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ABSTRACT

Face-to-face structured interviews were held with 1,810 older adults throughout Queensland (Australia) to determine their sources of information about housing, finance, legal matters, home maintenance, and social activities. At least 97% of respondents knew of at least one source of information about each topic; however, 42%-57% could name only one available source of information on each topic. Respondents over the age of 80 were less likely to cite printed information sources such as newspapers and phone books. Across all five categories, the informal network of family and friends was mentioned frequently. Forty-one percent preferred getting information by telephone, 34% preferred talking to someone in an office, and 24% preferred written information. Many respondents did not mention any of the considerable number of expensive high-quality services currently available in many communities throughout Queensland to help older people retain their independence. It was concluded that policymakers and service providers must ensure that potential users know how to access suitable providers during times of need. (Contains 19 references. Appended are the following: tables/lists detailing sources and frequency of information, respondents' living arrangements/accommodation status, and prior problems with getting information; list of survey officers; and the survey instrument.) (MN)

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# Sources of Information

## How Older Queensland Adults obtain Information about:

- Housing
- Finance
- Legal Matters
- Home Maintenance
- Social Activities

**(Final Report - February 1996)**

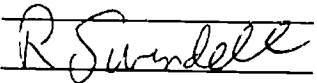
A study conducted on behalf of the Office of Ageing  
for the Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs

Richard Swindell and Ken Vassella  
Griffith University

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February 1996

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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Face-to-face structured interviews were held with 1810 older people from different parts of Queensland, principally to find out how they get their information about five main areas which impact on their quality of life. These areas were: housing; finance; legal matters; home maintenance; and social activities. Health matters were not a focus of this study.

To determine the extent of participants' knowledge of information sources throughout their community they were asked to mention one first choice, and then prompted to list as many alternatives as they wished.

### **MAJOR FINDINGS**

#### **FIVE MAJOR CATEGORIES**

##### **Housing**

The main category cited as a source for information about housing was Real Estate Agents (43%). This, by far, was the main choice, regardless of participants' location, age group, gender or physical capability. Council and Government Agencies (16%), family and friends (14%), and newspaper (11%) were the other most frequently cited sources.

Forty-two per cent of participants were able to name only one source, and three per cent could not name any source at all.

##### **Finance**

Commercial institutions (56%), such as banks, building societies and credit unions, comprised the main cited information providers, particularly for those living in small centres (80%). The other main sources given were family and friends (12%), financial advisers (10%) and accountants (10%).

Fifty-three per cent of participants were able to name only one source, and one per cent could not name any source at all.

##### **Legal matters**

Solicitors (66%), Legal Aid (11%) and family and friends (9%) were the main categories given as sources of information about legal matters. Overall, police (1%) were not seen as important sources of information. However, in small centres, police were rated quite highly, ranking fourth behind the above three sources. Fifty-seven per cent of participants were able to name only one source, and one per cent could not name any source at all.



## **Home maintenance**

For home maintenance, responses were spread more evenly across first mentioned categories than they were for the other four main areas. Main responses were: family and friends (27%), tradesmen (14%), local paper (14%), telephone book (14%), hardware store (8%) and council and government agencies (8%).

Forty-eight per cent of participants were able to name only one source, and one per cent could not name any source at all.

## **Social activities**

The local newspaper (28%), clubs (21%), and family and friends (13%) were most frequently mentioned as sources of information about social activities.

Forty-two per cent of participants were able to name only one source, and three per cent could not name any source at all.

## **Interpreting single source replies to the five major categories**

There are two ways of looking at the overall responses to the five main areas. An optimistic interpretation could suggest that, in every case, 97 per cent or higher knew of at least one source to turn to for information. However, a more cautious and, probably, more realistic interpretation is gained by focusing on the large numbers of participants who could name only one source in each of the areas (from 42%-57%). If their nominated source is inappropriate they appear to know of no alternatives. For example, in the housing area, real estate agents was the main category choice (43%). Because many real estate agents are unlikely to be widely knowledgeable about housing alternatives for the ageing, or impartial in providing advice, many older Queenslanders who nominated this source as their only choice, may not be able to get the kinds of advice about housing which is best suited to their needs

## **MEDIA SOURCES**

People in the old-old category tended to cite printed sources such as newspaper and phone book less frequently than the young-old. Despite this drop off with age, 19% of those over the age of 80, and 19% of the frail elderly mentioned the local newspaper as a source of information about social activities. The local newspaper, therefore, appears to be consulted, at least for some sources of information, across all surveyed age ranges, particularly outside Brisbane. In contrast, the city newspaper was not mentioned frequently, and other media outlets such as radio and TV, barely rated a mention.

## **THE PERVASIVE NATURE OF INFORMAL NETWORKS**

Across all five categories the informal network of family and friends was mentioned frequently, more so by women than men, and, as might have been anticipated, with increasing frequency by age. For formal information providers who are interested in spreading their specific message as widely as possible, this reliance by older people on informal sources could be regarded either as a weakness or a potential strength. On the negative side, the tendency for people to cite informal networks suggests that many older people do not know of, or do not think of, the many specific outlets which currently exist to provide them with the kinds of substantial and impartial information which can help them. In all probability, within the informal network, the great majority of people who are consulted for advice would need to seek specific information from a formal provider or recognised authority, in order to obtain the best and most appropriate advice. If members of the informal network are, themselves, incapable of seeking expert advice, the informal network fails as an information provider. On the positive side, informal networks are highly pervasive and could, perhaps, be used to advantage by formal information providers. Since adults of all ages can be members of informal networks advertising of information services should extend beyond the ageing population.

## **PREFERRED METHOD OF GETTING INFORMATION**

Participants were asked to state their preferred way of getting information. The telephone (41%) was the preferred way, followed by talking to someone in an office (34%), and written information (24%). Preference varied with gender with males having a slight preference for face to face information rather than the telephone. Location was also a factor with Brisbane people preferring face to face (41%) and telephone (39%); people in large centres preferring mainly the telephone (53%) and those in small centre preferring face to face (40%) and written (38%). Participants were also asked if they had reasonable access to a number of common amenities and communication outlets. Regardless of location, age, frailty, or perceived difficulties with reading, walking, or hearing, the telephone was accessible to 91-98 per cent of participants.

## **CONCLUSION**

A considerable number of expensive, high quality services currently exists in many communities throughout Queensland, specifically to help older people retain their independence. Participants in this study listed a very wide range of sources which they would think to turn to if they required specific information (Appendices 1-5). In many cases the high quality providers were not mentioned. Many of the sources listed in Appendices 1-5 are unlikely to be able to provide appropriate information. The challenge for policy makers and service providers alike is to ensure that potential users know how to access suitable providers during times of need. Information of the kind obtained from this study will assist in helping to ensure that increasingly scarce resources are put to most effective use.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

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This report was prepared on behalf of the Office of Ageing for the Queensland Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs.

The purpose of the research was to provide information to the Office of Ageing about the ways in which older adults in Queensland obtain information, or would seek information if it were required, about a range of areas which contribute to their quality of life. The research will help to provide a basis on which future decisions can be made regarding the most effective ways to package and provide information for older Queenslanders.

Twenty-three older Queenslanders were trained as Survey Officers for this study. Data were collected by face-to-face, structured questionnaire with 1810 older adults (50 years and older) from a number of different geographical areas of Queensland (Appendix 8).

## 2. BACKGROUND

---

Older people comprise the fastest growing sector of the population. In 1993, one in seven Queenslanders was aged 60 years and over. By the year 2031 more than one person in four will be over the age of 60. Quite spectacular growth is projected to take place in the old-old population, with the projected increase for people over the age of 85 years being more than three times the rate for Queensland overall (Office of Ageing, 1994).

Day's (1985) study showed that older Australians want to maintain their independence to the end. However, apart from a social responsibility to ensure that older peoples' rights are respected, it also makes economic sense to assist older people to maximise their independence. The financial costs of institutional support are considerably higher than costs associated with helping older people to remain independent.

Older people need information across a wide range of categories that have the potential to contribute to their quality of life and, directly or indirectly, to their ability to remain independent. A survey of older people in the USA (Jones, Morrow, Morris, Ries, and Wekstein, 1992) found a total of 58 frequently mentioned items that were perceived to be of concern. These included everyday items, like housing, recreation, financial concerns and so forth.

By and large, the myriad needs of older people are catered for through a wide range of outlets which operate in many ways throughout the community. These outlets are supported by all sectors of government and many non-government organisations, both commercial and voluntary. In many cases formal information channels have been set up in an attempt to ensure that those who could make use of these services know of their existence. However, the effectiveness of information outlets in informing older people of the availability of a specific service is open to question. For example, in a survey to gauge the awareness of health services in Canada (Snider, 1980) it was found that older peoples' awareness levels of available services was only slightly better than would have occurred by chance alone.

In apparent contrast to the level of older Canadian's awareness of services, a New Zealand study (Colmar Brunton Research, 1990) determined the extent of older people's awareness of specialist support services available in that country. Participants were provided with a list of services and asked whether they had heard of these. Services like Meals on Wheels, District Nursing, Senior Citizens Clubs and church based social services all rated 80 per cent or better recognition. Fifty per cent or more had heard of Home Help, Grey Power, and Disability Allowance. Other services were less well known but all were considerably higher than for those reported in Snider's (1980) Canadian study. However, an important difference between the two studies was in the way participants' awareness of a service was gauged. In the New Zealand study participants were given a list of services and in the Canadian study they were not. Many adults are likely to reply that they have heard of a service if their memories are jogged, as occurred in the New Zealand study. For policy makers, evaluators and the like, a knowledge of what services an older person would think of turning to in times of need would probably be of greater benefit. A more realistic picture of older people's knowledge of support services is likely to be gained from unprompted responses.

