



RANZCO

The Royal Australian
and New Zealand
College of Ophthalmologists

Human Rights

Approved by:

Board

Last review:

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1. Purpose and scope

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO)'s approach to human rights is consistent with the frameworks and conventions outlined within the United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹ and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.²

RANZCO is committed to uphold and advance human rights standards as per these frameworks, both within the organisation and in RANZCO's external work. In the context of health, RANZCO strives to ensure all individuals have the right to medical access regardless of age, sex, gender, place of residence, colour, religion, language, ethnic background or any other status.

This principle also guides RANZCO's international development work. RANZCO is actively involved within the Asia-Pacific region, in promoting eye health care through training, fellowship placements, eye tests, medical and surgical treatment and education, among other activities. RANZCO believe that although governments are ultimately responsible to protect and preserve the fulfilment of human rights, RANZCO is well positioned to be a constructive influence for human rights in the communities in which the organisation operates. Our vision and organisational values drive us to seek the best possible outcomes for patients and as a consequence we endeavour to ensure all individuals within the Asia-Pacific region have universal access to essential health care services.

2. Definition

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of nationality, place of residence, sex, gender, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.

Universal human rights are often expressed and guaranteed by law, in the forms of treaties, customary international law, general principles and other sources of international law. International human rights law lays down obligations of Governments to act in certain ways and to refrain from certain acts, in order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups.

3. Human Rights, Development, and Health

Human Rights and Development are inextricably linked. The purpose of development activities is to provide individuals with the capacity to be able to participate fully in all aspects of society, and realise their human rights. The right to development was formally endorsed internationally in the 1986 UN Declaration on the Right to Development.³ The subsequent 1993 Vienna

Declaration and Program of Action⁴ is seen as the cornerstone document for implementing the Right to Development.

This relationship is also recognised by State and non-State development agencies, with some agencies highlighting the realisation of Human Rights as their primary agency goal. References to Human Rights are also in key international development agreements, including the Millennium Development Goals Declaration.⁵ The principles behind other key international development cooperation agreements, such as the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness,⁶ support the protection and fulfilment of Human Rights.

3.1 Human Rights-Based Approaches

The application of Human Rights principles by State, non-State and other health actors has taken a variety of forms, including education and advocacy work, monitoring the provision of health goods and services against international requirements, and enhancing program design and monitoring and evaluation through application of Human Rights Frameworks. The conceptual framework for development based on international Human Rights standards is termed the 'Human Rights-Based Approaches' (HRBA) to Development.^{7 8 9}

UN agencies have agreed on a number of common elements to effective HRBAs, including that policies and programs should have fulfilment of Human Rights as a main objective; that programs identify the roles and responsibilities of rights-holders and duty-bearers and strengthen their capacity to demand or meet their obligations and that international Human Rights principles and standards guide all phases of development programming.

3.2 Human Rights and Health

Health, including equitable access to proper health services, is a fundamental human right. This right is anchored in most international human rights covenants, including article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;¹ article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;¹⁰ article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;¹¹ article 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;¹² and articles 12 and 14 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.¹³

The Right to Health includes rights of equitable access to both health-related goods and services, and physical environment, to support physical and mental health. The supply of health-related goods and services comprises four essential elements:

- Availability, in that health-related goods and services are provided in sufficient quantity;
- Accessibility, in that health-related goods and services are available to everyone, without discrimination;
- Acceptability, in that health-related goods and services are appropriate for the needs of the population, sensitive to issues including culture, age, and gender; and
- Quality, in that health-related goods and services are medically sound.

These concepts are particularly pertinent for eye health, especially given that a large proportion of vision loss and blindness worldwide is preventable. Eyesight plays an overwhelming role in our everyday interactions with society, and access to proper eye health services therefore may impact on all aspects of peoples' lives. The recognition of a universal right to access high quality and affordable eye care is a key focus of the joint World Health Organization (WHO) and International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) initiative - VISION 2020: The Right to Sight. RANZCO, as a member of the IAPB seeks to contribute to this initiative through its work in the Asia-Pacific region and ensuring that our activities ensure patient safety and quality of care within the framework of human rights based approach exemplified by RANZCO's Professional Code of Conduct.

