

Tai Poutini Polytechnic Media Release

Monday 14 September 2015



Allegations of short changing student learning time on its search and rescue courses and enrolling staff as “ghost students” are baseless says Tai Poutini Polytechnic. These allegations have been made against Tai Poutini Polytechnic (TPP) by the Search and Rescue Institute of New Zealand (SARINZ), a private search and rescue training company, which has a commercial history with TPP.

The Polytechnic has contracted SARINZ to deliver training programmes in the past but this commercial relationship ended in 2013 when the Polytechnic started delivering the training directly.

Over the years the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) have independently investigated a range of complaints from SARINZ against TPP, and found them to have no foundation.

TPP stands by its search and rescue delivery and works closely with New Zealand Search and Rescue (NZSAR) – the national coordinating body for the search and rescue sector – to ensure that all training delivered is appropriate and enhances the safety of the sector.

The Polytechnic continues to refute the most recent claims made by SARINZ, through Labour MP David Cunliffe, which are addressed specifically below:

- “Ghost enrolments” – all student enrolments require passport or birth certificate verification to qualify for funding. In addition all search and rescue-related enrolments are also reported to NZSAR for verification.
- “TPP staff on courses to claim extra funding” – a small number of Polytechnic staff members are also search and rescue volunteers in their spare time. These volunteers (less than 5 Equivalent Full Time Students) have received training, which NZSAR requests of all its volunteers, in recent years. This is appropriate and the claim that the Polytechnic is enrolling staff “to claim extra funding” is baseless. TPP has in fact delivered hundreds of thousands of dollars of unfunded training to meet sector needs.
- “Running an 11-month course in one week” – once again, this claim is baseless. The advanced ropes course has never been required to run over 11 months. The course involves distance learning work and a seven-day intensive practical component.

“Tai Poutini Polytechnic is committed to enhancing public safety across a range of courses including search and rescue training,” says Chief Executive, Allan Sargison.

For more information contact:

Samuel Blight, Director - Strategy

DDI (03) 769 9404 | Email samuelb@tpp.ac.nz