Silverstein (1984) cited a paradox resulting from the expressed need by the elderly for services which, at the same time, were under-utilised. His survey found that fewer than 25 per cent of respondents exhibited a high level of service awareness. The level of knowledge of services was not evenly distributed throughout the sample. People whose knowledge was acquired through media and informal networks such as friends and family, showed evidence of a greater overall knowledge than did those who relied on other source of information. However, the respondents did not restrict themselves to one source of information for all services, using media, informal and, less often, formal sources. Those who took the trouble to learn through formal sources were more likely to make use of them. Conversely Ward, Sherman and Lagory (1984) found that the informal network was not an important criterion for either helping or hindering the use of services. Those respondents living in cities had a higher level of knowledge of services than those in country areas. However, the level of lack of knowledge of services was similar, with between one-third and one-half of respondents unaware of each type of service.

The importance of informal networks is supported by other studies (Coyne, 1991; O'Brien & Wagner, 1980). In a study looking at marketing techniques, Klippel and Sweeney (1974) stressed that the use of the informal network in communicating with the aged market could be a useful marketing strategy and could be applicable across a broad product spectrum. Tinker, McCreddie and Salvage (1993) revealed that the main way in which most elderly people in England received information was from their families, friends and neighbours. If these sources were discounted, then the major sources became the health services and, more particularly, the general practitioner.

In a study of communication channels used by the elderly to obtain information Goodman (1992) found that television and newspapers were the most often cited methods of communication. Next was "friends and relatives", followed by magazines and radio. Professionals were least used as a source of information. Again, selection of methods was not universal across the sample and appeared to be influenced by education, age, gender, income, and living arrangements. People aged 80 and older used print media less frequently. Higher income people were more likely to choose newspapers, magazines and organisations. Women selected brochures/leaflets and listened to the radio more often than men. Those who lived with others used newspapers, organisations and radio more than those who lived alone.

Studies of providers and other professionals revealed support for more formal methods of disseminating information about services. A survey of specialists in the field of gerontology, including library/information specialists, education/researchers, policy level administrators, and service providers (Hales, 1985) found that they favoured the formal ways used by agencies and organisations. In their view, improvements in information dissemination would be achieved through inter-agency outreach programs, more one-to-one contact in existing structures, and better training of workers in the area. Only the library/information specialists thought a computerised approach was important. In fact, none of the other professionals considered that library programs and Information and Referral (including hotlines) programs were relevant. Government networks were recognised by all the groups as the best means of supplying information. The media was seen as the best external source for promulgating information.

In support of the library/information specialists' views, others advocate the use of technology as an efficient method of communication with elderly people. Smyth

and Harris (1993) claim that the setting up of computer hotlines would be the best way of transmitting information, observing that printed material is often out of date. Teleconferencing has also been suggested and trialed as a non-threatening and practical way of providing coping and expert based information to isolated older adults (Swindell, Singer and Singer, 1994).

The New South Wales Office on Ageing has proposed a "One Stop Information Shop" telephone system for older people (Kennedy, 1993). The system involves a centralised, computer-based data bank which any older person in any place in the State could telephone in order to obtain information about any service. Upon accessing the data bank, callers would be given the phone number and/or address of the nearest service provider. The major advantage of such a system would be that older people and care givers need know of only one number in order to gain information. Other advantages claimed for this approach include: affordability and efficiency for the consumer; currency of information; appropriateness for older people who are frequently in their homes; fairness and equity for older people isolated by distance; and anonymity for users.

A similar project, which accepts inquiries on the phone and in person, has been established in a community in north-eastern Melbourne. In an evaluation of this project Fox, Sims, Farish, Sullivan and Gray (1995) reported that 77 per cent of users had found the service to be "very useful" and 20 per cent "useful". Only three per cent found the service to be of little or no use. Impressive as these results sound, it needs to be noted that the evaluation was conducted only with the users of the service. No information was obtained from non-users about their level of awareness of the service. Also, most calls were from carers and professionals rather than elderly people themselves.

The foregoing literature search reflects the paucity of accessible research which relates to older people's information services. Extensive CD Rom literature searches were undertaken through Australian Public Affairs Information Service (APAIS), Public Affairs Information Service (PAIS), Social Services Index (SSI), Australian Family and Society Abstracts, and Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC). Several lists were also scanned on Internet for items of relevance to the study.

Throughout Australia, government and non-government organisations *en toto* provide an impressive array of services which are intended to contribute to the well being of older people. In Queensland a large number of support services for

the ageing exists throughout the State, and many of these providers have set up formal information channels in an attempt to ensure that those who have need of these services know of their existence.

Unless older people know how to get the type of information they need, when they want it, and in a form which is likely to be of greatest use to them, much of the potential benefit to be derived from costly support services is lost. In the years ahead increasing numbers of older people, and an almost inevitable continuation of current financial pressures on social services, suggest that every effort must be made to ensure that the ageing and their carers are knowledgeable of, and know how to access available services. Information obtained from this study will assist providers to meet these objectives.



### **3. METHODOLOGY**

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Preliminary discussions between the project leader and personnel from the Office of Ageing resulted in broad agreement regarding the content and extent of the proposed survey. It was agreed that a cross-section of the older Queensland population should be surveyed by structured questionnaire with participants drawn randomly from large, medium and smaller population centres around the State. Ideally, participants should include: the old-old; the healthy ageing; the frail ageing; people with hearing, sight and ambulatory difficulties; people from isolated areas; aboriginal people; and people from non-English speaking backgrounds. Where possible, the survey was to be conducted by older people drawn from University of the Third Age (U3A) groups from selected areas of Queensland.

#### **3.1 The survey instrument**

A draft instrument was developed to reflect the specific information needs of Office of Ageing personnel, as well as the rather limited findings from relevant literature. Data were to be collected by face-to-face interviews. Apart from meeting specific content requirements, the instrument had to be constructed so that a number of mechanical details associated with data collection and entry could be easily undertaken by the older data collectors, many of whom were to be trained by telephone. The instrument was structured for:

- ease of interpretation during telephone training;
- ease and speed of use in the field by survey officers;
- consistency of information entry;
- ease of understanding by the older people to be surveyed; and
- ease of transference of data to a statistical package.

Data were to be entered directly onto the survey instruments by the survey officers. Ultimately, after testing a number of different formats, one was developed which required the entry of only a "1" or a "2" in each set category, and minimum word entry in the majority of questions which were expected to yield a variety of answers. Two of the open ended questions allowed for sentence length responses. Cues to the correct method of entering data for each question were included on the survey form. This was done to ensure consistent entry of information and to simplify the training of survey officers. The same system of

cuing was included on the separate question sheet issued to the survey officers.

Two face-to-face training sessions were held with the five survey officers from Brisbane. Following these sessions, the instrument was pilot tested with 50 elderly participants drawn at random from shopping centres and the Brisbane City Mall. Discussion of the process and outcome, and a trial analysis of the data, led to minor modifications of the questionnaire, which were agreed to by the Office of Ageing. Data from the 50 participants in the pilot study were not used in the main study. The final version of the instrument and question sheet is included in Appendix 10.

### **3.2 Survey Officers**

Older adults relate more easily in an interview situation to people of their own approximate age group (Mayhew and Swindell, in press). For this reason every effort was made to recruit survey officers who were retired people. The survey officers were to be paid at standard Research Assistant rates. In the larger centres U3A administrators were approached to recruit assistants. In the smaller centres possible assistants were approached on the advice of officers of the Queensland branch of the National Pensioners and Superannuants League, and the Queensland Council on the Ageing.

All assistants were contacted individually, either in person or, in most cases, by telephone and mail. This preliminary contact was used to explain the purpose and the general form of the survey, and to determine their willingness to continue. Written confirmation of appointment, together with copies of the survey forms and question sheet, were then mailed to those who had agreed to train as survey officers.

Training took place via teleconferences with small groups of up to six survey officers at a time. For most people two separate hour long teleconferences were sufficient. During the teleconferences, participants were first taken stepwise through the questionnaire and given detailed instructions on how to ask questions, and prompt for further information when required. The survey officers were instructed to read set questions and to give no cues to interviewees, other than those specifically included on the question sheet. Stepwise training was followed by role play during which participants took turns to "survey" other members of the group, and code and record their data on their practice sheets. All groups were offered the option of additional training by teleconference but

most felt that they were sufficiently well prepared to collect the data after two sessions. A third teleconference session was held for a small number of survey officers. A listing of survey officers and their location is included in Appendix 8.

### **3.3 The sample**

The sample comprised 1810 older adults (50 years and older) selected from a number of different geographical areas of Queensland. A selection of larger and smaller centres was made. The larger centres, Brisbane, Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville, and Bundaberg, were chosen on the basis of their having an established U3A group which could help recruit survey officers. Smaller centres were chosen from the central and far western areas of the State. These centres were Kingaroy, Mitchell, Barcaldine, Biloela, Mount Isa, Roma, Hughenden, Clermont, Emerald and Charleville.

Within the centres participants were selected at random, preferably from different locales. The bulk of the interviews were conducted in shopping centres and malls. The 95 frail elderly participants were interviewed in their places of residence or other locations convenient for them.

For this study, it was not practicable to obtain specific responses from subgroups of either Aboriginal people, or from people originating from non-English speaking backgrounds. Initial discussions with Aboriginal advisers suggested that Elders from throughout Queensland would need to travel to Brisbane for discussion of the project, and training in order to carry out the interviews. The project budget was not able to support this option. Officials of the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland were unable to assist with the project at the time the data were collected.

