

# ERO Early Childhood Akatea | Governing Organisation Evaluation Report

Governing Organisation Name: Te Whānau Tupu Ngātahi o Aotearoa – Playcentre Aotearoa

Head Office Location: Wellington

## 1 ERO's judgement of Te Whānau Tupu Ngātahi o Aotearoa – Playcentre Aotearoa:

Indicator	Below the threshold for quality		Above the threshold for quality	
Organisational conditions	Improvement required	Working towards	Embedded	Excelling
Learning conditions	Improvement required	Working towards	Embedded	Excelling

*For an explanation of the judgement terms used and of the evaluation process please refer to the last page of this report. These judgements are based on the evidence provided to ERO during the evaluation process.*

Children's health and safety

Improvement required

Taking reasonable steps

## 2 ERO's Judgements

A [Governing Organisation Evaluation](#) evaluates the extent to which organisational and learning conditions support equitable and excellent outcomes for all learners. [Te Ara Poutama Indicators of quality for early childhood education: what matters most](#) is the basis for making judgements about its effectiveness. The [Early Childhood Education \(ECE\) - Improvement Framework \(teacher led services\)](#) derived from the indicators, is used to inform the ERO's judgements about the organisation's performance. Evaluation for improvement | Ngā Aronga Whai Hua is integrated across all of the above areas.

### 3 About the Organisation

Te Whānau Tupu Ngātahī o Aotearoa – Playcentre Aotearoa is a national organisation comprising of 381 parent-led early childhood services. At the time of this evaluation four playcentres were on provisional licences and one newly built playcentre has a probational licence.

The co-governing board of trustees are supported by a Chief Executive and senior leadership team. The senior leadership team includes specialist roles focused on parent education, financial and revenue management, strategy, development and growth, human resource management, marketing and communication. The 2025 addition of a Pou Māori position to the senior leadership team was a strategic appointment to support Playcentre Aotearoa to enact the intent of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

A change in the organisational structure has resulted in the Manager of Strategy, Development and Growth overseeing curriculum, teaching and learning. This includes responsibility for and oversight of national and regional service delivery teams.

Playcentre Aotearoa has continued to consolidate governance and operational models to promote growth and sustainability across the organisation. Key priorities progressed are to increase national consistency and oversight, and to shift the liability of compliance and administration from parents to governance. There have been some additional roles created and increased resourcing assigned to existing roles to support these strategic priorities. Throughout this period of change, Playcentre Aotearoa has maintained a clear line of sight to what matters most at Playcentre – families playing, learning and growing together.

Enrolments in playcentres are increasingly varied. Many children attend one day per week with many older children also attending other early learning services. Currently, playcentres operate in remote, rural and urban settings, offering between one and seven sessions per week.

Findings from ERO's evaluation at the governance and organisational level included evaluating the extent to which Te Whānau Tupu Ngātahī o Aotearoa – Playcentre Aotearoa's strategic intentions, quality improvement systems, processes and practices support the provision of quality education and care at individual service level.

### 4 Organisation Progress

The organisation has made good progress to address the improvement actions identified in ERO's March 2024 report.

Three improvement actions were identified. These were to:

- define strategic priorities that are focused on what is most important for groups of children
- build leaders' understanding of regulatory requirements to support rigorous oversight and assurance that compliance is being maintained in playcentres
- establish agreed communication expectations, systems, and processes for reporting at each leadership level.

In September 2024 the organisation reviewed its' strategic priorities and implemented a business development plan to progress key improvement objectives. These objectives have whānau and children's learning and wellbeing at the core of decision-making and resource allocation. Parent and whānau perspectives have contributed to and materially influenced these objectives. Consolidation of the organisation remains a governance priority.

Current priorities of the organisation include:

- providing budget management, reporting and development planning to support all playcentres
- moving responsibility for compliance from parents to the organisation by implementing a new system to support and monitor compliance
- clarifying education roles and responsibilities of parents, whānau and leaders in alignment with the philosophy of Playcentre Aotearoa
- completing amalgamation processes to become a national organisation by 31 August 2025 to lessen administrative requirements for whānau
- developing an evaluative framework for quality curriculum and leadership to be used consistently by leaders nationally and across regions.

