Handout 8: Empowerment through Client Oriented Service Delivery

The way that services support people with a disability has changed over time. The Federal Disability Services Act (1986) and the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) have been important in leading and supporting these changes.

Early history of service delivery was based on a custodial care model. This was because society believed that people with a disability needed to be looked after by others because they did not know how to look after themselves or what was good for them. This meant that people with a disability were powerless in determining how they wanted to live.

Today, service delivery is increasingly more client oriented. This is based on the philosophy that people with a disability should have as much say in their own lives as they are able. If they are not able to make decisions about their lives due to the level of the disability, they have family and other advocates who make those decisions. The role of the service provider is to support the person or their advocate to identify their options, assist in planning how to achieve their goals, and provide the type of service that will meet these goals.

This can be challenging for services because they may not always agree with the person's goals, or they may have to do things differently than they are used to. It also may take more time to support the person to make decisions.