The Commission uses and encourages others to use the human rights approach:

- linking of decision-making at every level to human rights standards set out in the relevant human rights covenants and conventions
- identification of all relevant human rights involved, and a balancing of rights, where necessary, prioritising those of the most vulnerable people, to maximise respect for all rights and rights holders
- an emphasis on the participation of individuals and groups in decision-making that affects them
- non-discrimination among individuals and groups through equal enjoyment of rights and obligations by all
- empowerment of individuals and groups by enabling them to use rights as leverage for action and to legitimise their voice in decision-making
- accountability for actions and decisions, which enables individuals and groups to complain about decisions that affect them adversely.
Human Rights Commission
Te Kāhui Tika Tangata

The Human Rights Commission was created to provide better protection of human rights in New Zealand. It works for a fair, safe and just society, where diversity is valued, human rights are respected, and everyone is able to live free from prejudice and unlawful discrimination.

The Human Rights Commission's job is to:
- advocate and promote respect for human rights in New Zealand
- encourage harmonious relations between individuals and among the diverse groups in New Zealand
- lead, evaluate, monitor and advise on equal employment opportunities
- provide information to the public about discrimination and to help resolve disputes about discrimination.

There are eight Human Rights Commissioners, the Chief Commissioner, the Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner, the Race Relations Commissioner and five part-time Commissioners.

The Director of Human Rights Proceedings heads up an independent office within the Commission, the Office of Human Rights Proceedings, Te Tari Whakatau Take Tika Tangata. The Director decides whether to provide legal representation for people who have complained of breaches of the Human Rights Act, 1993. Proceedings are heard in the Human Rights Review Tribunal. The Commissioners and the Director must act independently and are supported by staff in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

What are human rights?
Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled. They are expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948 and through international treaties.

Human rights deal with how people live together. In particular, they set out the basis for the relationship between the governed and those who govern.

Examples of human rights include civil and political rights, such as the right to life and liberty, freedom of expression, equality before the law, and the right to be free from discrimination. Social, cultural and economic rights include the right to participate in culture, the right to work, the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to education.

Everyone is equally entitled to human rights without discrimination. With human rights come duties and responsibilities.

What the Commission does
- advocates for human rights
- inquires into infringements of human rights
- makes public statements on human rights and race relations
- promotes understanding of the human rights dimensions of the Treaty of Waitangi
- conducts human rights programmes, activities and education
- publishes guidelines and voluntary codes of practice
- receives and invites public representations on human rights
- brings proceedings and intervenes in court on human rights issues
- reports to the Prime Minister on how New Zealand complies with international human rights standards and legislation
- develops the national plan of action for human rights
- provides a service to deal with enquiries and complaints about discrimination
- through the Office of Human Rights Proceedings offers legal representation at the Human Rights Review Tribunal.

Contact the Human Rights Commission
Telephone (03) 366 7991
Fax (03) 377 3593
Email: Infoline@hrc.co.nz
Website: www.hrc.co.nz
What the Commission does

Goals
- Legislation, policy and practice incorporate human rights standards
- Increased and improved participation of individuals and groups in decision-making that affects them
- Barriers to participation in all areas of society are reduced, and equal employment opportunities promoted
- Improved human rights protections and effective means of accessing them
- Harmonious and improved understanding between the diverse groups in New Zealand
- Improved international and regional understanding of human rights issues and incorporation of human rights standards into institutional arrangements
- A healthy relationship between the Treaty partners which is conducive to the realisation of human rights

Human rights enquiries and complaints service

The Human Rights Commission offers a free, confidential service for members of the public with human rights enquiries and complaints of unlawful discrimination. The Commission’s dispute resolution process is limited to unlawful discrimination complaints. However, the Commission also addresses broader human rights issues. These include human rights issues other than discrimination, for example relating to disability, housing, education, detention, employment and race relations.

International accreditation

The Human Rights Commission is a member of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions and of the International Coordinating Committee of national human rights institutions. It holds A status accreditation, which is the United Nations prerequisite for participation in the Human Rights Council. The accreditation, reviewed every five years, requires the Commission to fully comply with the standards set out in the United Nations Paris Principles. The Paris Principles set out the responsibilities, status and functions of national human rights institutions.

Human Rights and Government

Human Rights and the Community

NZ Action Plan for Human Rights

National Conversation About Work – Listening to New Zealanders

Right to Work

Tika ki te whai mahi

All people in New Zealand have equal employment opportunities and access to decent and productive work.

Race Relations

Whakawhanuanga tanga  ā iwi

Relations between the diverse groups that make up New Zealand society are harmonious, based on equality, mutual respect, and a shared sense of belonging to Aotearoa New Zealand.

Disabled People

Te Huika Haua

Disabled people enjoy full and effective participation in New Zealand society and are respected for who they are.

Te Mana I Waitangi

Human rights and the Treaty of Waitangi

Goal: The Treaty relationship between the Crown and tangata whenua operates effectively at all levels for the protection of the rights of tangata whenua and the benefit of society as a whole.

Kāpititia ā tiaiao

International connectedness

Goal: New Zealand’s security and prospects for sustainable development are strengthened by national and global respect for international human rights law.

Photos from left: Lakeside Festival; Robert Martin, IRC; Stuart and Jean Burnett; Murray Henare, human rights advocate; Teysara Khan, founder Auckland Muslim Girls Association.

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The Commission’s focus

The Commission published Mana ki te Tangata, the New Zealand Action Plan for Human Rights in 2005, following nationwide consultation. Based on the action plan, the Commission has identified six major human rights areas of work and a goal for each one:

Te taiao tika tangata – The human rights environment

Goal: Human rights standards are incorporated in New Zealand’s law, upheld in policy and delivered in practice.

Te hunga haua – Disabled people

Goal: Disabled people are respected for who they are and are able to participate fully in New Zealand society.

Whakawhanuanga tanga ā iwi – Race Relations

Goal: Relations between the diverse groups that make up New Zealand society are harmonious, based on equality, mutual respect, and a shared sense of belonging to New Zealand.

Tika ki te whai mahi – Right to work

Goal: All people in New Zealand have equal employment opportunities and access to decent and productive work.
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- **Te taiaroa tangata – The human rights environment**
  - **Goal:** Human rights standards are incorporated in New Zealand law, upheld in policy and delivered in practice.

- **Te hunga haua – Disabled people**
  - **Goal:** Disabled people are respected for who they are and able to live free from prejudice and discrimination.

- **Whakawhanaungatanga a iwi – Race Relations**
  - **Goal:** Relations between the diverse groups that make up New Zealand society are harmonious, based on equality, mutual respect, and a shared sense of belonging to Aotearoa New Zealand.

- **Tika ki te whai mahi – Right to work**
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Human Rights Environment

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**Te mana i Waitangi – Human rights and the Treaty of Waitangi**

**Goal:** The Treaty relationship between the Crown and tangata whenua operates effectively at all levels for the protection of the rights of tangata whenua and the benefit of society as a whole.

**Kāpititia ā taiao – International connectedness**

**Goal:** New Zealand’s security and prospects for sustainable development are strengthened by national and global respect for international human rights law.

Photos from left: Lakeside Festival; Robert Martin, IHC; Stuart and Jean Burnett; Murray Hines, human rights advocate; Tassyka Khan, founder Auckland Muslim Girls Association.