

19th July 2026

Mayor, Councillors, CEO
Orange City Council
council@orange.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mayor, Councillors and CEO

Submission to Orange City Council - Future of the Cook Park Aviary

This submission supports the retention, refurbishment and long-term enhancement of the Cook Park Aviary. It is intended to reflect the views of the wider Australian avicultural community, which is willing to work collaboratively with Orange City Council through Orange Bird Society to ensure the aviary becomes one of Australia's finest public aviaries.

Please include this submission as a formal response to the following “Your Say” survey:

<https://yoursay.orange.nsw.gov.au/cook-park-aviary>

We were dismayed to learn that demolition was being considered for such an iconic aviary. Although the “Your Say” consultation claims to be seeking genuine feedback, discussions with local aviculturists and the “Cook Park Plan of Management 2025” imply otherwise.

This submission has been prepared by Animal Care Australia but has the formal support of the following organisations, who have also offered to assist with advice, resources, expertise and/or financial assistance should this be required.

- Animal Care Australia Inc. (ACA)
- Orange Bird Society
- Canary and Cage Bird Federation of Australia Inc. (CCBFA)
- Finch Society of Australia (FSA)
- Parrot Breeders and Exhibitors Society NSW Inc. (PKES)
- Avicultural Society of NSW
- National Finch and Softbill Association (NFSA)
- BirdKeeper Pty. Limited
- Australian Society for Avian Preservation Limited

There should be no doubt that the avicultural community is adamant the aviary must be refurbished and retained.

1. Retain the Aviary. The Cook Park Aviary should be retained as a permanent feature of Cook Park. After almost a century it has become part of the park's heritage and identity.
2. Refurbish Rather than Demolish. The current condition of the aviary is a reason to invest in refurbishment, not removal. Modernisation can improve animal welfare, visitor experience and operational efficiency.
3. Honour Previous Council Decisions. Council has previously resolved to retain the aviary and consult on upgrading and maintenance. The current process should build upon those decisions rather than presume eventual removal.

4. Recognise Orange's National Standing. Orange hosts Australia's largest annual avicultural sale and expo. Thousands of birdkeepers visit Orange each year. A refurbished public aviary would strengthen tourism and provide a unique attraction for visitors.
5. National Support. Australia has more than 300 bird clubs and specialist avicultural organisations. Many members are willing to support this project through advocacy, expertise, fundraising and volunteer assistance.
6. Local bird keepers looked after the aviary for decades. Advice from members of Orange Bird Society indicates they once managed and serviced the Cook Park Aviary. This role was taken from them some years ago for reasons they do not understand. It is clear the aviary has degenerated since.
7. Council Appears to Have Already Decided. Orange Bird Society has engaged with Council over many years and has repeatedly offered its expertise and practical assistance. Those approaches have been met with obfuscation, avoidance and a failure to meaningfully engage. Local birdkeepers have understandably concluded that Council is determined to demolish the aviary regardless of the alternatives available.
8. Poor Management by Council. The current "Your Say" webpage includes the draft Cook Park Plan of Management 2025 which recommends removal of the bird aviary with the only justification being due to the poor welfare which is clearly due to poor management by Council.
9. Is This Consultation Genuine? There is now a strong perception among local birdkeepers that this consultation is little more than a procedural exercise designed to validate a decision that has already been made. If Council has genuinely not predetermined the future of the aviary, it must demonstrate that retention and refurbishment will be properly and objectively considered.
10. The "Your Say" page states "As part of this process, an independent check of the aviary will also be carried out to look at animal welfare, the condition of the structure and what it takes to run it." We have not been approached and are unaware of any avian experts who have been approached to perform this assessment. Please advise who Council intends to perform such a check? Neither Animal Welfare League (AWL) or RSPCA NSW are suitably qualified.
11. Volunteers are keen to help. The Orange Bird Society remains willing to assist.
12. Partnership with Orange Bird Society. Orange Bird Society should become Council's principal community partner and first point of contact for aviary matters. Council would retain ownership and governance while drawing upon the Society's expertise.
13. Volunteer Framework. Volunteers are successfully used by councils across Australia in parks, museums, gardens and environmental projects. There has been some indications insurance is an issue – we do not understand.
14. Education. The aviary should include interpretive displays covering native birds, conservation breeding, responsible bird ownership, wildlife rescue, biosecurity and the role of aviculture in conserving threatened species.
15. Tourism. The aviary should be promoted as part of Orange's tourism strategy, particularly during the annual bird sale and expo, encouraging visitors to extend their stay in the city.
16. Heritage. The aviary is part of Cook Park's historical character. Sensitive refurbishment can preserve this heritage while meeting contemporary standards.
17. Animal Welfare. A modern aviary managed with input from experienced aviculturists provides high standards of welfare, enrichment, nutrition and veterinary oversight.

18. Good Governance. Council's strategic objectives emphasise collaboration, partnerships, community participation and attracting external support. Working with Orange Bird Society is consistent with those objectives.
19. Memorandum of Understanding. Council should enter into an MOU with Orange Bird Society defining responsibilities for advice, volunteer coordination, fundraising, education and routine operational assistance.
20. Conclusion. The Australian avicultural community is not merely asking Council to retain the aviary. We offer practical assistance, expertise and financial support. Orange has a unique opportunity to create one of Australia's premier municipal aviaries. Council should retain, refurbish and enhance the Cook Park Aviary and establish Orange Bird Society as its long-term community partner.

We respectfully request to be informed of when the matter will be considered by Council. We intend presenting to Council prior to any decision.

In the interim please do not hesitate to make contact if we can assist with the independent check of the aviary. In addition, I would suggest a meeting to discuss options would be a sensible way forward. Kind regards,



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About Animal Care Australia

As a nationally recognised animal welfare organisation, Animal Care Australia encourages continued development of animal welfare standards and Codes of Practice for animal husbandry, breeding, training, sale, and sporting exhibitions for a wide range of animal species, including pets, companion animals, animals used for educational or entertainment purposes or kept for conservation.

Animal Care Australia was founded in early 2018 to establish an organisation run solely by volunteers to lobby for real animal welfare. With extreme animal rights and animal liberationist ideologies influencing government legislation, regulation, and policy at our expense and to the detriment of our animals and pets, it has become necessary to provide government with a balancing voice.

By uniting the broad spectrum of animal groups, collectively we offer an experienced, sensible approach to animal welfare.

By educating our members and the public about the importance of treating animals with kindness and respect for their needs and promoting the humane treatment of animals to improve animal welfare outcomes, Animal Care Australia is in the unique position of lobbying and advocating for all animals within our care.

Animal Care Australia provides priority to the following:

- advocating for stronger welfare outcomes
- advocating to increase education of the public in animal welfare and best care techniques
- educate the public on handling their animals with kindness & respect and the importance of their needs
- educate the public in the differences between animal welfare and animal rights