4. Human rights and RANZCO development work

4.1 Asia-Pacific Region:

The Asia-Pacific region is amazingly diverse and complex and plays host to a multitude of culturally different states, regions, and peoples. The region faces a "mosaic of human rights challenges",¹⁴ and considering the lack of strength imbued within national institutions, RANZCO is well positioned to be a voice to foster discussion and provide the tools to redress human rights issues, particularly in the context of eye health.

Some of the most pressing human rights issues in the Asia-Pacific region include widespread poverty, violence against women and children, lack of judicial independence and ill treatment in detention. These issues are compounded by political and social instability and weak justice systems. There are also significant instances of racial discrimination. Processes of social reconciliation and peace building, civil unrest and emergency rule, affect some nations' key institutions from time to time.

Australia and New Zealand have ratified almost all international human rights treaties; nevertheless, both countries face ongoing challenges relating to their indigenous populations, requiring more work.

4.2 Internal Human Resource Management and Development:

Through implementation of the International Ophthalmology Development Register (IODR) RANZCO aims to:

- Develop and promote professional standards and policy in relation to the practice of eye care in the Asia Pacific region and:
- Foster, develop and promote educational and training opportunities and approaches to meet the needs of eye care in the Asia Pacific region.

4.3 International Activities:

RANZCO fellows have a long and proud record of contribution to the prevention of avoidable blindness in developing countries and we are consistently striving to improve medical access to the areas of greatest need within the Asia-Pacific region. RANZCO ensures that its internal Human Resources policies are non-discriminatory, non-exclusionary, transparent and accountable. Policies are reviewed periodically to ensure all information contained is up to date and complies with all legislative changes.

5. Human rights policy implementation

RANZCO's human rights policy is instilled within RANZCO's organisational culture and operations in the Asia-Pacific region in the following ways:

6.1 Internal Human Resource Management and Development

- Ensure that RANZCO's internal Human Resources policies are non-discriminatory, non-exclusionary, transparent and accountable, including as they apply to, or are applied by, Country Program Offices.

5.2 External Communications

- Ensure that RANZCO's key organisational documents (such as the Constitution, Strategic Framework and Annual Reports) clearly articulate values, principles and work methods that are consistent with Human Rights; and
- Communicate these values, principles and work methods to the public, donors and supporters, implementing partners and the people and communities with whom RANZCO works with.

5.3 Program Planning

- Ensure quality situational analyses are undertaken to identify root causes of eye and other health issues, to form the basis of Program planning;
- Adopt a consultative approach to Program planning to ensure that all stakeholders are suitably informed of appropriate courses of action to increase the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes; and
- Verify and confirm implemented Programs specifically aim to reduce eye and other health related issues.

5.4 Program Implementation

- Ensure suppliers utilised to procure goods and services have organisational values which are consistent with UN Human Rights conventions and principles. RANZCO shall continue to employ non-discriminatory practices when implementing programs and expects associate

partners to uphold and respect ILO core conventions. Embrace and instil a participatory approach to Program implementation to ensure that all stakeholders are readily informed of progress and developments.

5.5 Program Monitoring and Evaluation

- Adopt a participatory approach to Program Monitoring and Evaluation processes to ensure that the perspectives of all stakeholders are heard, understood and given due consideration;
- Create measurable indicators to allow outcomes and outputs to be monitored on a regular basis. Reflect RANZCO's principles of transparency and accountability, by ensuring that results are disseminated, to all stakeholders in a timely and appropriate manner. Periodically assess RANZCO's activities and progress in promoting, protecting, and fulfilling Human Rights obligations.

6. References

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5. United Nations *Millennium development goals*. New York. Available at: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> (Accessed: 30 June 2016).
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7. Alston, P. and Robinson, M. (2005) *Human rights and development: towards mutual reinforcement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
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11. United Nations (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child* New York: United Nations. Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> (Accessed: 18 May 2016).
12. United Nations (1965) *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* New York: United Nations. Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CERD.aspx> (Accessed: 12 July 2016).
13. United Nations (1979) *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* New York: United Nations. Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cedaw.pdf> (Accessed: 14 July 2016).
14. Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade (2010) *Human rights in the Asia-Pacific: Challenges and opportunities*, Canberra: The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia.

7. Record of amendments to this document

Page	Details of Amendment	Date amended
Entire document	Created	03/08/2012
Entire document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed • Minor changes throughout • References updated 	10/2016