



Legal Information Needs of Older People

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Contents

Contents	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Executive Summary	iv
Part 1 Literature Review	1
Introduction.....	1
Scope of the literature review.....	1
Structure of the report	1
Older people in Australia.....	2
Women	2
Culturally and linguistically diverse older people (CALD).....	2
Indigenous Australians.....	3
Rural and geographically isolated.....	3
Topics of information needed by older people	3
Legal information needs.....	4
Knowledge of services and information	4
Knowledge of legal services and information.....	5
Information acquisition.....	5
Key findings and points.....	6
Gender	6
Culturally and linguistically diverse older people (CALD).....	7
Indigenous older people	7
Information technology	8
Legal information acquisition.....	9
Barriers to information acquisition	9
Characteristics of older people	9
Characteristics of service providers.....	10
Characteristics of information	10
Barriers to legal information acquisition.....	10
Characteristics of older people	10
Characteristics of legal service providers.....	11
Barriers to use of complaint procedures.....	11
Information provision strategies	11
Guidelines for information provision.....	12
Strategies for specific target groups	13
Culturally and linguistically diverse older people.....	13
Aboriginal older people	13
Older people living in remote areas.....	14
Disabled.....	14
Legal information provision.....	14
Information provision to lawyers	14
Conclusions.....	15
Notes	15
References.....	19

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This literature review aims to promote the improved dissemination of legal information to older people. It examines the legal information needs of older Australians and the most effective ways of providing information to them. Very little material, however, is available on older people's legal information needs and seeking behaviour. For this reason, this review includes reports and articles that look at information needs and the sources used in other areas, particularly health.

Although an extensive literature search was conducted, the material included in this review is selective rather than exhaustive. It contains reports and articles cited in major Australian databases.

The report is divided into two parts. Part 1—the literature review—presents the key findings based on the material. Part 2 presents summaries for some of the key articles and reports cited in the literature review. The executive summary contains the key findings and points from Part 1.

Key points and findings

The legal information needs of older people

Older people find it difficult to identify what they need or want to know about their legal rights. Studies on the legal needs of older people found that they need information on the legal aspects of:

- ◆ Accommodation and housing e.g. nature of tenancy, rights of renters
- ◆ Health related issues e.g. advanced health care directives
- ◆ Financial and consumer related legal issues e.g. eligibility for services
- ◆ Discrimination related issues e.g. employment, provision of services
- ◆ Elder abuse issues e.g. psychological and financial abuse and neglect
- ◆ Grandparenting issues
- ◆ Substitute decision-making and end of life issues e.g. wills and probate.

They also need information on where and how to make a complaint when dealing with issues related to the above topics.

Older people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, Aboriginal older people, the socially isolated, and those living in remote areas need information on similar topics but their priorities may differ and their needs may be stronger.

Awareness and knowledge of services and information

- ◆ Many older people are unaware that they have information needs. They have a low awareness of services and the sources of information available to them. In particular, there is low awareness of and knowledge about legal issues and legal services and information sources.
- ◆ Older people are unaware of their legal rights and of the increasing amount of legislation which has been enacted to strengthen these rights.
- ◆ Their knowledge of enduring powers of attorney and advanced health directives is low.

Awareness and knowledge is lower among the following groups of older people:

- ◆ the 'decisional dependent', that is, older people who are willing to give control of their affairs to other people
- ◆ those with lower incomes and wealth
- ◆ Aboriginal people
- ◆ those who are disabled
- ◆ those who are from CALD backgrounds
- ◆ some who live in rural and remote areas.

Information acquisition

Many older people, like the population as a whole, do relatively little information seeking when they are facing a problem or critical situation. Often only one source is approached.

In addition, many do not seek information until it is needed—"until the time comes". For example, many think there is no need to worry about enduring power of attorney or an advanced health directive until later in life, or they believe their family will take care of issues such as substitute decision-making.

In retrospect, however, older people often wished they had sought more information before "the time came". Other key findings about information acquisition include:

- ◆ Level of education, income, cultural background and education influence the number of information acquisition activities and the sources used.
- ◆ Commonly used information sources are:
 - family and friends
 - face-to-face oral information followed up by written information
 - local newspapers and large city dailies
 - magazines
 - telephone
 - professionals e.g. doctors, chemists
 - local council

- radio
- brochures and pamphlets.
- ◆ Preferred/valued sources and channels for legal information include:
 - lawyers
 - family and friends
 - a professional from their own cultural group.

Barriers to information acquisition

Barriers to information acquisition can arise from the characteristics of older people themselves or from the characteristics of information providers.

Barriers associated with the characteristics of older people include:

- ◆ reluctance to think about death and disabilities and the associated issues
- ◆ low literacy levels among both English speakers and those from a non-English speaking background
- ◆ lack of confidence in enforcing their rights
- ◆ perceptions that the law is disempowering and cannot solve their problems
- ◆ fear that lawyers may act against their interests.

Barriers can also result from the characteristics of information providers. These may include:

- ◆ high costs
- ◆ stereotypes about older people
- ◆ a lack of interest by legal practitioners in older clients
- ◆ lack of knowledge about older people or the legal issues they face
- ◆ lack of legal aid services.

Barriers that limit older people's use of available complaint procedures include:

- ◆ reluctance to complain
- ◆ lack of awareness of how to make a complaint
- ◆ fear of retributions from service providers.

Information provision strategies

As many older people do not realise they have legal information needs, it is necessary to take a proactive approach when promoting services. Providers should help to make older people aware of their needs, for example, the importance of making arrangements for end of life contingencies.

In addition, the diversity of older people means that it is important to select specific target groups/segments and develop different messages and strategies for each group.

There is general agreement on which information provision strategies are most effective: face-to-face methods are recommended by both older people and by providers. These should be supplemented by printed information. In addition, local newspapers, presentations, radio (particularly talkback radio), telephone information services, and television are recommended.

Additional strategies for dissemination of information to older people about legal issues include:

- ◆ formal talks from experts
- ◆ pamphlets and brochures
- ◆ a public education campaign to raise awareness of issues such as enduring powers of attorney and legal rights.
- ◆ a specialist legal service for older people.

Regardless of the dissemination method selected, it should ensure:

- ◆ confidentiality
- ◆ reasonable costs which are known ahead of time
- ◆ lawyers who demonstrate friendliness, warmth, ability to communicate and a respectful attitude
- ◆ lawyers from different cultural backgrounds.

Conclusions

Providing information to older people is complex because of the diversity of the group and many older people's low perception of their needs. Many different pathways to information need to be provided. There has, however, been limited empirical evidence on the effectiveness of different methods and strategies. Further research is needed in this area and on when older people need legal information, how they acquire it and what they do with the information when it is provided.

Part 1 Literature Review

Introduction

As a group older people are economically and socially disadvantaged. Legal information can help alleviate this disadvantage and enable older people to remain independent; it can aid older people, their families and carers in making decisions and choices.¹

This literature review aims to promote the improved dissemination of legal information to older people. It examines the legal information needs of older Australians and the most effective ways of providing information to them.

Scope of the literature review

Ten years ago there was a limited amount of information about older Australians' information needs and their information seeking behaviour. This has changed. Several major reports have been commissioned and numerous articles written. Very little material, however, is available on the legal information needs of older people and the way they seek it out. For this reason, this review includes reports and articles that look at information needs and the sources used in other areas, particularly health.

Although an extensive literature search was conducted, the material included in this review is selective rather than exhaustive. It contains reports and articles cited in major Australian databases. The focus, therefore, is on the Australian experience.

Structure of the report

The report is divided into two parts. Part 1—the literature review—provides background statistics and information on older people in Australia, describes the scope of the material examined, and presents the key findings based on the material. The findings are presented in three sections, each of which has a subsection on the legal aspects of the topic:

- ◆ Awareness of information and information needs
- ◆ Information sources used and preferred
- ◆ Potential methods of information provision.

Part 2 presents summaries of some of the key articles cited in the literature review.

Older people in Australia

In its publication *Older Australians at a Glance*,² the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) defines "older people" as those aged 65 and over.³ According to the AIHW, the number of older Australians is increasing rapidly from 1.9 million in 1991 to an expected 3 million in 2011 and 4.2 million in the year 2021. In addition, the proportion of the population aged 65 years or older is expected to increase from 12 per cent in 1997 to between 21 per cent and 22 per cent by the year 2031.⁴

The elderly are an extremely diverse group. The term "older people" groups together people who are up to 40 years or more apart in age. The differences in education, life events, health and values between those in their 60s and those, for example, in their 90s are large. For these reasons, it is important to avoid assumptions and stereotypes.

Many other characteristics differentiate older people from each other, for example, their gender, cultural and racial background, extent of mobility, where they live and their living arrangements. Each of these characteristics is important in determining their information needs and the most effective ways to meet those needs. In this review, particular attention is given to the groups listed below.

In addition, many of the characteristics associated with older aged Australians, such as the distrust of new technologies, are partly a function of education and experience rather than age.⁵ Therefore, it is likely that future generations of older people will differ at least in some ways from those discussed in this review. Access to computers at work, growing literacy rates and increasing participation in higher education are likely to influence the information needs and seeking patterns of even the next generation of older Australians.

Women

Women, due to their longer life expectancy, comprise 56 per cent of Australia's older people, and this percentage grows in the older age categories. In 2001, 69 per cent of those aged 85 and over were women.⁶

Men and women experience retirement and old age differently. Socialisation has led to differences between men and women in their interests and preferred media. Hence different information provision formats and channels may be necessary.⁷

Older people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds

In 2001, 33 per cent of older people were born overseas, with most of the overseas born (61%) coming from non-English speaking countries: Italy, Greece, Germany and the Netherlands. As a group, older people from CALD backgrounds are more likely to fall into the lower end of the older age category.⁸

Older people from different language and ethnic groups are as diverse as their English-speaking counterparts. Spanish speakers, for example, come from a wide

range of countries with different experiences; Arabic speakers can differ by religion and cultural background (Arab or non-Arab); Polish speakers are both Roman Catholic and Jewish; and Bosnians may be Christian or Muslim. These differences not only influence information needs but also appropriate methods of information dissemination.

Indigenous Australians

Because Indigenous Australians make up only 2.4 per cent of the Australian population, and the life expectancy for Indigenous people is approximately 20 years less than the rest of the population, Indigenous Australians account for only one-half of one percent (0.5%) of people 65 years and older.⁹ Ageing can occur at a younger age and be more debilitating.¹⁰

Rural and geographically isolated

Even when older people living in rural areas have the same information needs as those in urban areas, access to information sources and services will differ because of the difficulties of travelling and the barriers of distance and time. This is particularly true for those living in remote areas.

