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**WOMEN'S INFORMATION
NEEDS STUDY**

FINAL REPORT

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- A SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE
- B IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

- In conjunction with the Women's Advisers from all Australian Governments and from the New Zealand Government, the NSW Department for Women commissioned *urbis keys young* to undertake research to examine women's information needs and information-seeking behaviour in relation to government information. The main purpose of the research was to develop more effective delivery methods for government information, addressing women's articulated needs and preferences.
- The research comprised three components:
 - A search of relevant literature and preparation of an annotated bibliography on women's information needs and information-seeking behaviours to inform the development of the empirical research.
 - A random national telephone survey of 1,457 adults (women and men) aged 18 years and over living in Australia and New Zealand.
 - In-depth face-to-face interviews with 40 women from various backgrounds: socio-economically disadvantaged women; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women; women from non-English speaking backgrounds; and Maori women living in New Zealand.
- This report presents the results of the empirical research, the annotated bibliography having previously been prepared and submitted to the NSW Department for Women.

KEY RESULTS FROM THE TELEPHONE SURVEY

- The majority of women (66%) surveyed reported that they had personally tried to obtain information from a government department, service or agency during the previous 12 months, indicating a high level of need for government information.

- The most common types of issues women needed to get information about during that time were education and training (30%), health (29%), income support (24%) and welfare/community services (21%). The majority of the women reported that it was *very important* for them to get information on the various problems and issues identified.
- A government department, service or agency was by far the most common first point of contact for information (57%), followed by the Internet (9%), a community organisation (9%) and a private professional (7%), with a small minority of women (4%) reporting they had first gone to friends or family for the government information they needed. Moreover, a government department, service or agency was identified as the source of the most useful information amongst those women who had gone to more than one person or place for information.
- Nevertheless, it is notable that a sizeable proportion of women (43%) first went somewhere *other* than a government source to get the information they needed. This is an important finding for government information and communication departments and agencies.
- The majority of women said they had been able to obtain some information from a government department, service or agency and most (92%) said the information either fully or partially met their needs. Although the majority of women (75%) who had successfully obtained some information from a government source said it had been easy to do so, a minority (16%) of women reported that it had been difficult.
- Printed material such as pamphlets and leaflets (74%), newspaper articles and magazines (69%), television (66%), face-to-face contact (59%), radio (57%) and the telephone (54%) were rated as generally satisfactory ways of receiving information from a government department, service or agency by the majority of women surveyed. Less satisfactory ways of obtaining this information were websites and the Internet (43%), posters and billboards (35%) and workshops and seminars (29%).

- Those ways of receiving information which the women regarded as highly satisfactory (as opposed to satisfactory overall) were face-to-face contact (28%), printed material (26%) websites or the Internet (24%), the telephone (22%) and television (22%).
- Women's and men's government information needs and information-seeking behaviour proved to be very similar, with few substantial differences. The most notable finding from the survey, however, was the major information-seeking role played by women in Australian and New Zealand households. A significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) proportion of female respondents (62%) than males (54%) identified themselves as the person in their household most often responsible for finding out information from an outside body. Furthermore, a smaller proportion of women than men identified their spouse or partner as the main information-seeker in their household.
- There were some statistically significant differences between the women and men surveyed in their information-seeking behaviour and preferences. The main differences concerned:
 - *The (past) use of websites and the Internet as a source of government information.* Significantly fewer ($p < 0.05$) female respondents (38%) than males (47%) reported ever having used the Internet to look up information about a government department, service or agency.
 - *The overall satisfaction with websites, the Internet, and posters and billboards as a way of receiving government information.* Significantly fewer ($p < 0.05$) women (43%) than men (51%) rated websites and the Internet to be a satisfactory way of receiving government information. Meanwhile significantly more ($p < 0.05$) women (35%) than men (29%) considered posters and billboards to be a satisfactory way of receiving government information.
 - *The level of satisfaction with printed material, the telephone, television, newspapers and magazines, as a way*

of receiving government information. Although broadly comparable numbers of female and male respondents reported these as satisfactory overall, significantly more ($p < 0.05$) women than men rated printed material, the telephone, newspaper articles and magazines and television as a *highly satisfactory* way of receiving government information.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

- There was considerable diversity in the information-seeking behaviour and preferences both within and across the groups of socially economically disadvantaged women, the Aboriginal and Maori women, and the women from non-English speaking backgrounds interviewed.
- Although drawn from groups commonly regarded as having special needs, by no means were all of these women disadvantaged in their information-seeking behaviour and experiences. On the contrary, many of the women proved to be remarkably resourceful and tenacious in their information-seeking behaviours.
- Echoing the results from the national telephone survey, many of the women interviewed – across all the groups – identified themselves as the primary information-seeker in their household. This was particularly notable amongst women who were sole parents, Aboriginal women and women who had responsibility for caring for a sick or elderly relative.
- Women who were less likely to identify themselves as the primary information-seeker were some of the older women who had a 'traditional' view of the division of roles and responsibilities between themselves and their partner; women who for various reasons felt shame, fear or a lack of confidence in performing a major information-seeking role; some older women from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) with limited English language proficiency; women who were socially isolated due to domestic violence or ill health; and some younger women who

were still reliant on older relatives to seek information on their behalf.

- Women's role as information-seeker was sometimes focused on traditional 'domestic' concerns (such as family, children, education, relationship issues), but more commonly extended to a wide range of issues where they needed to obtain information from a government department or agency.
- Women's information needs and information-seeking role were found to be ever-changing, reflecting the life cycle and changes in personal, financial, social and family circumstances. Women's information needs and information-seeking behaviour were thus highly situational – and were often determined by such factors as their age, socio-economic status, level of education, family circumstances, ethnicity, previous information-seeking experiences etc.
- Government sources were the actual and preferred first point of information for women who had a history of contact with government services and programs (for example, sole parent families, women on welfare benefits, women employed in government). Other women, however, preferred going to a 'one-stop-shop' or community organisation with which they were familiar or felt comfortable. This was particularly common amongst women who had a more complex problem or multiple issues, and amongst women who felt intimidated by government departments or agencies – such as some of the Aboriginal, NESB and Maori women. Many of these women needed more than mere information: they needed support and/or advocacy to be able to obtain and act on the information received.
- Many of the Maori women and the women of NESB (as well as one or two of the Aboriginal women) said they would approach family and friends as a first point of contact for government information. This decision was often highly strategic. The person approached was often someone whom they knew to be a good 'information-broker'; someone who had knowledge of – or contacts within – government; someone who had experienced a similar problem to them or would be able to provide them with some personal support; or someone considered to be generally knowledgeable about 'the system'. Their preference to approach family or friends first for information also sometimes reflected a lack of experience in dealing directly with government agencies or departments; fear of encountering unsympathetic, judgmental or discriminatory attitudes (particularly evident amongst Aboriginal and Maori women); the poor English language skills amongst some of NESB women and Aboriginal women; social isolation and/or a lack of knowledge about where to go for information.
- Although many women (particularly those living some distance from services and/or with young children at home) rated the *telephone* as a quick, convenient, time-saving, cheap and accessible way of obtaining government information, the telephone was not the preferred mode of communication amongst some Aboriginal women, women whose English language skills were limited, or some women with a sight or hearing impairment. Much of the dislike of the telephone as a means of obtaining government information reflected frustrations and difficulties encountered with call centres and telephone information service systems (eg delays, button-pressing, being kept waiting).
- Echoing the results of the national telephone survey, *printed materials* on specific issues were identified as an important way of receiving government information, particularly if available in community languages. *Newspaper articles and magazines, television and radio* were also valued as good sources of general government information – with ethnic radio being particularly valued by women of NESB – although these methods were considered less valuable for more detailed or specific information needs. The *Internet*, although used and valued by some of the women, was not accessible to many of the women from a socio-economically disadvantaged background, or to some of the NESB, Maori or Aboriginal women. Poverty, lack of education, lack of access to a computer and language barriers limited

these women's access to, or use of, the Internet to obtain government information.

