



Thousands of Kiwis show their love for DOC

Title

Messages of support from thousands of New Zealanders are being stuck onto Department of Conservation (DOC) office windows across the country, as part of a national Love DOC Day today. Love DOC Day was organised by conservation charity Forest & Bird (BirdLife in New Zealand), after the department announced last month that 140 frontline jobs would be lost in yet another round of cuts.

DOC has lost ten per cent of its staff in the last two years, and \$54 million worth of government funding over the last four years.

By lunchtime more than a thousand people had emailed messages of support, which have been transcribed to Post-it notes, and placed onto DOC's buildings in 26 locations around the country, from Warkworth to Invercargill. One message of support came from South Africa's Gough Island Antarctic base in the mid-South Atlantic Ocean. Other messages of support are being written up and applied to DOC offices directly by local people. A message was also sent by Forest & Bird to DOC's team on Raoul Island, in the Kermadec Group, this afternoon. "It was impossible to deliver any cakes, but at least we could let the country's most isolated workers know how much New Zealanders appreciate the work they do," says Kevin Hackwell, Forest & Bird's Advocacy Manager. Many DOC staff have shown their appreciation to those outside their offices. Staff at DOC's Christchurch office shared their cake with those that had shown up to mark Love DOC Day. The Love Doc event began at 12pm today, and will run until 2pm. "Love Doc Day stemmed from the widespread shock and disappointment that was expressed throughout the country after last month's job cuts were announced," says Kevin Hackwell. "Anyone who has ever enjoyed a national park knows just how important DOC is to what makes New Zealand such a great place to live. "And anyone who works in tourism, for example, knows how vital it is that DOC is funded to do its job," Kevin Hackwell says. The Tourism Industry Association this week expressed its concern about the job losses at DOC. "The Government must cancel the cuts, and give DOC the money it needs in the upcoming budget," says Kevin Hackwell. "Last year the Auditor General made it clear in her report that DOC wasn't performing as it should. Restructuring the department, and cutting yet another 140 jobs, is not going to change that situation. "DOC is the single-most important guardian of this country's clean green brand, our special places, our historic sites, and our endangered species. If we lose that, we're toast," says Kevin Hackwell.