

# Report of External Evaluation and Review

VisionWest Community Trust

Confident in educational performance

Not Yet Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 30 October 2014

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MoE Number: 7944  
NZQA Reference: C12343  
Dates of EER visit: 25 and 26 September 2013

*Final Report*

# 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:	VisionWest Community Trust
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	97 Glendale Road, Glen Eden, West Auckland
Delivery sites:	One site as above
First registered:	9 April 2010
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Youth Guarantee (NCEA levels 1 and 2)</li><li>• National Certificate in Adult Literacy Education (Vocational Tutor/Lecturer or Workplace Trainer) (Level 5)</li><li>• Training for Work</li><li>• Alternative Education</li><li>• Intensive Literacy and Numeracy</li></ul>
Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students signatory:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 244 (35 per cent Māori; 35 per cent Pasifika; 30 per cent European and others*)  <i>* Approximate figures</i>
Number of staff:	11 full-time equivalents
Scope of active	As noted above

accreditation:

**Distinctive characteristics:** Originally incorporated as the Friendship Centre Trust in 1988, the organisation was established to provide community support services to the neighbourhood. Over the years, the organisation grew and became one of the largest community-based trusts in West Auckland. In 2010, the Friendship Centre Trust merged with Genesis Training Centre and formed VisionWest Community Trust. The organisation provides a diverse range of services, including community housing, home healthcare, kindergarten, counselling, budgeting, food bank, curtain bank, uniform bank as well as operating a training school. The training arm of VisionWest Community Trust, VisionWest Training Centre (VisionWest), aims to deliver quality education and training within a Christian context. The Alternative Education, Youth Guarantee and Training for Work programmes provide second-chance learners with opportunities to re-engage with education, with the aim of moving off benefits and gaining employment. The intensive literacy and numeracy courses currently attract mainly refugees and migrants for whom English is their second language.

**Recent significant changes:** VisionWest has recently gone through a restructure, and a couple of staff positions were disestablished as a result.

**Previous quality assurance history:** An external evaluation and review (EER) visit report was published on 29 August 2012, in which NZQA was Confident in VisionWest's educational performance and Not Yet Confident in VisionWest's capability in self-assessment.

The 2012 NZQA external moderation report for VisionWest showed that modifications were required for four out of the eight assessment materials submitted, and three of the 10 unit standards included as part of the moderation plan had all three samples of assessor's judgements not approved.

**Other:** VisionWest receives funding from the Ministry of Education, the Tertiary Education Commission

(TEC) and the Ministry of Social Development.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The agreed scope of the EER of VisionWest included the following mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management and strategy.

Other focus areas were:

- Youth Guarantee
- Intensive Literacy and Numeracy

The selection of the Youth Guarantee programme allowed the evaluation team to assess the operations of VisionWest through a full-time funded course for young at-risk learners, the main group that VisionWest works with.

The Intensive Literacy and Numeracy (ILN) courses were selected as a focus area because they target a different type of learner and enabled the evaluation team to gain a broader perspective on VisionWest's capability in self-assessment, as ILN was not a focus area chosen in the previous EER.

## 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.*

The EER took place with a team of two evaluators, who visited the site at Glen Eden, West Auckland over two days. Prior to the EER, VisionWest supplied the lead evaluator with descriptive information about the organisation, and its self-assessment materials, including improvements initiated since the previous EER. This assisted the lead evaluator in developing the scope of this EER.

During the on-site visit, the evaluation team interviewed the chief executive officer of VisionWest Community Trust, one member of the trust board, the training centre manager, the academic programme manager, and tutors and students of the two focus areas. The lead evaluator interviewed several graduates by telephone. A wide range of documents was examined for the purpose of triangulation.

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# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **VisionWest Community Trust**.

VisionWest has good engagement in achieving the targeted outcomes set by the funding agencies. It has a clear focus on achieving the completion and qualification outcomes set by the TEC, and the desired credit outcomes and student attendance required to meet funding requirements. For example, since 2011 credit achievement has increased steadily, from an average of 24.5 credits in 2011 to an average of 59 credits for the year to July 2013. Currently, the main focus of data collection is to provide the funding agencies with the statistics that they require.