### **3.4 Survey content**

Survey content was nominated by the Office of Ageing. Five areas which impact on older people's quality of life were surveyed: housing; financial matters; legal matters; home maintenance; and social activities. Health-related issues were not a focus of the study. Other questions included participants' living arrangements; age; sex; perceptions of problems with obtaining information; ease of access to sources of information; difficulties with vision, locomotion and hearing; and frequency of use of communication and transport systems.

### 3.5 Data analysis

Data were initially entered into an Excel spreadsheet which was formatted in the same manner as the survey sheets for ease of transcription. Qualitative responses were also entered into the spreadsheet. Data screening and initial descriptive analyses were undertaken using Excel's statistical capabilities. Graphs and charts were produced in Excel. Cross-tabulations and other analyses were produced using SPSS for Windows (Version 6.0).

## 4. RESULTS

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### 4.1 Interpretation of data

In the following, data percentages have been rounded to whole numbers and, therefore, do not always add to exactly 100.

Respondents listed a large number of sources which they would use to obtain information about the five major surveyed areas (housing, finance, legal matters, home maintenance, social activities). In most analyses, in order to reduce the detail, only specific responses which total ten per cent or more are included. Details of all sources mentioned by all survey participants are listed in appendixes 1-5.

In viewing the charts and tables it is important to bear in mind what the percentages mean. In most cases they relate to numbers of people responding to a particular choice. In a few cases, which are clearly specified in the charts and tables, percentages relate to the frequency of citings of a particular category. For example, Table 2 on page 15 shows the percentages of main sources of information about housing as first choice, other choices and total choices. One choice only is possible for first choice, therefore, when reading the first choice row in Table 2 (or any other Table with a "first choice" category), percentages can be thought of either as choices or as sample size. However, because each respondent was prompted to give multiple responses for other choices, the percentages for Other Choices and Total relate to the number of times a particular choice was cited. In practice, the number of other choices provided by interviewees ranged from zero to six.

A number of cross-tabulations were run between each of the five major categories (housing, finance, legal matters, home maintenance and social activities) and other variables. Cross-tabulations are a convenient way of displaying combinations of values for two or more categorical variables, for example, age and housing. The data for all cross-tabulations in this report can best be illustrated by reference to a specific example. Table i on the next page is reproduced from the section on Housing which appears in section 4.2.1. Reading across the first data row for the 50-59 years old age group, there were 374 respondents (n = 374) within the 50-59 years old age group. Seventeen per cent

of people aged 50-59 had mentioned Family and Friends, 33 per cent had mentioned Council and Government Agencies, 62 per cent had mentioned Real Estate Agents and 30 per cent had mentioned newspapers. The number in each cross-tabulation cell is the percentage of people in a specific group who mentioned an option, regardless of whether it was a first or other choice. Since people were prompted to list as many choices as possible, the percentages in a row are usually much greater than 100. All cross-tabulations should be interpreted in this way.

**Table i: Comparison of Age by Housing Information Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who have listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category >		Family and Friends	Council/ Government Agencies	Real Estate Agent	Newspaper
Group	n				
50 to 59 years	374	17	33	62	30
60 to 69 years	598	25	25	70	30
70 to 79 years	588	27	29	60	20
80 plus years	238	34	22	49	15

#### 4.1.1 Don't know" responses

"Don't know" responses would be of concern if large numbers of respondents were unprepared, or unable to provide usable answers to the range of questions asked. Of the 1810 interviewees only 21 people (1%) answered "don't know" three or more times. That is, some 99 per cent of those interviewed attempted to provide useful answers to the questions.

## 4.1.2 Demographic details

Demographic data are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic Data**

SAMPLE SIZE: N = 1810*			
		n	%
Gender	Females	1025	58
	Males	745	42
Age Ranges	50 to 59	373	21
	60 to 69	597	33
	70 to 79	588	33
	80 plus	240	13
Physical Capability	Non-frail	1715	95
	Frail	95	5
Living Arrangements	Alone	610	34
	With Partner	905	50
	With Friend/s	17	1
	With Family	149	8
	Family lives with you	90	5
	Other	27	2
Description of Abode	Own Residence	1283	71
	Rented Residence	288	16
	Family Residence	80	4
	Retirement Village	83	4
	Nursing Home	9	0.5
	Other	64	3.5
Location	Brisbane	895	49.5
	Large Centres (n=4)	696	38.5
	Small Centres (n=13)	219	12
English as First Language	Yes	1728	96
	No	80	4

\* Some category totals do not equal the sample size (n=1810) because some respondents did not answer some questions.

## 4.2 The Five Main Questions

### 4.2.1 Housing

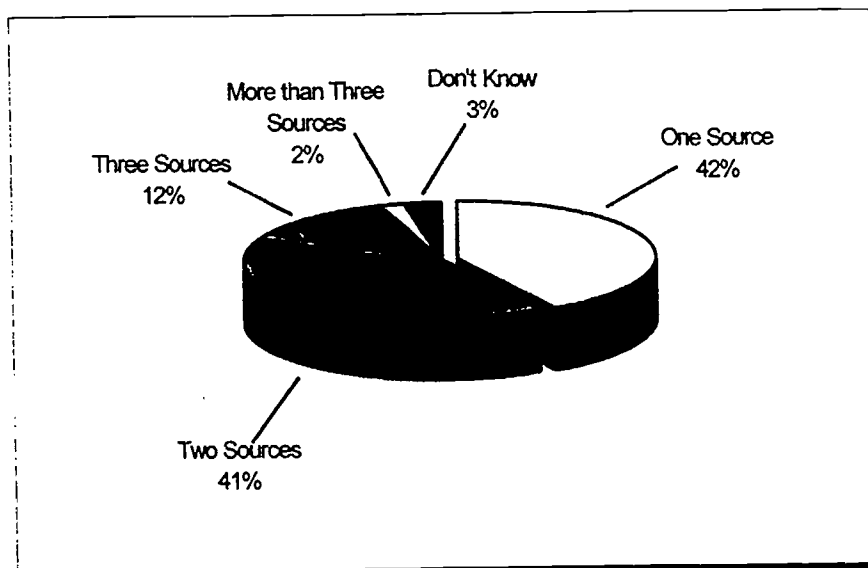
Question:

"If you needed information about housing, what sources would provide this information? Sources could be people, places, media or written material.

What is your first choice?  
What are others you know about?"

Details of the extent of older Queenslanders' knowledge of housing information sources appear in Chart 1 below.

**Chart 1: The Extent of Knowledge about Sources of Information on Housing Matters**



A total of 45 per cent knew of one or no source of information about housing. The full range of sources for housing information is listed in Appendix 1. Many of these listed sources appear to be inappropriate, therefore, it would appear that a large number of older Queenslanders may be unable to locate suitable housing



information when they need it. Fourteen per cent could name three or more sources.

Table 2 shows where respondents would go for their first and other choices for housing information. For their first choice only one entry was allowed. For "Other Choices" respondents were prompted to name as many relevant alternatives as they could.

**Table 2: Sources of Information about Housing Matters**

	Family and Friends	Newspaper	Real Estate Agent	Council/ Government Agencies	Other	Don't Know
First Choice	14	11	43	16	12	3
Other Choices	16	19	27	15	24	
Total	15	15	37	16	17	

For both first and other choices the preferred source was Real Estate Agencies. This option occurred in 43 per cent of first choices and 37 per cent of total mentions. Council and Government Agencies (16%), Family and Friends (14%), and Newspapers (11%) were the other large groupings. Fewer than three per cent were unable to suggest any source at all. In all, 60 different locations, people or institutions were indicated as possible sources of information about housing matters. Most of these were single or small number responses and these are listed, together with their frequencies, in Appendix 1.

A number of cross-tabulations were run between housing and other variables. Details on how to interpret these are discussed on page 11.

Table 3 shows the percentage of responses by age range versus the total of the main listed ways for seeking information about housing.

**Table 3: Comparison of Age by Housing Information Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who have listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category >		Family and Friends	Council/ Government Agencies	Real Estate Agent	Newspaper
Group	n				
50 to 59 years	374	17	33	62	30
60 to 69 years	598	25	25	70	30
70 to 79 years	588	27	29	60	20
80 plus years	238	34	22	49	15

Table 3 shows that Real Estate Agents are the most important single source regardless of age. Apart from those aged 80 and over, 60 per cent or more older people would think of approaching Real Estate Agents for information about housing. There is an increasing reliance on the informal network of friends and family with increasing age, and a decreasing knowledge of formal networks like Council and Government Agencies, with age.

**Table 4: Comparison of Gender by Housing Information Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who have listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category >		Family and Friends	Council/ Government Agencies	Real Estate Agent	Newspaper
Group	n				
Female	1026	29	26	60	23
Male	745	20	30	66	26

Females (n=1026) tend to rely more heavily on the informal network of family and friends, whereas males may be more inclined to suggest formal government and non-government networks.

**Table 5: Comparison of Physical Capability by Housing Information Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category >		Family and Friends	Council/ Government Agencies	Real Estate Agent	Newspaper
Group	n				
Non-frail	1715	24	27	63	25
Frail	95	37	25	41	12

As might have been expected, the frail elderly are more heavily reliant on informal networks than are non-frail older adults. Forty-one per cent of frail elderly people would also think of Real Estate Agents for specific information about their housing. Newspapers are of less importance to the frail elderly. However, as shown later, nearly 20 per cent think of the local newspaper as an information source for social information, so this medium is quite important for some categories of information.

**Table 6: Comparison of Location by Main Housing Information Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who listed a category regardless of first or other choice.

