**Bron’s Thoughts Decision Making Research**

The aim of the research was to investigate best practice supported decision making principles and tools. Over the past few years there have been a number of projects both within Australia and overseas which have focused on various models of supported decision making.

To be able to make your own decisions and to have choice and control over your life is a basic human right. Most people need some type of support to make important decisions in their life. Interdependence is a normal method of decision-making for everyone. People with disability are no different to anyone else and should receive the least intrusive form of support to help them make decisions. There is a need to raise people’s awareness of the rights of people with disability when it comes to decision making and along with those rights comes responsibility. Supported decision making is not unlimited choice – just like the rest of society, there are limits.

Some these that have been identified so far include:

**Capacity & Competency:**

Assume capacity and this includes the perception of others in the person's life

Competency can be learned, influenced, enhanced and suppressed - people need to try things out

Capacity test?

**Co-design approach:**

Using the co-design approach will help identify the real experiences and issues faced by people who require support to make decisions and to ensure that the model we design works for those who need it the most.

Supported decision making is an agreement between the person who needs (and must want) support for decision making & their friends/family/supporters, an

agreement can end at anytime

**Supporters:**

Be clear about the supporters role - they may have other roles in a person’s life but when supporting or facilitating the decision making process they need to respect the person’s 2wishes, preferences & interests. Ultimately the person makes the decision not the supporter.

Supporters aren't paid it's a freely given relationship between the person who needs support for decision making & their supporter(s).

Education, information & resources for potential supporters need to be available so they understand and can self-select in or out. The 'assessment' process should be to facilitate for all participants a process of self-selection. This support, education & assistance need to be multifaceted to include different ethnic groups, different styles of communication & people who are socially isolated. When people do decide to

go ahead and be a supporter further support and information and advice will be necessary.

**Considerations:**

Types of decisions being made

Self- selection process for participants

Introducing a third party to the agreement

Tools need to be interactive, use plain English/symbols

Decision specific

It’s more important about the type of support someone gets to build preferences into choices - we need to reframe decision making as participating and that preferences will build into choices.

Where supporters 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 (eg networks rather than individuals)

**Challenges:**

The legislation that we work under

The different approach to mental incapacity needed to facilitate supported decision making – a broader definition such as Personhood - the wishes and desires of the individual, and the trusting relationship they have with the people in their network

Risks

Unwise decisions & supporters feelings about these decisions

Encouraging others to presume capacity about the person (sometimes this will also include the person as they may not have experienced many opportunities to make decisions)

Fear the supporter may take over the decision making

Family conflicts

Communication style of the person

No family or friends and the need to build a network/circle

People may think it takes too much time and effort to support a person to make their own decisions

**Safeguard:**

Shouldn't overprotect a person with a disability

Often there is a broader support network, more than one person

The role of a Monitor of a Facilitator (paid)

**Advocacy:**

There is a role for advocacy organisations - sources of information & support

Cultural change - develop decision rich environments.