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Report of External Evaluation and Review

Search and Rescue Institute New
Zealand Limited trading as SARINZ

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 25 May 2017

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Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.

Introduction

1. TEO in context

Name of TEO:	Search and Rescue Institute New Zealand Limited trading as SARINZ
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	27 October 2009
Location:	Riccarton, Christchurch ¹
Delivery sites:	Nationwide as required; no fixed delivery sites
Courses currently delivered:	Applied Coordinated Incident Management (Training Scheme) (level 4) Other customised training as required
Code of Practice signatory:	Not a signatory
Number of students:	Approximately 600 students per year on formal short courses of one to five days duration. Total approximately 6.0 EFTS (equivalent full-time students). Excludes refresher and customised delivery. No International students
Number of staff:	Two x 0.75 permanent staff Approximately six regularly contracted training delivery staff supported by another six casual and

¹ SARINZ operates as a 'virtual' organisation in that the administration centre is based in a home office in Christchurch; the general manager is based on Great Barrier Island and training delivery staff are located throughout New Zealand.

	10 occasional training staff.
Scope of active accreditation:	<p>Applied Coordinated Incident Management (Training Scheme) (level 4)</p> <p>SARINZ holds wide-ranging consent to assess in domains and unit standards associated with outdoor education, civil defence, search and rescue, emergency management, fire and rescue, up to level 5.</p> <p>For a detailed list of SARINZ's complete accreditation (not all currently active), refer to: http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/nqf-accreditations.do?providerId=792728001</p>
Distinctive characteristics:	<p>The parent body, SARINZ Group, was established in late 2002 and began delivering training in early 2003 through a training partnership with Tai Poutini Polytechnic which ended January 2012.</p> <p>SARINZ registered as a PTE in October 2009.</p> <p>The delivery, assessment and registration of credits on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) comprise only a small portion of training undertaken by SARINZ. The remainder is bespoke training which is generally not assessed.</p>
Recent significant changes:	<p>SARINZ was approved for Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) funding through the Emergency Management Adult and Community Education fund from 2016 for a maximum of 13 EFTS per year. In addition to the TEC funding, much of SARINZ's training remains 'user pays'.</p>
Previous quality assurance history:	<p>The previous external evaluation and review (EER) of SARINZ, held in June 2013, resulted in summative judgements of Highly Confident in educational performance and Confident in capability in self-assessment.</p> <p>No matters of concern have been identified by NZQA since the previous EER.</p>

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

This EER included all of the organisation's training activities.

3. Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published policies and procedures. The methodology used is described fully in the web document Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction>. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

Prior to the EER, the lead evaluator discussed the visit by telephone with the organisation's general manager. The evaluation team of two evaluators spent one and half days at the SARINZ home office/administration centre in Christchurch and at a nearby meeting venue, where they reviewed an extensive range of documentation and met with the general manager, administration officer, industry representatives and tutors. The evaluation team also visited an Action Oriented Team Leadership Skills course in Kaiapoi and spoke informally with several students. Follow-up phone calls were made to three industry stakeholders.

During the site visit, SARINZ provided the evaluation team with a range of operational documentation, including planning materials, quality management policies, enrolment information and policies, student achievement records, student evaluations, collated analysis of student satisfaction levels, and course delivery and assessment materials. This documentation complemented the self-assessment information that had been pre-submitted by the organisation. The evaluators reviewed all materials tabled.

The evaluation team is confident that a sufficient range of evidence was used to reach evaluative judgements.

Summary of Results

Statements of confidence on educational performance and capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance and **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Search and Rescue Institute New Zealand (SARINZ) Limited**.

The reasons for this high level of confidence can be summarised as follows:

- The students are acquiring useful and meaningful skills and knowledge, evidenced by feedback from students, graduates and the industry sector that the training is directly leading to improved operational performance by regional search and rescue operations.
- SARINZ is contributing valued outcomes to students and key stakeholders through its quality training, responsiveness and community contribution. The organisation also uses its own knowledge, experience and expertise along with relationships with other experts to contribute insights into clients' and students' practices. An indicator of this value is the fact that SARINZ personnel are regularly co-opted by search and rescue organisations and the police to assist with complex search and rescue operations.
- The organisation is highly regarded by, and engages exceptionally well with, the search and rescue/civil defence industry, employers, and community and regulatory bodies. It uses information gained through this network to keep course delivery current and to ensure stakeholder needs are met. Every course is contextualised around the specific needs and circumstances of the client group.
- There is clear evidence that the organisation has addressed recommendations from the last EER and continues to make ongoing improvements to the already high quality of delivery and assessment.
- The organisation is soundly and sustainably managed. It has systems for monitoring its obligations to ensure that important compliance accountabilities are understood and well managed.

