

## **Empowering Autonomy Through Risk Enablement: Olivia's Decision Adventures**

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### **Short Abstract**

Olivia's transition from having a Guardian to becoming her own decision-maker exemplifies the profound impact of risk enablement on personal autonomy and quality of life. This presentation explores Olivia's journey and underscores the critical role of risk enablement in supported decision-making.

Risk enablement prioritises individuals to make their own choices, even when those choices involve certain risks. For Olivia, this approach has been transformative, allowing her to embrace autonomy and actively shape her life. After undergoing a rigorous court process to regain her decision-making rights, Olivia experienced the balance between managing risks and maintaining personal freedom. Her story highlights how, rather than eliminating risks, it is crucial to manage them thoughtfully to foster independence and personal growth.

This presentation will detail Olivia's experience with risk enablement, her top tips for being a great decision supporter and share examples of supports that assisted her to make recent decisions.

Marissa has journeyed alongside Olivia in multiple roles as a supporter. Marissa will highlight right-fit supports, the process of supported decision making and practical steps to enable risk.

By involving decision supporters, Olivia continues to make informed decisions, navigate challenges and achieve a greater sense of control.

Key takeaways include the importance of individual autonomy, the value of a supported decision making framework, and the need for clear communication. Olivia's journey serves as a compelling lived experience story for other decision makers, family members and decision supporters, professionals and policymakers, demonstrating how enabling risk can profoundly impact personal empowerment and dignity in decision-making.

### **Long Abstract**

Olivia's transition from having a Guardian to becoming her own decision-maker provides a compelling story of the impact of risk enablement on personal autonomy and quality of life. This presentation examines Olivia's journey, illustrating how the practice of risk enablement has been pivotal in enhancing her sense of autonomy and decision-making capabilities.

## **Understanding Risk Enablement in Supported Decision-Making**

Risk enablement is integral to supported decision-making, focusing on empowering individuals to make their own choices even when those choices involve certain risks. The NDIS Supported Decision-Making Policy (NDIS, 2020) advocates for this approach, emphasising that rather than eliminating all risks, it is vital to assess and manage them. This framework supports individuals in actively shaping their lives. For Olivia, taking risks helped her live the life she wanted to live.

Latrobe University's "Enabling Risk" resource (Latrobe University, 2022) underscores the importance of a balanced approach to risk management. It highlights that thoughtful risk management, rather than risk avoidance, fosters independence and personal growth. Olivia's story aligns with this perspective, demonstrating how enabling risk has empowered her to embrace autonomy and navigate her life more effectively.

### **Olivia's Journey: A Story of Risk Enablement**

Olivia's journey from having a Guardian to regaining her decision-making rights through a court process illustrates the practical application of risk enablement. Her experience reflects the necessity of balancing risk management with the preservation of personal freedom. By receiving tailored support and involving her decision-making team, Olivia has been able to make informed decisions and experience significant personal growth.

The presentation will provide detailed insights into Olivia's experience, including examples of recent decisions she has made and the practical support strategies employed. Marissa, a decision supporter, will discuss effective tailored support and the practical steps involved in enabling risk.

### **Research Insights and Practical Frameworks**

Dr. Jo Watson's research (Watson, 2018) emphasizes the importance of supporting individuals in making informed decisions while managing risks. Watson highlights that enabling individuals to take risks, when appropriately managed, is crucial for fostering autonomy and enhancing quality of life. Olivia's experience exemplifies this, demonstrating how managing rather than avoiding risks can significantly impact personal empowerment.

Dr. Christine Bigby's research on supported decision-making (Bigby, 2020) supports the notion that effective decision-making involves a collaborative process that respects individual preferences and values while managing risks. Bigby's findings highlight that balancing risk and autonomy is essential for promoting independence.

Professor Sally Robinson's work (Robinson, 2019) on autonomy and risk further reinforces the importance of allowing individuals to make decisions involving risk. Robinson illustrates that respecting individuals' rights to take risks is fundamental to preserving their dignity and self-worth.

Dr. Michelle Browning's research (Browning, 2021) provides practical strategies for supported decision-making, emphasizing clear communication, ongoing support, and regular reviews. Browning's work highlights that these elements are crucial for effective risk enablement, as

seen in Olivia's experience where continuous support and tailored strategies have been instrumental in her decision-making process.

## **Key Takeaways**

The presentation will highlight several key takeaways from Olivia's journey and research:

1. **Respecting Individual Autonomy:** Empowering individuals to make their own choices, even when those choices involve risks, is essential for promoting personal autonomy and dignity. Olivia's experience demonstrates how risk enablement can enhance personal freedom and quality of life.
2. **Quality Decision Support:** Effective supported decision-making requires great knowledge of the person's will and preference, and commitment to act. Right-fit support and the involvement of decision supporters are critical to ensuring informed decision-making.
3. **Capability and communication:** Olivia's journey underscores the importance of building capability over time and supporting communication and education in the decision-making process.
4. **Practical Strategies for Risk Enablement:** Research highlights various strategies for implementing risk enablement effectively, including managing risks thoughtfully, involving decision supporters, and making sure the decision maker stays at the centre of the process.

Olivia's story offers valuable lived experience for decision-makers, family members, decision supporters, professionals, and policymakers. It illustrates how enabling risk can profoundly impact personal empowerment and dignity in decision-making processes, providing practical lessons for fostering autonomy and quality of life.