

12 June 2025

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 14 May 2025, in which you asked a number of questions and for documents relating to a South Island kākā named Charlie.

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA).

Your questions and our responses are listed below (note we have altered the numbering of questions to avoid duplicative numbering):

*Please supply the following information under the Official Information Act, including all communications, emails, meeting minutes, and messages in the last year regarding:*

1. *All communication with Professor Beausoleil and her organisation on welfare, Charlie Girl, Dunedin, and related issues.*

I am extending the timeframe to respond to this part of your request, as allowed under section 15A(1) of the OIA. We require an additional 20 days to respond to your request. We will send you a response to this question no later than 11 July 2025, earlier if possible.

The extension of time is necessary as the consultations necessary to make a decision on the request mean that a proper response to the request cannot reasonably be made within the original time limit.

2. *The scope of Charlie's welfare assessment - what parameters was Professor Beausoleil given?*

The contract with Professor Beausoleil asked for an independent assessment, using the Five Domains model, of Charlie's current welfare state (snapshot) and recent and current risks to her welfare.

The assessment was to meet the following standards:

- 1) Snapshot of current welfare state – compile using mainly animal-based indicators gathered by observing Charlie in her current habitat and talking to current and previous managers/veterinarians about her health and behaviour.

- 2) Welfare risk assessment – compile using a combination of animal-based and resource/management-based indicators gathered by observing Charlie and features of her current and previous habitats and talking to various parties about her management, health and behaviour.
- 3) Data will be collected by interviewing key people in Dunedin, Te Anau and online, making observations of Charlie and her current habitat in Dunedin and observation of her previous habitat in Te Anau.
- 4) In-person or online interviews with those involved in Charlie's care, including from DOC, Dunedin Botanic Gardens Aviary, Dunedin Wildlife Hospital, and external advocates for Charlie.
- 5) The data collected will be integrated with key information on kākā biology and behaviour using the Five Domains model to assess Charlie's current welfare state as well as to provide a broader understanding of the ways in which management, facilities, resources and personnel might influence her welfare (welfare risk assessment).
- 6) Based on data collected (including interviews), recommendations will be made on how to best support Charlie's welfare going forward.
- 7) The assessments will be presented in a written report.

3. *All supporting documentation from the assessment, including but not limited to: notes, materials provided to Professor Beausoleil, DWH clinical notes, provided 7/1/25, DWH vet welfare assessment report, 18/10/24, Email correspondence and materials provided, 7/1/25, Avian long term medication plan (Sept 2024), DWH clinical notes 2020 – 2024, provided 7/1/25, SI kākā captive breeding programme flocking and breeding plan for 24/25 (1/5/2024), Email correspondence, 6/1/25, Excerpt from Critical Issues document in OIA released documents (date unknown), etc.*

On 3 June 2025 we emailed you to ask if you would be willing to limit your request to information provided by DOC only, as opposed to *all* supporting information, including that provided by third parties. We explained that we would need to source the complete information from Professor Beausoleil directly and consult with each affected third party on releasing the information, and that this would take time.

As we have not heard from you, I am extending the timeframe to respond to this part of your request, as allowed under section 15A(1) of the OIA. We require an additional 20 days to respond to your request. We will send you a response to this question no later than 11 July 2025, earlier if possible. As above, the extension of time is necessary as the consultations necessary to make a decision on the request mean that a proper response to the request cannot reasonably be made within the original time limit.

If you wish to refine your request, you can still do so, by emailing [governmentservices@doc.govt.nz](mailto:governmentservices@doc.govt.nz), and this will reduce the length of time needed.

I will note now that some of the documents provided to Professor Beausoleil are already publicly available:

- DWH report: Charlie Health and Behavioural Assessment 9 August 2024 is publicly available at the following link (search for OIAD-4522): [www.doc.govt.nz/news/oia-responses/2024/](https://www.doc.govt.nz/news/oia-responses/2024/)
- Approved SI kākā captive breeding flocking plan 24-25 is publicly available at the following link (OIAD-4542) <https://fyi.org.nz/request/28615-captive-kaka-welfare-concerns-dunedin-aviary>

4. *What changes have DOC and Dunedin made for Charlie after receiving the welfare report?*

DOC has worked with wildlife husbandry experts at Dunedin Botanic Gardens Aviary and wildlife veterinary experts at the Dunedin Wildlife Hospital to address the recommendations for Charlie that were made in the independent animal welfare expert's report. The key actions taken to date include ensuring appropriate bathing opportunities are available, reinstituting regular positive human interaction with keepers (e.g. training for rewards), and avoiding any further disturbance and change in Charlie's environment. A monitoring approach and an approach to managing any changes have also been implemented.

