

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