A quasi-experimental study of supported decision-making training for the Australian aged care workforce

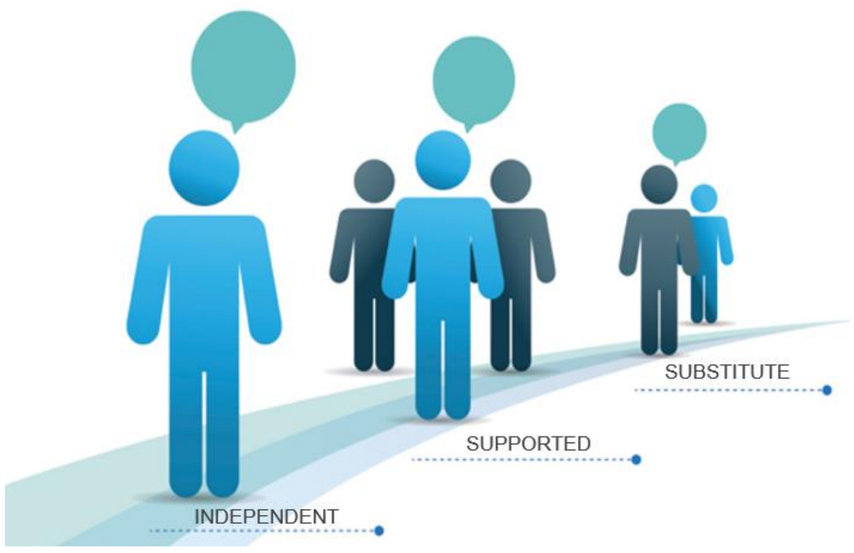
Building Capacity for Supported Decision-Making for People Living with Dementia and Acquired Disability (The BUDDY Project)

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Background

- Supported decision-making has been identified as an important component in meeting requirements under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Supported decision-making is the process by which a person with a disability is enabled to make or communicate decisions about personal and legal matters.
- Law, policy and practice is changing towards supported decision-making, with substitute decision-making only a last resort.
- The BUDDY project was funded to co-design training with lived experience experts for aged care staff.



Why is this important?

- The Aged Care Act 2024 and Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards create requirements for supported decision-making in aged care.[1]
- The aged care workforce are comprised of diverse staff, who come from a range of disciplines, training and educational and cultural backgrounds.

Research Questions

- Can a combination of an **in-person workshop** (4 hours) and **follow-up online mentoring** (3 x 30 mins) delivered with an adult learning approach result in increased knowledge, confidence and self-reported practice in supported decision-making?

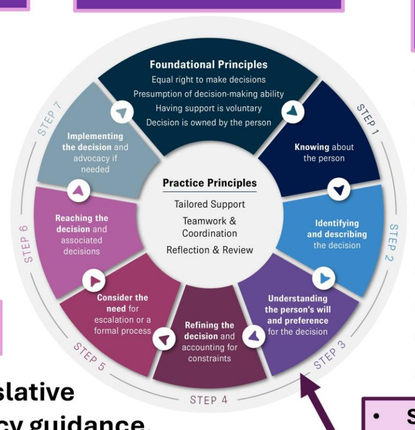
Methods

- The training methods incorporate lived experience videos, case scenarios and anonymous real-time quizzes, within an overarching adult learning approach.

Experiential Training Materials

- Slides & Facilitator Guide
- Participant Workbook
- Lived Experience Videos
- Experiential Activities
- Progressive Quizzes
- Case Scenarios

SDM Practice Framework & Practice Tools



Advanced Practice Online Modules

- SDM principles
- Human rights basis
- Decision-making & the brain
- Effective communication
- SDM in practice (Part 1)
- SDM in practice (Part 2)
- Aged Care Act requirements
- State & Territory laws
- Aged care worker roles
- Positive approach to risk

