

Equality, Capacity and Disability

Submission from Self Advocacy Group – Express Yourself

Based in South Australia, supported by Minda Incorporated

Do you think this new plan of having supporters and representative will help you to make your own decisions in a better way?

All of our self advocacy group agreed that sometimes it's hard to make a decision and support helps.

We think supporters and representatives are really important because they can explain things to us, especially when we are sick, because they can explain what the doctor means. They can also explain what will happen if we make a decision, for example what the consequences are of our decisions.

Supporters and representatives are good because they can help us to speak up for ourselves.

We think supporters need to know what is important to us before they can help us make a decision.

Can you think of any safeguards to have in the new plan?

We only want supporters to be able to help us to make decisions about certain things in our lives – not everything.

We think it should be the responsibility of supporters/representatives to help us reach our goals if we can't do them straight away. For example, if we want to make a decision to go on an overseas holiday but don't have the money right now then it should be up to facilitators to help us make a savings plan to reach that goal – our decisions shouldn't be forgotten.

There should be a complaints process if our supporter or representative isn't listening to us. We should be able to go and see someone or fill in a form if we want to make a complaint.

Comments on Voting

We think that all people with a disability have the right to vote. 9 members of our self advocacy group voted for the first time last year in the federal election. Some of us were over 60 years old and had never been told that we had the right to vote until we did self advocacy training! Most of us had a very good experience voting. Our support workers helped us to get to a polling booth and ask the volunteers working at the booth to help us make our vote so our support workers didn't influence our vote. The volunteers at the polling booth read out the form to us, helped us to fill it in, and showed us where to put the form when we were finished.

We think it's important that the electoral commission are flexible with people who rely on support to get to a polling booth – if our support doesn't show up on the day we should not be fined for not

being able to vote as long as we let the electoral commission know as soon as possible that our support did not arrive.

Comments on Access to Justice

None of us have had much to do with courts. We do think it would be important though to have someone there to help you understand the questions you're asked and what's happening.