The management and staff at VisionWest have a Christian commitment to help the local community, and the organisation is a not-for-profit trust which runs a number of support agencies from the site including the training school, which is centred on giving at-risk youth and second-chance learners the opportunity to improve essential life skills, improve their self-confidence, engage in higher study and in some cases, find employment. The evaluators learned that the training school is effective in the first two but not necessarily so in the latter two objectives.

VisionWest programmes provide valuable 'soft-skill' outcomes for its students and through them, their families and the wider community. The evaluators saw that positive improvements in the students' self-confidence and communication skills have been noticed by those around them. In addition, achievement data demonstrates value for the 90 per cent of learners who completed their 100 hours of literacy and numeracy training and made measurable gains in one or more of the skills areas.

The PTE does not systematically gather data from graduates, so it is not known whether the PTE is achieving longer-term value with its programmes. Currently, the emphasis is to stimulate the students' positive engagement with society and the world around them, and it is not really known how well the programmes prepare students for further learning or employment.

VisionWest concentrates on employing people who it feels have the skills for managing at-risk youth and second-chance learners. Currently, tutors are helped to gain relevant unit standards for managing unit standards-based learning, and there is support for tutors to gain skills in adult literacy and numeracy teaching practices. The teachers are enthusiastic and use their passion and life experience well to assist the students to learn.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Not Yet Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **VisionWest Community Trust**.

VisionWest collects comprehensive data in matters that concern the funding agencies. There is good evidence that the PTE responds well to commercial and economic changes that influence the sector and the PTE in particular.

VisionWest would benefit from engaging in more focused benchmarking activities with similar PTEs. Currently, it mainly uses the TEC outcomes comparisons for this purpose. The organisation is not collecting data and analysing it to identify the various educational needs of the students and the institution.

The quality and long-term impacts of the learning on employment and further study are not fully understood. Graduates and employers are not systematically contacted for feedback. Gaining feedback from these stakeholders would help the organisation to understand the long-term value of the learning for most of the important stakeholders.

The PTE would gain from accessing industry and educational contacts to gain structured advice, which will assist in informing programme developments and maintaining currency and relevance in the learning. The evaluators noted that informal contact with stakeholders is occurring and plans are afoot for the inclusion of formal advisory input from industry.

During the course of the evaluation visit, it was observed that some students had some pertinent feedback to offer about programme structure and delivery. It was not clear to the evaluators whether there is an appropriate forum where the students can offer these ideas to the staff. The PTE has instituted a 'prefect' system based on the selection of student representatives, but it is not clear how this will enhance student-staff communications.

While the PTE continues to make advances in its self-assessment, VisionWest is developing with a lack of systematic analysis of comparisons with similar institutions and stakeholders that would enable it to validate the actions it takes.

# Findings<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

Learner achievement is generally good. For the Youth Guarantee programme delivered in 2012, each of VisionWest's successful learners achieved 44 credits on average. The evaluators were told that VisionWest is currently on track towards meeting the targets for 2013 agreed with the TEC. With average credit achievement sitting at approximately 59 credits in mid-2013, this is a significant increase in achievement. Being a non-profit community organisation, VisionWest determined that one of its operational priorities is to retain its funding from various agencies by meeting the agreed performance targets. The organisation has mechanisms in place to regularly measure its progress against this objective.

Reports to the TEC demonstrate that over 90 per cent of learners who complete 100 hours of learning or more achieve enhanced literacy and/or numeracy skills. Beyond the statistics, VisionWest is equipping its learners, many of whom have come from disadvantaged backgrounds, with life skills such as self-confidence, self-management and self-discipline. This transformation was verified in the discussions with management, staff and students, and is invaluable and important – very often, VisionWest is the last opportunity for these learners to re-engage with education and gain these life skills

Having said the above, there are areas for improvement. For the ILN courses, 11 out of 45 learners (24.4 per cent) did not complete the course in 2012. While this completion rate has, so far, been reduced to five out of 40 students (12.5 per cent) for the year to date, it is a result of managing prospective learners' expectations during enrolment rather than the result of a proactive analysis of the reasons for non-completion. VisionWest has accepted the occurrence of drop-outs as a reality. The PTE acknowledged that while this issue could be partially addressed by careful enrolment interviews, it was required to accept referrals from the funding agencies. Notwithstanding the characteristics of the learners, a better understanding of the reasons for non-completion could lead to more effective strategies to manage the issue and ultimately produce better outcomes.