Policy Guidelines

Human rights, legislative requirements, policy guidance, self-audit tools

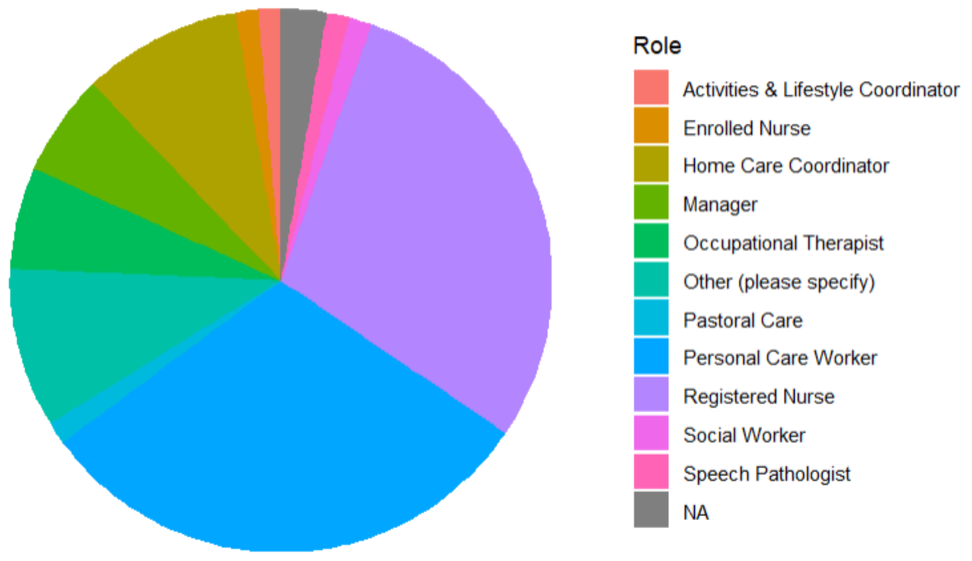
- SDM Practice Framework
- Decision Mapping Tool
- SDM Reflection Tool

- The evaluation methods include measures of **knowledge**, **confidence**, and **self-reported decision-support practice**, during a pre-training phase (time 0 – time 1) and a post-training phase (time 1 – time 3).

Results

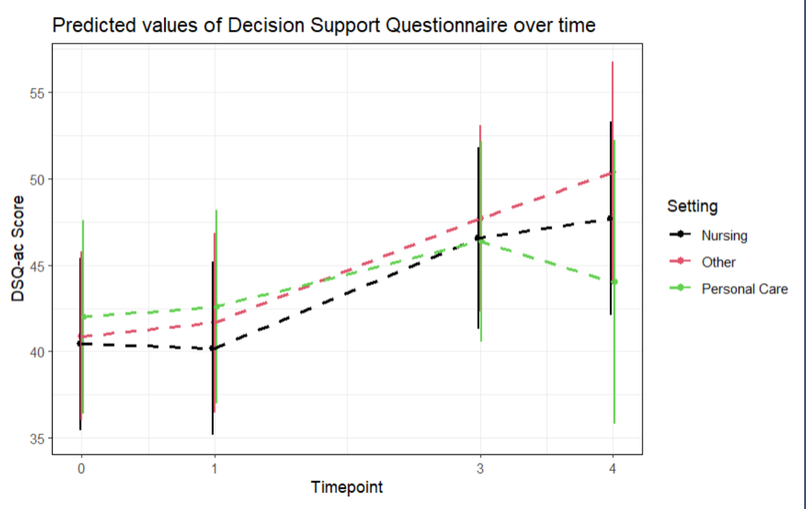
Participant Demographics

- 127/143 (88.8%) female
- 111/144 (77.1%) residential care setting
- 53/143 (37.1%) speak English at home



Training Outcomes

- Training has been implemented and preliminary data collected from eight residential and home care sites/regions (n=120 participants).
- Supported decision-making confidence, knowledge and self-reported practices showed increases during the post-training phase.



Time 0 = enrolment, Time 1 = pre-workshop, Time 2 = post-workshop, Time 3 = post-mentoring, Time 4 = 8 week follow up

- "One of the most valuable parts of the workshop was the role-play activity, where we experienced situations from a resident's point of view. We used equipment that simulated impaired vision while making choices presented by a support worker. This helped me understand how difficult it can be for residents to hear, see, understand information, and make decisions." (Training participant)
- Further qualitative evaluation will explore staff perceptions of the acceptability and feasibility of the training workshop and follow up mentoring sessions.

Policy & Practice Implications

- The Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards create new requirements for aged care providers.
- Training is required to enable aged care staff to understand and implement high-quality supported decision-making.
- Policies and procedures require updating, so that staff are able to implement supported decision-making.
- Teamwork and coordination is required to ensure appropriate role clarity for aged care staff in supported decision-making, with escalation to senior clinical and management staff as needed.

References

1. Department of Health Disability and Ageing. Aged Care Providers Policy. Canberra: DHDA; 2026. https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/2026-04/aged-care-providers-policy.pdf

The authors acknowledge the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, and the Medical Research Future Fund, who provide funding for this project.

For more info about the BUDDY project: email buddy-project@neura.edu.au.