



Wildlife Hospital Trust  
Submission to Dunedin City Council's 9-Year Plan  
2025

The Wildlife Hospital Trust operates Dunedin's Wildlife Hospital, a nonprofit entity treating sick and injured native New Zealand animals. The Hospital operates out of the Otago Polytechnic's School of Animal Health in North Dunedin. Our facility is one of the front line players in a number of conservation efforts, particularly for the hoiho/yellow-eyed penguin, a Dunedin icon and taonga species.

We are requesting \$100,000 in financial support from Dunedin City Council for our work with native species via the Council's 2025 9 Year Plan.

### **Funding Purpose**

The funding will be used to secure the employment of Hospital Director Dr. Lisa Argilla, MNZM. Dr. Argilla is a New Zealand-trained wildlife veterinarian (Massey University), and an avian specialist (ANZCVS). She is an expert on hoiho/yellow-eyed penguins and New Zealand parrot species, including kākāpō. A Member of the New Order of Merit, Dr. Argilla is the visionary behind the Wildlife Hospital and is well-known in New Zealand and abroad. The Trust wishes to ensure her level of skill, talent and significant international profile is retained in Dunedin for the long-term.

### **Relationship with Dunedin City Council**

Dunedin City Council is a cornerstone partner of the Wildlife Hospital. Through previous Long-Term Plans (2018 and 2021), and the 2024 Annual Plan, the DCC has provided us with funding that has anchored our operations.

The Council was an early and enthusiastic backer of the Wildlife Hospital, both with financial considerations, and in spirit. In short, we could not have accomplished what we have so far without your support. Ehara koe i a ia! We are grateful and we thank you.

The relationship between the Hospital and DCC does not begin and end with grant funding. Throughout the years, our respective teams have found many ways of working together, including:

- Collaborating with Council staff on an exciting conservation project opportunity in 2026 that, once approved, will provide a unique and exciting opportunity for Dunedin residents to watch our work with one of New Zealand's rarest species, and will draw visitors from around the world - watch this space!
- Providing veterinary care for the Dunedin Botanic Garden's aviary birds, including kākā that are released into Orokonui Ecosanctuary, kea, and kākāriki



- Partial secondment of the Dunedin Botanic Garden's Aviary Curator and avian hand-rearing expert, Alisha Sherriff, to the Hospital team during the month of November, to assist with crucial hoiho chick work (recently highlighted in *NZ Geographic*, December 2023)
- Providing images, stories and stats to DCC comms teams for use in internal and external communications pieces
- Creation of a joint education programme - Caring for Conservation - with the Hospital, the Dunedin Botanic Garden and Orokonui Ecosanctuary
- Receiving permission to collect browse for our patients on DCC Parks land
- Support from the Parks team to secure native plants from Ribbonwood Nursery to provide cover and fodder for takahē and kakī patients
- Promoting Dunedin as the Wildlife Capital of New Zealand in our communications, including as an active participant in Wild Dunedin
- Cross-promotion of City Sanctuary and their predator-free work in the urban core

We share a particularly close relationship with the aviary facility at the Dunedin Botanic Garden. Few locals know that the aviaries have a long history of contributing to conservation on the South Island, including breeding programmes for native species like kea and kākā. All kākā released at Orokonui Ecosanctuary have been reared at the DBG, some of which are cared for at the Wildlife Hospital when required. The aviaries at DBG also utilise available rehabilitation spaces to condition former Hospital patients before release. This is managed by the DBG Aviary Curator with contributions from her staff. The DBG has rehabilitated all of the Hospital's kea and kākā patients, along with smaller species like bellbirds and tūī.

### **Impact of Dunedin City Council + Wildlife Hospital Relationship**

Since we received funding from Dunedin City Council, we have:

- Created jobs. We have tripled the size of our staff, from two to six. All six jobs created at the Hospital are full-time; 5 out of our 6 staff relocated to Dunedin from other parts of New Zealand to work at the Wildlife Hospital.
- Treated over 4,000 native NZ patients with success rates over 80% across all species, including many endangered and taonga species, and some of NZ's most iconic such as:
  - 1,328 hoiho/yellow-eyed penguins
  - 87 kākāpō
  - 21 northern royal albatross/toroa
  - And many more; approximately 60% of our patients hold a threatened, endangered or critically endangered status.
  - 70% of our patients originate from Dunedin City
- Developed three new programmes with Otago Polytechnic, which draws students to Dunedin, including veterinarians and veterinary nurses;



- Engaged hundreds of volunteers across our operations, providing opportunities for the community to get meaningfully involved in conservation;
- Spoken to over 3,500 community members at events, club meetings and schools, providing education to the wider public regarding native species and challenges they face.