CONCLUSIONS

- Women play a major role as information-seekers in Australian and New Zealand households. Indeed, women are more likely than men to be the primary information-seeker in their household when it comes to the range of issues that may require information on government services or programs.
- Women's information-seeking roles typically extend well beyond the traditional 'domestic' or family spheres. Many women are the major information-seeker in their household for all types of issues that may require government information including employment and education, planning and zoning regulations, housing and immigration matters.
- Women's information needs are enormously varied and ever-changing – reflecting a complex mix of situational, personal and life-cycle issues and factors.
- Women's general information-seeking behaviours and preferences do not vary significantly from those of men in the majority of issues explored in this study. Factors such as age, ethnicity, and level of education may be more important than gender in influencing information-seeking behaviours and preferences.
- There is, nevertheless, evidence to suggest that certain women are more constrained in their information-seeking roles and capabilities. These include (older) women with limited English language skills; women who are socially isolated through ill health, domestic violence or a disability; women who live in a highly gender role-differentiated relationship where the (male) partner takes on the responsibility for all or most of the information-seeking; women who for cultural reasons or past (bad) experiences with government departments and services feel fear, shame or embarrassment or anticipate an unsympathetic response when seeking government information direct from

government sources (eg some Aboriginal, Maori and NESB women).

- Women rate face-to-face contact, printed material, the telephone and television as the most satisfactory means of obtaining government information. The Internet, while also an important source of information for some women, is not accessible to many women from low socio-economic backgrounds, nor to some Aboriginal, Maori or NESB women.

Communicating Effectively with Women: Key Issues for Government Departments

The research findings from this study have a number of implications for the design and dissemination of government information to women. To maximise information-provision to women, the information and public relations sections of government departments and agencies should:

- Recognise the major 'information-seeker' or 'gatekeeper' role played by women in Australian and New Zealand households and plan and distribute their information and education campaigns and products accordingly.
- Recognise the diversity of women's government information-seeking experiences and preferences. This means that different 'products' and approaches will be required for different segments of the female population, including older women, women of NESB, Aboriginal and Maori women.
- Recognise also that there may be some diversity of government information-seeking experiences and preferences within these groups. Aboriginal women, Maori women and NESB women may require a range of information strategies relating to their age, level of education, and English language literacy.

- Recognise that women do not have the same level of access to the Internet as men, and that only just over a third have ever used websites or the net to obtain government information. The challenge is for government to continue to make information available through websites, but not regard these as substitutes for the provision of information in 'traditional' formats. Older women, women from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and women from various cultural backgrounds still prefer and require government information in a range of formats, in particular printed materials, face-to-face contact and telephone services. It should also be noted that many women are highly receptive to receiving government information via newspapers and magazines, radio (particularly ethnic radio in the case of NESB women) and television.
- Produce material in community languages wherever possible. This material needs to be developed (in print, radio and television) in close consultation with *women* from non-English speaking communities and ideally be developed and written in the community language, rather than merely translated from the English format.
- Noting that a sizeable proportion of women first go somewhere else rather than a government source to obtain government information, distribute government information material via relevant women's community networks and organisations – especially NESB, Aboriginal, Maori and other women's organisations. Also distribute relevant material via relevant legal and health professionals from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds.
- Ensure all government department, agency and service information personnel receive appropriate customer service training and supervision regarding dealing with women from cultural and ethnic minorities.
- Ensure women's telephone and general information services and systems are properly resourced, accessible, and staffed by knowledgeable and skilled personnel.
- As far as possible, integrate information services with service options or referral mechanisms so that women requiring support as well as information can be assisted.

1. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 BACKGROUND

The NSW Department for Women commissioned *urbis keys young* to undertake research to examine women's information needs and information-seeking behaviours in relation to government information. The stated purpose of the research was to develop more effective delivery methods for government information, addressing women's articulated needs and preferences.

The project was undertaken for the NSW Department for Women in conjunction with Women's Advisers from Australian State, Territory and Commonwealth Governments and also from New Zealand.

1.2 PROJECT COMPONENTS

1.2.1 Overview

The project comprised three components:

- *An annotated bibliography on women's information needs and information-seeking behaviours.* The major purpose of the literature search was to inform the approach and development of the research instruments in the main phases of the research.
- *A random national telephone survey of 1,457 people, conducted in Australia and in New Zealand.*
- *In-depth face-to-face interviews with 40 women from certain specified groups: socio-economically disadvantaged women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from non-English speaking*

backgrounds (NESB), and Maori women living in New Zealand.

In addition to the above work conducted by *urbis keys young*, the NSW Department for Women itself conducted an analysis of existing government information strategies to further inform the development of recommendations arising out of the research project.

Each of the above research components is now discussed in more detail.

1.2.2 Annotated Bibliography

As a preliminary exercise, a strategic search and analysis of relevant literature was undertaken largely to provide a sound basis for the empirical research. An annotated bibliography was produced and has been provided to the NSW Department for Women as a resource.

1.2.3 National Telephone Survey in Australia and New Zealand

A random (inter)national telephone survey of 1,457 respondents aged 18 years and over was conducted during a period in October 2001 in both Australia and New Zealand. A total of 1,015 interviews were conducted in Australia and 442 in New Zealand. The random sample of households across all of Australia and all of New Zealand was drawn from the Electronic White Pages. Both samples had age and sex quotas for each major area within each community. The Australian data were weighted by age and area to the current Australian Bureau of Statistics population statistics and the New Zealand data were weighted to New Zealand population statistics.

The interviews were conducted using Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) facilities in Australia and in New Zealand. The survey instrument was piloted with 20 respondents in each country in order to test the wording of the questions and the appropriateness of the pre-coded responses. A

copy of the survey instrument is attached at Appendix A.

Although the project primarily aimed to identify women's information needs and help-seeking behaviours, it was decided that the national telephone survey be conducted with both women and men, rather than with women only. The main reason for this decision was that the preliminary review of the literature revealed that to date very little research has been conducted on – and therefore very little is known about – how women's and men's information-seeking behaviours and patterns vary. Conducting a survey of women only would not further our understanding of whether, and how, women's and men's information-seeking needs and preferences differ. Accordingly, it was decided to take the opportunity of conducting the survey with both women and men to explore these issues further.

