

# The role of supporters

## Decision-making support for people with cognitive disability

Information sheet for disability support workers

Supporters are people who listen and promote the person's will and preferences (i.e., what a person wants, doesn't want, likes, dislikes, prefers to do). Direct support workers can be supporters.

### A supporter might be needed to:

- Gather and understand information about the decision, and present this information to the person in a way he or she understands.
- Help the person work out the options.
- Help the person to work out the benefits and risks of each option.
- Help the person to work out and understand the outcomes of a decision.
- Make a plan for turning the decision into a reality.

It is good to have a group of supporters, rather than just one person.

### A supporter (this could be you!):

- Has a trusting relationship with the person.
- Respects the person's independence and sense of worth.
- Respects the person's decision-making style.
- Knows the person well and wants to keep learning about the person.
- Can ask others to help with the decision-making process, if that is what the person with disability wants.
- Can spend as much time as needed to support decision-making.<sup>1</sup>

### Characteristics of an effective supporter

- Adapts support to the person.
- Focuses on the person's will and preferences.
- Is neutral and doesn't influence the decision.
- Doesn't limit the person's options – this means all the different possibilities are explained.
- Respects the person's decision whether or not they agree with it.



### Remember

- A supporter listens and promotes the person's will and preferences (i.e., what a person wants, doesn't want, likes, dislikes, prefers to do).
- A supporter helps collect information so that the person can make a decision.
- Sometimes a group of supporters are involved in the decision-making process.
- The role of the supporter can change depending on the decision being made.

<sup>1</sup> Office of the Public Advocate South Australia. (2011). *Developing a model of practice for supported decision making: Background information to assist the facilitation of agreements*. Retrieved October 12, 2015, from [http://www.opa.sa.gov.au/resources/supported\\_decision\\_making](http://www.opa.sa.gov.au/resources/supported_decision_making).