

It's My Choice!

The Principles of Choice

Acknowledgements:

We are indebted to the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs for funding this project and for their support during the project period.

Our reference group has been a constant source of reflection and help and we would very much like to extend our thanks to them.

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Ngila Bevan | People with Disabilities Australia |
| John Chesterman | Office of the Public Advocate, Victoria. |
| Gill Pierce | Carers Victoria |
| Sharon Granek | Women with Disabilities Victoria |
| Jen Hargrave | Women with Disabilities Victoria |
| John McKenna | Independent Consultant and Disability Advocate |
| Stella Koritsas | Wesley Mission |
| Christina David | Doctoral student, RMIT University |

The authors would like to thank Kael Hildebrand, a person with lived experience of disability, who worked as a research assistant collecting data and research material. We would also like to thank the actors and makers of the *It's My Choice!* films, including those who have supported the project behind the scenes, and the following companies for their generous support in production:



The research team have consulted with over 70 people including those with a disability, family carers and those working in and managing services. They have given their time freely and their experience and knowledge have established a knowledge review grounded in people's realities. We are thankful for the sterling work Rosetta Moors has put into the project in varying ways not least arranging and undertaking interviews and transcription of themes.

The production of the resources accompanying this knowledge review have involved a significant number of people. In particular we are thankful to Nilgun Guven, Director of the FOG Theatre along with members of the cast of In Sarah's Own Time, David's Artful Choices and It's not Simple, It's not that Easy. Filmmaker Rachel Edward and the project liaison officer, Jacque Robinson, have both helped in producing the film resource. The expertise of the Inclusion Melbourne editor Nathan Despott and graphic designer Justin Smyrk have been important in the production and distribution of the final resources.

Paul Ramcharan, Daniel Leighton and Carmel Laragy, May 2013.

Volume 1 of 5

It's My Choice! Toolkit

ISBN: 978-0-9922717-9-4
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(2013)
Inclusion Melbourne and
RMIT University
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www.rmit.edu.au/casr

It's My Choice!

Produced By Inclusion Melbourne and RMIT University

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It's My Choice! Film Production

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Director | Nilgun Guven |
| Filmmaker | Rachel Edward |
| Actors | Susan Doyle, John Eslick, Paul Mately |
| Original music | Ryan Granger and Shotgun Studios |
| Creative Producer | Nilgun Guven |
| Assistant | Anthony Edward |
| Production | Lemac Film and Digital Umbershoot |

Suggested citation: Ramcharan, P, Leighton, D, Moors, R, Laragy, C, Despott, N & Guven, N 2013, *It's My Choice! Toolkit*, Inclusion Melbourne/RMIT University, Melbourne.










Funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

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It's My Choice!

The Principles
of Choice

1

| PRINCIPLES OF CHOICE | | |
|----------------------|--|---|
| 1 | I have the right to make choices throughout my day. |  |
| 2 | I have the right to be who I choose to be. |  |
| 3 | I choose my hopes, dreams, and goals. |  |
| 4 | All my choices start with my ideas. |  |
| 5 | I make better choices if I have had a chance to try lots of options. |  |
| 6 | My experiences may be limited by money, experience or what is possible – but they should not be more limited than others just because I have a disability. |  |
| 7 | Let me make my own choices as far as I can. |  |
| 8 | Support me if I need help making my choices or making my choices real. |  |
| 9 | Choice is a journey. It never stops. |  |

Types of Choice

Principle 1

I have the right to make choices throughout my day.
These are called mundane or everyday choices.

Principle 2

I have the right to be who I choose to be.
These are called lifestyle choices.

Principle 3

I can choose what I want, my hopes, dreams, and goals.
These are called pervasive choices.

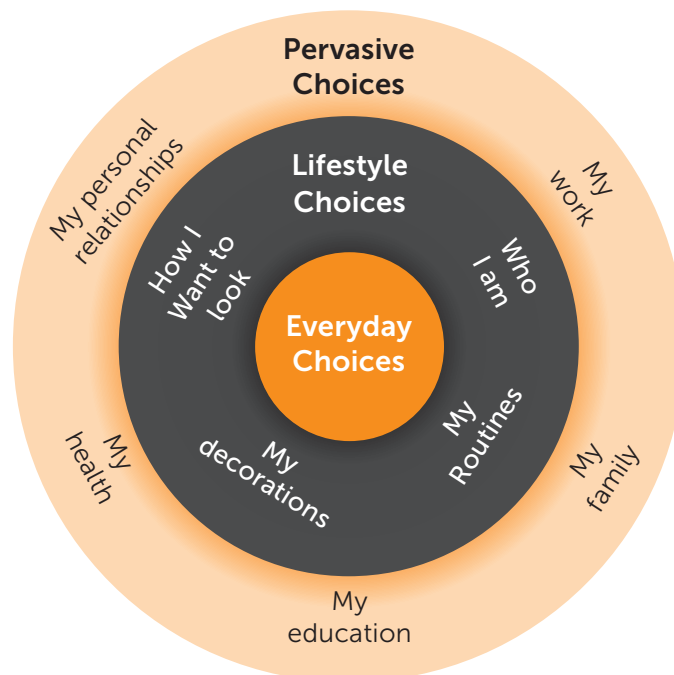
No choices should contradict or conflict with others. Pervasive choice is of a higher order than lifestyle choice, which is of a higher order than everyday choice.