Category >		Family and Friends	Council/ Government Agencies	Real Estate Agent	Newspaper
Group	n				
Brisbane	896	28	27	63	19
Large Centre	696	19	25	63	19
Small Centre	218	32	36	60	41

The largest response category of Real Estate Agents is independent of location; 60 per cent or more older Queenslanders would think of this category for obtaining information about their housing. A much greater emphasis is placed on the category of newspapers in small centres (41%) than it is elsewhere (19%). Council and Government Agencies were also cited more frequently in small centres (36%) than in larger centres.

Cross-tabulations of housing by living arrangements (ie. whether interviewees live alone or with others) showed no noteworthy differences.

#### 4.2.2 Finance

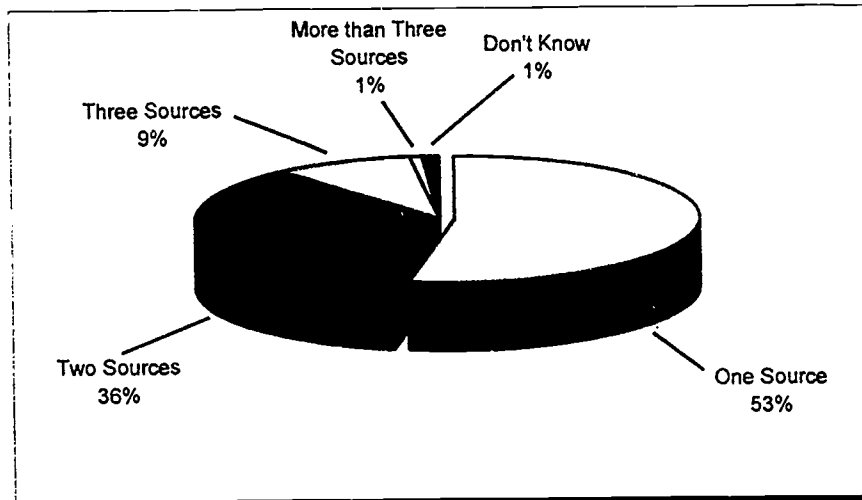
Question:

"If you needed information about financial matters, what sources would provide this information? Sources could be people, places, media or written material.

What is your first choice?  
What are others you know about?"

Details of the extent of older Queenslanders' knowledge of information sources about financial matters are summarised in Chart 2 on the following page.

**Chart 2: The Extent of Knowledge about Sources of Information on Financial Matters**



A total of 54 per cent could name one or no source of information about financial matters. Ten per cent could name three or more sources.

Table 7 shows where respondents would go for their first and other choices for financial information. For their first choice only one entry was allowed. For "Other Choices" respondents were prompted to name as many relevant alternatives as they could.

**Table 7: Sources of Information about Financial Matters**

	Family and Friends	Financial Institution	Financial Adviser	Accountant	Other Sources	Don't Know
First Choice	12	56	10	10	11	1
Other Choices	18	26	17	19	20	
Total	14	45	13	13	18	1

The main category nominated for both first choice (56%) and other choices (26%) was "Financial Institutions", which included banks, credit unions, building societies, and so forth. In total, these sources represented 45 per cent of all nominated possibilities. The next most frequently mentioned first choices were, Family and Friends, Financial Adviser and Accountant, but each of these was cited on only about 10-12 per cent of occasions. Fewer than one per cent could not suggest any source at all. In all, 44 different locations, people or institutions were indicated as possible sources of information about financial matters. Most

of these were single or small number responses and appear as "Other Sources" in Table 7. A listing of Other Sources and their frequencies appears in Appendix 2.

A number of cross-tabulations between financial information data and other variables were undertaken, and these are summarised in the following tables. Details of how to interpret these data are discussed on page 11.

Table 8 shows the percentage breakdown of responses by age range for the main ways in which older people would seek information about financial matters.

**Table 8: Comparison of Age by Financial Information Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who have listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category >		Family and Friends	Council and Government Agencies	Financial Institutions	Accountant	Financial Adviser
Group	n					
50 to 59 years	374	16	5	70	25	22
60 to 69 years	598	18	5	75	24	25
70 to 79 years	588	24	8	71	19	16
80 plus years	238	35	9	63	13	14

Regardless of age grouping Financial Institutions were the most frequently cited, with the lowest frequency (63%) occurring amongst the old-old. The trend observed in housing information, with older people becoming increasingly reliant on informal networks, also appears in Table 8. Council and Government Agencies are shown as a category, not because they are recognised widely by any particular age grouping but, rather, to emphasise the fact that they are not regarded by younger people as information providers. Generally, younger people seem to be more aware of formal providers than older people, but this is not so for Council and Government Agencies.

**Table 9: Comparison of Gender by Financial Information Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category >		Family and Friends	Council and Government Agencies	Financial Institutions	Accountant	Financial Adviser
Group	n					
Female	1026	27	6	70	20	19
Male	745	16	8	73	22	20

Table 7 shows that females (27%) tend to rely much more heavily than males (16%) on the informal network of family and friends for financial information. Men are slightly more inclined to list formal sources.

**Table 10: Comparison of Living Arrangements by Financial Information Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category >		Family and Friends	Council and Government Agencies	Financial Institutions	Accountant	Financial Adviser
Group	n					
Live Alone	604	30	8	70	19	19
Live with Others	1194	18	6	72	22	20

Cross-tabulations between living arrangements and the major categories (housing, financial, legal, home maintenance, social activities) generally differentiated poorly between the groups. Table 10 shows one of the exceptions. People who live alone listed Family and Friends (30%) as a source of financial information more frequently than did those who live with others (18%).

**Table 11: Comparison of Physical Capability by Financial Information Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who have listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category >		Family and Friends	Council and Government Agencies	Financial Institutions	Accountant	Financial Adviser
Group	n					
Non-frail	1715	21	6	71	21	20
Frail	95	33	11	55	20	7

Financial Institutions are cited as the most frequently occurring source of information about financial matters for both frail (55%) and non-frail (71%) people. Frail elderly people (33%) were more likely to use Family and Friends than non-frail people (21%).

**Table 12: Comparison of Location by Financial Information Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category		Family and Friends	Council and Government Agencies	Financial Institutions	Accountant	Financial Adviser
Group	n					
Brisbane	896	23	9	72	11	20
Large Centres	696	17	5	67	27	17
Small Centres	218	36	3	80	45	28

Financial Institutions rate prominently regardless of the size of the region. As noted earlier, Council and Government Agencies were not well cited, however, those that named this source came mainly from Brisbane (9%). By contrast, Accountants were

cited much less frequently in Brisbane (11%) than they were in other Large Centres (27%), or Small Centres (45%). Accountants were cited much less frequently in Brisbane (11%) than they were in other Large Centres (27%), or Small Centres (45%).

#### 4.2.3 Legal Matters

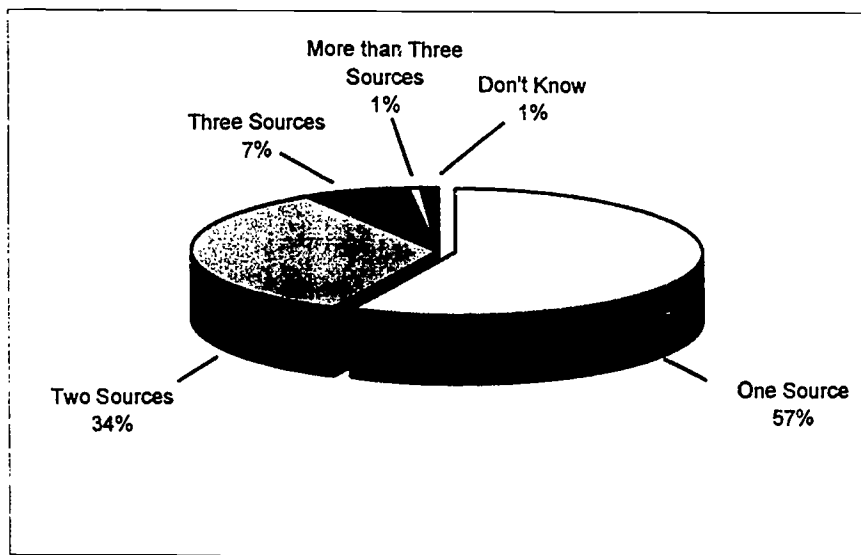
Question:

"If you needed information about legal matters, what sources would provide this information? Sources could be people, places, media or written material.

What is your first choice?  
What are others you know about?"

Details of the extent of older Queenslanders' knowledge of legal information sources can be found in Chart 3 below.

**Chart 3: The Extent of Knowledge about Sources of Information on Legal Matters**



A total of 58 per cent could name one or no source of information about financial matters. Eight per cent could name three or more sources.

Table 13 shows where respondents would go for their first and other choices for legal information. For their first choice only one entry was allowed. For "Other Choices" respondents were prompted to name as many relevant alternatives as they could.

**Table 13: Sources of Information about Legal Matters**

	Family and Friends	Solicitor	Legal Aid	Police	Other	Don't Know
First Choice	9	66	11	1	11	1
Other Choices	20	20	19	8	33	
Total	13	50	14	4	18	1

For both first and other choices the most common source of information about legal matters was "Solicitor". This option occurred in 66 per cent of first choices and 50 per cent of all mentions. This one category was so dominant that few of the other choices rate highly. Of the other formal choices only "Legal Aid" was seen as important. Fewer than one per cent could not suggest any source at all. In all, 54 different locations, people or institutions were indicated as possible sources of information about legal matters. Most of these were single or small number responses and have been included as Other in Table 13. A listing of Other Sources and their frequencies appears in Appendix 3.

A number of cross-tabulations between financial information data and other variables were undertaken, and these are summarised in the following tables. Details of how to interpret these data are discussed on page 11.

Table 14 shows the percentage of responses by age range versus the total of all listed ways for seeking information about legal matters.