1.2.4 In-depth Interviews

In-depth face-to-face one-on-one interviews were conducted with 10 women of NESB, 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and 10 women from a disadvantaged socio-economic background drawn from three Australian States (New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria) and 10 Maori women living in New Zealand.

The interviews were conducted using the semi-structured interview schedule attached at Appendix B. Interviews with Aboriginal women were conducted by an Indigenous researcher, and interviews with the Maori women were conducted by a researcher of Maori descent. Interviews with NESB women were arranged through a NESB facilitator, and conducted using interpreters where necessary. A small financial incentive was paid to each of the women interviewed in-depth for the study.

The main aim of these interviews was to explore in more depth than would be possible in a telephone survey, some of the issues

involved in seeking government information for women from potentially socially or economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The in-depth interviews aimed to identify and increase our understanding of preferred information-seeking pathways amongst these groups of women and the barriers and opportunities they face in obtaining information about government services and programs.

1.3 THIS REPORT

Section 2 of this report details the results of the national telephone survey.

Sections 3 to 6 of the report present the material obtained from the in-depth interviews with the four groups of women.

Section 7 summarises the key findings from the national telephone survey and from the qualitative phase of the study, and presents the main conclusions.

2. THE NATIONAL TELEPHONE SURVEY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The telephone survey was undertaken with a random sample of people from both Australia and New Zealand during mid-October 2001. Details of the survey methodology have been described in Section 1.

Demographic and other basic characteristics of the sample are presented in Section 2.2, and the responses to other survey questions are presented and discussed in Sections 2.5 to 2.7 under the headings *Main Information-Seeker in the Household*, *Experiences in Seeking Government Information*, *Preferred Ways of Obtaining Government Information* and *Hypothetical Information-Seeking*. The responses for the total sample and for males and females are presented in each table. Beyond this, other variables (eg age, country living in, education level etc) are discussed where appropriate.

2.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

A total of 1,457 respondents participated in the survey. The characteristics of the sample (demographic and otherwise) are shown below, and are discussed as appropriate in following sections in relation to the survey questions.

Table 1 Gender	n	%
Male	701	48%
Female	759	52%
Total	1457	100%

Table 4 Location	n	%
Urban	914	63%
Rural	543	37%
Total	1457	100%

Table 2 Age	n	%
18-24	185	13%
25-39	421	29%
40-54	436	30%
55+	415	28%
Total	1457	100%

Table 5 Any children under 18 in the household	n	%
Yes	497	34%
No	960	66%
Total	1457	100%

Table 3 Country	n	%
Australia	1015	70%
New Zealand	442	30%
Total	1457	100%

Table 6 Description of household	n	%
Couple with children	571	39%
Single parent with children	93	6%
Couple with no children	403	28%
One-person household	224	15%
Shared or group household	96	7%
Extended or shared family	68	5%
Other	2	<1%
Total	1457	100%

Table 7 Language other than English spoken at home	n	%
Yes	194	13%
No	1263	87%
Total	1457	100%

Table 8 Highest level of education	n	%
Year 9 or below	185	13%
Year 10 or equivalent	167	12%
Year 11 or equivalent	247	17%
Year 12 or equivalent	184	13%
Technical / commercial	166	11%
Diploma / degree	496	34%
Other (Australia only)	12	<1%
Total	1457	100%

Table 9 Employment status	n	%
Employed		
Full-time (35 hours per week or over)	664	46%
Part-time (under 35 hours per week)	267	18%
Total employed	931	64%
Not employed		
Looking for full-time work	41	3%
Looking for part-time work	23	2%
Retired	285	20%
Student	47	3%
Non-worker	50	3%
Home duties	80	5%
Total not employed	526	36%
Total	1457	100%

Table 10 Occupation	n	%
Professional / owner / manager	349	24%
Semi-professional	97	7%
Sales	78	5%
Other white collar	244	17%
Skilled worker	318	22%
Semi / unskilled worker	299	21%
No occupation given	72	5%
Total	1457	100%

Table 11 Total annual household income, before tax	n	%
Less than \$20,000	257	18%
\$21,000 to \$34,999	249	17%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	235	16%
\$50,000 to \$64,999	187	13%
\$65,000 and over	330	23%
Refused to disclose	199	14%
Total	1457	100%

Table 12 Descended from NZ Maori (NZ survey only)	n	%
Yes	52	12%
No	390	88%
Total	442	100%

Table 13 Partner descended from NZ Maori (NZ survey only)	n	%
Yes	33	11%
No	269	88%
Don't Know / can't say	3	1%
Total	305	100%

Table 14 Pacific Islander ethnic group (NZ survey only)	n	%
Yes	16	4%
No	426	88%
Total	442	100%

2.3 MAIN INFORMATION-SEEKER IN THE HOUSEHOLD

2.3.1 Main Information-Seeker in Respondent's Household

Table 15 Person in household most often responsible for finding out information from outside body	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Me	62%	54%	843	58%
My partner / spouse	9%	14%	167	12%
My mother	4%	2%	42	3%
My father	3%	2%	34	2%
My son	1%	–	10	1%
My daughter	1%	–	8	–
Other family member	1%	1%	17	1%
A friend	1%	1%	12	1%
Someone else who is not a friend	–	–	2	–
It varies, there is no-one in particular	18%	25%	311	21%
Don't know/ can't say	–	1%	11	1%
Total	100%	100%	1457	100%

At a Glance

Respondents were asked whether in general, if they or someone else in their household needs to find out information from an outside body, is there someone who is most often responsible for finding out that information? Over half (54%) of the respondents stated 'Me' as the main information-seeker. A further 14% said it was their *partner or spouse*. Just over a fifth (21%) of respondents stated *it varies, there is no-one in particular* who took on the role of information-seeker.

Gender Issues

There was a significant difference regarding information-seeking in terms of respondent gender. A significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) proportion of **females** (62%) than **males** (54%) stated 'Me' as the person most often responsible for finding out information from an outside body in their household. Furthermore, significantly fewer ($p < 0.05$) **female** respondents (9%) than **male** respondents (14%) stated that it was their *partner or spouse* who was most often responsible for finding out information.

Other Issues

A higher proportion of respondents **over 25 years** (61%) stated they were the main information-seeker than those who were **18-24 years** (36%).

As might be expected, the majority (92%) of those who belonged to a **one-person household** stated themselves as taking on the role of primary information-seeker. Approximately three-quarters (77%) of **single parents with children** also said it was themselves who took on this role.

In terms of country of residence, 26% of residents who lived in **Australia** stated that *no-one in particular* was responsible for information-seeking, compared with only 10% of respondents living in **New Zealand**.

Variation in the primary information-seeking role tended to increase somewhat with income: 14% of those with incomes **under \$20,000** said that there was *no-one in particular*, compared with 27% of those with incomes **over \$65,000**.