People living in regional cities, however, may have advantages over those in capital cities as word of mouth and social networks provide an important source of information in regional cities.¹¹ Unlike those in more remote areas, they may not have to travel to gain access to the information as many regional cities have established information centres.¹²

Topics of information needed by older people

Many of the studies examined for this review looked at the subject matter of the information older people need. There were three main methods of generating the topics: opinions from older people themselves, service statistics based on what topics older people asked for, and informed opinion from service providers. The key findings and points are:

- ◆ Information needs change over older people's age cycle.¹³
- ◆ The topics needed by older people were similar across studies regardless of the method used to generate the topics. These were
 - accommodation/housing¹⁴
 - social security/pensions/benefits¹⁵
 - other finance¹⁶
 - health¹⁷
 - leisure and recreation¹⁸
 - support services.¹⁹

Legal information needs

Many if not all of the topics above contain legal aspects, however, the general information needs literature does not usually identify legal needs as a separate category. Often, authors combined "legal" with "finance", and "lawyers" with "accountants". The following general studies, however, did find that:

- ◆ Legal issues accounted for approximately 14 per cent of the total number of the topics most requested in three general information services.²⁰
- ◆ Older people found it difficult to identify what they needed or wanted to know about legal rights—"It was a situation so far away from everyday reality".²¹

Two studies looked specifically at legal needs which can be summarised as follows:²²

- ◆ Accommodation and housing e.g. nature of tenancy, rights of renters
- ◆ Health related legal issues e.g. advanced health care directives
- ◆ Financial and consumer related legal issues e.g. eligibility for services, obtaining credit
- ◆ Discrimination related legal issues e.g. employment, provision of services
- ◆ Elder abuse issues e.g. psychological and financial abuse and neglect
- ◆ Grandparenting issues
- ◆ Substitute decision-making and end of life issues e.g. wills & probate, guardianship
- ◆ Older people also need information on where and how to make a complaint when dealing with issues related to the above topics.

Lawyers need:

- ◆ to have greater in-depth knowledge of elder law, particularly the Retirement Villages Act, the Aged Care Act and the Power of Attorney Act
- ◆ to know how to judge and deal with mental incapacity
- ◆ to know about other information sources and services in the community for older people
- ◆ to understand the cultural and family factors which may affect people's response to legal advice.

Knowledge of services and information

Most studies reported a low awareness of the services and sources of information available to older people. When asked where they could get information or help on particular topics, many older people could not name any source.²³

A significant proportion of older people do not perceive that they have information needs and lack knowledge about issues important to them, for example, health, finance and law. Awareness and knowledge tends to be lower in particular groups.

- ◆ The 'decisional dependent', that is older people who are willing to give control of their affairs to other people.²⁴ This group is often frail and may be at particular risk of financial and other abuse.
- ◆ Those with lower incomes and wealth. For example, older people with fewer assets have been shown to be less interested in planning for finances in old age and retirement in general.²⁵
- ◆ Aboriginal people, people with a disability and those from a CALD background. The latter group in particular may have no concept of government pensions and benefits.²⁶
- ◆ Some older people living in rural and remote areas. Some studies, however, have found that awareness and knowledge is perceived to be higher in regional areas because of stronger community networks.²⁷

Knowledge of legal services and information

Although few studies have investigated awareness of legal services and information and knowledge of legal issues, the results that are available mirror those in other areas. Issues specifically relating to knowledge of legal services and information include:

- ◆ Some groups, especially those from a CALD background do not understand the Australian legal system.²⁸
- ◆ There is low awareness of legal information sources and services. This is one of the greatest barriers to the use of legal services.²⁹
- ◆ Many individuals are unsure about whom they need to approach for information that they require. In one study only 42 per cent of older people surveyed could say how they would satisfy any need for information on legal rights.³⁰
- ◆ Older people are unaware of their legal rights and of the increasing amount of legislation which has been enacted to strengthen these rights.³¹
- ◆ Knowledge and uptake of enduring powers of attorney and advanced health directives are low. In Tilse's study 34 per cent reported having enduring powers of attorney.³²
- ◆ There was almost a complete lack of knowledge about substitute decision-making among older people in rural areas, those from a CALD background, Aboriginal people and women not used to handling financial and other family affairs.³³
- ◆ Knowledge of the legal aspects of tenancy in aged care facilities and retirement villages is low.³⁴

Information acquisition

Most older people, like the population as a whole, do relatively little information seeking when they are facing a problem or critical situation. Often only one source is approached. More commonly older people acquire information accidentally rather

than purposefully: for example, most information obtained from newspapers, family and friends and television comes fortuitously. The fact that information is accidentally acquired is an important consideration when developing information strategies.³⁵

Key findings and points

- ◆ Level of education, income and cultural background influence the number of information acquisition activities and the sources used.³⁶
- ◆ Many older people do not seek information until it is needed; often they do very little planning "until the time comes".³⁷
- ◆ In retrospect, some older people wish they had sought more information before "the time came".³⁸
- ◆ Many older people have a high level of confidence that information needs can be solved once they arise.³⁹
- ◆ Older people often think information will be easy to find.⁴⁰
- ◆ Some older patients want more written information, for example from doctors, but are hesitant to ask for it.⁴¹

Commonly used information sources are:

- ◆ family and friends⁴²
- ◆ local newspapers and large city dailies⁴³
- ◆ magazines⁴⁴
- ◆ telephone⁴⁵
- ◆ professionals e.g. doctors, chemists⁴⁶
- ◆ brochures and pamphlets.⁴⁷

Preferred and valued sources include:

- ◆ face to face oral information followed up by written information⁴⁸
- ◆ family and friends⁴⁹
- ◆ telephone⁵⁰
- ◆ local newspapers⁵¹
- ◆ brochures and pamphlets⁵²
- ◆ local council⁵³
- ◆ radio.⁵⁴

The internet (particularly among women and people from CALD backgrounds), seminars, videos and posters are considered to be less effective and/or less liked.⁵⁵

Gender

- ◆ Although older men and women use many of the same sources, for example, newspapers, television and radio, there are differences. Journals and the internet

are more likely to be used by older men. Family, community organisations and the telephone are more likely to be used by older women.⁵⁶

Older people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds

Older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are not a homogeneous group. However, they have certain characteristics in common:

- ◆ They rely more heavily on family and friends for information than do those from English speaking backgrounds; these sources are usually the first they approach.
- ◆ They often delegate information seeking to their children⁵⁷
- ◆ They also acquire information from:
 - community organisations and ethnic clubs
 - ethnic and talkback radio
 - professionals from their own cultural group
 - brochures.⁵⁸

The sources they prefer or value are:

- ◆ family and friends
- ◆ ethnic organisations⁵⁹
- ◆ brochures/pamphlets in their own language (some groups consider this source to be the most important and essential element)⁶⁰
- ◆ newspapers in their own language⁶¹
- ◆ radio in their own language⁶²
- ◆ professionals with the same cultural background.⁶³

Telephone information services are often not valued because of language difficulties.⁶⁴

Indigenous older people

- ◆ Aboriginal older people tend not to use institutional sources, even those set up for them by governments; rather they rely on social and family networks.⁶⁵
- ◆ Preferred or valued sources and channels for information are:
 - face to face oral information⁶⁶
 - family and friends⁶⁷
 - Koori radio⁶⁸
 - community organisations run by Aborigines.⁶⁹

Information technology

Computers - particularly the internet - hold great promise for improving the life of older people. The World Wide Web, email, chat rooms and bulletin boards have the potential to alleviate social isolation, increase the ability of older people to communicate with others and provide mental stimulation and opportunities for learning. The internet could be particularly valuable for those whose disabilities make travel difficult.

Despite its potential, many studies have found that the majority of older Australians have never used a computer and even higher percentages have never used the internet.⁷⁰ At least one study found that there was little difference in the use of computers and the Internet by older men and women.⁷¹ The willingness to use and take up new information technologies is, however, related to age, education and where a person lives.⁷² The penetration of new technology among certain groups, especially older people from CALD backgrounds, Aboriginal older people and those in remote areas, remains extremely low.⁷³

In addition many older people have negative attitudes about their ability to use the new technologies. There are many reasons for this, chief among them being the lack of confidence and skills. In one study 50 per cent of the older people surveyed gave lack of skills as the main reason for their non-use of computers and the internet.⁷⁴

There are, however, other barriers including:

- ◆ costs
- ◆ lack of appropriate public access facilities⁷⁵
- ◆ poor design of computer programs and web pages⁷⁶
- ◆ mistrust and concern about privacy⁷⁷
- ◆ inappropriate training methods
- ◆ lack of awareness of the benefits to be gained⁷⁸
- ◆ lack of appropriate technologies.⁷⁹

The picture, however, is not all bleak. There is evidence that the uptake of technology by older people is increasing. For example, use of the internet by those aged 55 and over has increased from 18 to 29 per cent between December 2000 and June 2003.⁸⁰ There is heavy demand for training, and in one study of people aged 50 and over, 85 per cent of participants who were introduced to the internet said they would use it again.⁸¹ In addition, it is probable that the rate of usage of information technology will increase with the next generation of older people as many will have been exposed to the technology at school and/or work.

Legal information acquisition

People acquire legal information in ways similar to those discussed above. In particular, most older people do not acquire legal information until it is needed. For example, Tilse found that many older people thought there was no need to worry about enduring powers of attorney (EPAs) or advanced health initiatives until later in life, or they believed their family would take care of issues like substitute decision-making.

In addition, very few sought advice when entering a retirement village or aged care home. Lawyers reported that accommodation contracts were less than 5 per cent of their practice. Finally, of those people with EPAs, a minority had sought legal advice when developing them. Lawyers with an interest in elder law, however, reported that EPAs were the largest component of their elder law practice.⁸² Other findings were:

- ◆ Some older people said they wished they had discussed the legal aspects of tenancy ahead of moving.
- ◆ Some older people who had sought advice were dissatisfied with the advice received. They thought the lawyer focused only on the technical legal aspects of a contract rather than how contract provisions would affect their life.
- ◆ Level of income was related to the perceived need to seek advice, for example those with lower incomes did not see EPAs as relevant to their situation. Lawyers reported that they had very few Aboriginal clients or clients from different ethnic backgrounds.⁸³

Preferred/valued sources and channels of information for older people include:

- A private lawyer—when given a hypothetical question about where they would go if they need information about family law, 52 per cent of a national sample, which included older people, responded they would seek out a lawyer⁸⁴
- Family and friends⁸⁵
- A professional from their own cultural group who would understand family interactions and particular issues.⁸⁶

Barriers to information acquisition

Barriers to information acquisition can arise from the characteristics of older people themselves, of the information provided to them, or the agencies which supply information.