For example, a person wants to eat more and more food – an everyday choice. One dream is to get fit by using a gym. Getting fit is a health need which will affect the rest of their life and is therefore pervasive. Going to the gym is a lifestyle choice about getting fit. The person may have chosen cycling or swimming, for example.

Whilst eating more is the person's choice, it will affect their higher order choice to be fit and their lifestyle choice to go to the gym. Discussion with family or friends or with support workers should make this contradiction clear. Most people need support, reassurance and reinforcement to accomplish their life ambitions and to see how some of their everyday choices can have a negative or positive effect on choices they make about their lifestyle and their dreams. This is no different for people with a disability. Sometimes, everyday choices can become a limitation on accomplishing dreams and people should be made aware of how this limits their ambitions. *Diagram 1* shows the links between the three types of choices.

Diagram 1:

Pervasive, lifestyle and everyday choices should not contradict each other.



Philosophy of Choice

Principle 4

All actions to pursue choices start with me.
I am the source and originator of my own choices.
Choice is diverse.

Diagram 2: The importance of origination



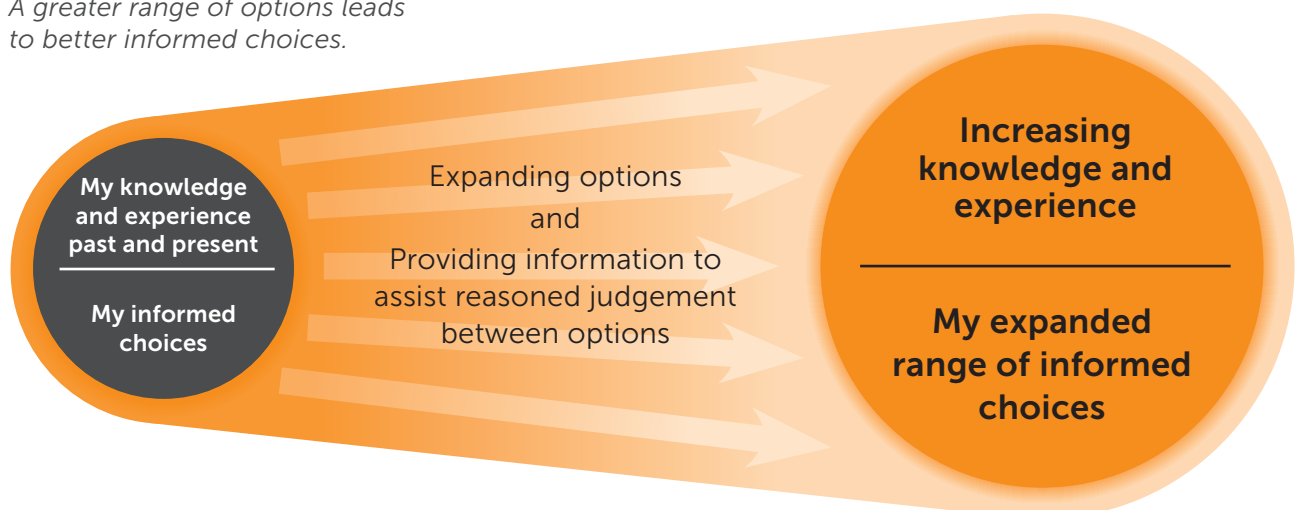
Think about how much more motivated I would be if I were pursuing what I wanted. What I want may have been suggested by others but in the end it is up to me. Think of how the outcomes would be better. Think about how involving me would become easier for you. Think about the fact that I would not be bored and that I would enjoy my choices.

Principle 5

My choices are likely to be greater and more expansive where I have more knowledge and experience to inform them. Building knowledge and experience is important to making choices informed by past experience.

Diagram 3:

A greater range of options leads to better informed choices.