**Table 14: Comparison of Age by Legal Information Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category >		Family and Friends	Solicitor	Legal Aid	Police	Council and Government Agencies
Group	n					
50 to 59 years	374	12	76	26	5	6
60 to 69 years	598	15	81	21	6	6
70 to 79 years	588	22	75	19	5	6
80 plus years	238	32	66	15	8	6



The category of Solicitor remains dominant regardless of age. Legal Aid is the only other formal source which rates 10 per cent or higher within all age ranges. Once again, a marked increase in the importance of informal networks occurs with increasing age. Neither Police nor Council and Government Agencies are frequently thought of as information providers about legal matters by people in any of the age groups.

**Table 15: Comparison of Gender by Legal Information Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category		Family and Friends	Solicitor	Legal Aid	Police	Council/ Government Agencies
Group	n					
Female	1026	23	75	20	6	5
Male	745	14	79	21	6	8

Females (23%) tend to cite the informal network of Family and Friends more often than males (14%).

**Table 16: Comparison of Physical Capability by Legal Information Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category >		Family and Friends	Solicitor	Legal Aid	Police	Council/ Government Agencies
Group	n					
Non-frail	1735	19	76	21	5	7
Frail	95	26	64	14	11	8

Solicitor was the main choice for both frail (64%) and non-frail (76%) people. Frail people (11%) were about twice as likely as non-frail people (5%) to think of Police, although the percentage responding to this option was small.

**Table 17: Comparison of Location by Legal Information Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category >		Family and Friends	Solicitor	Legal Aid	Police	Council and Government Agencies
Group	n					
Brisbane	896	18	77	19	2	7
Large Centres	696	16	73	19	5	5
Small Centres	218	33	80	33	22	6

It would appear that people in small centres have a wider spread of knowledge about legal information sources than do people in larger centres. Police are cited as an important source for legal information in small centres (22%), but not elsewhere. Similarly, Legal Aid is rated as considerably more important in small centres (33%) than in Brisbane (19%) and the other large centres (19%).

#### 4.2.4 Home Maintenance

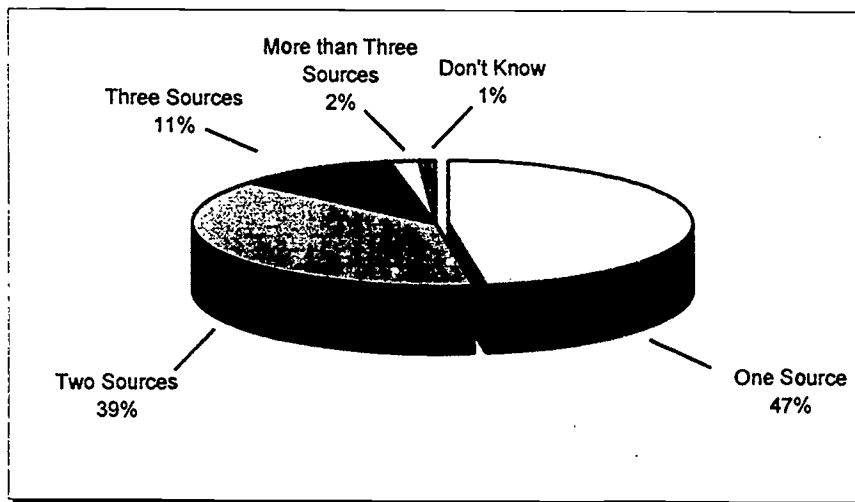
Question:

"If you needed information about Home Maintenance, what sources would provide this information? Sources could be people, places, media or written material.

What is your first choice?  
What are others you know about?"

Details of the extent of older Queenslanders' knowledge of Home Maintenance Information sources appear in Chart 4 on the next page.

**Chart 4: The Extent of Knowledge about Sources of Information on Home Maintenance**



A total of 49 per cent could name one or no source of information about financial matters. Thirteen per cent could name three or more sources.

Table 18 shows where respondents would go for their first and other choices for home maintenance information. For their first choice only one entry was allowed. For "Other Choices" respondents were prompted to name as many relevant alternatives as they could.

**Table 18: Sources of Information about Home Maintenance**

	Family and Friends	Hardware Store	Telephone Book	Council/ Government Agencies	Local Paper	Tradesman	Other
First Choice	27	8	14	8	14	14	17
Other Choices	20	11	16	6	22	9	17
Total	24	10	15	7	15	12	17

Home maintenance differs from the other areas in that majority responses are spread across a greater number of categories. No one category scored over 30 per cent on either first or other choice. Of first choices, Family and Friends (27%) scored highest followed by the telephone book (14%), and local newspaper (14%). Fewer than one per cent were unable to suggest any source at all. A total of 49 different locations, people or institutions were indicated as possible sources

of information about housing matters. Most of these were single or small number responses and have been listed as Other in Table 18. A listing of Other Sources and their frequencies appears in Appendix 4.

A number of cross-tabulations between home maintenance data and other variables were undertaken, and these are summarised in the following tables. Details of how to interpret these data are discussed on page 11.

Table 19 shows the percentage of responses by age range versus the total of all listed ways for seeking information about housing.

**Table 19: Comparison of Age by Home Maintenance Information Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category >		Family and Friends	Telephone Book	Council/ Government Agencies	Hardware Store	Local Newspaper	Tradesman
Group	n						
50 to 59 years	374	33	30	14	21	24	23
60 to 69 years	598	40	26	9	22	27	21
70 to 79 years	588	41	23	13	12	24	20
80 plus years	238	47	18	13	5	23	15

In Table 19 the trend of older people relying more on Family and Friends ranks highest for home maintenance information for all age groups, and this category becomes increasingly important as age increases. The local newspaper is also an important source for all age groups.

**Table 20: Comparison of Gender by Home Maintenance Information Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category >		Family and Friends	Telephone Book	Council/ Government Agencies	Hardware	Local newspaper	Tradesman
Group	n						
Female	1026	45	25	13	12	25	17
Male	745	33	24	11	21	24	25

Table 20 reinforces the trend established in earlier cross-tabulations; females (45%) tend to cite the informal network of Family and Friends more often than males (33%). As might have been anticipated from gender role considerations, males cited categories like hardware store and tradesman more frequently than females.

**Table 21: Comparison of Physical Capacity by Home Maintenance Information Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category >		Family and Friends	Telephone Book	Council/ Government Agencies	Hardware	Local Newspaper	Tradesman
Group	n						
Non-Frail	1735	39	25	11	17	25	20
Frail	95	45	9	19	1	15	17

Frail elderly people (45%) think of Family and Friends as primary sources of information about home maintenance more often than do non-frail people (39%). They also cited Council and Government Agencies more frequently, perhaps reflecting the fact that many frail people rely on regular levels of agency support in order to maintain their daily activities. Neither the telephone book (9%) nor hardware outlets (1%) are important information sources for the frail elderly.

Cross-tabulations between Home Maintenance and location, and Home Maintenance and living arrangements revealed no important differences between groups.

#### 4.2.5 Social Activities

Question:

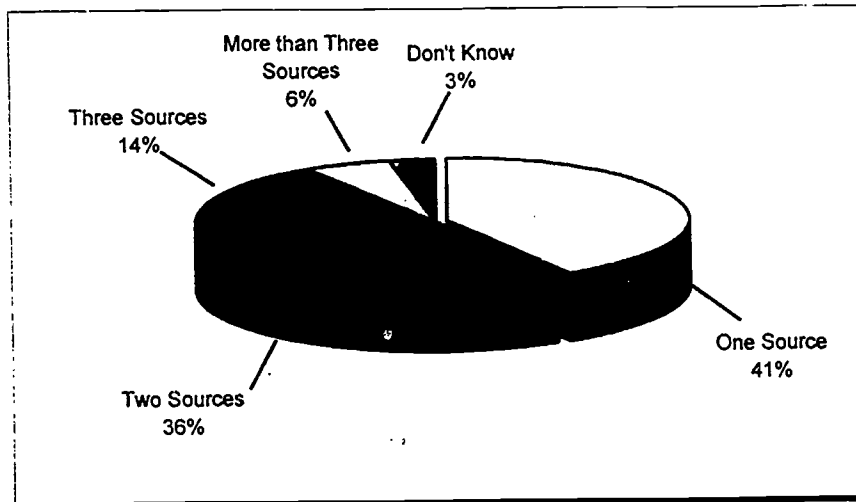
"If you needed information about Social Activities, what sources would provide this information? Sources could be people, places, media or written material.

What is your first choice?

What are others you know about?"

Details of the extent of older Queenslanders' knowledge of Social Activities appear in Chart 5 on the next page.

**Chart 5: The Extent of Knowledge about Sources of Information on Social Activities**



A total of 45 per cent could name one or no source of information about financial matters. Twenty per cent could name three or more sources.

**Table 22: Sources of Information about Social Activities Cited as First and Other Options**

	Family and Friends	Church	Club	Local Newspaper	City Newspaper	Other
First Choice	13	7	21	28	7	20
Other Choices	16	9	16	20	12	27
Total	15	8	18	24	9	14

This category had a much larger number of sources recognised by respondents than any other category. A total of seventy locations, people or institutions were indicated as possible sources of information about Social Activities. The main responses are spread across several categories and no one category rated above 28 per cent as either first or second choice. Of first choices, local newspapers (28%) rated the highest. Many people would also directly contact clubs (21%). Once again the informal network of Family and Friends (13%) rated in the top three choices. A listing of Other Sources and their frequencies appears in Appendix 5. A number of cross-tabulations between social activities data and other variables were undertaken, and these are summarised in the following tables. Details of how to interpret these data are discussed on page 11.

Table 23 shows the percentage of responses by age range versus the total of all listed ways for seeking information about social activities.

