With the nature of disability services changing, the Disability Services Commission is developing a series of position papers to inform sector discussion and progress. The papers reflect the Commission’s point of view and are working documents that will be updated as required.

**Definition**

Contemporary services are those where people with disability can exercise choice about service delivery and funding. This allows them to have control of their lives and the services that support them. Individuals can make informed choices because they are provided with information about options and advocacy support. The Commission works in partnership with the disability services sector to promote and foster contemporary services.

Contemporary sector organisations have management structures that facilitate choice, consent and decision-making. There is an investment in informal networks and the community, which allows for the increased involvement of people with disability, families and carers.

There is a focus on achieving positive results, effectiveness and outcomes – but with clear standards so performance can be managed. Policy and services are continuously improved, informed by robust evidence and research. Both are developed and implemented by a skilled workforce.

**Purpose**

Over many years, successive consultations have found people achieve better outcomes when they can exercise genuine control over their lives, while services deliver quality outcomes. Good governance and service providers with the capacity and capability to meet consumers’ needs are essential. This document is used by the Commission to provide guidance when considering State Government investment in supports and services.

**Key features**

The Commission considers that contemporary services:

- are designed and directed by the person and/or family and carers
- are individualised, identify a person’s strengths and then builds on those strengths
- protect and promote human rights
- optimise and promote inclusion in the community
- promote learning, growth and development
- are flexible, responsive and change with a person’s needs
- are based on effective planning and include formal and informal supports
- are responsive to family and carer needs.
In practice this would include:

- Supports and services that promote a person’s capacity to have an ordinary and healthy life, while also being culturally and age appropriate.
- Good links or partnerships with community-based services and other government departments and stakeholders.
- Supports and services provided by organisations that support human rights and comply with legal frameworks.
- Services and supports that assist people to be involved in the community in a meaningful way. This could include tools and equipment for people to participate in the community, and supports and services that assist the person to develop connections, networks and relationships. Informal and unpaid relationships are important and recognised.
- Supports and services that provide the person with opportunities for life-long learning and development. This includes assisting people to develop skills, as well as during times of transition.
- Supports and services informed by evidence, trends and research.
- Innovative models of support and services.
- Supports and services that provide value for money, are demand-driven and financially accountable.

Reform drivers
The Commission reached this point of view based on a range of analyses, consultations and policy inputs, detailed below:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Economic Audit Committee discussion paper 2009
- Shut Out 2009
- Count Me In
- Productivity Commission Report into Long Term Disability Scheme (NDIS) 2011
- Disability Professional Services Review (2011)
- National Disability Strategy
- Quality Management Framework Consultation (2012)
- Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy.

Collaboration and partnership among government, providers, consumers and other agencies is critical to the success of ensuring better outcomes for people with disability.