Characteristics of older people

- ◆ Low perceptions of needs⁸⁷
- ◆ Lack of awareness of the availability of information

- ◆ The difficulty and unpleasantness of thinking about death and disabilities and the things associated with them e.g. enduring powers of attorney or advanced health directives⁸⁸
- ◆ The difficulty of searching for information because of disabilities and immobility⁸⁹
- ◆ Low literacy levels among English speakers⁹⁰
- ◆ Low literacy levels in English and in their first language among those from CALD backgrounds⁹¹
- ◆ Negative past experiences⁹²
- ◆ Lack of experience, particularly among women, with handling their own and family affairs⁹³
- ◆ Lack of confidence in approaching established or official agencies.⁹⁴

Characteristics of service providers

- ◆ Stereotypes about older people⁹⁵
- ◆ The large number of information agencies, often with overlapping coverage⁹⁶
- ◆ Inappropriate use of technology⁹⁷
- ◆ Poor physical accessibility⁹⁸
- ◆ Conscious limiting of demand because of limited resources⁹⁹
- ◆ The lack of appropriate knowledge among professionals like doctors and lawyers¹⁰⁰
- ◆ Professionals' reliance on oral rather than written information not allowing older people to refer to and assimilate complex ideas.¹⁰¹

Characteristics of information

- ◆ Materials that are too detailed, difficult to read and understand¹⁰²
- ◆ Material that is not tailored to individual needs¹⁰³
- ◆ Inaccurate or inconsistent information.¹⁰⁴

Barriers to legal information acquisition

In addition to the barriers to information acquisition identified above, the Law and Justice Foundation's report on the legal needs of older people found the following to be important obstacles to the acquisition of legal information and advice.¹⁰⁵

Characteristics of older people

- ◆ Lack of awareness of their legal rights
- ◆ Lack of confidence in enforcing their rights
- ◆ Perceptions that the law is disempowering and cannot solve their problems
- ◆ Reluctance to take legal action
- ◆ Fear that lawyers may act against their interests.

Characteristics of legal service providers

- ♦ The high cost of legal services. Tilse also found this to be a barrier; people on fixed incomes found cost to be the biggest barrier.¹⁰⁶
- ♦ A lack of interest by legal practitioners in older clients
- ♦ Difficulties in accessing legal aid services and funding
- ♦ Lack of specialised legal services for older people
- ♦ Insufficient free assistance.

Barriers to use of complaint procedures

The Law and Justice Foundation study also found barriers that limited older people's use of complaint procedures.

- ♦ Reluctance to complain (the most common theme)
- ♦ Lack of awareness of how to make a complaint
- ♦ Lack of awareness of whom to approach for help
- ♦ Fear of retribution from service suppliers
- ♦ Difficulties associated with the self-representation or self advocacy that is required before some bodies
- ♦ Dislike and mistrust of the legal/court system
- ♦ Responsibility on the older person to initiate complaints
- ♦ The need to negotiate directly with the supplier of goods/services
- ♦ Differences in the power relationship between an older person and a provider.

Information provision strategies

The studies agree on several points that apply regardless of the information strategies or methods to be used.¹⁰⁷ Firstly, many older people do not realise they have needs in important topic areas and providers should not assume that the need for information or a particular service is self-evident. It is necessary, therefore, to take a proactive approach when promoting a service. Providers may need to make older people aware of their legal needs, for example, the importance of making arrangements for end of life contingencies. This requires promoting the benefits of some matters, for example, advanced health directives, as well as raising awareness of where to get information about them.

Secondly, many of the studies stress the importance of selecting target groups/segments and developing different messages and strategies for each group.¹⁰⁸ The groups below were those most commonly identified in the literature:

- ♦ Information-disadvantaged older people such as people of CALD background, those who live in remote areas, Aboriginal older people and people with disabilities

- ◆ Family and carers
- ◆ Providers of services and information to older people
- ◆ Professionals e.g. lawyers, doctors
- ◆ Community workers.¹⁰⁹

When selecting target groups, several authors pointed out that the size of the group is not the only factor to consider, as small groups may have more and stronger needs than those in larger groups. The New South Wales Government Office on Social Policy has recommended several characteristics other than size when determining which language/ethnic groups should be targeted; among these are residency patterns and length of residence in Australia.¹¹⁰

The following guidelines have been compiled from recommendations of various studies about effective information provision strategies for older people.

Guidelines for information provision

- ◆ All messages should avoid condescending and culturally negative terms like "old" and "elderly".¹¹¹
- ◆ Important messages should provide a sense of individuality so older people can relate it to their situation.¹¹²
- ◆ Older people need to be made aware of where to go for information.¹¹³
- ◆ Face-to-face methods are recommended by both older people and providers. They should be supplemented by printed information.
- ◆ Services should be staffed with knowledgeable people who understand the needs and concerns of older people.¹¹⁴
- ◆ Confidentiality and privacy should be provided. Many older people value these attributes of service particularly when accessing legal and health information.¹¹⁵
- ◆ Local newspapers, presentations, radio (particularly talkback radio), telephone information services, and television should be considered.¹¹⁶
- ◆ Mail drops, junk mail, fliers¹¹⁷
- ◆ A single contact location or free telephone number to call¹¹⁸
- ◆ Teleconferencing and Telelink are useful for older people with limited mobility.¹¹⁹
- ◆ Websites should be combined with information strategies more appropriate for older people.¹²⁰
- ◆ Strategies should be implemented to increase the accessibility of the internet such as:¹²¹
 - Appropriate software and hardware
 - Public access facilities
 - Training programs for older people
 - The development of content of interest to older people

- ♦ Websites should be developed for and promoted to intermediaries e.g. lawyers and community leaders¹²²

However, there are some areas of disagreement. Pamphlets and brochures are, perhaps, the most problematic source. In one study, 75 per cent of older people thought information in pamphlets and brochures was helpful and many of those who read the material followed the advice. They also used the information more than once.¹²³ Other studies, however, reported that people dislike printed information.¹²⁴ There was also some differing evidence on the effectiveness of seminars and presentations.

Differences among authors may be due to (1) the sample of older people studied (most of the studies did not use random sampling) and/or (2) the experience of the researchers or consultants. In addition, older people and service and information providers can have differing opinions on what methods are most appropriate. For example, the Purdon study found that service providers thought that older people did not like the telephone, preferred TV for information and did not like approaching council offices. Many older people disagreed with each of these findings.¹²⁵ Another study concluded that doctors limited the dissemination of written information to their older patients because they thought that older people preferred oral information, but some of the older people surveyed wanted more written information from their doctors.¹²⁶

Strategies for specific target groups

Culturally and linguistically diverse older people

Any strategy or message must be culturally sensitive. It may, for example, be appropriate to disseminate information at the festivals of some ethnic groups but not at others because of the religious nature of some festivals.¹²⁷

Moreover, what is culturally sensitive may differ within cultural groups. For example, some ethnic newspapers may have a political stance that is unacceptable to some members of the community. A symbol of a cross might be acceptable to some but not others.¹²⁸ In addition:

- ♦ Printed materials should be available in community languages.¹²⁹
- ♦ Printed translations must be of the highest quality and be tested.
- ♦ Community organisations are very important and their leaders are generally credible. These organisations can play an important dissemination role.
- ♦ In some cultural groups, family, particularly children, are often delegated information seeking responsibilities and may be an effective target group.¹³⁰
- ♦ If possible, services should be staffed with bilingual workers rather than translators. If translators are used, they should be well-trained and aware of the cultural sensitivities of the group.¹³¹

Aboriginal older people

Providers should try to use Aboriginal organisations when disseminating information. Recommended strategies include Koori radio and community television and

community organisations.¹³² When services are provided by non-Aboriginal organisations, the services should be staffed with Aboriginal people or those with proven cultural sensitivity.¹³³

Older people living in remote areas

Strategies for increasing access for this group include:

- ♦ Broadcast media, i.e. radio, and TV
- ♦ Telelink and teleconferencing¹³⁴
- ♦ Information distribution via the closest shops, doctors' surgeries, etc¹³⁵
- ♦ Cassette tapes, video tapes, CD-ROMs, or other multimedia may be appropriate for some older people.¹³⁶

People with disabilities

- ♦ Teleconferencing.¹³⁷

Legal information provision

A number of strategies have been suggested to improve legal information dissemination to older people:¹³⁸

- ♦ Formal talks from experts
- ♦ Pamphlets and brochures
- ♦ A public education campaign to raise awareness of
 - possible incapacity and the importance of EPAs
 - potential for abuse
 - legal rights
 - the need to seek independent advice for accommodation contracts
- ♦ "A specialist legal service for older people [which] could provide a valuable resourcing role for generalist legal services ... regarding issues for older people and methods of effective service delivery to older people".¹³⁹
- ♦ The availability of specialised legal advice within generalist organisations.¹⁴⁰

Attributes of legal services preferred by older people include:¹⁴¹

- ♦ confidentiality
- ♦ reasonable costs which are known ahead of time
- ♦ lawyers who demonstrate friendliness, warmth, ability to communicate and a respectful attitude
- ♦ lawyers from a similar cultural background who understand their culture and family arrangements.

Information provision to lawyers

Strategies recommended for information dissemination to lawyers include:¹⁴²

- ◆ continuing education programs on
 - elder law
 - information resources available in the community
 - communicating with older people
- ◆ the development of information kits, seminars and telephone conferences.

Conclusions

Providing legal information to older people is complex because of the diversity of the group and many older people's low perception of their needs. Although most older Australians need information on the same topics, for example, accommodation, health and support services, providers will need to provide different pathways to that information. The studies contained many recommendations for new and improved services. There was, however, limited empirical evidence on the effectiveness of various methods and strategies.

The Access to Justice and Legal Needs of Older People in New South Wales study provides a detailed picture of the legal needs of older people, but more detailed information is still required about when older people need legal information, how they acquire it and what they do with the information when it is provided.

Notes

¹ L Ellison et al, *The Legal Needs of Older People in New South Wales*, Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, Sydney, 2004, p. vii.

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Older Australians at a glance*, Canberra, 2002, <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/welfare/oag02/>>. p.2.

³ "Older people" is defined differently in the reports/articles included in this review. In some of the material "older" begins at age 55 in others, 60 and so on.

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Social Trends: Population - Population Projections: Our Ageing Population*, 1999, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/B7760619C3973594CA25699F0005D60F>>.

⁵ K Williamson, *I Can Tell You a Remedy for Migraines. Telecommunications and the Information and Communications Needs of Older Adults*, 1997, <http://infotech.monash.edu/itnr/reports/remedy.html>; Adamson, L, *Gadgets and Gizmos: What will the New Telecommunications Services Offer Older People?*, Bottom Line - Australian Pensioners' and Superannuants' Federation, Sydney, 1994, p. 6.

⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, p. 2.

⁷ K Barnett, L Buys & B Adkins, 'Information and Communication Practices: the Joint Concerns of Age and Gender in the Information Age', *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, vol. 19, no. 2, May, 2000, pp. 69-74.

⁸ AIHW, p. 3.

⁹ AIHW, p. 3.

¹⁰ R Schultz, *Review of the information needs of older people in South Australia: final report*, [Council on the Ageing, The Consumer Forum for the Aged], 1993, p. 22.

¹¹ K Williamson, A Bow & K Wale, 'Encouraging public internet use by older people: a comparative study of city and rural areas', *Rural Society*, vol. 7, no. 3-4, 1997, pp. 3-11.