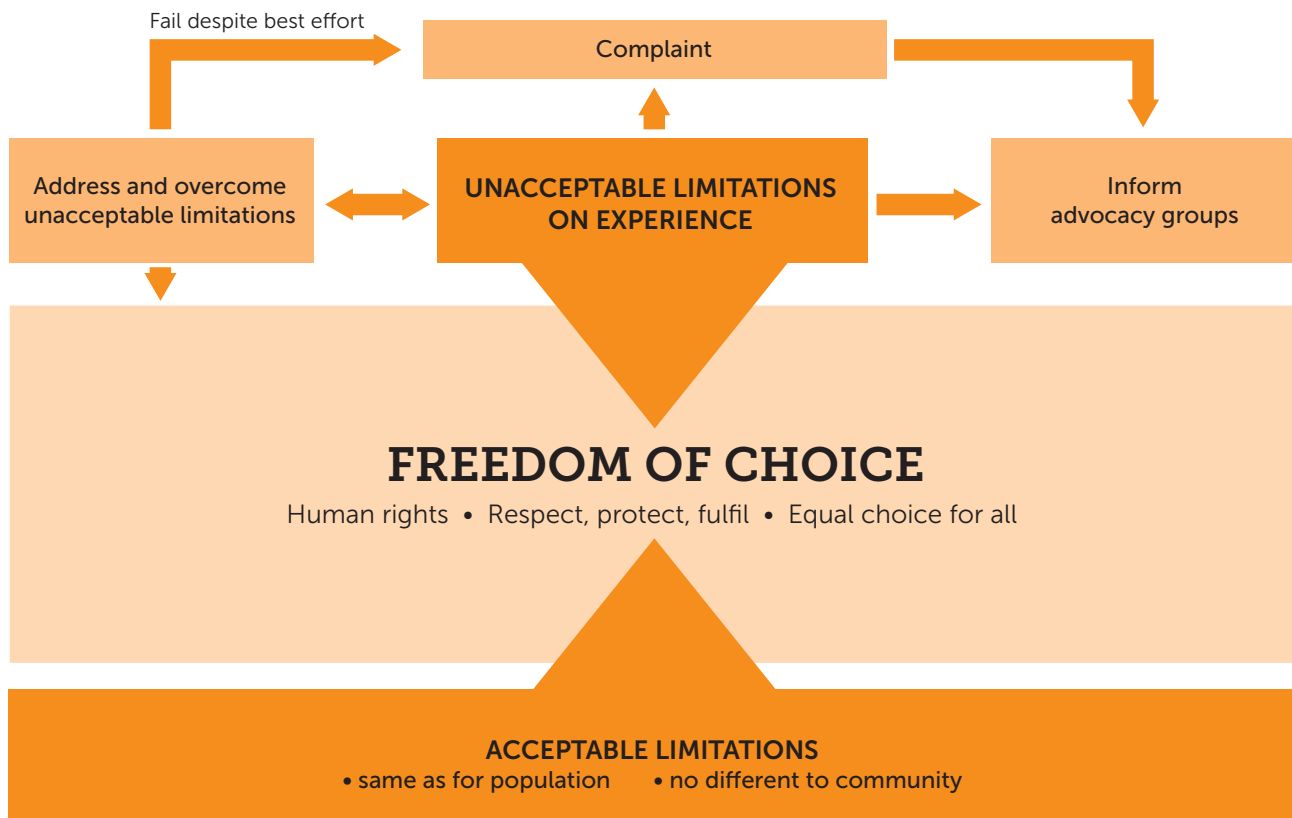


Principle 6

My personal experiences may be limited by money, experience or what is possible.
 Nobody is completely free to choose and pursue any choice they wish.
 What is important is whether the limitations I experience are reasonable or not.

- Based on arguments of discrimination and social justice, limitation on experience should be no greater for me as a person with a disability than it is for others.
- Limitations on my experiences should be no different in form or measure to community 'norms'
- I have equal human rights to everyone else. In making my choices disability discrimination says it is an offense if these human rights are not respected, protected and fulfilled.
- If there are reasonable limitations on my choice I have a right to try and overcome these. I cannot achieve everything I want. All people are limited by their capabilities but striving to achieve the highest level of capability is what makes life meaningful. This may only be achieved where I have dignity of risk.

