

Category: Social Procurement  
Finalist: Toowoomba Regional Council

The Toowoomba Regional Council provides gainful employment for individuals with a disability in the local community through its recently established contract with Ability Enterprises.

In April 2012, various groups within the Toowoomba Region founded the Toowoomba Social Procurement Group. The Group was established in partnership with key local social enterprises including Lifeline and the Toowoomba Clubhouse. The Toowoomba Regional Council has seen the development of this group, especially in its foundation period, as a key step in understanding ways the Council could make a difference in the local community through social procurement initiatives.

In September 2012, the Toowoomba Regional Council awarded a waste management contract to Ability Enterprises, a new social enterprise founded by the Toowoomba Clubhouse and employment agency Personnel West. The Council entrusted Ability Enterprises with the gatehouse operation for its 13 waste transfer stations. In this model the enterprise receives payment based on quantity of waste being disposed.

Ability Enterprises was established with the social mission of hiring at least 50% of its employees with special needs. The enterprise currently employs 40 individuals with a disability living in the Toowoomba regional council area. This is 80% of its total staff. At least half of these employees are on a government benefit program and have been out of work for 10 years or more. Ability Enterprise employees are externally supported by key agencies such as the Toowoomba Clubhouse, Lifeline and Personnel West to ensure that their vocational, social inclusion and housing needs are being met.

The Toowoomba Regional Council is now developing strategies to embed social procurement into its policy framework.

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