**Table 23: Comparison of Age by Social Activities Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category >		Family and Friends	Church	Club	Local Newspaper	City Newspaper
Group	n					
50 to 59 years	374	23	6	27	20	60
60 to 69 years	598	25	11	34	18	56
70 to 79 years	588	28	19	35	13	32
80 plus years	238	29	25	36	12	19

The trend observed of increasing reliance on informal networks with age is not as marked in the Social Activities question as it was with the first four questions. Each age group rates informal networks as important. The local newspaper was cited more frequently than the major newspaper by all groups. It was cited as the main source of social activities information by the young-old (60% and 56%) but not for the old-old (32% and 19%). Older groups more frequently cited church than their younger counterparts. Clubs were important for all groups.

**Table 24: Comparison of Living Arrangements by Social Activities Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category >		Family and Friends	Church	Club	Local Newspaper	City Newspaper
Group	n					
Live Alone	604	29	18	36	12	36
Live with Others	1194	24	13	32	18	48

Thirty-six per cent of people who live alone think of the local newspaper for social activity information. This suggests that the local newspaper might be targeted to provide specific information about other categories, to older people who live alone.

**Table 25: Comparison of Physical Capability by Social Activities Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category >		Family and Friends	Church	Club	Local Newspaper	City Newspaper
Group	n					
Non-frail	1715	25	14	33	1 7	45
Frail	95	31	16	19	6	19

The frail elderly cited clubs (19%), and Family and Friends (31%) as their main sources of information. Non-frail people also cited Clubs and Community Centres frequently (33%) but turned most often to local newspapers (45%).

**Table 26: Comparison of Location by Social Activities Sources**

Numbers in category cells are percentages of people in the group who listed a category, regardless of first or other choice.

Category >		Family and Friends	Church	Club	Local Newspaper	City Newspaper
Group	n					
Brisbane	896	24	15	33	23	32
Large Centres	696	21	9	28	12	58
Small Centres	218	48	30	51	2	45

Local newspapers were cited much more frequently in large centres (58%) and small centres (45%) than they were in Brisbane (32%). Family and Friends were cited about twice as often in small centres (48%) as they were in larger centres (21%). Clubs (51%) and Church (30%) were also much more important in small centres.

### 4.3 Additional Information

This section provides additional information relating to the analysis of the five main question areas. As well, a number of more general issues relevant to the ways that older Queenslanders get their information are discussed.

#### 4.3.1 Most frequent citings

The literature in Chapter 2 cited a number of studies which showed that the informal networks of family and friends are very frequently named by older people as being important to their quality of life needs and decisions. This study proved to be no different. In Table 27 below, the frequency and percentage of first and additional choices for the family and friends category are shown.

Table 27, and the following five tables which list total mentions, should be interpreted as follows. Interviewees were asked to give a single first choice for each of the five main questions and as many others as they liked for other choices. Of a possible total of 9050 first choices (5 questions x 1810 interviewees) 8934 useful first responses were obtained. Total Other Choices were similarly counted. Percentages of these totals were then calculated for the most frequently mentioned choices.

**Table 27: Family and Friends Cited in the Five Main Questions**

Family and Friends	First Choice (% of total mentions [n = 8934])	Other Choices (% of total mentions [n = 5901])
		15

Family and Friends was the most frequently cited of all categories, rating 15 per cent of total first mentions. On the one hand, this high frequency of citings might



be seen to be somewhat disappointing. This is because comparatively few people who are consulted from within the informal network would be able to provide the kinds of detail that specific agencies can. For example, many older women turn to their husbands or children for information. If they in turn respond by contacting formal providers or other appropriate sources within the community, then the informal network works effectively as an information provider. However, if they provide ineffective or incorrect information then the informal network breaks down as an information provider. In the interests of maximising opportunities for older Queenslanders to get the best information, it would seem preferable if more older people knew of direct routes to gaining high quality information.

On the other hand, because informal networks are so pervasive, perhaps it might be helpful to regard this resource in another way. Perhaps, more adults, not just older adults, should know how to access high quality information easily. In Queensland, there are hundreds of quality information providers throughout the communities. It would be impractical to advertise all these services in a regular, systematic and inexpensive way. However, some organisations have arrived at what appears, on the surface at least, to be an efficient way for centralising the many sources of information. For example, a "one stop shop" idea as proposed in New South Wales, envisages that all the information providers throughout the State would be listed on a computerised database. Callers from anywhere within the State could receive information about the closest and most appropriate organisation for them to contact.

One of the greatest advantages of such a centralised system is that people in the community need know of only one source to contact for their information, namely the telephone number of the central advisory system. Advertising of such a service would likely be a comparatively inexpensive proposition, although the network itself would probably be costly to set up, staff, and maintain.

Providers also could benefit from a centralised system because potential users are more likely to hear of their services than they otherwise might. As a case in point the following two tables show categories of information provider which are relatively unrecognised in the community.

**Table 28: Seniors' Infolink Cited in the Five Main Questions**

Seniors' Infolink	First Choice (% of total mentions [n = 8934])	Other Choices (% of total mentions [n = 5901])
		1

Seniors' Infolink is run by the Council on the Ageing, Queensland specifically to inform older Queenslanders about services to seniors and to offer consultation on matters of concern to older adults. It is supported by a comprehensive computer database to allow ease of referral. Although the system had been operating for more than 6 months when the survey was run very few older people appeared to have heard of its existence.

Similarly, Community Centres also provide a valuable service for older adults and most are able to provide information about a wide range of services for older people. However, as shown in Table 29, they are not recognised as major information sources.

**Table 29: Community Centres Cited in the Five Main Questions**

Community Centres	First Choice (% of total mentions [n = 8934])	Other Choices (% of total mentions [n = 5901])
	1	2

Many council and government services exist specifically to provide information and assistance in the five main question areas. Table 30 indicates that it would be advantageous if more older adults were aware of these provisions.

**Table 30: Council and Government Agencies Cited in the Five Main Questions**

Council and Government Agencies	First Choice (% of total mentions [n = 8934])	Other Choices (% of total mentions [n = 5901])
	8	9

Table 31 shows that the media, particularly radio and television, were not important information providers in the five main questions. Radio and television each rated less than one per cent. Overall, local newspapers rated eight per cent. However, as discussed in 4.2.4 (home maintenance) and 4.2.5 (social activities), the local newspaper was cited as an important source of information.

**Table 31: Media Cited in the Five Main Questions**

Media	First Choice (% of total mentions [n = 8934])	Other Choices (% of total mentions [n = 5901])
Local Newspapers	8	3
City Newspapers	3	4
Radio	< 1	1
Television	< 1	1

### 4.3.2 Preferred medium for getting information

Participants were asked to state their single preferred way for getting information from the following choices:

- Telephone
- Talking to someone in an office
- Written (eg pamphlets, newsletters)
- Touch Screens

Responses are summarised in Table 32.

**Table 32: Preferred method for getting information**

Telephone (%)	Talking to someone in an office (%)	Written (%)	Touch Screens (%)
41	34	24	1

#### Telephone

It is not surprising that the Telephone was chosen as the preferred method (41%). Older people have grown up with the phone and the overwhelming majority of older people in developed countries think of this medium as a commonplace household necessity. The technology is both inexpensive and user friendly, and many frail, ill or incapacitated older people rely on the phone for their everyday contact with the "outside world".

Main reasons given for choosing the telephone were: more convenient; quicker; can stay at home; saves walking; direct source; cheaper; can discuss and ask question; can find out more information; best for those out of town; can be selective; easy to stop by hanging up; and can use first and follow up in other ways.

#### Talking to someone in an office

Talking to someone in an office was the next most popular (34%) and the main reasons given were: personal contact/face-to-face; get better or more correct information; can ask more questions; hearing problems on phone; get to the heart of the issue; able to understand better; more reliable information; quickest; shortage of printed material; get people's undivided attention; don't feel hurried; can get information that is not available over the telephone; private; can clarify doubts; can't read English easily; poor eyesight; and know who to blame or refer back to.

#### Written

Although ranked third, written (24%) is, nevertheless, the preferred medium for about one quarter of the older population. The main reasons given for preferring written information were: available when needed; has greater impact; easier to remember; can take your time; understand better; refer back later; more reliable; more legal; hearing problems; privacy; keep as record; no pressure; cheap; you

can make comparisons; can't be changed; like to get mail; and others can help me to understand.

### Touch Screen

Computer-based technologies such as touch screens are not yet widely available for older people. Consequently, few of the respondents are likely to have an opportunity to properly consider this medium. Touch screens were readily accepted by older people during EXPO 1988 in Brisbane, so it is reasonable to think that most older people would have little difficulty with accepting touch screens as a means of getting their information. Main reasons given by those who nominated touch screens (1%) were: easier to make up one's mind; simple and user friendly; more precise; and more information available.

**Table 33: Location and Preferred method for getting Information**

	Telephone	Talking to someone in an office	Written	Touch screens
Brisbane	39	41	19	1
Large Centres	53	25	21	0
Small Centres	20	40	38	0

The Telephone was preferred by a much smaller percentage of people living in small centres (20%) compared with people living in Brisbane (39%) and in large centres (53%). One explanation for this could be that the places in small towns where people would go to get written and/or verbal information are likely to be within easy walking distance of each other. Thus, there may be less necessity for them to use the phone. In larger cities, problems with parking and more difficult access to some outlets for information could be conveniently bypassed by the telephone. People in Brisbane were almost equal in their choice of telephone and talking to someone in an office, with about 40 per cent citing each. The small percentage of people who nominated Touch Screens (1%) came from Brisbane.