## Alignment with Dunedin City Council Strategies

The work of the Wildlife Hospital is closely aligned with, and supportive of, the following goals of DCC strategies:

### Te Ao Tūroa - the Environment Strategy

- *Dunedin has a healthy environment - Increase indigenous biodiversity*
  - The Wildlife Hospital cares for 700+ native patients per year;
  - 80% are successfully treated and released back into the wild;
  - 70% of our patients originate from and are released back into Dunedin City.
- *Dunedin people care for the natural world - Increase understanding of and champion the natural world*
  - We speak to up to 1,000 community members each year about the work of the Hospital and the challenges native wildlife face, including simple everyday actions that people can take to support indigenous fauna.
    - Talks to schools, service clubs, retirement homes, social clubs and more;
    - A monthly community radio spot ("Creature Feature") highlighting one of our native patients, including ways Dunedin residents can help the species;
    - A free, NZ-curriculum based "virtual field trip" educational resource including videos, fact sheets, worksheets and quizzes, highlighted the Wildlife Hospital and conservation partner mahi available to ALL schools in New Zealand.
- *Dunedin people care for the natural world - support conservation volunteering efforts and initiatives; support a diverse range of opportunities for volunteers to engage with the environment*
  - The Wildlife Hospital engages more than 2000 volunteer hours each year in support of our work, including in-hospital volunteers, fundraisers, outreach assistants, and governance officers.
- *Dunedin is resilient and net carbon zero - manage natural resources sustainably*
  - The Wildlife Hospital workplace van is a 100% battery electric vehicle, which we promote on social media and in the community;
  - Our organisation participates in and promotes the annual Aotearoa Bike Challenge each February (in 2025 we had a 1st place finish in New Zealand for workplaces with 3-6 staff);
  - Wherever possible, we remove items from the waste stream that can be repurposed or otherwise used for a wildlife hospital setting, including large pieces of equipment (ex:



anaesthetic machines and endoscopy stacks outdated for human use) and expired medications that are still suitable for veterinary use.

#### Dunedin's Economic Development Strategy

- *Dunedin is a hub of skills and talent.*
  - The Wildlife Hospital has a strategic partnership with Otago Polytechnic. Together, we have created new courses for veterinarians (Level 7) and veterinary nurses (Level 6) working in their field, in addition to embedding practical work experience with wildlife into existing veterinary nursing courses.
  - The Hospital hosts placements for vet and vet nursing students from New Zealand and the world.
  - 5 of our 6 staff members have relocated to Dunedin to work at the Hospital.
- *Dunedin has linkages beyond our borders.*
  - Inquiries from every part of the world to host veterinary and vet nursing placements are received every week, even throughout the global pandemic.
- *Dunedin is a compelling destination.*
  - The Hospital helps care for the wildlife that Dunedin is known for, ensuring there are healthy populations of native species, and that the city becomes known for its conservation efforts.
  - The Hospital works closely with ecotourism providers including Orokonui, the OPERA, Clearwater Tours, Port to Port Ferry and Tours, the Monarch and the Royal Albatross Centre for cross-promotion and other endeavours.
  - The Hospital participates in Wild Dunedin, NZ's Festival of Nature, each year with multiple events in every programme.
  - The long-term plan of the Trust is to develop a new physical base that will have tourist visitor capacity, adding to the growing list of eco-tourism opportunities in the city.

The relationship between the DCC and the Wildlife Hospital has been fruitful and mutually beneficial. Thanks to the Council's support, the Hospital is now an integral community institution in Ōtepoti, the wildlife capital of New Zealand.

Ngā mihi nui

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Jordana Wright".



Jordana Whyte

MANAGER

The Wildlife Hospital Trust

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