

Submission to Dunedin City Council on behalf of the New Zealand Sea Lion Trust

Dunedin is unique in the world as a city where people live alongside a recovering population of endangered pakake (New Zealand sea lions). As the rarest sea lion species in the world, pakake contribute significantly to Dunedin's identity, economy, and community wellbeing. Their presence enriches the lives of residents and visitors alike, offering encounters with nature that few other cities can match.

Dunedin City Council has already recognised the value of pakake through tourism marketing campaigns, using their story to attract visitors and support the local economy. However, while tourism supports the local economy, it can also pose risks to pakake wellbeing, with poorly managed tourist interactions often leading to harassment and stress for these animals. The 9-Year Plan offers a unique opportunity to build a future that embraces this special relationship, positioning Dunedin as a global leader in urban wildlife coexistence.

Key Recommendations:

Roading

Future roading renewals and developments should prioritise the safety of both people and pakake. We recommend that all new roading projects within 1km of waterways be designed with both human and pakake safety in mind. Key considerations should include:

- Enhanced driver sightlines, speed controls, and safe access/recess points for pakake.
- The Ōtakou Peninsula connection project, a particularly important opportunity to improve safety, as it is frequently used by both pakake and tourists who may be unaware that sea lions use roads.

Investment in temporary road safety measures is also crucial to ensure both human and pakake safety as awareness around pakake road use is building.

- Ensure there is funding to cover the installation of temporary road safety resources such as signs, speed bumps, and one-way traffic signals.
- Invest in training staff who can respond urgently to pakake road use events.

Grants

Unallocated grant funding could be used to support community-led efforts to care for pakake in several ways:

- **Habitat enhancement:** Supporting projects that improve coastal habitats to reduce the risk of pakake venturing into dangerous areas.
- **Community awareness:** Funding projects like a sea lion-themed mural along the one-way system to raise awareness of pakake's use of roads and their broader habitat use.
- **Advocacy support:** Increasing funding to local community groups to help educate tourists and the public about responsible behaviour around pakake to reduce negative human impacts.

Playground Upgrades

The planned upgrade of Marlow Park (Dinosaur Park) must accommodate the regular use of this space by

pakake. This past summer (2024/25), a mother and pup used the park as a safe resting place. The design should include:

- Clear sightlines for children and parents to spot pakake.
- Larger vegetated areas where pakake can safely retreat if needed.
- Barriers that can gently funnel pakake away from high-use child areas.

This upgrade also presents an incredible opportunity for passive education, teaching tamariki to respect and share space with coastal wildlife.

Kettle Park Landfill Remediation

The restoration of the dune system at Kettle Park offers a valuable opportunity to create spaces that support both human recreation and pakake use. The dune remediation should be used to design areas that facilitate coexistence between people and pakake. Also use other similar opportunities (e.g. Forbury Park) to create safe coastal habitat for pakake to use in built-up areas.

Smooth Hill Landfill

The increase in heavy vehicle traffic between Green Island and Big Stone Road raises serious concerns for pakake safety. Pakake regularly cross and use these roads, and additional truck traffic heightens the risk of collisions. Any road upgrades related to landfill access must include safety improvements, such as:

- Traffic speed management, signage, and driver education about the presence of pakake.

Festivals and Events

We encourage the Council to support the development of a new festival that celebrates Dunedin's unique relationship with pakake.

- Such a festival would offer residents a chance to connect with their special neighbours, learn how to coexist with them, and build a sense of pride in our unique wildlife.
- It would also provide a distinctive addition to Dunedin's event calendar, potentially attracting national and international visitors as the world's only festival dedicated to celebrating sea lions.

Long-Term Support for Pakake

Dunedin City Council must make a long-term commitment to the protection and welfare of its pakake residents, ensuring they are not negatively impacted by increasing human activity. This should include ongoing support for critical programs, such as:

- The **Dunedin Wildlife Hospital**, which provides essential veterinary care for injured and sick pakake.
- The **Summer Ranger Program**, which delivers vital on-the-ground advocacy, education, and management support to reduce human-wildlife conflicts.

Conclusion

Dunedin is in a rare and privileged position to lead the world in urban conservation. By making thoughtful investments in infrastructure, community projects, education, and long-term wildlife care,

Dunedin can create a future where both people and pakake thrive. I strongly encourage the Council to prioritise the protection, integration, and celebration of pakake throughout the city's planning, recognising their cultural, ecological, and economic significance to our shared future.

Sincerely,

The New Zealand Sea Lion Trust