**Table 34: Gender and Preferred method for getting Information**

	Telephone	Talking to someone in an office	Written	Touch Screens
Female	43	31	26	<1
Male	37	40	22	<1

Females preferred the telephone (43%) more than face to face (31%) and written material (26%). Males preference was for face to face (40%) followed by telephone (37%) and written (22%).

### **4.3.3 Living arrangements and type of accommodation**

Participants' living arrangements and their types of accommodation are listed in Appendix 6.

### **4.3.4 Problems with obtaining information**

Participants were asked whether they had experienced any trouble getting information in the past and, if so, to describe what the problems were. Thirteen per cent replied that they had; 87 per cent replied that had not. The areas listed as problems are summarised in Appendix 7.

Cross-tabulations between Social Activities and Gender revealed no large differences between groups.

### **4.3.5 Ease of Access**

Participants were asked if they had reasonable access to a number of common amenities and communication outlets. These were:

- Library
- Shops
- Police Station
- Telephone
- Free Local Paper
- Council and Government Agencies
- Community Centre
- Hospital

Responses are summarised in tables 35-37. All figures are given as percentages.

**Table 35: Access to Amenities by Location**

Amenity	Brisbane (%)	Large Centres (%)	Small Centres (%)
Library	91	91	84
Shops	95	96	95
Police Station	88	91	91
Telephone	97	98	98
Free Local Paper	94	96	73
Council and Government Agencies	92	92	80
Community Centre	87	89	72
Hospital	93	96	91

Generally, Table 35 shows that respondents in Brisbane and other large centres appear to be well served by communications and other amenities. By contrast, respondents in small centres do not have comparable access to community centres, free papers, and council or government agencies. Regardless of location 97 per cent or more of the sample had access to a telephone.

Health problems and difficulties with public transport tend to increase with age, and are likely to affect older peoples' perceptions of the ease with which they can access community amenities. Table 36 shows the breakdown of perceived access to a range of common community amenities or communication outlets, by age range. Data for the frail elderly (n = 94) are included for comparison.

**Table 36: Access to Amenities by Age Range**

Amenity	50-59 years (%)	60-69 years (%)	70-79 years (%)	80 years and older (%)	Frail Elderly (%)
Library	92	93	91	79	56
Shops	96	97	96	89	69
Police Station	92	93	89	80	52
Telephone	97	99	98	97	91
Free Local Paper	93	95	93	84	76
Council and Government Agencies	93	93	90	86	57
Community Centre	86	89	87	82	76
Hospital	94	95	93	89	77

Although percentages for the 80 years and older age range generally were lower than for the other age ranges surveyed, the results are still very high. This is not entirely unexpected because the great majority of data were collected in public places and shopping centres. In other words, the survey was predominantly of active older people who were able to get out and about. In contrast, frail elderly people are less able to get out and about, and a sharp fall off in accessibility to amenities is perceived by this group. Note, however, that access to telephone is very high for all age groups, as well as for the frail elderly.

Sensory and motor skills tend to decline in later life, and these decrements may affect older people's perceptions of their ability to access amenities. Interviewees were asked whether they had any difficulties with reading, walking or hearing which prevented them from taking advantage of the sources. Cross tabulations of perceived access to a range of common community amenities or communication outlets, by those with specific physical difficulties are shown in Table 37.

**Table 37: Access to Amenities by Difficulties in Reading, Walking or Hearing**

Amenity	Percentage of those with a difficulty who believe they have reasonable access to amenities		
	Reading n = 304	Walking n = 490	Hearing n = 404
Library	85	82	88
Shops	90	89	95
Police Station	85	81	88
Telephone	96	96	98
Free Local Paper	86	88	91
Council and Government Agencies	83	83	88
Community Centre	83	81	85

Percentages shown in Table 37 are for subgroup totals and refer to those who still have reasonable access to amenities, despite their difficulties. For example, for the telephone, 96 per cent of the 304 people who indicated that they have difficulties with reading, indicated that they had reasonable access to the telephone. Ninety-eight per cent of the 404 people reporting hearing difficulties claimed reasonable access to the telephone.

Tables 35-37 show that the telephone remains highly accessible to older Queenslanders, regardless of age, location, sensory-motor difficulties or frailty. Older people are accustomed to using the telephone in daily life, and a range of inexpensive accessories such as loud speaker phones, hands free phones and the like, allow even those who are very ill or frail to continue to use the phone with comparative ease (Swindell & Mayhew, in press).

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## APPENDIX 1:

### Sources and frequency of information about housing

Real Estate Agent - 1131	Information Bureau - 4	Notice boards - 1
Council or Government Agency - 495	Display homes - 4	Bowling club - 1
Family and Friends - 456	HIA - 4	Post Office - 1
Newspaper - 449	Legacy - 3	Bank Member Report - 1
Community Centre - 56	RSL - 2	Shop windows - 1
Telephone Book - 50	Relocatable home park - 2	Neighbourhood Watch - 1
Telephone Infolink - 39	Police station - 2	Ask at pub - 1
Radio - 33	Neighbourhood centre - 2	QHA - 1
Television - 23	National Seniors - 2	Paraplegic Association - 1
Solicitor - 14	Landsearch - 2	Pensioners Insurance - 1
Look around suburb - 13	Direct to owner - 2	HRS - 1
Church - 12	Neighbours - 2	CAB - 1
Library - 8	Valuer - 2	War Widows Guild - 1
Retirement Village - 8	Senior Citizens Advocacy - 2	Housing guide - 1
Local Member - 8	Insurance Co - 2	Stock/station agents - 1
Junk Mail - 8	Doctor - 2	Meals on Wheels - 1
Self - 7	Court House - 2	Lifeline Crisis House - 1
Nursing home - 6	Travel Agent - 1	Blue Nurses - 1
Architect - 5	Telecom - 1	Ombudsman - 1
Magazines - 5	Rent referral office - 1	Newsagent - 1
	Pensioners League - 1	

## APPENDIX 2:

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### Sources and frequency of information about Finance

Financial Institutions - 1284	Telephone Infolink - 9	Vietnamese Social Worker - 1
Family and Friends- 456	Real estate Agent - 7	Tax Agent - 1
Accountant - 380	Insurance Company - 7	Senior Citizens - 1
Financial Adviser - 359	Magazines - 6	National Seniors - 1
Council or Government Agencies - 119	Money lender - 5	Chemist - 1
Solicitor - 58	Junk mail - 3	AGC - 1
Public Trustee - 36	Church - 3	Financial info service - 1
Newspaper - 30	Legacy - 3	Pensioner Legal - 1
Stockbroker - 22	Women's Financial Counsellor - 2	Council for the Aged - 1
Television - 19	Pensioners Insurance - 2	Encyclopedia - 1
Self - 17	RSL - 2	Aged Pensioner News - 1
Telephone Book - 17	Local Member - 2	
Radio - 12	unit Supervisor - 1	
	RACQ - 1	

## APPENDIX 3:

### Sources and frequency of information about Legal Matters

Solicitor - 1378	Community Legal Service - 4	Salvation Army - 1
Legal Aid - 370	Justice of the Peace - 4	Doctor - 1
Family and Friends - 347	Books - 3	AFI - 1
Public Trustee - 127	Public curator - 3	Lifeline - 1
Council and government Agencies - 111	Husband - 3	Forensic library - 1
Police - 102	Conveyancer - 3	Magazines - 1
Pensioner Insurance - 57	Church - 3	Choice magazine - 1
Telephone Book - 28	Pensioner Hotline - 2	CES - 1
Telephone Infolink - 20	University - 2	Community Service for Women - 1
Free Legal Advice - 14	CAB - 2	Talkback radio - 1
Accountant - 13	Community Centre - 2	CPS - 1
Court/family court - 10	Television - 2	Post office - 1
Library - 9	National Seniors - 2	War Veterans Legal - 1
Financial Institutions - 15	Insurance Company - 2	Farmers Federation - 1
RSL - 8	Senior Citizens - 1	Legal day at shopping centre - 1
Law Society - 7	Executor - 1	Ombudsman - 1
Newspaper - 7	Consumer Affairs - 1	Court house - 1
Legacy - 5	Radio ads for writing wills cheaply - 1	
Politician - 5		

## APPENDIX 4:

### Sources and frequency of information about Home Maintenance

Family and Friends - 721	Body Corporate - 7	National Seniors - 1
Local Newspaper - 453	Bank - 6	Neighbour - 1
Telephone Book - 444	Magazines - 5	Architect - 1
Tradesman - 367	Books - 5	Healthcare - 1
Hardware Store - 290	Legacy - 4	Catalogue - 1
Council and Government Agencies - 214	Ask around - 3	Primaries - 1
City Newspaper - 91	Home Show - 3	Home Maintenance Scheme - 1
Telephone Infolink - 73	Signs in the street - 3	Directory of Services - 1
Community Centre - 60	Junk mail - 14	Uni Social Worker - 1
Self - 47	Husband - 14	Pensioner Home Security and Minor Repairs - 1
Retirement Village management - 19	Home Assist - 14	CAB - 1
Landlord - 18	Blue Nurses - 2	War Widows Guild - 1
Real Estate Agent - 17	Insurance Company - 2	Rental Authorities - 1
Radio - 15	Union - 2	Advertise - 1
Television - 12	Home Improvement Advice Bureau - 2	Furniture shop - 1
Church - 11	Multiskill - 1	RSL - 1
Don't need - 9	RACQ - 1	
Library - 8	Local Member - 1	