2.4 SEEKING GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

2.4.1 Whether Information Personally Sought From a Government Department, Service or Agency in Last 12 Months

Table 16 Personally tried to get information from a government department, service or agency in the last 12 months	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Yes	66%	65%	957	66%
No	34%	35%	500	34%
Total	100	100	1457	100

At a Glance

Respondents were asked whether they had personally tried to get information from a government department, service or agency in the last 12 months. The majority of respondents (66%) indicated they had.

Gender Issues

There was no difference in the prevalence of personally seeking information from a government source in the last 12 months amongst the female and male respondents surveyed.

2.4.2 Types of Information Personally Sought From A Government Department, Service or Agency in the Last 12 Months (Multiple Response)

Table 17 Types of information sought from a government department, service or agency in the last 12 months	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
Education or training	415	29%	1040	71%
Health	388	27%	1061	73%
Welfare or community services	320	22%	1132	78%
Income support	321	22%	1134	78%
Employment	255	18%	1200	82%
Planning and zoning regulations or issues	201	14%	1254	86%
Consumer or fair trading issues	169	12%	1285	88%
Child support	158	11%	1299	89%
Housing or accommodation	145	10%	1310	90%
Aged care	120	8%	1335	92%
Immigration	79	5%	1377	95%

At a Glance

Respondents were asked whether they had personally tried to get certain types of specified information from a government department, service or agency during the last 12 months. *Education and training* (29%) was the most common issue for which respondents had contacted a government department, service or agency in the last 12 months, followed by *health* (27%), *welfare or community services* (22%) and *income support* (22%).

2.4.3 Types of Information Personally Sought From a Government Department, Service or Agency in the Last 12 Months, by Gender (Multiple Response)

Table 18 Types of information sought from government department, service or agency in the last 12 months	Yes (%)		No (%)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Education or training	30%	27%	70%	73%
Health	29%	24%	71%	75%
Welfare or community services	21%	23%	78%	77%
Income support	24%	20%	76%	80%
Employment	17%	18%	83%	81%
Planning and zoning regulations or issues	13%	15%	87%	85%
Consumer or fair trading issues	12%	11%	88%	89%
Child support	11%	10%	89%	90%
Housing or accommodation	11%	8%	89%	91%
Aged care	9%	7%	91%	93%
Immigration	5%	6%	95%	94%

Gender Issues

The types of information sought from a government department, service or agency over the last 12 months by female and male respondents were broadly comparable. However, a slightly higher percentage of **female** respondents than **male** respondents sought information on *education and training* (30% of females; 27% of males), *health* (29% of females; 24% of males) and *income support* (24% of females; 20% of males).

2.4.4 Most Recent Issue on Which Respondents Sought Information

Table 19 The most recent issues on which respondents sought information	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Education or training	13%	12%	179	12%
Health	11%	10%	148	10%
Income support	9%	6%	109	8%
Employment	6%	8%	96	7%
Planning and zoning regulations	5%	7%	90	6%
Welfare or community services	5%	6%	79	5%
Consumer or fair trading issues	3%	5%	63	4%
Child support	4%	5%	62	4%
Aged care	5%	3%	54	4%
Housing or accommodation	3%	3%	44	3%
Immigration	2%	3%	33	2%
No recent issue	34%	35%	500	34%
Total	100%	100%	1457	100%

At a Glance

Respondents were asked to identify the most recent issue on which they had sought information from a government department, service or agency. (This was the issue about which they were subsequently asked a series of questions). The most common recent issues identified were *education and training*, *health* and *income support*.

Gender Issues

The most recent issue identified by the female and male respondents were very similar, with a slightly higher proportion of **females** (9%) than **males** (6%) identifying *income support* as an issue.

2.4.5 Importance of Getting Information

Table 20 How important was it for you to get some information?	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Very important	53%	57%	526	55%
Fairly important	36%	30%	315	33%
Neither important nor unimportant	6%	6%	57	6%
Fairly unimportant	3%	5%	37	4%
Not at all important	1%	2%	16	2%
Don't know / can't say	<1%	<1%	6	<1%
Total	100%	100%	957	100%

At a Glance

Of the 957 respondents who had personally tried to get information from a government department, service or agency in the last 12 months, the majority (88%) stated that it was important for them to get some information (55% *very important*; 33% *fairly important*). Only 6% said it was either *fairly unimportant* (4%) or *not at all important* (2%), and a further 6% said it was *neither important nor unimportant*.

Gender Issues

There was no discernible difference between male and female respondents regarding the importance of getting some information. However, a marginally higher proportion of **female** respondents (89%) than **male** respondents (87%) reported that it was important.

Other Issues

Compared with 88% for the sample as a whole, the view that it was important to get some information was *highest* among those:

- who work **part-time** (92%)
- aged **40-54** years (91%)
- who spoke a **language other than English at home**(91%).

Meanwhile, the view that it was important to get some information was *lowest* among those:

- aged **over 55** years (83%)
- living in a **one-person** household (82%)
- with education **year 9 or below** (74%).

2.4.6 Complexity of Problem/Issue

Table 21 How would you describe the problem or issue?	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Very complex	7%	11%	86	9%
Fairly complex	16%	16%	153	16%
Neither complex nor straightforward	9%	6%	72	8%
Fairly straightforward	42%	44%	416	43%
Very straightforward	25%	22%	224	23%
Don't know / can't say	1%	1%	9	1%
Total	100%	100%	957	100%

At a Glance

Only one-quarter (25%) of respondents described the problem or issue they needed information on as complex (9% *very complex*; 16% *fairly complex*). Most (67%) said their information need was either *fairly straightforward* (43%) or *very straightforward* (23%). Eight percent said it was *neither complex nor straightforward*, while 1% said they *did not know/could not say*.

Gender Issues

There was some variation in terms of gender. A slightly lower proportion of **female** respondents (23%) than **males** (27%) described their problem or issue as complex, and significantly ($p < 0.05$) fewer women (7%) than men (11%) described the problem as *very complex*.

Other Issues

Compared with 25% for the sample as a whole, the view that the problem or issue was complex was *highest* among those:

- of **Maori descent** (40%) (NZ respondents only)
- aged **over 55** years (32%)
- living in **New Zealand** (31%).

Meanwhile, the view that the problem or issue was complex was *lowest* among those:

- living in **Australia** (22%)
- who were a **single parent** with children (21%)
- aged between **18-24** years (19%)
- with an education level of **year 12** or equivalent (18%).

2.4.7 Anxiety Over Problem/Issue

Table 22 Was the problem or issue causing you anxiety at the time?	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Considerable anxiety	17%	15%	152	16%
Some anxiety	12%	11%	113	12%
Just a little anxiety	9%	10%	93	10%
Total anxiety	39%	36%	360	38%
No anxiety	60%	63%	589	62%
Don't know / can't say	1%	1%	8	<1%
Total	100%	100%	957	100%

At a Glance

When asked if the problem or issue caused them any anxiety at the time, the majority of respondents (62%) reported *no anxiety*. However, over a third (38%) said the problem or issue did cause them anxiety at the time. Of those who said it caused anxiety, 16% stated that it caused *considerable anxiety*, while 12% said it caused *some anxiety*, and 10% said *just a little anxiety*.

