**Jo Watson – SCOPE Victoria**

**Supported Decision Making**

**Are everyone’s voices being heard?**

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| **Approach** | SDM Basic Principles:   1. Everyone can participate in decisions with support; 2. Everyone has responses to things they experience. These responses are often interpreted as preferences by people who know someone well. These preferences can be used as the building blocks of decisions; 3. There is significant value in human beings supporting, and working collaboratively with one another to make decisions; 4. Everyone uses their support networks in making decisions that are difficult for them. |
| **Considerations** | It’s not about individual capacity but the presumption that every human being is communicating all the time and this will include preferences.  It’s more important the amount and type of support someone gets to build preferences into choices.  Those who have a positive view of a person’s capacity to participate in decisions are likely to be more responsive to the focus person.  Where supporter’s have a demonstrated understanding of the communication continuum, it appears likely that they will perceive the person as having capacity to participate in decisions.  People notice more when they work collaboratively.  When someone has no one in their life, family or friends, can paid workers blur the boundaries? Is it realistic, helpful? |
| **Challenges** | Supporters understanding the human communication continuum, interpreting collaboratively as opposed to individually, viewing the focus person ‘beyond their disability’, the kind of decision being made, the nature of the relationship/paid/unpaid/both.  Building networks can be challenging.  People who can exhibit challenging behaviour. |
| **What does this teach us?** | We need to be mindful of people who are uniquely verbal and pay close attention to what they are communicating.  Intentional work to build relationships will be hard and take time when someone has no one and has been socially isolated. It will be worth it!!!  The people around people with complex communication styles will need to have a positive view of a person’s capacity, without it we won’t get anywhere.  Education and information for supporters is so important..  We need to reframe decision making as participating and that preferences will develop into choices |