Reports from Dunedin Botanic Gardens Aviary indicate that Charlie is doing well, as demonstrated by her maintaining a stable weight, interacting with her keepers more, being more tolerant of her aviary mate, and reduction in the frequency of stereotypical behaviours observed.

5. *From page 9 of the welfare report: "Charlie is reported to have stopped eating for the first 3-4 days after a familiar observer arrived at DBG."*

*A) Please clarify when Charlie was not eating and what was reported.*

*B) Please provide Charlie's diet information.*

*C) Please provide all weights for Charlie from June 2024 to present.*

*D) What occurred after the first 3-4 days?*

*E) Has Charlie stopped eating at other times?*

6. *What data has been collected on Charlie and is it collected by an independent assessor?*

7. *All of Charlie's movements at Dunedin.*

8. *All of Charlie's partners at Dunedin, including times she had more than one bird in with her.*

These questions (5-8) were transferred to the Dunedin City Council on 28 May 2025. You will receive a separate response from the Council on these questions.

9. *Per the Welfare Assessment, please comment on Domains 4 and 5 for Charlie at Dunedin.*

Agencies subject to the OIA are not required to form an opinion or create new information. I therefore regret that I am refusing this part of your request under section 18(g) of the OIA as the information requested is not held.

10. *How long is an acceptable time for a parrot to be kept in an overwhelming environment?*

DOC has worked with bird husbandry experts and wildlife veterinarians to understand and implement Charlie's welfare requirements, seeking additional expert advice (such as from

Professor Beausoleil) when required. DOC does not have a position on acceptable times for parrots to be kept in overwhelming environments.

11. *Was Charlie moved on trial from Te Anau? How long was that trial expected to last?*

No, Charlie was not moved on trial to Dunedin Botanic Gardens Aviary.

12. *Does DOC understand 'flooding' in terms of animal behaviour modification? Does DOC have a position on the use of flooding?*

DOC has worked with bird husbandry experts and wildlife veterinarians to understand and implement Charlie's welfare requirements, seeking additional expert advice (such as from Professor Beausoleil) when required. DOC does not have a position on 'flooding' in terms of animal behaviour modification.

13. *Per your press releases, please define 'settling in' as it relates to kaka parrots. What parameters define 'settling in' or 'settled in'?*

DOC has worked with bird husbandry experts and wildlife veterinarians to understand and implement Charlie's welfare requirements, seeking additional expert advice (such as from Professor Beausoleil) when required. DOC does not have a set definition of 'settling in'.

14. *Please provide all communications, notes, management plans, and related information on Charlie Girl for the last year.*

Some communication regarding Charlie from the past year has been previously released under OIAD-4207 (see [www.doc.govt.nz/news/oia-responses/2024/](http://www.doc.govt.nz/news/oia-responses/2024/)). This covers the period 27 June 2023 to 27 June 2024. I am therefore partially declining your request for communications for the period 14 May 2024 to 27 June 2024 under section 18(d) of the OIA because it is publicly available.

Communications with Professor Beausoleil will be considered for release in response to question 1. Many key documents will also be considered for release under question 3. This part of your request is therefore extended in line with those questions as noted above.

Remaining communications regarding Charlie from 28 June 2024 to 14 May 2025 is a large request and is not possible to make this information available without substantial collation and research. I therefore regret that I must decline the remaining part of your request under section 18(f) of the OIA.

15. *What is the purpose of keeping Charlie in Dunedin?*

South Island kākā are nationally vulnerable to extinction, and a breed-for-release programme is led by DOC, working with a range of captive facilities to enable this species to be re-established in areas where it has been lost. As part of this programme, we have concentrated captive breeding pairs to one site (Dunedin Botanic Gardens Aviary) to help boost the number of chicks available for release. Having them at one site helps to manage things like forming new pairs and fostering eggs/chicks if required. In the 23/24 year, we had a particularly bumper breeding season with kākā pairs that had never bred before producing eggs with much needed genetic diversity to the population. However, a lot of these birds are inexperienced parents, so the support of a keen, experienced female bird like Charlie would have been invaluable to foster eggs or chicks. As such, Charlie was moved to Dunedin Botanic Garden Aviary for this purpose.

Charlie is expected to remain in Dunedin, as recommended in the independent welfare assessment, to best support her welfare going forward.

16. *What concerns does DOC have with figure 2A on page 23 of Charlie's welfare assessment?*

Agencies subject to the OIA are not required to form an opinion or create new information. I therefore regret that I am refusing this part of your request under section 18(g) of the OIA as the information requested is not held.

17. *How has DOC identified and eliminated triggers for Charlie (per page 26 of the welfare report)?*

Please see response to Question 4 above.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision to decline information, or make a complaint about the extension, by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the OIA.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) may be published on DOC's website.

Nāku noa, nā



Tim Bamford  
Director Terrestrial Biodiversity  
Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*