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- ¹³ A Tinker, C McCreddie & A Salvage, *The information needs of elderly people - an exploratory study*, Age Concern - Institute of Gerontology, London, 1993; Scott.
- ¹⁴ L Gething, 'Ageing in place: issues for people ageing with long standing disabilities', *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, vol. 20, no. 1, March, 2001, pp. 2-3; Scott; Tinker
- ¹⁵ Schultz; Scott
- ¹⁶ Scott; C Tilse, D Setterlund, et al., 'Legal practitioners and older clients: challenges and opportunities for effective practice', *Elder Law Review*, vol. 1, 2002, pp. 34-42.; Tinker
- ¹⁷ Scott; Tinker; Williamson 1997.
- ¹⁸ S Jones, 'Information for older people: accessible and appropriate?' *Library Association of Australia Biennial Conference*, Australia 1988; New South Wales Government Office on Social Policy, *Delivering the message: best practice in providing government information*, 7, New South Wales Government Social Policy Directorate, Sydney, 1995; Scott.
- ¹⁹ Tinker
- ²⁰ This overall percentage was computed from data in Schultz, pp. 28-29.
- ²¹ Tinker, p. 29.
- ²² C Ellison et al , 'Legal practitioners and older clients: challenges and opportunities for effective practice', *Elder Law Review*, vol. 1, 2002, pp. 34-42; Ellison, various pages
- ²³ Tinker, p. 32
- ²⁴ Tilse, p. 34.
- ²⁵ Tilse
- ²⁶ Worthington Di Marzio and Cultural Partners Australia, *Access to information about government services among culturally and linguistically diverse audiences*, Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, Report, Melbourne, 2001, <http://www.info.vic.gov.au/resources/cald_report.htm>.
- ²⁷ Purdon; Williamson 97
- ²⁸ Worthington
- ²⁹ Tilse
- ³⁰ Ellison, p. xxii.
- ³¹ Tilse
- ³² Tinker, p. 32.
- ³³ Urbis Keys Young, *Women's information needs study: final report*, NSW Department for Women, Sydney 2002, p. 40.
- ³⁴ Tilse
- ³⁵ Williamson, 97; Davison in Scott, p. 3
- ³⁶ Tilse; Williamson 97
- ³⁷ Scott; Tilse; Woolcott Research, *Information dissemination strategy study: an evaluation of the information needs and communications preferences of older people*, Department of Social Security, Sydney, 1997, p. 20.
- ³⁸ Tilse, Woolcott, p. 18.
- ³⁹ Tinker
- ⁴⁰ Woolcott, p. 83
- ⁴¹ Tilse; K McKenna, et al, 'Older patients request more information: a survey of use of written patient education materials in general practice', *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, vol. 22, no. 1, March, 2003, pp. 15 - 19.
- ⁴² Purdon; Woolcott.
- ⁴³ Williamson 97; Scott; Woolcott, p. 23.
- ⁴⁴ Barnett ; Woolcott
- ⁴⁵ Barnett, Williamson 97
- ⁴⁶ McKenna; Purdon, p. 27; Williamson 97.
- ⁴⁷ McKenna
- ⁴⁸ Woolcott
- ⁴⁹ Purdon; Woolcott
- ⁵⁰ Williamson 97.
- ⁵¹ Purdon
- ⁵² Scott, p. 8; Woolcott, p. 102.
- ⁵³ Purdon; Worthington
- ⁵⁴ Nicholson in Scott, p8 , Worthington
- ⁵⁵ Urbis, Woolcott
- ⁵⁶ Barnett, p. 71.
- ⁵⁷ Worthington; Urbis, p. 24
- ⁵⁸ Worthington.
- ⁵⁹ Purdon; Urbis; Worthington
- ⁶⁰ Urbis; Worthington; New South Wales Government Office on Social Policy, p.31.
- ⁶¹ Urbis; Worthington.
- ⁶² Urbis; New South Wales Government Office on Social Policy.
- ⁶³ Purdon; Bilingual Consultants Network

- ⁶⁴ Urbis; Worthington
⁶⁵ Purdon; Schultz, p. 22.
⁶⁶ Purdon, p. 23.
⁶⁷ Schultz, p. 22.
⁶⁸ New South Wales Government Office on Social Policy
⁶⁹ New South Wales Government Office on Social Policy; Purdon.
⁷⁰ Williamson, Bow & Wale
⁷¹ Barnett, p. 71; Williamson, Bow & Wale; Urbis, p. 28.
⁷² Williamson, Bow & Wale
⁷³ Williamson, Bow & Wale; Worthington.
⁷⁴ Williamson 1997, p. 7.
⁷⁵ National Office for the Information Economy, *Older Australians Online*,
http://www.noie.gov.au/projects/access/Connecting_Communities/older_aust.htm; Scott; Williamson, Bow & Wale.
⁷⁶ Williamson 97.
⁷⁷ National Office for the Information Economy; Williamson 97
⁷⁸ Adamson; National Office for the Information Economy
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⁸⁰ Nielsen/Net ratings in Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, *Current state of play, characteristics of Australians accessing the internet*, December 2003,
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⁸¹ Williamson, p. 6.
⁸² Tilse, p. 37.
⁸³ Tilse
⁸⁴ Urbis, p. 40
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⁸⁶ Bilingual Consultants Network, *Information Needs of Older Australians*, Department of Health, Housing, Local Government and Community Services, Report, Canberra, 1993; Purdon.
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⁸⁹ New South Wales Office of Social Policy; Tilse; Tinker.
⁹⁰ Tinker, L Tooth, M Clark & K McKenna, 'Poor functional health literacy: the silent disability for older people', *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, vol. 19, no. 1, February, 2000, pp. 14-21.
⁹¹ New South Wales Government Office on Social Policy; Worthington.
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⁹⁸ Tilse
⁹⁹ Tinker, p. 17.
¹⁰⁰ Tilse; Tinker.
¹⁰¹ McKenna; Tinker.
¹⁰² Tinker; Woolcott, p. 24.
¹⁰³ Scott; Tinker; Woolcott, p. 18.
¹⁰⁴ Purdon, p. 25; Tinker.
¹⁰⁵ Ellison, various pages
¹⁰⁶ Tilse, p. 39
¹⁰⁷ Schultz ;Tinker; Tilse; Woolcott; Worthington.
¹⁰⁸ New South Wales Government Office on Social Policy; Purdon; Schultz; Scott; Woolcott; Worthington
¹⁰⁹ Tilse
¹¹⁰ New South Wales Government Office on Social Policy, p. 13
¹¹¹ New South Wales Government Office on Social Policy; Scott
¹¹² Scott, p. 5; Tinker; Woolcott.
¹¹³ Purdon; Woolcott, p. 61.
¹¹⁴ Schultz
¹¹⁵ Tilse; Williamson, Bow & Wale.
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¹¹⁸ Purdon; Worthington; Woolcott
¹¹⁹ R Swindell, L Singer & G Singer, 'Teleconferencing as a medium for providing expert support to the isolated ageing', *Australian Journal on Ageing*, vol. 13, no. 2, May, 1994, pp. 93-94.; T Thomas & J Urbano, 'Telelink and

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¹³⁰ Bilingual Consultants Network; Woolcott; Worthington.

¹³¹ Schultz

¹³² Purdon; New South Wales Government Office on Social Policy.

¹³³ Schultz.

¹³⁴ Swindell

¹³⁵ Schultz; Williamson 97.

¹³⁶ New South Wales Government Office on Social Policy

¹³⁷ Thomas.

¹³⁸ Tilse

¹³⁹ Ellison, p. xxii

¹⁴⁰ Schultz, p. 34.

¹⁴¹ Tilse, p. 38.

¹⁴² Tilse

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* *Included in Part 2: Selected literature summaries*

Part 2 Literature Summaries

The primary purpose of the selected summaries is to provide the reader with more information on the most relevant and substantive reports and articles. It is important to note that in some summaries the content of the article or report has been restructured. In addition, only those findings and points relevant to this study on the information needs of older people have been included.

The summaries are in alphabetical order by first named author.

Barnett, KR, Buys, LR & Adkins, BA, 'Information and communication practices: the joint concerns of age and gender in the information age', *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2000, pp. 69-74.

Aim To explore “the extent to which gender differences appear in the choices of information and communication sources used by older men and women”.

Method

- Mail survey [date unknown]
- Questions related to older people’s use of traditional and computer-based information and communications sources for purposes of information, entertainment or leisure, or keeping in touch.

Sample

Size: 48 (20 men, 28 women)

Selection: The sample was gained through groups involved with older people such as University of the Third age, Council on the Ageing, the 60s and Better Program, TAFE Electronic Learning Centres and Seniornet.

Age: More than 60 years old

Location: Queensland.

Key findings *This summary only presents the findings related to use for information purposes. The article also includes results for entertainment and leisure use and for keeping in touch.*

Sources used in accessing information (descending order)

- Newspapers, television and radio were used by 75 per cent of the sample. There was little difference by gender.
- Magazines and journals were more likely to be used by men.
- Family, community organisations, telephone and books were more likely to be used by women.
- Use of the computer, internet and email was equal for men and women.

Ellison, S , Schetzer, L, Mullins, J, Perry, J & Wong, K, *Access to justice and legal needs of older people in New South Wales*, Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, Sydney, 2004.

Aims To identify legal issues faced by older people in NSW; barriers which hinder accessing services; and attitudes of older people which may limit their willingness to take legal action.

Method

- Literature review
- Interviews with people interested in elder law e.g. service providers, representatives from community organisations including legal centres, legal practitioners and academics conducted in 2002
- Nine focus group discussions with 78 older people purposively chosen to cover a range of geographical and socio-demographic categories
- Submissions from older people
- Participation in relevant conferences and forums.

Key findings

Barriers which hinder accessing services

Barriers which arise from the characteristics of older people themselves:

- Lack of awareness of legal rights
- Lack of confidence in enforcing rights
- Perceptions that the law is disempowering and cannot solve their problems
- Lack of awareness of where to obtain information and assistance
- Reluctance to take legal action.

Other barriers:

- Technological barriers
- High cost of legal services
- Lack of interest by legal practitioners in older clients
- Difficulties in accessing legal aid
- Lack of specialised legal services for older people.

Legal Issues

Accommodation and housing issues

- Nursing homes and residential facilities e.g. abuse, contractual and financial arrangements and tenancy issues
- Retirement villages e.g. nature of tenure, village mismanagement, reduction in services
- Strata title home units e.g. increases in charges, lack of information about body corporate issues, ineffective managing agents
- Public housing tenancy e.g. long waiting lists, unfair lease terminations
- Private tenancy e.g. discrimination by real estate agents, unreasonable rent increases
- Home ownership e.g. neighbour problems, real estate scams, abuse of power of attorney leading to the sale of the home
- Boarders and lodgers e.g. lack of protection for occupancy rights, problems with security deposits, failure to undertake repairs
- Residential parks e.g. problems when park closes, fees, rules.

