A research based framework for supported decision making

Everyone has the right to make choices about their own life. Supported decision making is a way to respect this right for people with intellectual disability.

A group of researchers made a Framework for Supported Decision Making. We call this **the Framework**. The Framework aims to guide laws, policies, services, and practice across Australia.

Christine Bigby led the research. She works at the Living with Disability Research Centre at La Trobe University.

The Framework includes nine main ideas. These ideas are called **principles**.

We use plain language to describe the nine principles below. If you would like more detail, you can read the full version of the Framework using the link above. The full version also explains the research behind the principles.

1. Everyone has the right to make decisions

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All adults have the right to make decisions about their own lives and to have those decisions respected.

2. Everyone should get the support they need

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People should get the support they need to make, communicate, and take part in decisions.

3. What people want and like matters

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A person's own wishes, preferences, and rights should guide decisions that affect them.

4. People should not be exploited when they make choices

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Systems and services should have safeguards that protect people from abuse. Everyone should have the right to choose freely, without being pressured, controlled or tricked by others.

5. Put the affected person at the centre of the decision

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Supported decision-making should always start with what the person wants and prefers. This is true for people with all levels of support needs.

6. Find ways to understand the person's wishes

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Most people can say what they want, with support from people who know them well. But sometimes it is hard to understand a person's wishes.

If a person's wishes cannot be clearly understood, decisions should be based on the best understanding of what the person would want. Family members, carers, and supporters should use what they know about the person to help work this out.

7. People have the right to take risks

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We all have the right to take reasonable risks. It is OK to get things wrong. This is true for people with intellectual disability.

Making a decision for someone is sometimes called substitute decision making. This approach should only be used as a last resort. It should only be done when the person is at serious risk of harm.

8. Support should go to people who need it most

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Some people face barriers to getting fair support. For example, a person who is socially isolated might not get the support they need to make their own choices.

People who fund and design services should think about groups of people that don't get the support they need. The needs of these groups should be met first.

9. Nothing about us without us

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People with intellectual disability should help design and fix supported decision making systems. Family and carers should help too.

We trust this resource

We trust this resource because it is:

- Made to help, not for profit

- Made by people who know a lot about the topic
- Made in Australia

We've checked this resource, and you can follow our guide to know if health information is true and right for you.

This resource was made by

Living with Disability Research Centre

The Living with Disability Research Centre does research to help support the social inclusion of people with cognitive disabilities.

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Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability

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In Australia, a Royal Commission is an investigation, independent of government, into a matter of great importance. The Disability Royal Commission was established in April 2019 in response to community concern about widespread reports of violence against, and the neglect, abuse and exploitation of, people with disability.

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