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### **TAI POUTINI AND TOURISM AWARDS: A PERFECT FIT**

Roderick Turner, Tai Poutini Polytechnic's Head of Department – Service Industries, was impressed with the high standard of entries received for the inaugural West Coast Tourism Awards. "The level of service that the winners demonstrated was excellent," he says.

Turner was one of the judges, along with Matt Ewen, General Manager of Tourism West Coast and Monica Armesto, Product Development Manager for Tourism New Zealand. He worked closely with Tourism West Coast to set up the Awards, which were established this year to recognise excellence in the hospitality and tourism sectors, says Turner.

"It's a celebration of excellence and gives the whole industry a bit of a lift."

Tai Poutini Polytechnic fittingly sponsored the 'People Development Award' which went to Fox Glacier Guiding, winner of the highly-competitive Tourism West Coast Attraction/Experience Award and the overall 2009 Awards winner.

"As the number one trainer and tertiary provider for the region, Tai Poutini Polytechnic's sponsorship of the People Development Award seemed like a perfect fit.

"We have a number of programmes centred around tourism, including ones in hospitality, leadership and guiding, and ecotourism. A lot of our students are employed by visitor destinations, including Fox Glacier Guiding."

The Polytechnic also sponsored the Access Tourism Award, a niche market that has huge potential for the West Coast, says Turner.

"People with disabilities represent a large and growing tourism market but it's one that New Zealand and the West Coast has not yet begun to fully exploit."

While most of us tend to think of people in wheelchairs as being the main group to benefit from good access, Turner says mobility issues affect a much larger group. "The main traveller is the baby

boomer. We have the spending power but aren't quite as agile on our pins as we used to be, so it's important the industry considers a wide range of mobility issues.

"Tourism is our number one export earner so there is an opportunity for New Zealand to become a sought-after destination for people with impeded mobility," says Turner, who recently got to experience it first-hand when he sprained his ankle.

"The potential of doing so is massive, particularly here on the West Coast where tourism is our number one employer."

There was no winner of the Access Tourism Award, but a Highly Commended award went to Punakaiki Crafts & Café. "They have plans in place which are addressing the issue in an excellent way and we presented them with an award to encourage and support them in what they're doing."

Turner adds that the whole Punakaiki area, including the track DOC has built out to the Pancake Rocks "is an excellent example of access".

One of the main factors to nudge the winners to the top was their level of involvement in their local communities and the greater West Coast, says Turner. "The winners are committed to the wider community and promote their particular region as well as themselves."

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#### List of Award Categories and Winners

Hospitality Standards Institute Food & Beverage Award 2009 Winner - Punakaiki Resort

Monteiths Visitor Accommodation Award 2009 Winner - Franz Josef Top 10 Holiday Park

Tourism West Coast Attraction / Experience Award Winner 2009 - Fox Glacier Guiding

Tai Poutini Polytechnic People Development Award Winner 2009 – Fox Glacier Guiding

Tai Poutini Polytechnic Access Tourism Award, Highly Commended 2009 – Punakaiki Crafts & Cafe

West Coast Tourism Awards 2009 Overall Winner – Fox Glacier Guiding

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**About Tai Poutini Polytechnic:**

*Tai Poutini Polytechnic (TPP) offers a range of exciting programmes, has had one of the highest course completion rates in New Zealand for the last 3 years, has low student to tutor ratios and great relationships with business and industry. TPP has campuses in Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Christchurch, Wanaka, Invercargill, Westport, Greymouth, Reefton and Hokitika. In 2010 Scholarships are available for most programmes\* (\* Conditions apply)*