Health related legal issues

- Advanced health care directives e.g. lack of knowledge about them, reluctance to think about "end of life" issues
- Access to health services e.g. poor communication and delivery of health services, costs, impact of age-assessed rationing
- Hospital discharge e.g. poor communication, lack of accommodation, attitudes and expectations of patients and carers
- Medication misuse e.g. lack of knowledge regarding use of medication for older people, difficulties in obtaining medical records
- Disability e.g. physical access to facilities, access to information.

Financial and consumer related legal issues

- Social security and veterans' pensions e.g. eligibility, difficulties applying eligibility tests, legal and financial advisers with insufficient knowledge
- Banking credit and debt e.g. older people's difficulties with new technology, credit and debt issues related to loans and credit cards
- Investment advice and financial planning e.g. poor access to needed information, lack of experience in handling own financial affairs
- Consumer issues e.g. complaints about goods and services, vulnerability to consumer fraud and the 'hard sell'.

Discrimination related legal issues

- Employment e.g. recruitment, conditions of employment and being required to state their age, being told that they were 'too qualified'
- Provision of goods and services e.g. denial of loans and travel insurance.

Elder abuse issues

- Types of abuse e.g. financial, psychological, neglect
- Barriers to addressing abuse issues include lack of awareness of services, fear of retribution, shame, lack of procedures among health professionals for addressing the abuse
- Responding to abuse: the most effective responses have been those which focus on empowering the older person and those with a partnership between the domestic violence and aged care workers
- Issues for lawyers e.g. need to take older people seriously when they raise the issue, determining the wishes of the older person by meeting with the older person by him/herself, understanding the risk factors for abuse.

Substitute decision-making and end of life issues

- Enduring powers of attorney (EPA) e.g. lack of awareness of existence and function, fear that EPA might be abused by attorneys

- Guardianship and financial management e.g. lack of awareness of existence and function, complex procedures, concerns about the power of the Guardianship Tribunal
- Nominee arrangements for financial affairs
- Wills and probate e.g. complexity of applying for a grant of probate, insufficient free assistance for probate matters, lawyers' conflicts of interests, determining which will is valid.

Grandparenting issues

- Denial of contact e.g. reluctance to take action as it may damage relations with their own child, legal costs, intimidation by court action
- Grandparents caring for grandchildren e.g. concern about delays investigating grandchildren who may be at risk.

Barriers to accessing complaint mechanisms

- Reluctance to complain (the most common theme throughout the project)
- Lack of awareness of how to make a complaint
- The fear of retributions from the service suppliers
- Difficulties associated with the self-representation or self-advocacy that is required before some bodies
- Dislike and mistrust of the legal/court system
- Responsibility on the older person to initiate the complaint
- The need to negotiate directly with the supplier of goods/services
- Lack of awareness about whom to approach for help
- Difference in the power an older person has vis a vis a supplier.

Recommendations “A specialist legal service for older people could provide a valuable resourcing role for generalist legal services across NSW regarding issues for older people and methods of effective service delivery to older people.”

McKenna, KT, Tooth, LR, King, DB, Clark, MJ, O'Rourke, PK, Steinberg, MA, & de Looze, FJ, 'Older patients request more information: a survey of use of written patient education materials in general practice'. *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2003, pp. 15-19.

- Aims**
- Determine GPs' use of written education materials with older patients and older patients' receipt of these materials
 - Determine GPs' and older patients' perceptions of written materials.

Method Face to face interviews with GPs and older patients conducted during 1998/99.

Sample

Size: 188 older people

50 GPs (29 males and 21 females)

Selection: GPs – random

Older people – convenience

Age: Patients 62 years and older

Location: Queensland.

- Key findings**
- Patients regard GPs as being the key providers of health information and prefer to receive information in this way.
 - There is a belief among doctors that older patients prefer oral rather than written information because of presumed visual, cognitive or literacy difficulties.
 - 20 per cent of older patients want more information and prefer their doctors to give them written information that they can read and refer to when needed.

- Recommendations**
- If older patients express interest in receiving written information GPs should provide it to them.
 - GPs could serve older people better if they made information more readily available to them.

New South Wales Government Office on Social Policy, *Delivering the message: best practice in providing government information*, New South Wales Government Social Policy Directorate, Sydney, 1995.

- Aim** To inform government agencies about the effectiveness of their information and to help them devise ways to improve access and “to illustrate how the diverse needs of the wide range of people in our society may be met by choosing the most suitable ways to deliver information”. Information was grouped into three categories: service, publicity and research and policy information.
- Method** There is no indication of the sources used for the guidelines. A bibliography is provided.
- Key points** *The report provides best practice guidelines for information provision to older people, Aboriginal people, those of non-English speaking backgrounds, people with a disability, residents of rural and remote areas and people with low levels of literacy. This summary only focuses on the needs of older people.*
- Targeting customer needs**
- Consultation with the target group is important. Determining customer information needs can be done through existing data or by conducting research studies on how users find and use information.
 - Older people need government information to find out about community activities and to enable them to be independent.
 - Difficulties in accessing information arise due to limited mobility, sight, hearing or income factors.
 - Some older people do not have the confidence or skills to access new information technologies.
 - The telephone is important for many older people.
 - Avoid condescending terms and stereotyping.
- Options for delivery**
- Decisions to be made include:
- Systems used to deliver information
 - Message design
 - Factors taken into consideration to ensure effectiveness of the information strategy.

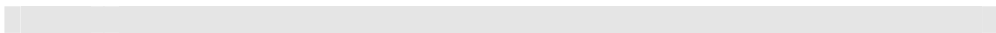
Recommended information needs and delivery options for older people

<i>Face-to-face</i>		<i>Telephone</i>	
Over the counter	❖	Standard phone line	✓
Stands at community events	❖	Freecall/local call costs line	✓
Presentations to community forums	✓	24 hour services	✓
Personal visits	✓	Information lines/call centres	✓
Community organisations	✓	Voicemail	❖
Friends and family	✓	Telephone typewriter	✘
Secondary contact eg. Doctor	✓	Fax	❖
		Modem	❖
<i>Print</i>		<i>Electronic</i>	
Pamphlets/booklets	❖	Radio	✓
Photostories	❖	Cassette tapes	✓
Flyers	❖	Television	✓
Newsletters	✓	Video tapes	❖
Directories	❖	CD ROM	❖
Notice boards	❖	Floppy Discs	❖
Posters/stickers/bookmarks,magnets etc	❖	Multimedia/interactive media	❖
Newspapers/magazines	✓	Networked databases/bulletin boards	❖
Direct mail	✓	Teletext	❖
		Information kiosks	❖
		Telecottages	❖

KEY: ✓ Often very suitable ❖ Sometimes very suitable ✘ Seldom suitable

Checklist for information delivery

- What internal information strategies will be employed?
- How will the information be tailored to meet different customer needs?
- What channels will be used to distribute the information?
- Will there be a charge for the information?
- How will customer feedback on the information be collected?
- How will this feedback and other inputs be used to improve information delivery?



Purdon Associates Pty Ltd, *Pebbles in the pond: a study of the information needs of older Australians regarding residential and community care*, Department of Health, Housing, Local Government and Community Services, Canberra, 1993.

- Aims** “...to provide qualitative information to the Department on the needs of older Australians for information about residential and community aged care programs, and on the most effective and preferred means of ensuring that such information is accessible.”
- Method** 21 discussion groups with older people, English and non-English speaking, carers and providers of aged care or information services during 1993. Questionnaires were provided to participants after the group discussions to determine their views and profiles. Participants were purposively selected to represent different socio-economic backgrounds and cultural mix and ages.
- Sample**
- Size:* 231
- Location:* QLD, NSW, VIC, SA
Metropolitan, Non-metropolitan.
- Key findings** *General awareness and knowledge of aged care services*
- Awareness of services was high. Most NESB group participants had vague information received from family and friends.
 - Awareness was higher among community-active older people than those with few community contacts.
 - Awareness of the right of appeal against a decision denying services was low.
 - Older people were confused about who provided aged care services.
 - Older people in rural areas/regional centres had a higher awareness of services and information than those in the city due to strong community interaction.
 - Older people had problems with the length and complexity of nursing home and hostel contracts. They tended to forget or not understand information about rights.
 - Safety and security factors were important to them.
 - The elderly only enquired about services when they needed

them. This was also true of nursing homes and hostels.

Groups missing out on services through lack of information

- Ethnic aged
 - Many believe that their children should care for them so therefore will not ask for outside assistance
 - Cultural barriers
 - Printed material is not appropriate due to illiteracy
 - Community leaders may filter information to account for values and beliefs of certain cultures.
- Aboriginal aged
 - Prefer to use services available for their people
 - Do not ask about services unless they are approached by the service providers themselves.
- Socially and physically isolated people, people with a mental illness or dementia
- High-income groups may not feel they are entitled to benefits
- People with low levels of literacy
- Retirement-village residents are given low priority for HACC services due to the belief that they are gaining all the help and services they need through the retirement village itself.

Information needs about aged care services

The details required by older people about a service include:

- Cost
- Benefits and service provided
- Eligibility
- Availability
- Who provides the service and where
- Cultural appropriateness
- Philosophy.

Sources of information

- The main sources used by consumers were friends, relatives or acquaintances, their doctor, a hospital or a social worker.
- The main sources differed by location, but usually a local provider organisation was mentioned. Local government

agencies were also frequently mentioned.

- Doctors were not seen as very reliable sources on aged care services as many doctors were either unaware of services themselves or did not provide needed information about them.
- Those from non-English speaking backgrounds were more likely to obtain information from friends and family, usually children.

Sources which had not been helpful

These were mentioned by only a small number of older people:

- Government departments which gave them 'the runaround'
- Inexperienced or poorly trained staff who gave inaccurate information
- Those which require use of communication technology
- Participants who did not speak/read English well mentioned
 - English-language publications
 - poor translations
 - 008 numbers with long waits.

Sources of information recommended by older people

There were some differences between providers and older people in perceptions regarding information source effectiveness. Sources recommended by the elderly included:

- A single contact local phone number or central contact point
- Personal contact
- The local newspaper and radio station
- Clubs for older people
- Directories were seen to be useful, if they were up to date
- Ethnic radio stations and newspapers
- Ethnic groups would use ethnic community organisations before other sources
- Doctors (participants from NESB groups).

Recommendations *Information targets*

- The elderly
- General practitioners
- Multilingual community, church and social groups
- Service providers and community workers
- Students.

Information dissemination

Dissemination should be approached at two levels:

- Creating awareness of the existence of services
- Providing easy access to detailed information about services.

Suggested ways of making people aware of services include:

- Guest speakers in clubs and organisations
- Brochures
- Ads on radio (talkback and ethnic) and television, local press
- Flyers in letterboxes or newspapers
- Directory or brochure delivered to households
- Fridge magnets
- Door knocks
- Information kits.

