

18 December 2024

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Tēnā koe ██████████

### **Response letter two**

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 21 October 2024, in which you asked questions regarding Charlie the kākā and Tim Bamford's letter to you of 18 September 2024. You addressed your request to both DOC and the Dunedin City Council (DCC) and I understand that the council is also responding to you.

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982. While some of your questions do not strictly fall under the OIA, we are responding to them regardless, for the sake of transparency.

On 18 November we extended the timeframe to respond to your request to 5 December due to both the consultations necessary and the large quantity of information to search through.

On 5 December I wrote to you with answers to most of your questions. However, several questions (questions 1-5, and question 7) required more time before I could advise you of my final decision and answer these questions. For context, these questions required further internal and external consultation. I apologise again for the delay.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *"We are, however, concerned about reports we have received that your presence at the DBGA is causing measurable, detrimental change in Charlie behaviour. Specifically, she is showing greater stereotypical behaviours in your presence. We suspect that Charlie remembers you and your training from when you were with her at the Te Anau Bird Sanctuary, and that this is leading to a change in behaviour in your presence. In your absence the stereotypical behaviour is reduced or absent. Further, we consider that your voice is influencing Charlie in her behaviours, and the close presence of your video camera (I have reports that you are standing with the lens against the aviary mesh) is unsettling Charlie and the other kākā present."*
  - 1a) *Please provide details of the cited reports, including data gathered*

1b) Which other kaka?

1c) What behaviours did they show?

1d) What baseline data for 'other kaka' do you have, when Christina Abramowicz was not present?

2. Tim stated [REDACTED] caused a 'measurable, detrimental change.' Please include all measurements and evidence relating to this, such as ethograms, video data, etc. Include all evidence of 'baseline' behaviour when [REDACTED] was not present and how it was obtained.
3. Tim stated Charlie 'is showing greater stereotypical behaviours in your presence.' Please include all evidence and measurements relating to this statement.

Reports were received from the Dunedin Botanical Gardens Aviary (run by the Dunedin City Council – DCC). Discussions were mostly via phone conversation; however, DOC holds one emailed "report" in scope of your request. Please see Item 4 in Table 1 appended.

I understand that DCC is also responding to your questions 1-3.

4. Tim stated 'We suspect that Charlie remembers you and our training... and that is leading to a change in behaviour in your presence.' Please provide all evidence supporting this hypothesis. Specify what changes were seen and the baseline behaviour. Was a certified parrot behaviour professional consulted? What are the qualifications of the person who made this hypothesis? Does DOC or DCC have supporting documentation, such as scientific papers, that positive reinforcement training leads to stereotypical behaviour? (see Charlie Girl Voluntary PT document, previously provided to DOC upon request, for a description of the positive reinforcement training Charlie received).

The suspicion that Charlie remembered you was based on reports from DCC. As described in Tim's letter of 18 September, these reports indicated that Charlie's behaviour was different in your presence. More specifically, it was described that Charlie demonstrated a greater prevalence of stereotypical behaviours in your presence. DOC did not make any comment about positive reinforcement training leading to stereotypical behaviours.

5. Tim stated 'Further, we consider that your voice is influencing Charlie in her behaviours, and the close presence of your video camera (I have reports that you are standing with the lens against the aviary mesh) is unsettling Charlie and the other kākā present.
  - 5a) Please explain what observable changes in Charlie, or other kaka, were seen in relation to this statement, and why 'video cameras' and 'lenses' are relevant. IE-how did Charlie and other birds respond to video cameras and lenses and what measurable observations were made
  - 5b) Does DOC and/or DCC have a policy on 'video camera' or 'lens' use around the aviaries? How has DOC or DCC addressed birds being 'unsettled' by 'lens' held by the public?

Reports were received from DCC as per questions 1-3. DOC does not have a policy on video cameras or lens use at the Dunedin Botanical Gardens Aviary, noting that the Aviary is run by the DCC.

*7. What evidence does DOC have in regards to Charlie weaving and obsessive toe grooming, etc that 'these are long term stereotypical behaviours*

*7a) Who provided this evidence and what was their working relationship with Charlie historically? What specific behaviours did they witness and with what frequency and duration? How often did they work with Charlie in Te Anau?*

*7b) Has anyone who worked with Charlie regularly for over a year been consulted on her behaviour and asked to compare Charlie's behaviour in Te Anau to her behaviour in Dunedin?*

*7c) Does DOC have evidence that Charlie would obsessively toe groom in Te Anau?*

*7d) What other evidence does DOC have that 'these are long-term stereotypical behaviours'?*

Charlie displayed stereotypical behaviours at Te Anau Bird Sanctuary over many years. As such, we consider these to be long-term stereotypical behaviours, i.e. those that have existed for a significant period of time (decades). This is based on observations from those involved in her care at Te Anau Bird Sanctuary, including two rangers who have looked after Charlie for over ten years.

Te Anau Bird Sanctuary rangers were asked about stereotypical behaviours that were seen when Charlie was transferred to Dunedin Wildlife Hospital. They confirmed via email that this behaviour was pre-existing and had been observed in Charlie while she was housed in Te Anau. Behaviours described by the Sanctuary rangers include swinging, in the past for hours at a time, and more recently only in "panic situations" (See Obs notes on Charlie Email – Item 5 in Table 1 appended). It is also noted that Charlie bites her left foot when uncomfortable. DOC does not hold detailed records of Charlie's behaviour at Te Anau Bird Sanctuary except for those documents already released to you, and a few additional documents (Items 6-8) listed in Table 1.

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the documents subject to information being withheld under one or more of the following sections of the Official Information Act, as applicable:

- section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people,
- section 9(2)(g)(ii) – to protect Ministers, members of organisations, officers, and employees from improper pressure or harassment.

In making my decision, I have considered section 9(1) of the Official Information Act and determined there are no public interests that outweigh the grounds for withholding.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) and attached documents may be published on the Department's website.

Nāku noa, nā



Hilary Aikman  
Director Terrestrial Biodiversity  
Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

**Table 1 - Schedule of documents**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Document description</b>	<b>Decision</b>
4	11 September 2024	Email from DBGA to DOC and DWH	Released in part
5	4 July 2024	Obs notes on Charlie email	Released in part
6	June 2023	Te Anau Bird Sanctuary kaka observations 6 June 2023 – 16 June 2023	Released in part
7	2018	Spreadsheet of kākā observations 2015-2018	Released in part
8	2015	Te Anau Bird Sanctuary description of kākā behaviours to record	Released in part