The evaluation team is of the view that the primary objective for VisionWest's data collection is to satisfy funding requirements. The use of data is more compliance-oriented than motivated by a desire for self-improvement through an in-depth

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<sup>1</sup> The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.



understanding of operations. For example, there is little analysis through benchmarking of the ILN courses against similar programmes delivered by other PTEs in the Auckland region.

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

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

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

Through the delivery of its training programmes and provision of associated support services, VisionWest is providing value to its stakeholders. The organisation offers alternative and vocational education opportunities to at-risk young learners, who are often at the 'crossroads' in their lives. With the right guidance, they can re-engage and become useful members of society. The evaluators heard about some of the challenges of meeting this goal. VisionWest is delivering positive outcomes for the majority of its learners. The 'ripple effect' from the positive learning means such success is having an impact beyond the individual learners and having a positive effect on their families/whānau and the West Auckland community in general. This success is recognised among the local social services agencies, as evidenced by ongoing referrals.

For the ILN courses, refugees and migrants are being supported and are acquiring not only language skills, but also life skills for settling into New Zealand, such as understanding the opening hours of businesses and how to read bus and train timetables. Learners from the course spoke of how their family noticed the change in their language and communication abilities, and how as a result they were better integrated into their adopted society.

VisionWest's mission is to transform lives and build healthy communities. While there are 'good-news stories' related by anecdotal means included in reports to the trust board, there is no mechanism for systematically tracking the outcomes and destinations of the graduates, and no direct feedback from graduates or employers to gauge the long-term value of the training. Such limitations restricted the evaluators' assessment of the value of the programmes. There is evidence that graduate outcomes data has been collected since April 2013, but this process has not been implemented across all delivered programmes. Given that data collection is in the early stages, no analysis has been performed so far. It is therefore too early to say whether this important initiative has led to any improved outcomes.

### 1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

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

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

VisionWest is successfully fulfilling an important need of the West Auckland community through offering young at-risk learners an opportunity to re-engage in education and to gain their first-ever recognised qualification. A process is in place to ensure learners' needs are determined, from establishing at the interview stage whether there are any learning difficulties such as dyslexia, to managing learners' expectations and attitudes during the induction phase. Students who are not likely to succeed in the programmes are referred to more appropriate agencies. An individual learning plan containing academic targets, and an aspiration book containing behavioural aspirations are developed at the commencement of studies and reviewed every three weeks with the tutor.

Responding positively to the findings from the previous EER, VisionWest has revamped its course and tutor evaluation questions and is now analysing the results as well as implementing improvements upon reflection of the analysis. For example, a computing suite has been introduced at the request of students of the Training for Work programmes wanting a classroom set-up with computers to support their learning and transition into work. In response to the feedback on difficulties in transportation, VisionWest has initiated a 'school bus' service, picking up and dropping off Alternative Education learners. This shows that VisionWest continues to improve on the use of collected data.

VisionWest reviews its training programmes annually. As a result of a recent review, the delivery of horticulture courses in the Youth Guarantee programme was terminated, as evidence showed that young learners were no longer interested in gardening work. Based on advice from funding agencies and as a result of existing internal demand and readily available internal resources and skills, VisionWest is proposing to replace the horticulture courses with courses in catering, hospitality and carpentry. However, the design and development of these programmes lack external advisory input, for example from industry. VisionWest is aware of this gap and is in the process of establishing advisory boards for these proposed programmes.

