

Human Rights Policy

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1. Purpose

Human rights are the basic rights that belong to us all because we are human beings. They have been recognised around the world as the basic standard required for governments, societies and communities to operate in a respectful and peaceful manner. They are the foundation for freedom, justice, peace and respect and are an essential part of any democratic and inclusive society that respects the rule of law, human dignity and equality.

Everyone has the same human rights: men, women, children, rich and poor, all nationalities and faiths. Human rights are about recognising and respecting the dignity of others.

This Policy establishes Council's commitment to ensuring that human rights are embedded in all Council decisions, policies, local laws, services and interactions with our community.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all functions, decisions and activities of Towong Shire Council. It is binding on:

- **Councillors** in their decision-making and community engagement roles;
- **Council employees**, whether permanent, temporary, full-time, part-time or casual;
- **Volunteers, contractors, consultants and agency personnel** engaged to perform work on behalf of Council.

This Policy applies across all areas of Council operations, including but not limited to:

- development and review of policies, strategies and local laws;
- preparation and approval of Council reports and decisions;
- delivery of services, programs and community engagement activities;
- regulatory functions, law enforcement and compliance activities;
- procurement, contracting and partnerships; and
- internal management, people-related processes and organisational practices.

All employees, Councillors and representatives of Council must give proper consideration to human rights and ensure that their actions are compatible with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic).

3. Guiding principles

Council's approach to human rights is guided by the following principles, which reflect the intent of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic) and underpin rights-based practice across all Council activities.

Dignity and Respect

Council recognises the inherent dignity, worth and equality of all people. All decisions, services and interactions must be grounded in respectful treatment of individuals and communities, valuing their perspectives and lived experience.

Equality and Non-Discrimination

Council is committed to upholding the right to equality and ensuring that people are not discriminated against on the basis of personal characteristics, status or circumstances.

Participation

People have the right to contribute to decisions that affect their lives and communities. Council will ensure meaningful, inclusive and accessible participation in engagement activities, policy development and service design.

Transparency and Accountability

Council will conduct its decision-making processes openly and transparently, providing clear reasoning for decisions that may impact human rights.

Proportionality (Reasonable Limitations)

Where a decision or action may limit a human right, the limitation must be lawful, necessary, reasonable and proportionate.

Cultural Rights

Council acknowledges and respects cultural identity as essential to human dignity. Council is committed to protecting the cultural rights of individuals and groups, including the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to maintain their cultural heritage, practices, languages and kinship ties.

Inclusion and Accessibility

Council will design and deliver services, information and environments that are accessible to all people.

Protection of Privacy and Personal Information

Human rights include protecting individuals from unlawful or arbitrary interference with their privacy. Council will handle all personal information in accordance with privacy legislation, ensuring that collection, storage and sharing of information is lawful, necessary and respectful of individual rights.

4. Approach

We aim to achieve Council's commitment to human rights by:

- Meeting the compliance requirements required under Human Rights legislation; and
- Ensuring all Council personnel and their representatives are aware of their responsibilities.

5. Responsibilities

The Senior Management Team is responsible for ensuring the policy is enacted throughout Council's policies and operations.

6. Related documents

6.1. Relevant Legislation and Standards

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following legislation/standards:

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006)*

6.2. Relevant Council Documents and Policies

This procedure should be read in conjunction with the following Council policies/plans/strategies:

- Employee Code of Conduct
- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Privacy policy
- Child Safety and Wellbeing policy

7. Human Rights

The policy gives regard to relevant legislation, principles of natural justice and procedural fairness, community values and Council's resource capacity. It is considered that this policy supports the rights identified in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006).

8. Definitions

Term	Definition
Human Rights	Human rights are the basic entitlements and freedoms that belong to every person, without discrimination. In Victoria, they are set out in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic) and include civil, political, cultural, and personal rights designed to protect human dignity.



Authorised by: _____

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