Ways of providing access to more detailed information include:

- Providers recommended that doctors should be targeted with information about aged care services, and how to refer patients to them.
- Many providers distributed leaflets to information services and local businesses like chemists, optometrists and medical surgeries.
- Some providers wrote articles in local newspapers.

Format and presentation of material

- Use large print
- Use familiar words
- Use one familiar format in the telephone book

- Avoid abbreviations and acronyms
 - Use symbols
 - Don't use language or images that alienate certain groups e.g. the "younger" old or ethnic communities.
-

Schultz, R, *Review of the information needs of older people in South Australia: final report*, Council on the Ageing, 1993.

- Aim** To examine ways to provide a more effective and efficient information service for older people in South Australia.
- Method**
- Discussions with representatives from Age Line, the Nursing Homes and Hostels Enquiry Service, the Council on the Ageing (SA), the Aged Rights Advocacy Service and other key groups concerned with providing information to the elderly
 - Questionnaire survey in 1992 of Local Government Community Care Workers (9 responses)
 - A literature search
 - A workshop with the aim of reaching an “agreement about the elements of an optimal information system for older people, and whether integration of the existing services would help to achieve that optimal system”.
- Key issues**
- Unnecessary duplication of material
 - Locations of the agencies e.g. shopfronts
 - Need for one point of contact for referral
 - Increased accessibility by telephone
 - The distinction between information provision, complaints mediation, and the role of independent advocacy services.
- Key points** The following characteristics were identified as contributing to ideal information services for older people in South Australia.
- Target groups***
- Older people, family and friends, service providers, other enquirers
 - Special need groups: people of non-English speaking backgrounds, older Aboriginal people, isolated elderly, rural residents and people with particular disabilities.
- Information needs – type of service***
- Education and community awareness: proactive provision of general information to older people
 - Information and advice: information in a particular area of

concern and interest; needed at a specific time

- Complaints: information which helps an older person with a specific complaint about a service. This requires an independent and recognised service
- Advocacy: involves working on behalf of the rights and interests of older people individually or as a group. Must be carried out by an organisation “with minimal conflict of interest”
- There were perceived gaps in complaints and advocacy information and services.

Information needs – subject areas

This part of the "ideal" service was primarily based on information provided by three of the information providers in the study.

- Accommodation/housing was the subject most requested in each of the services.
- Other topics commonly sought were services/help available, health, finance benefits/pensions, legal affairs and recreation/leisure.
- Legal enquiries accounted for approximately 14 per cent of the total number of enquiries.

Information provision

The elderly prefer to receive information from both local information services and central information services.

- Local information services provide face-to-face information to the elderly and are extremely useful for those from non-English speaking backgrounds. They can be very narrow, however, as they only provide information about local services.
- Central information services provide one point of contact. They may not provide information about local services and may not be readily accessible to some older people e.g. less mobile.
- Services should be promoted through talks to groups, radio talkback and ethnic radio and newspapers.
- Staff should have skills in communicating with older people, mediation, information organisation and cultural sensitivity.
- Specialised skills are needed for legal and financial advice.
- Volunteers can play a role e.g. keeping information up-to-

date, giving talks.

- Information services should be aware of their duty of care to provide accurate information.

Benefits of integrating services

- Client accessibility e.g. a central shop front location
- The up-dating and rationalisation of information
- More cost effective promotion
- Staff backup and relief
- More help for non-English speaking elderly: bilingual workers can be used across services.



Swindell, R, Singer, L & Singer, G, 'Teleconferencing as a medium for providing expert support to the isolated ageing', *Australian Journal on Ageing*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1994, pp. 93-94.

Aim To “test the feasibility of delivering, from a distance, substantial life management information to groups of people who had not previously met.”

Method

- Seven groups of Brisbane elderly residents (42 in total: 35 female and 7 male) took part in a series of teleconferences with the experts who were in Melbourne. Information from experts was presented in 3-5 minute segments and participants were invited to respond.
- Each group met with the researchers by telephone for 50 minutes once a week, for three weeks.
- Evaluators took part in the conferences and wrote comments during each of the sessions.
- The participants were interviewed individually at the end of the series.
- A second trial was conducted with 3 groups (24 individuals) of Melbourne residents.

Sample

Size: 66

Location: Brisbane, Melbourne

Key findings

- All participants rated the experience highly.
- There were no negative comments from feedback.
- All participants rated the topics as important.
- Expert-based information can be provided effectively to older adults who are isolated from the city via teleconferencing.

Thomas, T & Urbano, J, 'Telelink and the visually-impaired elderly: a group dynamic analysis', Australian Journal on Ageing, vol. 12, no. 1, 1993, pp. 25-29.

Telelink uses teleconferencing to bring small groups of elderly people with visual impairment together each week for stimulation, social interaction or therapy. It was established because traditional services for the visually impaired were unsuccessful as they were targeted towards children and younger adults. This meant that the elderly were not having their needs met effectively enough. Telelink is now available in different languages for various ethnic groups.

Aim To investigate the role of Telelink as a means of providing social support to the visually-impaired elderly.

Method

- Seven Telelink groups of the Association for the Blind, Victoria were selected at random and observed
- Each group consisted of 4 to 8 older people who were connected with each other via teleconference in their own home with a group leader. Sessions were one hour each week.
- 12 dimensions were used to reflect the discussions of the groups, for example information sharing, social chatting.
- The researcher listened to the group conversations and recorded data using time sampling techniques.
- Members of the groups were interviewed individually by phone a week later.

Sample

Size: 46 older people

Age: 60-80 years

Location: Victoria (23 urban, 23 rural). 41 per cent lived alone.

Key findings

- The main topics of the conversation were current affairs, health and exchange of useful information.
- Most subjects reported positive comments about Telelink.
- Telelink is excellent for receiving support and getting information from a group with the same disability.

Tilse, C., Setterlund, D., Wilson, J & Herd, B., 'Legal practitioners and older clients: challenges and opportunities for effective practice', *Elder Law Review*, vol. 1, 2002, pp. 34-42.

Aim To explore the knowledge, experience and use of powers of attorney, retirement village and aged care legislation by older people and their carers, legal practitioners and aged care practitioners in Queensland.

Method Consisted of two stages:

- Mail survey of legal practitioners in 1999
- 48 focus groups and 29 individual interviews with older people.

Sample

Size: Legal practitioners – 137
Older people – 377

Selection:

- 251 legal practitioners interested in legal practice with older people on the Queensland Law Society list were mailed a survey. Respondents were diversified across gender age and type and size of practice.
- Older participants were recruited from aged care services, carer organisations, retirement villages, aged care facilities and similar areas. Respondents were selected purposively to represent diverse socio-demographic factors, cognitive and physical ability and setting—community, aged care facilities and retirement villages.

Location: Queensland (urban and rural).

Key findings

Legal issues

Legal Practitioners

- Enduring powers of attorney were the predominant area for advice.
- Accommodation agreements and contracts were a minor area.

Older People

- Very few had sought legal advice when entering a retirement village; none when entering an aged care home.
- A minority sought advice regarding health, finance, EPAs and accommodation.

Service delivery issues

Legal Practitioners

- 58 per cent of practitioners reported that 20 per cent or less of their clients were over 60 years of age.
- Very few were Aboriginal or from different ethnic backgrounds.
- Barriers to accessing legal advice was the main issue raised.
- Providing a service to this group was not very lucrative – more of a community service.
- Time taken to communicate and the effect on costs was an issue.
- Lawyers need to be patient, kind and understanding with their elderly clients and the whole process needs to be slowed down so that they understand.
- 58 per cent reported no difficulty with older clients.
- 55 per cent had difficulty in knowing where to send clients for other information that they required.
- Dealing with family dynamics was often difficult.

Older People

- Participants reported mostly positive comments about practitioners.
- Positive attributes of practitioners included: friendliness and warmth, good communication skills, respectful attitude, reasonable costs, coming to home, costs known ahead of time.
- Some in retirement homes regretted not seeking advice beforehand; some had consulted a lawyer and still found that they were dissatisfied with arrangements.
- Practitioners need to look at matters in terms of how they impact on everyday life in addition to legal concerns.

- Issues raised included the difficulty of family arrangements, time required, costs, the complexity of legislation.
- Confidentiality was important particularly with Asian participants who would prefer a practitioner from their own cultural background who could understand family dynamics.

Knowledge of relevant legislation

Legal Practitioners

- Practitioners' self-reported knowledge of the Retirement Villages Act was very low but was high for Powers of Attorney Act and Advance Health Directives. There was no difference between rural and urban respondents.
- Approximately one-half indicated a need for training in the Powers of Attorney Act, Retirement Villages Act and the Aged Care Act.
- Preferred methods for receiving information were information kits, Law Society seminars and telephone conferences.

Older People

- Understanding and knowledge of the law was low or very low for health directives and the legal aspects of aged care facility entry.
- Income and disability influenced level of knowledge and perceived need to seek advice: lower income participants didn't think EPAs were relevant or something that they needed to monitor.
- There was little understanding of substitute decision-making. Many respondents believed they could make arrangements at the '11th hour' and the family would take care of it.
- There was a complete lack of knowledge of substitute decision-making among some people from different cultural backgrounds, those living in hostels and rural areas, and the physically frail.
- Formal talks from experts and informal discussion with trusted service providers were the preferred ways of obtaining legal information.
- Most older people also preferred informal discussions with

their family and friends in regard to legal matters.

- Recommendations**
- A broad based public education campaign is needed about the possibility of future incapacity, EPAs and residential arrangements and the implications of not making arrangements.
 - There is a need to highlight to older people potential abuse, their protections in legislation and the need to seek legal advice before signing a residency contract.
 - New and more inventive ways of conveying complex information to older people are needed, for example, audio-visual materials.
 - Practitioners need ongoing education in several areas:
 - Legislation
 - The cultural and family factors which may determine older peoples' responses
 - Information and community sources available to their clients.
-

Tinker, A, McCreadie, C & Salvage, A, *The Information needs of elderly people - an exploratory study*, Age Concern - Institute of Gerontology, London, 1993.

Aims To determine what are the information needs of elderly people; what help is being provided; whether there is a need for more help; and how these needs can be met.

Method

- Literature search of research on information needs of the elderly
- Group interviews with elderly people
- Individual interviews with elderly people
- Interviews with representatives of information-giving organisations (1992).

Sample

Size: Group interviews with elderly – 2
Individual elderly interviews– 50
Organisation representatives – 18

Selection: Non-random

Age: 60 and over (elderly sample)

Location: Great Britain

Key findings *Literature search and interviews with information providers*
Only selected findings from these two sections of the report are presented in this summary because of the age of the material and its specificity to the British environment. Those interested in more detail should refer to the entire report.