#### 1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

Overall, the evaluation team is satisfied with VisionWest's teaching effectiveness. Staff are recruited for their passion and experience with at-risk youth. Once appointed, they are supported professionally in their development, such as attending courses delivered through Ako Aotearoa, achieving unit standards 4098 *Use standards to assess candidate performance*, 11551 *Moderate assessment* and 11552 *Design and evaluate assessment materials*, as well as completing the National Certificate in Adult Literacy Education. VisionWest's emphasis on passion and experience over teaching qualifications raises some concerns, despite the organisation reporting that it has, in the recent past, recruited qualified tutors and 'found no significant difference in outcomes'.

All tutoring positions have an appropriately worded job description document. Each staff member has their own set of key performance indicators, and their performance is formally appraised annually by senior management, supported by regular programme tracking and academic discussions every six working days. Staff members use a shared teachers' planner for lesson planning, and the practice of keeping a self-reflective journal is highly encouraged. During the on-site visit, the evaluation team saw evidence of how the use of such a journal has encouraged reflection and follow-up actions. This is evidence of a good self-assessment system that leads to effective teaching practices.

The evaluation team sighted evidence on internal moderation practices across all programmes, an improvement from the previous EER. The effectiveness is yet to be confirmed by external moderation with NZQA later this year.

VisionWest's tutors are not sharing best practices in teaching with other PTEs currently. This has occurred in the past on an informal basis. Given the small pool of tutors internally, NZQA sees value in recommending this communication.

#### 1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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

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

VisionWest learners enjoy the diverse support services offered by VisionWest Community Trust, such as access to a food bank, and counselling and budgeting services. VisionWest works closely with other social services agencies such as Child, Youth and Family, Odyssey House, Youth Horizons etc. This ensures the organisation is well prepared and equipped for providing the necessary guidance

and support to at-risk youth learners, who attend VisionWest either voluntarily or involuntarily.

Beyond the infrastructure, as a faith-based organisation guided by strong Christian values and principles, it is evident that VisionWest's management and staff are genuine in caring about these vulnerable learners, not only to support their academic achievements, but more importantly, to support their development as people. A safe environment is provided to support learning. Attendance policy is clearly communicated to learners and appropriate procedures are in place to follow up on non-attendance, including home visits for extended, unexplained absences when required. These aspects provide a solid platform for the transformation of learners' lives.

During the evaluation team's on-site visit, some students from the ILN courses suggested that, given the rolling intake and very different levels of English language ability, learning might be more effective if the class was divided into two streams based on competency. VisionWest may wish to consider this suggestion, and provide appropriate mechanisms to allow similar suggestions to be channelled to staff and management in the future.

## 1.6 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

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

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

The governing trust board has a good grasp of VisionWest's performance and learners' achievements. Reports summarising achievements to date and identifiable trends and concerns, as well as recent 'good-news stories', are tabled at the trust board meetings every two months. Board members attend VisionWest's graduation and social events where possible. The trust board is also involved in overseeing the development of proposals for extracurricular activities, as well as establishing relationships with other education organisations and forums, for mentoring and benchmarking purposes. It is evident that there is an effective line of communication between VisionWest's management and the governance team.

Responding positively to the previous EER findings, management advised, and evidence was sighted for, more formalised processes in VisionWest's self-assessment system. As previously mentioned, the methodology and use of course evaluation has been reviewed and improved upon. A programme review was completed and VisionWest went through a restructure in August 2013, further ensuring financial viability and that students' needs are being met. While the PTE continues to make advances in its self-assessment, the evaluators feel that VisionWest is developing somewhat without the checks provided by consultation with stakeholders and comparisons with similar PTEs.

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## Focus Areas

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

### 2.1 Focus area: Governance, management and strategy

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

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

### 2.2 Focus area: Youth Guarantee

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

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

### 2.3 Focus area: Intensive Literacy and Numeracy

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

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

# Recommendations

NZQA recommends that VisionWest Community Trust:

- Continue to develop its engagement for gathering systematic input from industry and similar PTEs, to assist in programme design and development, and to ensure the ongoing relevance of the currently delivered courses.
- Continue to improve on benchmarking practices.
- Consider better ways to use existing data and how it can better inform decision-making leading to even better outcomes for all.
- Ensure the process of destination data collection is applied consistently across all training programmes, and systematically analyse the data to inform future programme development.

# 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](http://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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