Diagram 4: Unacceptable and acceptable limitations



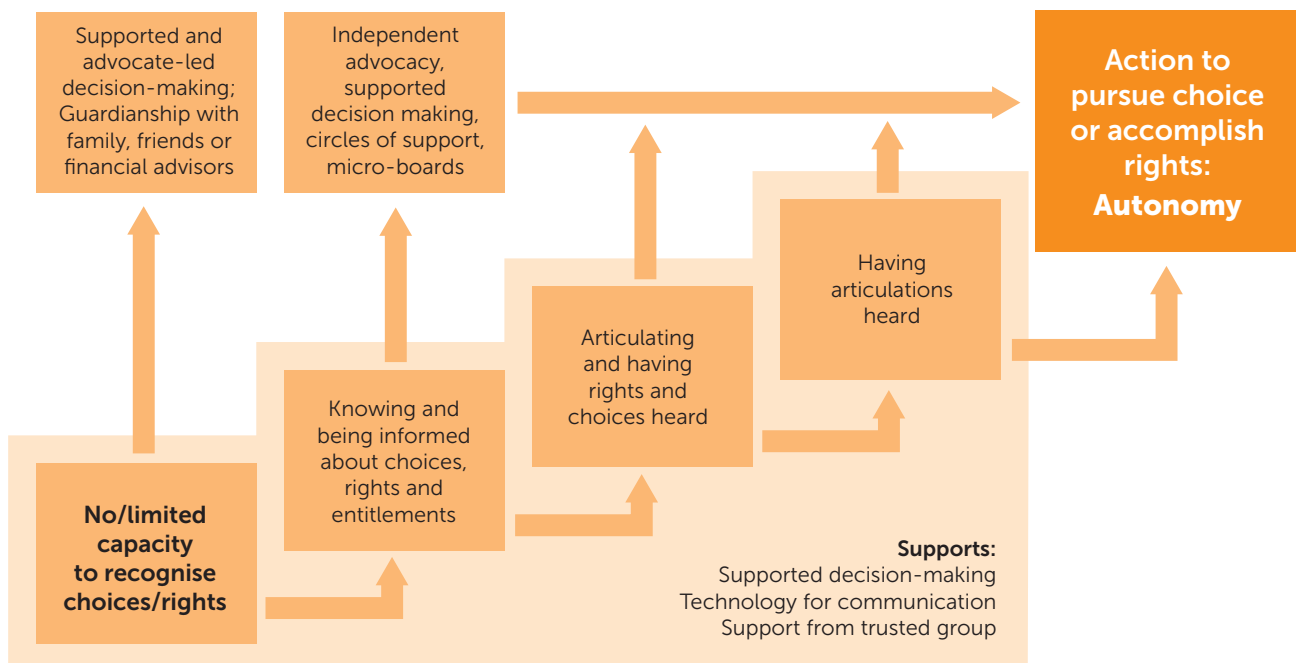
Optimising the person's right to choose

Principle 7

I have the right to exercise my choice to the greatest degree possible without interference or competence-inhibiting support. All support must be competency-enhancing.

- I am not excluded from choice if I am unable to speak for myself. I may need support (technical or personal) and/or advocacy at different times. But that support must not stop me from making the choice myself if I can do so.
- I do **not** need support and/or advocacy to do things I can already do for myself.
- To choose is to discern difference and favour one or more options. For choice to be experienced it should therefore be informed.
- Being informed about choices is not just about placing options in front of a person, nor is it about asking a person to be content with the only available option. More is required for a choice to be considered informed.
- Where I choose I can make my choice with a collective or with an advocate and/or guardian or appointed nominee.

Diagram 5: The need for advocacy and supported decision-making.



(adapted from Ramcharan, P., Nankervis, K., Strong, R. and Robertson, A. (2009) Experience of restrictive practices: A view from people with disabilities and family carers. Melbourne: Department of human Services).

People may need differing levels of support and advocacy. People who cannot conceptualise choice and rights are likely to need some formal advocacy or substitute decision-making arrangement. Unless the person can pursue things wholly independently they will need advocacy, supported decision-making or decision-making groups such as circles or micro-boards.

My Choice Journey

There are two parts to the choice journey. First there is the *nature of the choice journey itself* and second is the *support required during the choice journey*.

Principle 8

Support for choice-making can take place where necessary at several places in my journey: I can learn from others by discussion, by seeking guidance, listening to other people's experiences and discussing challenges.

- a. Identify, with help if needed, what my likely choices might be if I am a person who cannot speak for myself.
- b. Know more about what alternatives and options I have, so that I can select my preference.
- c. Plan with me what steps to take on the journey to achieving my choices and goals.
- d. Plan my steps and identify what services and supports might best help me achieve my goals.
- e. Identify limitations and clarify how to address and overcome these.
- f. Help me choose how best to manage my DisabilityCare funding and payments to service and support providers so that I move towards making my choices come true.
- g. Support me to review where I am up to, whether things are working and what can be done better.

Principle 9

Choice is a continuing journey and not just a one-off action.

- a. What I **want** tells others what I **need** to help me move towards my key life and lifestyle choices.
- b. If I am moving towards a goal then I am growing. As I grow I fulfil my capabilities and this gives my life meaning.
- c. As my life changes, so too can my choices and pathways.
- d. The goal is *not the only option left or the last cab off the rank*. What I say I want tells you what I need. Choice therefore means planning achievable steps to get to my chosen goal. That is the standard against which formal services will be judged.



Logo of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) with the text "National Association of the Deaf" written in reverse.

Volume 1 of 5

ISBN 978-0-9922717-9-4



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