SARINZ is a small organisation which uses a combination of informal and formal feedback processes to monitor and evaluate how well it is meeting its student and client company needs. These processes indicate that SARINZ is identifying and meeting student and client needs very well. Review practices range from strategic and annual plans at the management level, through to monthly review meetings and briefings pre- and post-course, as well as student surveys and 1:1 meetings with stakeholders. Self-assessment occurs at all levels of the organisation, and has led to excellent alignment with stakeholder expectations.

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Findings²

1.1 How well do students achieve?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

SARINZ is meeting, and in many cases exceeding the most important needs of its learners and stakeholders. Students acquire new, useful and highly relevant skills and knowledge as a result of their training with SARINZ. Knowledge gained is not only from the course material delivered, but also from the extensive, up-to-date sector knowledge and expert opinion that the tutors share with students to contextualise their learning. Staff at SARINZ demonstrated a good understanding of the factors that lead to student achievement, and regularly discuss ideas for maintaining and improving achievement.

SARINZ is achieving excellent results, generally achieving 100 per cent course completions³ on every course. These excellent rates of achievement are complemented by high rates of student and client satisfaction across different elements of course delivery.

The high level of achievement is brought about by strong organisational expectations and emphasis on success coupled with excellent teaching, small classes and first-rate student support which extends to 1:1 tuition if required. The achievement rates for Māori and Pasifika are similar to the cohorts as a whole.

1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including students?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

SARINZ was established to meet a specific training need in a niche area where no other viable provider existed. Delivering training that meets identified needs and leads to improved operational performance has consistently underpinned SARINZ's

² The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

³ All courses are demanding and are delivered with the expectation that all student will complete. On average only two or three students per year fail to complete, usually due to circumstances outside of the students' or SARINZ's control.

training development and delivery. Clients have told SARINZ that they consider the organisation to be a premium provider of search and rescue education and that they are meeting clients' and learners' needs very well. In particular, clients have told SARINZ – and this was verified in discussions between the evaluators and industry organisations – that they value that the training is appropriately contextualised and is resulting in improved understanding of and practices on search and rescue operations.

SARINZ's strong and positive relationships with peak bodies such as LandSAR (New Zealand Land Search and Rescue Incorporated) and New Zealand Police as well as tutors' own currency in search and rescue operations, helps to inform course design, content and delivery.

The organisation's self-assessment processes confirm that students and client organisations are highly satisfied with the training. There is a growing body of evidence from unsolicited and anecdotal feedback that past students have been able to apply their skills and knowledge in search and rescue operations and in emergency management.

SARINZ's client focus is typified in the way the courses are scheduled around the needs of clients and deliver training where and when it is needed. Teaching premises are hired on a casual basis or provided by the client. SARINZ has systems and processes to ensure that premises are fit for purpose and that the learning environments it creates are suited to the needs of students. Tutors also work with client organisations to develop teaching scenarios that are contextualised to the operational environments of students. For instance, when a new course is scheduled a SARINZ instructor will contact the local and/or regional search and rescue coordinator to identify topical situations and challenges. SARINZ uses actual search and rescue events and reports or reviews to learn from and make improvements.

The volume of repeat business that SARINZ delivers to national and regional clients reflects that considerable value is being attained. Funders and users of training are very satisfied with the use of refresher training funding. This is very significant considering that search and rescue personnel are mainly volunteers whose training is coordinated by police, some of whose districts/regions choose to train with SARINZ on a user-pays basis in preference to funded training provided elsewhere.

SARINZ also relies on independent research commissioned in 2010 on the long-term search and rescues needs in New Zealand (to 2030) to inform their training. This research is still highly relevant and identified, for instance, that technology will continue to lessen the need for land-based searches in bush and wilderness. Likewise, the aging and urbanised population will significantly increase the need for urban search and rescue, often involving sufferers of early dementia.

1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

SARINZ's regular and ongoing interaction with its stakeholders is a stand-out feature of the organisation. Mechanisms employed include ongoing contact with clients and students, student satisfaction surveys, client surveys, and participation in industry and community forums.

Tutors and students relate very well to each other. The students and industry organisations interviewed spoke very highly of SARINZ's teaching staff, and written student evaluations confirmed this. They liked the open, friendly and varied style of delivery and the fact that tutors had significant personal experiences to call upon. They found the range of learning activities engaging and highly relevant. Studying in a small group ensures students have constant access to the staff and can participate actively and easily in discussion and practical or field-based activities. Students noted, and student feedback forms validated, that staff were very responsive to concerns or issues raised.

SARINZ has sound assessment tools and effective moderation processes to confirm that teaching strategies and assessment outcomes are valid. The representatives from the new standard-setting body, The Skills Organisation, commented that they had not yet engaged with SARINZ but intended to do so this year. In the absence of formal external moderation, SARINZ has relied on independent individuals to moderate assessments and delivery material.