Regional plans and communication initiatives developed by leaders are purposefully aligned to the revised strategic priorities. They provide increased information and expectations that are communicated from national office across the layers of leadership and through continued consultation with individual playcentres.

Priority has been given to building the capability of national and regional leaders to understand regulatory requirements. Leaders have increased their knowledge of compliance expectations and draw on this to better inform future planning. The organisation is taking steps to improve oversight of compliance through the development and implementation of specific roles and processes.

Progress has been made to build the organisation's capacity to meet and maintain compliance through the creation of new kaimahi roles and the introduction of an electronic health and safety recording system. However, building shared understanding of compliance requirements at all levels is ongoing. In nearly half of the services visited by ERO, parents, centre advisors and session facilitators were not clear about aspects of these requirements. This particularly related to undertaking emergency drills, hazard recording and documenting analysis of accidents.

The development of reporting frameworks throughout the organisation from individual playcentres to board level, includes defined reporting expectations. These are at the early stages of implementation. There are clearer lines of communication between leadership layers evident. More regular reporting is providing opportunities for teams to share information and build their understanding about the operation of the organisation.

## 5 Evaluation findings for April 2025

Playcentre Aotearoa retains a focus on children with kaiako (whānau, volunteers and employed staff) taking collective responsibility for the wellbeing and learning of children.

Leaders have been focused on improvement and change to support the progress of the organisation. Most of the actions taken are in the beginning stages of being implemented and it is too soon to know about the effectiveness of these changes. Playcentre Aotearoa is in the early stages of establishing conditions that can contribute to improving the quality of the curriculum provided for all children.

The organisation has adopted a new operating model which has a greater focus on governance responsibility and accountability for regulatory compliance. The kaimahi role is at an early stage of being implemented nationally. When fully implemented, kaimahi and the centre advisors will be responsible for overseeing and building the capability of playcentre parents to meet and maintain compliance at individual playcentres. Kaimahi will also be involved in reporting compliance to management teams who will be responsible for analysing trends and including this information in reporting as needed.

The focus of the Pou Māori position is to build cultural competence to enact the intent of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the organisation's plans, policies and practices. This is at the very beginning stages of development owing to a lapsed Māori strategy and associated resourcing in late 2023.

A differentiated approach developed to support whānau Māori through the Playcentre Education Programme is resulting in increased levels of parent enrolments in playcentre education courses.

A new initiative is to intentionally support Pacific leadership and to have an increased focus on success for Pacific learners, families and their communities. This initiative includes a plan to open a service with greater reflection of Pacific values and knowledge.

The organisation has been trialling different approaches to determine how best to support parent volunteers to undertake an internal evaluation process that leads to improvement. This work is in the early stages of implementation.

## 6 Leadership to support quality education and care for children

Centre advisors have a key leadership responsibility to support the quality of teaching and learning within playcentres. They report to regional support leads and regional managers. Approximately half of services employ session facilitators and others are led by parent volunteer groups. Promoting and engaging parents in Playcentre Education programmes is a key approach to increase the quality of the curriculum provided for children.

Playcentre Aotearoa leaders work collaboratively and are establishing conditions for the ongoing development of organisational leadership capability, to better support the quality of teaching in playcentres.

- Regional managers and regional support leads model and provide conditions that support and enable high levels of relational trust and professional accountability.
- Leaders provide some professional learning opportunities, including curriculum guidance and development of tools and resources for internal evaluation. Whilst leaders evaluate the effectiveness of external professional development, they are yet to evaluate the effectiveness of internally provided professional learning.
- Session facilitators and parents engage in self-review to make improvements, and some have knowledge and skills to carry out evaluation. The variance in capability to use internal evaluation, limits the opportunities for some playcentres to gather evidence or to analyse the impact of changes made.
- Clear expectations for leaders across the organisation around their roles and responsibilities have been developed and are being implemented. Whilst this has resulted in more regular reporting across layers of leadership, the information within most reporting is descriptive. It is not well focused on what matters most, or what leaders know about the quality of curriculum within playcentres.
- Much of what centre advisors know about the enacted curriculum and individual playcentres is informal. There is wide variance of information within written reports.
- Agreed and clear indicators to promote a shared understanding of how to provide a quality curriculum, and to inform reporting about curriculum provision, are yet to be developed.