## APPENDIX 5:

### Sources and frequency of information about Social Activities

Local Newspaper - 793	National Seniors - 7	Books - 1
Club - 599	Senior Citizens - 7	Walk around suburb - 1
Family and Friends - 469	University of the Third Age - 6	War Widows - 1
City Newspaper - 293	Respite Centre - 6	Community Organisation - 1
Church - 262	Theatre foyer - 4	Council for the Aged - 1
Community Centre - 137	Legacy - 4	Migrant office - 1
Council And Government Agencies - 111	Local Member 4 -	TAB - 1
Television - 83	Pub - 4	People in the mall - 1
Telephone Book - 76	Doctor - 4	Stamp Auctions and agents - 1
Radio - 55	Magazines - 3	Ombudsman - 1
Library - 51	Work group - 3	RACQ - 1
Tourist/Info Bureau - 21	Neighbours - 3	RSL - 1
No need - 18	Bingo - 3	Golden oldies - 1
Retirement Village - 17	Church - 2	CWA - 1
Junk mail - 13	Pensioners Association - 2	Ticket offices - 1
Chemist shop - 11	Neighbourhood Watch - 2	Ring the place concerned - 1
Shopping Centre - 10	Bowls Club - 2	Hairdresser - 1
CAB - 10	Cultural Centre - 2	
Notice Boards - 9	Support group - 2	
Travel agent - 8	Sporting bodies - 2	

## APPENDIX 6:

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### Living arrangements and accommodation status

#### Living Arrangements

Live alone - 610  
Live with partner - 905  
Live with friends - 17  
Live with family - 149  
Family lives with them - 90  
Border lives with them - 3  
Religious community - 2  
Nursing home - 2  
Hostel - 1

#### Accommodation Status

Own residence - 1283	Boarding room - 8
Rental residence - 288	Religious community - 2
With family - 80	Private motel - 1
Retirement Village - 83	Bed and Breakfast - 1
Caravan - 22	Camps - 1
Nursing Home - 9	House owned by friend - 1
Hostel - 9	

## APPENDIX 7:

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### Prior problems with getting information

Thirteen per cent of the sample said that they had some problems with getting information in the past. Responses and frequency are listed below.

Government - 78  
Private Enterprise - 27  
Didn't know where to get help - 22  
Telephone - being put on hold - 20  
Staff - badly trained/uncaring - 20  
Problems associated with old age - 13  
No info or restricted info - 10  
Transport - distance, isolation - 9  
Incorrect information - 6  
Language difficulties - 5  
Media - 2  
Hospitals - 1

## APPENDIX 8:

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### Survey Officers

- Brisbane:

Pam Flower  
Ursula Hamilton  
Carmel O'Keeffe

Constance Simmons  
Mary Snell  
Frances Wildt-Pavlu

- Other parts of Queensland:

D. Aylett (Barcaldine)  
M. Bruce (Charleville)  
M. Coffison (Hughenden)  
N. Cush (Kingaroy)  
J. Freeman (Roma)  
C. Gleeson (Mackay)  
E. Guy (Biloela)  
J. Hughes (Mitchell)  
P. James (Clermont)

G. Logan (Mount Isa)  
J. McCurley (Townsville)  
G. Moss (Rockhampton)  
R. Oates (Emerald)  
M. Perry (Townsville)  
D. Priestly (Bundaberg)  
J. Ruddell (Mackay)  
E. Tarver (Longreach)



## APPENDIX 9:

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### Office of Ageing Seminar - October 20, 1995

A seminar to discuss preliminary results of this study, and to hear about information services currently provided by four community organisations, was held in Brisbane on October 20, 1995. Brief presentations were made by

- Queensland Council on the Ageing
  - Seniors' Infolink**
  - Service provides information on all issues that relate to older people.
  - Aims to ensure that the person is speedily linked to the service they require ("The next call is the right one")
  - Data kept on computer database and hard copy
  
- Queensland Council of Cares
  - Information Support Line**
  - Support Line staffed by trained counsellors
  - Supplies information for carers and self carers throughout Queensland.
  - Information about Home Help, Meals on Wheels, Day Respite Centres
  - Central computer database in Brisbane with plans for several regional developments in larger cities.
  - Telephone listing in every regional telephone book costs \$12,000 per year
  
- Veteran's Affairs
  - Supplies a service for veterans. Provides advice on pensions, health and refers to other agencies for all other matters.
  - Hard copy rather than computerised database.
  
- National Pensioners and Queensland Council of Caregivers
  - Provides information about matters pertaining to the Department of Social Security
  - Refers other queries to the relevant provider
  - Hard copy rather than computerised database

All mentioned the need for their services to become well known throughout the ageing community. The high cost of advertising to achieve this was mentioned as a constraint.

## **APPENDIX 10:**

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### **Survey Instrument**

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

The first five questions require you to make the same two queries.

Use the wording below for each of the categories, substituting the category for the blank space.

If you needed information about \_\_\_\_\_ what sources would provide this information?  
Sources could be people, places, media or written material.

(A) First choice. (One only)

(B) Others you know about. (Probe. There may be several answers.)

Question 1. Housing Question 2. Financial Matters Question 3. Legal Matters

Question 4. Home Maintenance Question 5. Social Activities

**Question 6.**

In general in which form would you most like to get your information?

Read this list aloud.



**Accept one answer only.**

- By telephone
- Talking to someone in an office
- written (eg pamphlets, newsletters)
- Touch Screens

**Question 7.**

Have you had trouble getting information in the past?

If so could you give details?

**Question 8.**

What are your present living arrangements?

Read this list aloud.



**Accept one answer only.**

- Alone
- With a partner
- With friend/s
- with family
- family lives with you
- Other

**Question 9.**

What would be a description of where you presently live?

Read this list aloud.



**Accept one answer only.**

- Your own house or flat
- Rented house or flat
- Family house or flat
- Retirement Village
- Nursing Home
- Other

**Question 10. (Based on their perceptions)**

Do you have reasonable access to:

Read this list aloud. 

Code answers: Yes = 1; No = 2.  
Should be an answer for every one

- Library
- Shops
- Police Station
- Telephone
- Free Local Paper
- Council and Government
- Community Centre
- Hospital

**Question 11. (Based on their perceptions)**

Do you have any problems with the following that prevents you taking advantage of any of the sources?

Read this list aloud. 

Code answers: Yes = 1; No = 2.

- Reading
- Walking
- Hearing

**Question 12. Is English your first language?**

Code answers: Yes = 1; No = 2.

**Question 13.**

Do you make regular use of the following?

Read this list aloud. 

Code answers: Yes = 1; No = 2.

- Telephone
- car (self driving)
- car (others driving)
- Public Transport

**Question 14.**

Into which age grouping do you fall?

Read this list aloud. 

Accept one answer only.

- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70-79
- 80-89
- 90 and over.

**Question 15. Male or female? (Don't ask this question)**

Code answers: Male = 1; Female = 2.

**Question 16.**

Are there any other aspects concerned with obtaining information about any of these matters on which you would like to comment? Probe.

(CONFIDENTIAL)

[Redacted]

**INFORMATION SOURCES SURVEY**

Conducted by Griffith University  
on behalf of the  
Office of Ageing  
for the  
Department of Family Services and  
Aboriginal and Islander Affairs

Venue: [Redacted]

Date: [Redacted]

Survey Officer: [Redacted]



Question 1 HOUSING		Question 2 FINANCIAL MATTERS																											
CODING: 1 = 1st. choice (one only) 2 = others (perhaps several)		CODING: 1 = 1st. choice (one only) 2 = others (perhaps several)																											
Case Number		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27		
		Telephone Info/line	Family/ Friend	Newspaper	Real Estate Agent	Telephone Book	Council/Government	Community Centre	Library	Radio	Television	Other	Don't Know	Details of Other	Telephone Info/line	Family/ Friend	Bank/Credit Union/etc	Telephone Book	Council/Government	Financial Adviser	Radio	Television	Accountant	Pub/Trustee	Other	Don't Know	Details of Other		
1																													
2																													
3																													
4																													
5																													
6																													
7																													
8																													
9																													
10																													

Question 3		Question 4																											
LEGAL MATTERS		HOME MAINTENANCE																											
CODING: 1 = 1st. choice (one only) 2 = others (perhaps several)		CODING: 1 = 1st. choice (one only) 2 = others (several?)																											
Case Number		28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	
		Telephone Info/line	Family/Friend	Pensioner Insurance	Telephone Book	Council/Government	Library	Public Trustee	Solicitor	Legal Aid	Police	Other	Don't Know	Details of Other	Telephone Info/line	Family/Friend	Hardware Store	Telephone Book	Council/Government	Community Centre	Radio	Television	Library	Local Newspaper	City Newspaper	Other	Don't Know	Details of Other	
1																													
2																													
3																													
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6																													
7																													
8																													
9																													
10																													





Question 7		Question 8	
PROBLEMS GETTING INFORMATION		LIVING ARRANGEMENTS	
Coding: 1 = Yes; 2 = No.		Coding: =1 (one only)	
Case Number	Info/Lack	75	76
	Describe	77	78
		79	80
		81	
		Describe Other	
1		Alone	
2		With Partner	
3		With Friends	
4		With Family	
5		Family with you	
6		Other	
7			
8			
9			
10			

Question 9 DESCRIPTION OF WHERE LIVE Coding =1 (one only)		Question 10 EASE OF ACCESS Coding: 1= Yes; 2 = No.										Question 11 DIFFICULTIES Coding: 1 =Yes; 2 = No.				Question 12 ENGLISH Coding: 1 =Yes; 2 = No.										Question 13 REGULAR USE			
Case Number		82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104					
	Describe Other	Own House/Flat	Rent House/Flat	Family House/Flat	Retirement Village	Nursing Home	Other		Library	Shops	Police Station	Telephone	Local Paper	Council/Gov Office	Community Centre	Hospital	Reading	Walking	Hearing	English 1st	Telephone	Car (self)	Car (other)	Public Transport					
1																													
2																													
3																													
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