Gender Issues

A slightly higher proportion of **females** (39%) than **males** (36%) said that the problem or issue caused them anxiety at the time.

Other Issues

Compared with 38% for the sample as a whole, the view that the problem or issue caused anxiety was *highest* among those:

- who were a **single parent with children** (56%)
- with incomes **under \$20,000** (46%)
- who were **not employed** (42%).

Meanwhile, the view that the problem or issue caused anxiety was *lowest* among those:

- with incomes **between \$35,000 - \$50,000** (34%)
- who were a **couple with children** (32%)
- aged between **18-24 years** (31%).

2.4.8 First Point of Contact for Information

Table 20 Who or where did you go to first?	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Government department, service or agency	57%	55%	534	56%
Internet	9%	12%	101	11%
Private professional	7%	9%	76	8%
Community organisation	9%	6%	71	7%
Friends / family	4%	3%	32	3%
Commercial / private company	3%	3%	30	3%
Hospital / doctor / medical centre	2%	2%	21	2%
University / TAFE / school	1%	2%	17	2%
Newspaper	1%	1%	10	1%
Telephone / phone book	1%	1%	8	1%
Council / local member	<1%	<1%	4	<1%
Other	3%	3%	27	3%
Don't know / can't say	2%	4%	26	3%
Total	100%	100%	957	100%

At a Glance

Respondents were asked who or where they went to *first* for information regarding their most recent problem or issue (ie for the matters identified in Section 2.4.4). The majority (56%) reported going to a *government department, service or agency* first. Following this, the *Internet* (11%) and a *private professional* (8%) were the most common first points of contact for information.

Gender Issues

Generally, male and female respondents' first point of contact were very similar. However, slightly fewer **females** (9%) than **males** (12%) used the *Internet* first as a way of seeking information. Meanwhile, a slightly higher proportion of **females** (9%) than **males** (6%) reported going to a *community organisation*.

Other Issues

Compared with 56% for the sample as a whole, contacting a *government department, service or agency* first was *highest* among those:

- living in **Australia** (64%)
- who were **single parents with children** (63%)
- with incomes **under \$20,000** (62%)
- living in **rural** areas (61%).

Meanwhile, contacting a *government department, service or agency* first was *lowest* among those:

- aged **18-24** years (49%)
- with incomes **over \$65,000** (49%)
- living in **New Zealand** (38%).

Compared with 11% for the sample as a whole, using the *Internet* as a first point of contact was *highest* among those:

- aged **18-24** years (19%)
- with incomes **over \$50,000** (16%)
- living in **urban** areas (14%).

Meanwhile, using the *Internet* as a first point of contact was *lowest* among those:

- with incomes **under \$20,000** (5%)
- living in **rural** areas (5%)
- who were of **Maori** descent (5%) (NZ survey only)
- aged **over 55** years (3%)
- with an education level of **year 9 or below** (1%).

2.4.9 Total Number of People/Places Contacted to Obtain Information

Table 24 Total number of places contacted to obtain information regarding the most recent matter or issue for which they needed government information	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
One person / place only	36%	54%	530	55%
Two people / places	25%	28%	250	26%
Three people / places	7%	7%	65	7%
Four or more people / places	5%	3%	39	4%
Don't know / can't say	7%	8%	73	7%
Total	100%	100%	957	100%

At a Glance

Respondents were asked which person/place they went to *first, second, third* and then *fourth* – to get the information they needed. Their responses indicated that just over half (55%) the respondents had contacted one person or place only to get the government information. A further 26% had contacted two people/places. A smaller number (7%) had gone to three people or places and 4% had gone to four or more people or places to get the information they needed.

Gender Issues

The patterns of information-seeking for the female and male respondents were very similar, with comparable numbers of women and men going to one person or place only for information, and to two, three, four or more places thereafter.

2.4.10 Source of Most Useful Information or Assistance

Table 25 Who or where did you get the most useful information or assistance?	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Government department, service or agency	40%	37%	146	39%
Internet	13%	15%	52	14%
Private professional	12%	15%	50	13%
Community organisation	8%	6%	26	7%
Friends / family	7%	5%	22	6%
Commercial / private company	3%	7%	18	5%
Hospital	3%	1%	7	2%
Newspaper	1%	2%	5	1%
Council / local member	2%		4	1%
University	1%	1%	4	1%
Aged care (assessment team)	1%	<1%	3	1%
They were as good as each other / equal	1%	<1%	2	<1%
None / did not get the information when I required	1%	2%	5	1%
Other	3%	4%	12	3%
Don't know / can't say	6%	5%	19	5%
Total	100%	100%	375	100%

At a Glance

The respondents who stated that they went to *more than one* location for information or assistance were asked who or where they received the most useful information or assistance from. The most useful source of information or assistance was a *government department, service or agency* (39%), followed by the *Internet* (14%) and then a *private professional* (13%).

Gender Issues

A government department, service or agency was by far the most useful source of information for both male and female respondents. However, a marginally higher proportion of **female** respondents than **males** reported a *government department, service or agency*, a *community organisation* or *friends/family* as the source of the most useful information. Meanwhile, marginally fewer **female** respondents than **males** reported that the *Internet* or a *private professional* were the sources of the most useful information.

Other Issues

Compared with 39% for the sample as a whole, finding a *government department, service or agency* as the source of the most useful information or assistance was *highest* among those:

- working **part-time** (49%)
- of **Maori** descent (46%) (NZ respondents only)
- with incomes **under \$35,000** (43%)
- with **children** in household (43%).

Finding a *government department, service or agency* as the source of the most useful information or assistance was *lowest* among those:

- who spoke a **language other than English at home** (34%)
- working **full-time** (34%)
- living in a **shared or group** household (32%)
- with incomes **between \$50,000 - \$65,000** (23%).

2.4.11 Ability to Obtain Some Information From a Government Department, Service or Agency

Table 26 Able to obtain some information from government department	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Yes	81%	79%	646	80%
No	16%	17%	133	16%
Don't know / can't say	4%	4%	32	4%
Total	100%	100%	811	100%

At a Glance

The 811 respondents who indicated they did not obtain the most useful information from a government department, service or agency were asked whether they were able to obtain any information at all from that source. The majority (80%) stated that *Yes* they did obtain some information, while a minority (16%) said *No* they did not, and 4% said they *did not know/couldn't say*.

Gender Issues

The responses of male and female respondents to this question were very similar. However, a marginally higher proportion of **female** respondents (81%) than **males** (79%) reported that they were able to get some information from the government department, service or agency.

Other Issues

Compared with 80% for the sample as a whole, being able to obtain some information from a government department, service or agency was *highest* among those:

- living in **Australia** (85%)
- with incomes **between \$50,00 - \$65,000** (84%).

Meanwhile, the ability to obtain some the information from a government department, service or agency was *lowest* among those:

- of **Maori** descent (32%) (NZ respondents only)
- living in **New Zealand** (25%)
- who were living in **one person** (22%) or **shared family** households (22%).