## 7 Summary of findings from visits to sample services

ERO visited a sample of 29 services to verify what Te Whānau Tupu Ngātahi o Aotearoa – Playcentre Aotearoa knows about the quality of each of the services' learning conditions and to what extent the organisational conditions support service improvement. ERO selected the service sample in consultation with the governing organisation.

Children's learning and development are supported by a curriculum that increasingly responds to their interests and enacts the organisation's philosophy and vision of families playing, learning and growing together.

- Well-resourced environments support children's learning. Adults are responsive to the interests and preferences of infants, toddlers and young children.
- Most children are increasingly supported to develop their knowledge, skills, attitudes, curiosity and creativity
- Some facilitators use and model for parents a range of intentional teaching strategies, such as prompting children's thinking, supporting their oral language development and encouraging children's efforts and developing social competencies. Adults knowledge about and use of teaching strategies is influenced by their level of participation in adult education programmes and/or additional qualifications.
- Children are well-supported by parents to experience cultures, languages and learner identities. The playcentre curriculum design values the inclusion of languages and cultures and is strengthened by parent/whānau contributions to the planning and enactment of a culturally responsive curriculum.
- Implementation of a bicultural curriculum is developing in most playcentres. Aspects of tikanga Māori and some te reo Māori are woven through daily routines and through waiata.
- Systems for assessment, planning and evaluation are not consistent across regions. This impacts on what centre advisors, session facilitators and parents know about children's learning and progress. Where this is done well, children's learning through play is documented and evident in individual samples of assessment.
- Whilst it is intended that parents document their children's learning, much of this work is currently completed by session facilitators who have variable levels of capability.

Centre leaders, parents and whānau are in the early stages of building a shared understanding of how an evaluation process can guide improvement.

- Increased collaboration between regional teams, alongside development of an internal evaluation lead role are in the early stages of building capability to undertake evaluation for improvement across the organisation.
- Regular reviews undertaken at a local playcentre level generally focus on resources or what adults are doing, and do not consistently prioritise making improvements to the curriculum experienced by children. Documented review work often does not sufficiently result in or show improvements to adults' teaching practices or children's learning.
- Centre advisors, session facilitators and parent leaders use a range of tools, processes and practices to support a review process. Collective capability to do and use evaluation to inform ongoing improvement is in the early stages of development.

## 8 Where to next for improvement?

Prior to the next ERO evaluation Te Whānau Tupu Ngātahi o Aotearoa – Playcentre Aotearoa will progress the following actions through its quality improvement planning. These actions are to:

- fully implement and monitor how well the newly established national kaimahi roles are supporting compliance requirements to be well understood, met and maintained in individual playcentres
- build a shared organisational understanding of the components that contribute to a quality curriculum. This includes developing indicators of what quality provision looks like in the Playcentre context and to then use these indicators to provide specific feedback to playcentres about what is going well and what to improve
- improve the evaluative reporting of centre advisors and regional leaders and provide more evidence-based information to the board, to support decision-making that is monitored and evaluated to identify positive impacts on outcomes for children.

## 9 Management Assurance on Legal Requirements

As part of this review, a representative of Te Whānau Tupu Ngātahi o Aotearoa – Playcentre Aotearoa completed an *ERO Governing Organisation Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklist*. In these documents they stated that the organisation has the systems, processes, and practices to be assured that service providers for licensed services within the organisation are meeting legal requirements related to:

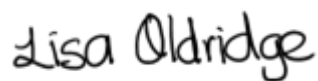
- curriculum
- premises and facilities
- health and safety practices
- governance, management, and administration.

The licensed service provider/s of the sampled services listed at the end of this report also completed an *ERO Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklist* for their service. In these documents they attested that they have taken all reasonable steps to meet legal requirements, including those detailed in Ministry of Education Circulars and other documents, related to these areas.

