



RANZCO

The Royal Australian
and New Zealand
College of Ophthalmologists

Disability

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1. Purpose and scope

This policy is intended to provide staff, Fellows and others associated with The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO), an understanding of the need to promote and improve the rights and opportunities of people with disabilities, particularly those who are needlessly blind.

RANZCO provides education and training to produce ophthalmologists that treat and prevent avoidable blindness through the provision of quality eye care services. RANZCO Fellows also participate in international development activities focused on treating and preventing avoidable blindness through improved access to comprehensive and quality eye care services and education, with the aim of reducing the impact of this particular disability on individuals and their communities.

2. Disability and its context defined

In 2007 Australia and New Zealand signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 December 2006. The Convention aims to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy human rights on an equal basis with others. RANZCO's disability policy emanates from this Convention. In addition to supporting this Convention, RANZCO is

- is a member of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB), and supports and contributes to the joint IAPB-World Health Organization initiative – *VISION 2020: The Right to Sight* aimed at eliminating avoidable blindness by 2020;
- a signatory to the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct.

The World Health Organization International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) has been accepted by 191 countries as the international standard to describe and measure health and disability. The ICF recognizes disability as a universal human experience, that is a multidimensional concept, relating to the body functions of people, the life activities in which people participate, and the factors in their environment that limit their capacity to participate. It adopts a bio-psycho-social understanding of disability, emphasizing function. A person's ability to function in everyday activities may be compromised when an impairment of their mind or body, interacts with a disabling environment, to impede function/ability to participate in everyday activities.

For the purpose of this policy, RANZCO views disability as: "an impairment which can lead to social and economic disadvantages, the denial of rights, and limited opportunities to equally participate in the life of the community." Our main programs and activities focus on addressing the impairment of avoidable blindness and on removing or reducing the systemic barriers that prevent people from having access to the services they need to restore or improve their vision. In doing so, RANZCO contributes to reducing the individual, social and economic impact of this particular disability.

As guiding principles RANZCO recognizes that:

- The Millennium Development Goals cannot be achieved without addressing the needs of people with disabilities.
- Disability can lead to social and economic disadvantages, the denial of rights and limited opportunities to equally participate in the life of the community.
- Addressing the impairment of avoidable blindness together with the disabling barriers, through improving access to comprehensive quality eye care services, means that the impact of this disability can be reduced.
- Effective approaches to disability and development require a strong understanding of the importance of human rights, poverty-reduction strategies and other linked issues.

And therefore seeks to:

- work with partners to treat and prevent avoidable blindness, with the goal of contributing to reducing both the incidence and the impact of this specific disability;
- promote the development of sustainable education and service provision systems with an emphasis on local ownership at state, regional and national levels;
- prioritise and support service provision to those whose blindness or vision impairment is avoidable, rather than those with unavoidable or permanent vision loss;
- maintain a focus on treating and preventing the disabling impacts of avoidable blindness in order to contribute to achieving the VISION 2020: The Right to Sight and the Millennium Development Goals;
- uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR);
- promote the general principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) [1], including:
 - respect for the inherent dignity, individual autonomy (including the freedom to make one's own choices), and independence of the person
 - non-discrimination
 - full and effective participation and inclusion in society
 - respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
 - equality of opportunity
 - accessibility

- equality between men and women
- respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

3. Implementation

In order to implement this Policy, RANZCO will:

Where it is possible and related to our development objectives:

- Advocate on behalf of people with disabilities, and specifically around the issue of avoidable blindness, at local, national and international levels.
- Seek to make eye care service provision a priority issue amongst governments, local authorities and relevant stakeholders, and promote the need for and benefits of sustainable services, systems and funding.
- Contribute to the development and implementation of national policies and programs.
- Develop relationships with groups or organisations which uphold the rights and dignity of people with disabilities.
- Select and maintain partnerships with organisations with the capacity to develop comprehensive, sustainable, affordable and accessible eye care services which will contribute to reducing and eliminating avoidable blindness.
- Participate in advocacy and partnership opportunities which promote issues relevant to the work of the college, such as *VISION 2020: The Right to Sight* campaign, *Close the Gap* campaign, and *Make Poverty History* campaign.

In relation to human resource management and development:

- Refrain from any discriminatory recruitment and employment practices for people with disabilities.
- Ensure that staff and relevant partners are able to access quality information regarding disability issues, in particular blindness and vision impairment.
- Ensure that staff are aware of the links between disability and existing development campaigns and hence build their support for the participation of RANZCO in campaigns such as *VISION 2020: The Right to Sight* and *Close the Gap*.

In relation to planning, design and implementation of projects:

- Actively encourage and support partner organisations and governments to consider disability issues when planning programs and implementing health services.

- When planning program activities, prioritize initiatives and services that address a proven need and that will have an impact on the quality of life of people with disabilities and their families.
- Make every effort to ensure that the services supported by RANZCO are accessible to all people by:
 - working with partners to address the barriers which prevent people accessing services, including poverty, age, gender, lack of knowledge, geographic location and social stigma.
 - where possible (such as during infrastructure development), include design features that promote or prioritise access to and mobility within physical buildings for people who are blind, vision-impaired, elderly or otherwise disabled.
 - developing sustainable systems which enable appropriate intervention, education and referrals to facilitate access to affordable, quality eye care for people in isolated or rural areas.
- Ensure that all work is undertaken with respect for the needs, rights and dignity of all program beneficiaries.

In relation to communications:

- Use material, such as appropriate language and images, which uphold the rights and dignity of persons with a disability, and which do not suggest or portray that a person who has a disability is a 'victim of' or 'suffering from' the disability (for example speak of a person 'having' cataracts rather than 'suffering from' cataracts).
- When possible, emphasize and prioritize the individual above and before the disability, by:
 - Naming individual(s) when appropriate.
 - Using empowering language (for example, speaking of 'a person who is blind' rather than 'a blind person' or 'people with disabilities' rather than 'disabled people').

The Chief Executive Officer will hold relevant General Managers accountable to this Policy and promote the Policy within RANZCO and ensure sufficient resources are available to implement this Policy.

The General Managers will ensure that all relevant staff members are aware of, and understand, this Policy and their responsibilities under it.

References

1. United Nations, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 13th December, 2006. Available from
< <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml> >