2.4.12 Government Meeting Information Needs

Table 27 Information from government department met needs?	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Fully met needs	66%	63%	513	65%
Partially met needs	26%	29%	215	27%
Didn't meet needs at all	7%	7%	56	7%
Don't know / can't say	1%	1%	8	1%
Total	100%	100%	792	100%

At a Glance

Of the 792 respondents who said they were able to obtain some information from a government source (or who said the most useful information was given by a government department, service or agency), 65% said the information *fully met their needs*. A further 27% said it *partially met their needs*, while 7% said *it did not meet their needs at all*.

Gender Issues

The responses of male and female respondents to this question were very similar. However, a marginally higher proportion of **female** respondents (66%) than **males** (63%) indicated that the information obtained from the government department, service or agency *fully met their needs*.

Other Issues

Compared with 92% for the sample as a whole, the view that the information from a government department, service or agency fully or partially met their needs was *highest* among those:

- with incomes **between \$35,000 - \$50,000** (97%)
- aged **18-24** years (96%)
- who were **single parents with children** (95%)
- with **technical / commercial** education (95%).

Meanwhile, the view that the information from a government department, service or agency fully or partially met their needs was *lowest* among those:

- aged **over 55** years (89%)
- with a **year 10** or equivalent education (89%)
- with incomes **under \$35,000** (89%).

2.4.13 Ease/Difficulty in Obtaining Information From a Government Department, Service or Agency

Table 28 Ease/difficulty in obtaining information	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Very easy	38%	35%	291	37%
Fairly easy	37%	41%	309	39%
Neither easy nor difficult	6%	6%	49	6%
Fairly difficult	13%	11%	97	12%
Very difficult	3%	6%	36	5%
Varied / went to more than one department	2%	1%	10	1%
Total	100%	100%	792	100%

At a Glance

When asked how easy or difficult it was to obtain this information from a government department, service or agency, the majority of respondents (76%) stated that it was easy (*very easy* 37%; *fairly easy* 39%). A minority (17%) said it was either *fairly difficult* (12%) or *very difficult* (5%), while 6% found it *neither easy nor difficult*.

Gender Issues

There were no major differences between male and female respondents regarding the ease or difficulty in obtaining information from a government department, service or agency. However, a marginally higher proportion of **females** (38%) than **males** (35%) reported it was *very easy* to obtain the information and marginally fewer reported that it was *very difficult* (3% of **female** respondents compared to 6% of **male** respondents).

Other Issues

Compared with 76% for the sample as a whole, the view that it was easy to obtain the information was *highest* among those:

- living in a **one-person** household (84%)
- with **year 10** or equivalent education (83%)
- aged between **18-24** years (82%)
- with incomes **between \$35,000 - \$50,000** (80%).

Meanwhile, the view that it was easy to obtain the information was *lowest* among those:

- living in **New Zealand** (69%)
- aged **40-54** years (69%)
- living in an **extended or shared** household (62%)
- of **Maori** descent (62%) (NZ respondents only).

The most commonly stated reasons for information being *easy* to obtain from a government department, service or agency were that:

- The department was helpful / knowledgeable / had correct information.
- Information was obtained via a telephone call.
- It was a straightforward issue / not complicated.
- Fast / quick service / got information immediately or on the spot.
- The information was available on the Internet.

The most commonly stated reasons for information being *difficult* to obtain were that:

- The department had no knowledge / did not want to tell the respondent.
- The respondent was constantly referred to other people or documents.
- There were long waiting times.
- There was a lack of information / they could not get the required information.
- Difficulties were experienced with using the telephone (eg always being put 'on hold', too many options).

2.5 PREFERRED WAYS OF OBTAINING GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

2.5.1 Satisfaction with Different Ways of Receiving Information From a Government Department, Service or Agency

Ways of receiving information	Printed material	News-paper	Tele-vision	Face-to-face	Radio	Tele-phone	Internet	Posters / billboards	Work-shops
Highly satisfactory	23%	17%	20%	30%	16%	20%	25%	4%	9%
Somewhat satisfactory	50%	50%	46%	30%	40%	34%	22%	27%	19%
Somewhat unsatisfactory	9%	10%	12%	8%	12%	17%	4%	20%	8%
Very unsatisfactory	6%	5%	8%	6%	8%	15%	5%	23%	7%
Depends on the issue or situation	6%	8%	8%	9%	6%	6%	3%	6%	7%
Don't know / can't say	7%	11%	8%	17%	17%	8%	41%	19%	50%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

At a glance

Respondents were asked in general, how satisfactory they found various specified ways of receiving information from a government department, service or agency.

Overall, *printed material* (73%) was stated as the most satisfactory way of receiving information from a government department, service or agency. This was followed by *newspaper articles or magazines* (67%), *television* (66%) *face-to-face contact* (60%), *radio* (56%) and the *telephone* (54%). The least satisfactory ways of receiving information were the *Internet* (47%), *posters/billboards* (31%) and *workshops or seminars* (28%). A large proportion of respondents, however, were unable to say how satisfactory the *Internet* (41%) or *workshops or seminars* (50%) were as a way of receiving government information.

Each of these responses is now analysed in more detail in the following sections.

2.5.2 Satisfaction with the Telephone as a Way of Receiving Information From a Government Department, Service or Agency

Table 30 Telephone as a way of receiving information	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Highly satisfactory	22%	18%	296	20%
Somewhat satisfactory	32%	36%	493	34%
Somewhat unsatisfactory	17%	16%	241	17%
Very unsatisfactory	14%	15%	216	15%
Depends on the issue or situation	6%	6%	91	6%
Don't know / can't say	7%	9%	120	8%
Total	100%	100%	1457	100%

At a Glance

Over half (54%) of respondents said that receiving information from a government department, service or agency via the telephone was satisfactory (20% *highly satisfactory*; 34% *somewhat satisfactory*). On the other hand, just under one-third (31%) stated that it was either *somewhat unsatisfactory* (17%) or *very unsatisfactory* (15%), while 6% said *it depends on the issue* and 8% *did not know/could not say*.

Gender Issues

There was no variation in the level satisfaction overall with the telephone as a way of receiving information from a government department, service or agency between male and female respondents. However, a significantly higher percentage ($p < 0.05$) of **female** respondents (22%) than **male** respondents (18%) indicated the telephone was a *highly satisfactory* way of receiving government information.

Other Issues

Compared with 54% for the sample as a whole, the view that the telephone was a satisfactory way of receiving government information was *highest* among those:

- of **Maori** descent (64%) (NZ respondents only)
- living in an **extended or shared** household (62%)
- with incomes **under \$20,000** (60%)
- aged **18-24** years (59%).

Meanwhile, viewing the telephone as a satisfactory way of receiving government information was *lowest* among those:

- who were a **couple with no children** (51%)
- aged **25-39** years (51%)
- with incomes **over \$50,000** (49%).