- The elderly are not homogeneous, and include a number of vulnerable groups such as those who are socially isolated or have poor mobility.
- They are not well informed.
- Family and friends are the most frequently accessed source of information but they are not always reliable because of the complexity of information.
- There is a need for more help in the provision of information.
- Barriers to information include:

- Those to do with older people e.g. low perception of needs and disabilities which hinder information seeking
- Those to do with professionals e.g. lack of knowledge and reliance on oral communication
- Those to do with information providers e.g. failure to update information and fragmented approaches
- The next generation of elderly may be different due to increased education opportunities and other factors.
- Professionals will face increasing numbers of older clients, so they will need help to enable them to provide information.
- Personal contact is essential to ensure information needs are met.
- Multimedia campaigns are more likely to be successful than single media campaigns.
- Information is needed at places where people go.
- There is a dislike of written information. Information must be worded simply and must be up-to-date. Format is important.

Potential initiatives

- One agency to co-ordinate and 'signpost' information agencies for the elderly
- Target carers' groups
- A telephone information service
- Training and support for professionals.

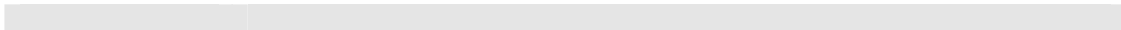
Individual and group interviews with the elderly

- The elderly find it difficult to identify needs they may have.
- The main areas of need were:
 - finance, especially social security and other benefits
 - health
 - housing
 - support services for people at home
- 20 per cent or more of the sample did not know how they would meet their information needs for legal rights.
- High level of confidence that information needs could be solved once they arise.
- Health practitioners, especially GPs, are a main source of

advice and information for health related information needs.

Legal information needs

- Information is needed when, for example, the elderly need to know about their legal rights, taking out or changing insurance policies and checking entitlement to income and benefits.
- Issues of this nature would be discussed with professionals e.g. a solicitor or lawyer.
- Knowledge of legal rights was very limited and the elderly found it hard to establish what they would want or need to know.
- 42 per cent of respondents didn't know how their information needs would be met in regard to legal rights.
- The most frequently occurring information situations e.g. how to get help in the garden, were not necessarily considered to be major concerns like health events.
- Some concerns of older people e.g. security or going out at night, may not be able to be addressed by factual information.



Tooth, L, Clark, M & McKenna, K, 'Poor Functional health literacy: the silent disability for older people', *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2000, pp. 14-21.

Aims Evidence suggests that many older people may be unable to read well enough to manage effectively in the health care system. The aim of this paper is to explore the link between functional literacy and health, and provide strategies for practitioners to deal with the problem.

- Key points**
- Forty percent of those aged 65 years or older left school at 14 years or younger. The leaving age is much higher for younger age groups.
 - Literacy may decline after retirement.
 - A 1996 ABS study found the following:
 - Of older Australians (65-74) almost half had limited literacy skills. 75 per cent of these had literacy levels which were poor or very poor.
 - Those with poor and very poor skills would be more likely to require assistance when reading information including information on medications, filling out application forms and deposit slips, etc.
 - Males 55-74 had higher levels of literacy than females.
 - Older Australians with fewer years of schooling are more likely to have poor health and handicaps. They make more visits to medical practitioners and hospitals than those with more schooling.
 - The reasons why poor literacy impacts on health outcomes is unclear, but it may be that those with lower literacy
 - are less assertive and less likely to take responsibility for health
 - do not understand how to use the system effectively
 - do not understand or know about medical conditions and management of health conditions
 - are embarrassed to ask for help
 - do not understand the written and oral communications

which comprise most of the materials from the health system

- Health care providers use many pamphlets, brochures, fact sheets and booklets to supplement oral advice, however, these usually have high readability levels that many people (especially older people) don't understand.
- Studies have found that most health materials have a reading level of grade 10 or higher. This includes labels on medicines and hearing aid brochures.
- In addition to vocabulary and syntax, characteristics like font, colour, amount of white space and personalisation also affect readability.
- Health professionals need to devise better ways to provide information for the elderly who have low literacy levels.
- All patient information material for the elderly should be written as simply as possible, using familiar words in conversational style, have summarised points and visual information.
- Non-written materials such as videos, slides, television, picture books and audiotapes are being used after the realisation that many people have low literacy levels.
- Professionals providing information need to be trained about the prevalence of illiteracy and how to produce information appropriate for this group.



Urbis Keys Young, *Women's information needs study: final report*, NSW Department of Women, Sydney, 2002.

Aims To examine women's information needs and information-seeking behaviours in relation to government information.

Method

- Literature search
- Telephone survey
- Face-to-face interviews (2001)

Sample

Size: Telephone survey – 1457

Face-to-face interviews – 40

Selection: Survey – random

Interviews – non-random selection of women from specified groups: social-economically disadvantaged, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, non-English speaking backgrounds and Maoris living in New Zealand

Age: 28 per cent of the survey sample was 55 years or older and 20 per cent were retired

Location: Australia, New Zealand.

Key findings

National survey

Differences of 5 per cent or more between respondents 55 years or older and the entire sample are noted.

- 66 per cent of respondents indicated they tried to get information from a government source in the past 12 months.
- The most common topics were education/training (29%). 9 per cent had tried to get information on aged care.
- 83 per cent of those aged 55 years or more said it was very important to get some information, compared to 88 per cent for the entire sample.
- People aged 55 years or more were more likely than the whole sample to say their problem/issue was complex (32% compared to 25%).

- 38 per cent of the sample said the problem for which they were seeking information caused them anxiety at the time.
- The most commonly reported first contact for information was a government entity (56%).
- Respondents aged 55 years or more were less likely than others to use the internet as the first point of call (3% vs 11%).
- Most people (55%) contacted one source only.
- For those who contacted more than one information source, the most useful sources were government, the internet and a private professional.
- Of those respondents who obtained information from a government agency, 92 per cent said that the information partially or fully met their needs.
- Respondents aged 55 years or older were equally as likely as the sample to say it was easy to obtain the information (approximately 76%).
- Satisfaction with ways of receiving information from government was highest for
 - printed material
 - newspaper articles/magazines
 - television: respondents 55 years or more were less likely (61%) than others (66%) to view TV as satisfactory
 - face-to-face contact.
- Satisfaction was lowest for
 - Internet: satisfaction for older people was 23 per cent versus 47 per cent for the sample; 20 per cent of those 55 years or more had used the internet to look up information about a government unit versus 42 per cent for the sample
 - posters/billboards: 55+ years (23%); sample (31%)
 - workshops seminars: 23 per cent versus 28 per cent.
- In response to a hypothetical question about where they would go if they needed information in relation to a family law matter, 52 per cent said a private lawyer and 8 per cent didn't know or couldn't say. A wide range of other sources were mentioned; legal aid or community legal service was the only other option nominated by more than 10 per cent of

respondents (12 per cent).

The following table shows the most frequently mentioned positive and negative features of obtaining government information via print, telephone and the Internet.

	Print materials	Telephone	Internet
Positives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can take time to read/digest • refer to again • provides enough information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • actually speak to someone • quick • no need to travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quick/available 24 hours • easy • can access from home
Negatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • too general/too brief • often difficult to read/understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have too wait too long • dislike electronic routing • hard to locate right person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficult to find what you need • can be slow • information too general/brief

Culturally and linguistically diverse—In-depth interviews

The group with women from non-English speaking backgrounds was the only one to have older participants (48-77 years). There were five respondents.

- The older women had very limited English.
- Most were dependent on husband and/or children, often their daughter, for information seeking.
- The older women needed information about government benefits, health issues and problems with adult children e.g. drugs.
- All the older women stated they would prefer to go to family and friends when seeking government information because of their limited English skills, lack of knowledge about other sources of information and lack of confidence in approaching 'official' organisations. Also, they can be trusted.
- Ethnic organisations were also approached.

- They preferred:
 - printed materials and newspapers or magazines in their own language
 - radio in their own language
 - professionals of the same cultural background
- The telephone was not preferred because of problems with language and assimilating information.
- Three of the five older respondents said they had no idea where to go for a family law matter.

Implications for information provision to older women from non-English speaking backgrounds

- Older women - particularly women of non-English speaking backgrounds - will require different approaches.
 - Websites should not be regarded as substitutes for the provision of information in other forms.
 - Information in newspapers and magazines and the ethnic media are important.
 - Materials should be produced in community languages when possible.
 - Information should be distributed through community networks.
 - Services should be integrated so that support and information can be offered from one point.
 - Staff need to be trained to deal with a culturally diverse population.
 - Telephone and other information sources should be accessible and staffed by knowledgeable people.
-

Williamson, K, *I can tell you a remedy for migraines. telecommunications and the information and communications needs of older adults*. 1997, <<http://infotech.monash.edu/itnr/reports/remedy.html>> (Accessed June 2003).

Aim To study the information-seeking and communication behaviours of telecommunication users.

Method

- Three focused interviews held over a 3 week period
- Telephone diary kept by respondents for 2 weeks (1992-4)

Sample

Size: 202

Selection: Purposively selected for balance e.g. gender, age, country of birth

Age: 60+

Location: Melbourne and Gippsland areas.

Key findings The paper identifies two different types of information:

1. Personal information: relevant to an individual or group e.g. a bowling club or church group.
2. Community information: public information relevant to the community in general. (This summary will focus on the sources used for acquiring community health information).

Community information

Telephone diaries

- Approximately 14 per cent of the 6241 calls were related to community information.
- Recreation, transport and activities of voluntary organisations were the most frequently occurring topics.

Interviews on information acquisition and sharing: health

Sources consulted by 50 per cent or more of the respondents:

- Members of professional groups e.g. doctors, physiotherapists etc. Health professionals were preferred as they are "authoritative and significant sources".

- Family members and friends
 - TV
 - Newspapers. Overseas-born respondents were less likely than the Australian-born respondents to report acquiring information from newspapers. All respondents who used newspapers gained their information incidentally.
 - Radio
 - Magazines. Women were significantly more likely to obtain information from magazines than men (77% vs 41%)
 - Pamphlets and brochures obtained from doctors, chemists, community health centres, etc.
 - Organisations from which information was sought:
 - Hospitals, community health centres, health insurance funds, Heart Foundation etc were mentioned by many respondents.
 - Libraries, information sources, government departments were used by a minority.
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Williamson, K, Bow, A & Wale, K, 'Encouraging public internet use by older people: a comparative study of city and rural areas', *Rural Society*, vol. 7, no. 3-4, 1997, pp. 3-11.

Aims To investigate how the elderly access new technology, their attitudes and perceptions about computers and the internet, the hands-on difficulties of using the new technology and how this access can be improved.

Methodology

- Survey of library users -selected non-randomly at the libraries
- Observation of participants using internet - selected non-randomly (1996)

Sample

Size: Survey – 120

Observation – 60

Age: 50+

Location: Three libraries in Victoria (2 Melbourne, 1 rural).

