

"I would love to see a person with a disability working alongside every single politician. I just think it would be a better world" **Colin Hiscoe, Reinforce Self Advocacy Group**

Consumer participation occurs at different levels within organisations. The following table is a useful tool which can be used to measure and reflect on the different levels of participation within organisations.

Levels of Participation

High	Full Control	Consumers handle the entire job of planning, policy making and managing a service, project or programme, e.g. Disabled Persons Organisations.
	Delegation	Consumers hold majority of seats on committees with delegated powers to make decisions.
	Partnership	Planning and decision-making responsibilities are shared e.g. through joint committees.
	Advisory	Organisation presents a plan and invites some feedback. Prepared to modify plan only if absolutely necessary.
	Consultation	Consumers are consulted through surveys and forums feedback is considered but they have no power to influence decisions.
	Information	Consumers receive information about an organisation's plans but have no input, e.g. consumer participation policies, use of volunteers, etc.
Low	None	Consumers told nothing.

Adapted from Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation developed in 1969

Just to make things more confusing . . . yet another table!

The following table was developed by the Queensland University of Technology to provide real life examples of how different degrees of consumer participation relates to the work of your organisation on all levels of work.:

Degree of Participation (High to Low)	Explanation	Individual Worker Level	Service or Program Level	Organisation or Management Level
Consumer Control	Consumers make the decisions	An older person directs the activities of their home care worker	An activity program for older people is created & managed by the clients	An aged care facility is owned & operated as a cooperative of all
Partnership	Decisions are made jointly by consumers and workers	A youth worker and client together identify priority issues and agree on a plan of support to achieve these over time	A team of youth workers and homeless young people design and produce a resource guide for young people sleeping rough	The management committee of youth support service must include two client representatives, and at least half the committee members must be
Consultation	Consumer views are sought and incorporated into decision making	A housing worker seeks feedback from tenants on their satisfaction with the support provided	A meeting is organized for tenants and potential tenants to provide feedback on a new funding	Management committee has an annual meeting with tenants of the service to receive feedback
Information Seeking	Workers seek information from consumers	A disability support worker asks a client about the timing of various activities during their day	An accommodation support service creates a suggestion box for consumer feedback	A disability employment agency undertakes a satisfaction survey of ex-clients as
Information Giving	Information is provided to consumers	A refuge worker gives information about consumer rights as a tenant	A poster describing service standards is prominently displayed in the refuge	The decision making structure of a crisis housing organisation is

The table can be used as a tool to review, reflect and explore ideas to support consumer participation of people with cognitive disabilities within your organisation.

² Developing Your Organisation: Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, QLD 2006