2.5.3 Positive Aspects of Using the Telephone to Get Information From or About Government Services or Programs (Multiple Response)

Table 31 Positive aspects of using the telephone	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Get to actually speak to someone	25%	26%	368	25%
Quick / less time-consuming	19%	19%	272	19%
No need to travel or go anywhere	19%	16%	256	18%
Can access services from where I live	13%	12%	182	13%
Cheap / inexpensive	9%	6%	109	8%
Anonymous / private / confidential	7%	5%	86	6%
Good customer service / get good information	4%	3%	51	4%
Can ask specific / direct questions	3%	3%	42	3%
Safe	3%	2%	35	3%
Convenient / easy to do	2%	2%	25	2%
Choice of different languages	1%	<1%	6	<1%
Other	3%	3%	48	3%
Don't know / can't say	9%	8%	125	9%
None I can think of	15%	20%	256	18%

At a Glance

Respondents were asked in general, what are the *positive or good* aspects of using the telephone to get information from or about government services or programs. *Actually getting to speak to someone* was the main positive aspect of using the telephone as a way of receiving this information which was identified (25% of respondents). Other commonly stated positive aspects were that the telephone was *quick / less time-consuming* (19%), that there was *no need to travel or go anywhere* (18%) and that the telephone enabled the respondent to *access services from where they live* (13%).

Gender Issues

There were no major differences in the positive aspects of using the telephone as identified by male and female respondents. However, a marginally higher proportion of **female** than **male** respondents reported that a positive aspect of using the telephone was that *there was no need to travel or go anywhere*, that the telephone was *cheap and inexpensive* and that it was *anonymous/private/confidential*.

2.5.4 Negative Aspects of Using the Telephone to Get Information From or About Government Services or Programs (Multiple Response)

Table 32 Negative aspects of using the telephone	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Have to wait a long time to speak to someone	57%	52%	799	55%
Dislike electronic 'routing through the system'	24%	23%	342	24%
Hard to locate right person to speak to	14%	14%	198	14%
Too impersonal	8%	11%	137	9%
Numbers are constantly engaged / can't get through	6%	8%	95	7%
No accountability / no record of advice	4%	3%	56	4%
Unable to speak to someone local	3%	3%	48	3%
Expensive	1%	2%	26	2%
Getting ignorant or unqualified people on the phone	2%	1%	24	2%
Don't always get the right information	2%	1%	20	1%
Have difficulties understanding spoken English	2%	1%	19	1%
Don't like using the Telephone Interpreter Service	<1%	<1%	6	<1%
Other	5%	5%	67	5%
Don't know / can't say	7%	5%	85	6%
None I can think of	11%	11%	162	11%

At a Glance

Respondents were asked, in general what are the *negative or bad* aspects of using the telephone as a way of getting information from or about government services or programs. Over half (55%) of the respondents stated that having to *wait a long time to speak to someone* was a negative aspect of using the telephone, followed by *disliking the electronic 'routing through the system'* (24%), that it was *hard to locate the right person to speak to* (14%), and that it was *too impersonal* (9%).

Gender Issues

The negative aspects of using the telephone to get information from or about government services or programs as identified by male and female respondents were broadly comparable. However, a slightly higher proportion of **female** than **male** respondents reported that *having to wait a long time to speak to someone* was a negative aspect, while slightly fewer considered the telephone to be *too impersonal*.

2.5.5 Satisfaction with Websites or the Internet as a Way of Receiving Information From a Government Department, Service or Agency

Table 33 Websites or Internet as a way of receiving information	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	N	%
Highly satisfactory	24%	25%	357	25%
Somewhat satisfactory	19%	26%	325	22%
Somewhat unsatisfactory	3%	4%	51	4%
Very unsatisfactory	5%	6%	78	5%
Depends on the issue or situation	4%	3%	48	3%
Don't know / can't say	45%	37%	598	41%
Total	100%	100%	1457	100%

At a Glance

Almost half (47%) of the respondents said that receiving information from a government department, service or agency via websites or the Internet was satisfactory (25% *highly satisfactory*; 22% *somewhat satisfactory*). Nine per cent stated that it was either *somewhat unsatisfactory* (4%) or *very unsatisfactory* (5%), while 3% said *it depends on the issue*. A substantial 41% of respondents *did not know/could not say* whether websites or the Internet were satisfactory ways of receiving information.

Gender Issues

There was a significant difference between male and female respondents' views regarding the use of websites or the Internet as a way of receiving government information. Significantly fewer ($p < 0.05$) **females** (43%) than **males** (51%) rated websites or the Internet as a satisfactory way of receiving government information. Notably, a higher proportion ($p < 0.05$) of **female** respondents (45%) indicated they were unable to say how satisfactory websites or the Internet were compared to **male** respondents (37%) suggesting less familiarity or use of this medium. (This was, in fact, confirmed in the next question – see Table 34.)

Other Issues

Compared with 47% for the sample as a whole, the view that websites or the Internet are a satisfactory way of receiving government information was *highest* among those:

- with incomes **over \$65,000** (73%)
- aged **18-24** years (70%)
- who were **employed** (57%)
- **with children** in the household (52%)
- living in **urban** areas (52%).

Meanwhile, viewing the websites or the Internet as a satisfactory way of receiving government information was *lowest* among those:

- living in **rural** areas (39%)
- who were **not employed** (29%)
- with incomes **under \$20,000** (23%)
- aged **over 55** years (23%).

2.5.6 Use of the Internet to Look up Information About a Government Department, Service or Agency

Table 34 Used Internet to look up information?	Gender		Total	
	Male	Female	n	%
Yes	47%	38%	618	42%
No	52%	61%	824	57%
Don't know / can't say	1%	1%	15	1%
Total	100%	100%	1457	100%

At a Glance

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had (ever) used the Internet to look up information about a government department, service or agency. Over half of the respondents (57%) said they had used the Internet to look up information about a government department, service or agency. However, 42% of respondents stated they had not done so, and 1% *did not know* or *could not say*.

Gender Issues

There was a significant difference between female and male respondents' use of the Internet to obtain government information. **Female** respondents (38%) were significantly less likely ($p < 0.05$) than **male** respondents (47%) to say they had ever used the Internet to look up information about a government department, agency or service. This would help explain the response to the previous question, that significantly fewer female than male respondents were unable to say whether websites or the Internet were a satisfactory way of receiving government information.

Other Issues

Compared with 42% for the sample as a whole, using the Internet to look up information about a government department, service or agency was *highest* among those:

- with incomes **over \$65,000** (71%)
- with a **degree / diploma** (64%)
- aged **18-24** years (56%)
- who were **employed** (54%).

Using the Internet to look up information about a government department, service or agency was *lowest* among those:

- living in **rural** areas (34%)
- living in a **one-person** household (28%)
- who were **not employed** (23%)
- with incomes **under \$20,000** (20%)
- aged **over 55** years (20%)
- with **year 9 or below** education (15%).