Key findings

Survey

Computer and internet use

- 65 per cent had used a computer at least once; 25 per cent used a computer at least fortnightly, 26 per cent said they would never use a computer.
- Nine respondents had used the internet; 90 per cent had never used the internet.
- Age was strongly related to having a computer at home: younger participants were far more likely than older participants to have a computer.
- Participants with a higher level education were more likely to have a computer in the home and more likely to use the computer frequently.
- City people were more likely to have a computer than rural people but there was no difference by gender or ethnic grouping.
- Approximately half said they didn't use a computer because they didn't know how or because they needed more practice.

Feelings about computers

- 42 per cent did not think computers were relevant to their lives.
- 49 per cent said they would use a computer if they had to or said they

found computers helpful but not essential.

- 8 per cent were positive about the role of the computer in their lives. They tended to be younger, better educated, to have a computer at home. They were less likely to be on a pension.
- Rural users were more likely to have negative feelings.

Observation

- 26 per cent of the participants had never used a computer before; 90 per cent had never used the internet.
- 43 per cent reported occasional or extensive problems with the use of the mouse; this was the biggest problem. Observers reported that 25 per cent of users had occasional or extensive problems with scrolling, the cursor and hypertext.
- The most popular topics were travel, genealogy, gardening and finance.
- Participants were disappointed by the lack of Australian information on the internet.
- After using the internet during the project, 85 per cent said that they would use it again.

Problems encountered

- For some respondents the mouse was difficult to use because of tremors or arthritis.
- Waiting times for the screen to load were long and frustrating.
- Screens were often considered to be poorly formatted.
- Buttons and links were often difficult to read because of the colour combinations and small fonts.
- Jargon and inconsistent terms were mentioned as a problem.
- Screen did not give obvious clues as to what to do next.

Recommendations

- Location e.g. private and physical conditions, lighting and furniture are important when providing public access.
- Alternatives to the standard mouse should be provided.
- Simple instructions and definitions should be available.
- Training should be made available.
- Colours used on home pages should be carefully considered.

Woolcott Research, *Information dissemination strategy study: an evaluation of the information needs and communications preferences of older people*, 2 vols, Department of Social Security, Sydney, 1997.

Aims This project aimed to identify the information needs of people planning for or in retirement, the availability of information and the most appropriate ways for the Department of Social Security to develop and convey this information to them.

Method

- Group discussions with older people
- In-depth interviews with key intermediaries e.g. DSS staff, retiree associations
- Telephone interviews with older people
- Additional interviews with members of selected groups e.g. NESB, those in remote locations (1996)

Sample

Size: 22 focus groups
40 in-depth interviews with intermediaries
1200 telephone interviews

Selection: Telephone interviews – random
Focus groups and in-depth interviews - non-random

Age: Telephone interviews – 46 years and over

Location: Groups – NSW and Qld; urban, semi-urban, rural
Survey – national.

Key findings *"...people approaching retirement do not know what they could or should be aware of."*

Group discussions with older people

- Most people did relatively little planning.
- It was only in older people of 70 years or more that the lack of planning became important and housing emerged as an issue.
- People didn't know where to go for help and felt there was no central point for retirement planning.
- An important issue was "knowing what they need to know".
- Attitudes towards potential information sources were mixed:
 - Peers and family: have influence but are often unreliable and

inaccurate

- Government departments: credible but not perceived to have a wide range of information
- Media: credible but the information is too general and not tailored to the individual
- Councils: approachable and non-judgmental
- Retirement agencies: perceived to be for those with higher incomes
- Cultural networks: extremely important to migrants
- Community centres: well thought of except for problems of confidentiality in rural areas.
- The Department of Social Security (DSS) was perceived to be a provider of services, not information. Participants also saw it as impersonal and government departments as not necessarily helpful.

Effectiveness of information formats

- Face to face: all participants thought that this mode was the most effective. A personal information consultant to help select material needed and highlight the important sections was regarded as important. Some people believed that face-to-face assistance was sufficient and written information was not needed.
- Telephone: allows information to be individualised but some felt the anonymity of the provider was a difficulty. Long waits were a disadvantage.
- Written material: considered to be a good back up to face-to-face information but was often not read in detail. Materials were difficult to use, too detailed and lacked relevance.
- Media: local newspapers were read by most participants, had high credibility and were used to find seminars, get ideas.
- Videos: the older participants did not appear to be heavy users of video machines.
- Seminars: participants thought these were a very effective mode. They were considered a "safe" environment.

Telephone interviews with older people

- 39 per cent of those who had retired more than two years ago did little or no planning. Many wished they had spent more time prior to retirement.

- The amount of retirement planning differed among respondents; in part this was based on demographic, social and economic factors, and in part on attitudes.
- Approximately one-quarter had attended a retirement planning seminar; one-half had seen a financial adviser. Respondents from non-English speaking backgrounds, those living in remote areas and the unemployed were less likely to have engaged in a range of planning activities.
- Among the retired, concessions, pension eligibility and health costs were the topics that received the highest percentages for "highly important".
- Nearly one-half of those in retirement did not believe they had adequate information in the above areas.
- Most people thought it was or would be easy to obtain "useful and unbiased information" about the topics important to them.
- When importance and ease of getting information were taken into account, the areas of greatest information need for the recently retired were retirement planning, investment options and concessions.
- Investment options, maintaining lifestyle and retirement planning were the areas of greatest need for those who had been retired for more than two years.
- When unprompted, people had problems identifying useful information sources. The DSS was mentioned by 40 per cent.
- When prompted, the DSS was the most nominated source by the retired (71%) closely followed by accountants/solicitors (68%).
- "Self" was mentioned as a major source of information for several topic areas.

Effectiveness of information formats

- A booklet listing the types of information available and where to find it was rated "highly appealing" by 53 per cent and "quite appealing" by 36 per cent. The format received a high percentage of "appealing" from all the sub-groups studied.
- Other formats rated highly appealing by 40 per cent or more were a phone number to ring, a small booklet, retirement information centres and a retirement manual. A low cost video received the lowest rating of "highly appealing" (20 per cent).

When asked for suggestions for providing information, the most common response was "publications which are easily understood" (9 per cent). Supplying information to people "when they are still young" was the second most frequently mentioned.

Interviews with intermediaries

- Financial planners and DSS staff saw themselves as frontline information providers.
- Ethnic community leaders saw themselves as a referral point - directing people to the right information.
- The intermediaries all believed that oral, face-to-face consultation was most effective for retirement topics because it offers opportunity for questions and answers and is effective for gaining attention.
- Telephone was the next best option. Older people were perceived as being impatient with delays and they wanted to speak with someone who would understand their situation, that is, someone their own age. People from NESB backgrounds also have problems with the telephone.
- Written materials were considered to be a good back-up but it was acknowledged that the reading level of many older people was low. Representatives of ethnic groups said there was a need for a general overview.
- Media were seen to be a good tool for increasing awareness. Ethnic radio and press were seen as crucial ways to reach those from a NESB.
- Seminars were highly thought of as a mode of information dissemination.

Recommendations

- Information on planning should be made relevant well before retirement; words like 'retirement' should be avoided.
- Face-to-face delivery methods should be used when possible.
- People must receive guidance on where to go for different types of information.
- People need to be told what they need to know.
- Intermediaries should coordinate their efforts.
- Awareness of the need for and benefits of retirement planning needs

to be raised.

- Opinion leaders and intermediaries should be made referral agents.
 - A basic guide which would attempt to change behaviour should be developed. The guide should be available in a number of formats.
 - Other strategies to consider are a telephone hotline, retirement information centres and booklets which list types of information available and where to get it and questions which should be asked.
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Worthington Di Marzio and Cultural Partners Australia, *Access to information about government services among culturally and linguistically diverse audiences*, Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, Melbourne, 2001, http://www.info.vic.gov.au/resources/cald_report.htm.

- Aims**
- To research the government information needs of culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians.
 - To identify the existing patterns of communication/information consumption about government services by culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians.
 - To develop an understanding of cultural and gender issues, including specific issues relating to new and emerging communities and the elderly.
 - To identify the preferred means by which specific categories of culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians like to receive information about government services.

- Method**
- Individual interviews
 - Focus groups

Sample

- Size:*
- 60 individual interviews with community leaders and spokespersons
 - 3 separate executive interviews with representatives of each of the twenty communities studied
 - 25 focus group discussions spread across the 20 communities and 21 language groups. Focus groups with older people were held with Mandarin, Croatian, Greek Italian, Maltese, Polish and Russian speakers. (2001)
 - Participants were purposively selected.

Location: Victoria

Key findings *Note: The report contains in-depth findings on the information needs and seeking of 21 language groups. This summary presents only those findings related to the focus groups with older people.*

Mandarin elderly

- Did not know where to go to complain about certain things
- Did not understand the legal system in Australia
- Acquired information from Chinese newspapers, community organisations, elderly club seminars, SBS Chinese news
- Had extremely low English skills
- Found sourcing information difficult because of language problems
- Did not understand the information they did find (language is a barrier)
- Had not used the internet
- Thought the most effective ways to provide information were:
 - providing information in Chinese or in English and Chinese together
 - SBS radio
 - Chinese newspapers and Chinese TV
 - at festivals.

Greek elderly

- Most information came from friends and social networks
- Acquired information from Greek radio programs and newspapers, friends, aged newsletter in Greek, Greek organisations
- Felt confident to seek information on their own
- Did not rely on children, as their children found it a "burden" to help with information
- Did not use 1800 numbers and other information lines as they were perceived to be for English speakers only
- Were computer illiterate
- Thought the most effective ways to provide information were:
 - to be provided in Greek
 - by direct mail.
- Felt that written material was most effective
- Did not favour community festivals for acquiring information

Italian elderly

- Those who couldn't speak English found it hard to find information.
- Acquired information from ethnic press, SBS, Yellow Pages, mainstream newspapers, radio, TV, pamphlets and government offices
- Preferred information in Italian
- Thought the most effective ways to provide information were:
 - in Italian
 - in question and answer format.

Maltese elderly

- Low awareness of services
- Did not trust the government
- Were unable to read English so preferred information in their own language
- Acquired information from ethnic radio, weekly meeting days of senior groups, word of mouth
- Usually relied on their children who have grown up in Australia to help them when they need it
- Were ashamed and felt stupid to ask for help
- Had no idea what the internet or web sites were
- Thought the most effective ways to provide information were:
 - information brochures in Maltese with a question and answer format
 - audiovisual (in group situations)
 - community organisations
 - ethnic media.

Polish elderly

- Found it difficult to find information about programs and services
- Faced language barriers when looking for information
- Acquired information from radio, TV, Polish weekly, word of mouth, friends and relatives

- Trusted their local councils and representatives of community organisations most
 - Found websites were helpful in obtaining information
 - Thought the most effective ways to provide information were:
 - sending information to members of various groups
 - community centres
 - face-to-face meetings
 - in Polish with simple text in large writing
 - audio-visual materials
 - radio announcements.
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