Staff are extremely passionate about and committed to their roles and are highly experienced national/international leaders in their fields. Evaluators saw first-hand evidence of a comprehensive staff induction process. This ensures consistency of approach by new tutors who also need to observe and deliver training under supervision to a high standard before they can become SARINZ tutors. Lesson planning is detailed and structured and there are regular observations of teaching – informal and scheduled. Staff demonstrated empathy and flexibility to meet individual needs including literacy and numeracy or other barriers to learning.

The very positive verbal and written feedback by stakeholders, the repeated engagement with industry, and the retention of SARINZ as a preferred provider affirm that the organisation is identifying and responding well to stakeholder needs.

1.4 How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Guidance and support is individualised and effective. Client organisations are specifically asked to identify whether any students have particular learning and support needs before commencing the training. The support services that SARINZ provides are appropriate to the courses they deliver. Learning support is focused on enabling students to achieve immediate success. Students with reading and writing difficulties can complete the assessments verbally where appropriate.

Co-tutoring helps to identify learners who may need individualised support, and to provide this support. Extra support is provided where needed to help individual learners during breaks, and tutors provide strong guidance to help learners engage and achieve.

Pre-course information and guidance is appropriate to the programmes offered, and students commented that they found the enrolment process very friendly. Evidence from student feedback and stakeholder discussion indicates that students are highly engaged in the learning that SARINZ provides.

Anonymous student survey findings captured from paper-based and online surveys indicate high levels of student satisfaction with the training and facilities. High response rates – combined with the facility for students to provide feedback online at any time subsequent to their course – and strong industry networks demonstrate a wide-ranging and reliable web of student feedback. Where necessary, this feedback is acted on promptly and thoughtfully to improve outcomes for students.

1.5 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The current governance and management structure of the PTE is appropriate and there is clear and decisive leadership occurring, based on excellent quality assurance principles and a shared set of core values. The working environment, staff morale and student experience are all very positive. The organisational strategy is formally documented and management and staff have a common understanding of the vision and direction. The organisation has developed and embedded effective systems for monitoring student achievement and supporting staff to improve outcomes. Quality is well embedded in the organisation.

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Effective resourcing is well planned and provided for all activities, and the organisation is financially sustainable.

SARINZ has very strong industry and employer relationships which provide useful feedback to training, which is followed up. SARINZ's responsiveness to this feedback has led to repeat business and identification as a 'preferred provider'.

SARINZ is responsive to changes in the operating environment. For instance, the PTE has successfully transitioned between funding models by adapting organisational and staff processes, operations and delivery. This type of reflective practice was evident in all areas of the organisation.

SARINZ has over time employed or contracted a pool of very talented and experienced staff which it manages effectively and actively develops. The value that SARINZ management puts on the experience and know-how of the team is clearly apparent and makes a positive difference to educational quality. The general manager and administration coordinator were open in their appreciation of the efforts, loyalty and dedication of staff. Staff enjoyed the environment and they worked hard but feel highly valued and rewarded.

Monitoring of performance within SARINZ is regular, transparent and robust, and the organisation encourages opportunities for reflection on its role and how to continue to make ongoing and continuous improvements to meeting the needs of students and other stakeholders. Self-assessment is being well led by management and is comprehensively understood and adopted throughout the organisation. Management and staff enthusiastically encourage opportunities for reflection on their roles and how to better meet stakeholder needs. This has led to an authentic and highly reflective learning environment and culture.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

As a small business in New Zealand, SARINZ has compliance accountabilities to a number of agencies and regulatory bodies. The organisation has a bring-up system to identify compliance requirements and deadlines to meet them. The organisational culture has a strong emphasis on compliance. Consequently, there was no indication that accountabilities are not being met. As previously discussed, moderation is up to date and meets required standards.

NZQA attestations and returns have been met within required timeframes. The courses are being delivered consistent with NZQA approvals.

Health and safety is at the core of SARINZ's operation. The organisation has detailed health and safety and risk management plans for all key operations. All staff are either employed or contracted and they told the evaluators that their contracts/agreements were current. There is systematic and robust appraisal of individual staff performance.

Since establishment, SARINZ has elected to have its financial accounts independently audited. Although this is not a legal requirement, as a charitable organisation they consider that independent audit demonstrates a higher level of accountability (than not doing so). For the past few years international accounting firm BDO has been contracted to fulfil this role. In 2015, for the first time, the task was extended to include an independent review which confirmed that the (TEC-funded) courses that SARINZ delivers align with the funding received.

In essence, SARINZ has a clear understanding of its compliance accountabilities and manages effectively to ensure obligations are met.

Focus Areas

This section reports significant findings in each focus area, not already covered in Part 1.

2.1 Focus area: Training delivery

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review.

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013, which are made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

Self-assessment and participation in external evaluation and review are requirements for maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities. The requirements are set through the NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013, which are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review, in accordance with the External Evaluation and Review Rules (EER) 2013, as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes and/or registration. The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.

This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013.

The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz).

The External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013 are available at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Rules/EER-Rules.pdf>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>.

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