All early childhood services are required to promote children's health and safety and to regularly review their compliance with legal requirements

## 10 Next ERO Review

The next ERO evaluation is likely to be in 12 months.



Lisa Oldridge  
Director of Early Childhood Education (Acting)

17 July 2025

[Further information about how ERO evaluates Akatea / Governing Organisations is available here.](#)

## 11 About the Governing Organisation

Service types	Playcentre	
Total number of licensed services	381	
Total number of children licensed for across all services	37,451 including up to 23,001 aged under 2 years	
Total number of children enrolled across all services	14,399	
Ethnic composition <i>Using rounded percentages</i>	Māori 15%, NZ European/Pakeha 81%, Pacific 4%, other ethnic groups 31%	
Number of adults	Qualified	1,344
	Unqualified	15,113
Review team on site	March 2025	
Date of this report	17 July 2025	
Most recent ERO report(s) These are available at <a href="http://www.ero.govt.nz">www.ero.govt.nz</a>	Akatea   Governing Organisation Evaluation, March 2024	

## 12 List of sampled services

All sampled services are on a full licence.

Services sampled in this evaluation included:

Profile Number	Name of service	Service Type
22061	Mt Wellington Playcentre	Playcentre
81024	Mosgiel Playcentre	Playcentre
70118	Shirley Playcentre	Playcentre
46531	Te Puawaitanga o Atareta Playcentre	Playcentre
81046	Weston Playcentre	Playcentre
70084	Lyttleton Street Playcentre	Playcentre
90030	Wakatipu Playcentre	Playcentre
22003	Glen Eden Playcentre	Playcentre
81001	Balclutha Playcentre	Playcentre
22033	Onehunga Playcentre	Playcentre
70108	Rangiora Playcentre	Playcentre
70120	Somerfield Community Playcentre	Playcentre
90031	Queenstown Playcentre	Playcentre
70439	Rakaia Playcentre	Playcentre
90010	Richmond Playcentre	Playcentre
70064	Harewood Playcentre	Playcentre
20487	St Heliers-Glendowie Playcentre	Playcentre
81002	Blueskin Playcentre	Playcentre
70060	Halswell Playcentre	Playcentre
70110	Redwood Playcentre	Playcentre
90024	Waihopai Playcentre	Playcentre
70042	Darfield Playcentre	Playcentre
81030	Palmerston Playcentre	Playcentre
70077	Lincoln Playcentre	Playcentre
81017	Lower Waitaki Playcentre	Playcentre
47853	Parkside Playcentre	Playcentre
22041	Greenhithe Playcentre	Playcentre
25226	Cockle Bay Playcentre	Playcentre
22011	Swanson Playcentre	Playcentre

#### Activities undertaken by the evaluation team

- Pre-visit contact with the service provider/organisation leader(s).
- Meetings and / or conversations with governance, management and leaders.
- Verification and validation of what the organisation knows about the quality of education and care in its services.
- Reading documentation.
- Sampling of information related to compliance.

#### Activities undertaken by the evaluation team in the service sample visits

- Pre-visit contact with the service leader.
- Meetings and / or conversations with leaders and teachers.
- Verification and validation of information shared by the organisation at service level.
- Reading documentation as service level.
- Scanning the learning environment and resources.
- Observations of interactions and teaching practice while onsite in the sample services.
- Sampling of information related to compliance.

#### Description around ERO's judgement terms

ERO's judgements are based on *Te Ara Poutama* and the *Early Childhood Education Improvement Framework (teacher led services)*.

	Above the threshold for quality
Excelling	The organisation is excelling in the learning and organisational conditions to support high quality education and care for children.
Embedded	The organisation has embedded its learning and organisational conditions to support ongoing improvement in the provision of quality education and care for children.
	Below the threshold for quality
Working towards	The organisation is working towards establishing the learning and organisational conditions to support improvements in the provision of quality education and care for children.
Improvement required	The organisation has not yet developed the learning and organisational conditions to support eh provision of quality education and care for children.