2.5.7 Positive Aspects of Using Websites and the Internet as Way of Receiving Information From or About Government Services or Programs (Multiple Response)

Table 35 Positive aspects of using the Internet and websites	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Can get information at any time of the day or night / when I need it / it is quick / no waiting	48%	50%	305	49%
Easy to find the information I want / informative	37%	36%	225	36%
Can access it from home	28%	25%	163	26%
Can access it from work	14%	10%	71	12%
Information is up-to-date	10%	11%	65	11%
Can download / print information	9%	9%	56	9%
Good for an overview or initial guide	6%	5%	36	6%
Don't need to speak to anyone	6%	5%	33	5%
Inexpensive	4%	5%	26	4%
Can get questions answered by email	5%	2%	22	4%
Anonymous / confidential	3%	2%	14	2%
Other	4%	4%	23	4%
Don't know / can't say	1%	1%	9	2%
None I can think of	2%	3%	17	3%

At a Glance

Respondents were asked, in general what are the *positive or good* aspects of using websites or the Internet as a way of receiving information about government services or programs. Being able to *get information any time of the day or night* was the most commonly identified positive aspect stated by the respondents who said they had used the Internet to look up information about a government department, service or agency. Other commonly stated positive aspects of the Internet and websites were that it was *easy to find the information wanted* (36%) and that the respondent was *able to access it from home* (26%) or *able to access it from work* (12%).

Gender Issues

The positive aspects of using the Internet and websites identified by male and female respondents were very similar. However, a marginally higher proportion of **female** than **male** respondents reported that the ability to access the Internet and websites from home or from work was beneficial.

2.5.8 Negative Aspects of Using Websites and the Internet as a Way of Receiving Information From or About Government Services and Programs (Multiple Response)

Table 36 Negative aspects of using the Internet	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
It's difficult to find what you are looking for / poorly designed sites / not user friendly / too much information	25%	26%	158	26%
Can be slow	17%	15%	99	16%
Information on websites tends to be too general / too brief to be of much assistance	17%	13%	94	15%
Impersonal / can't ask questions	9%	6%	45	7%
Need access to a computer or the Internet	7%	6%	42	7%
Need to know how to use a computer or the Internet	7%	6%	39	6%
Not often up to date / don't know if it is updated	3%	3%	19	3%
Information may have been tampered with / security issues	4%	2%	17	3%
The Internet can be expensive	2%	2%	12	2%
Emails are not responded to	2%	1%	9	2%
Too many adverts	<1%	2%	5	1%
Other	4%	3%	21	3%
Don't know / can't say	7%	5%	38	6%
None I can think of	20%	25%	140	23%

At a Glance

Respondents were asked in general, what are the *negative or bad* aspects of using websites and the Internet as a way of receiving information from or about government services or programs. The main negative aspects of using the Internet and websites as a source of government information about government services or programs identified by respondents were that *it is difficult to find what you are looking for* (26%), that *it can be slow* (16%) and that *information on the Internet tends to be too general* (15%).

Gender Issues

The negative aspects of using websites and the Internet as way of obtaining government information identified by male and female respondents were very similar, with few discernible differences. However, a slightly higher proportion of **female** respondents than **males** considered *information on websites to be too general or too brief to be of much assistance*, and that the Internet and websites were *too impersonal/can't ask questions*.

2.5.9 Satisfaction with Printed Material as a Way of Receiving Information From a Government Department, Service or Agency

Table 36 Printed material as a way of receiving information	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Highly satisfactory	26%	19%	329	23%
Somewhat satisfactory	48%	53%	735	50%
Somewhat unsatisfactory	8%	9%	127	9%
Very unsatisfactory	4%	7%	83	6%
Depends on the issue or situation	7%	5%	88	6%
Don't know / can't say	6%	7%	95	7%
Total	100%	100%	1457	100%

At a Glance

The majority of the survey respondents (73%) said that printed material was a satisfactory way of receiving information from a government department, service or agency (23% *highly satisfactory*; 50% *somewhat satisfactory*). A minority (15%) stated that this was either *somewhat unsatisfactory* (9%) or *very unsatisfactory* (6%), while 7% *did not know/could not say* and 6% said that it *depends on the issue or situation*.

Gender Issues

Male and female respondents' overall satisfaction with printed material as a way of receiving information from a government source were broadly comparable. However, a significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) proportion of **female** respondents (26%) than **males** (19%) indicated that printed material was a *highly satisfactory* way of receiving information, and fewer women reported printed material as unsatisfactory.

Other Issues

Compared with 73% for the sample as a whole, the view that printed material was a satisfactory way of receiving government information was *highest* among those:

- aged **18-24** years (80%)
- working **part-time** (78%)
- living in **Australia** (75%).

Meanwhile, the view that printed material was a satisfactory way of receiving government information was *lowest* among those:

- aged **over 55** years (69%)
- living in **New Zealand** (68%).

2.5.10 Positive Aspects of Printed Material as a Way of Receiving Information From or About Government Services or Programs (Multiple Response)

Table 37 Positive aspects of using printed material	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Can take time to read it / digest it	33%	31%	468	32%
Can refer to it again	25%	24%	358	25%
Usually provides enough basic information / helpful	20%	19%	282	19%
Generally easy to read	17%	17%	243	17%
Good back-up to / confirmation of verbal information	12%	12%	172	12%
Provides further contact details/place to get information	7%	7%	102	7%
If it's in writing, it's binding	4%	3%	53	4%
Can use it to show other people	3%	2%	36	3%
Availability / accessible / easy to obtain	1%	1%	15	1%
Delivered by mail / can get them sent to you	<1%	<1%	7	<1%
Other	2%	2%	29	2%
Don't know / can't say	7%	8%	111	8%
None I can think of	9%	12%	150	10%

At a Glance

Respondents were asked in general, what are the *positive or good* aspects about using printed material (ie pamphlets, booklets) as a way of receiving information from or about government services or programs. The most commonly reported positive aspects of printed material were that the respondent *can take time to read it/digest it* (32%); *is able to refer to it again* (25%); that it *usually provides enough information* (19%) and is *generally easy to read* (17%).

Gender Issues

The positive aspects of printed material identified by male and female respondents were very similar, with no discernible differences.

2.5.11 Negative Aspects of Printed Material as a Way of Receiving Information From or About Government Services or Programs (Multiple Response)

Table 38 Negative aspects of using the printed material	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Usually too general / too brief to be of much assistance	21%	21%	303	21%
Material is often difficult to read or understand	10%	6%	115	8%
Too much information	7%	7%	102	7%
Get too much junk mail clutter	6%	7%	95	7%
Impersonal	7%	6%	92	6%
Waste of paper / resources / money	6%	6%	85	6%
Difficult to obtain	4%	5%	67	5%
Often print too small to read	4%	4%	57	4%
Can't ask questions / needs clarification	3%	2%	39	3%
Not credible / can't tell if it's true or false	3%	2%	37	3%
Have to wait for it to be sent to you	2%	2%	29	2%
Information is quickly outdated	3%	1%	28	2%
Often can't get material in my language	2%	1%	19	1%
Other	3%	4%	50	3%
Don't know / can't say	8%	10%	131	9%
None I can think of	23%	25%	352	24%

At a Glance

Respondents were asked, in general what are the *negative or bad* aspects of using printed material as a way of receiving information from or about government services or programs? The most commonly stated negative aspects of printed material as a way of receiving government information identified were that it is *usually too general/too brief to be of much assistance* (21%); that it is *often difficult to read or understand* (8%); that it provides *too much information* (7%) or that you *get too much junk mail clutter* (7%).

Gender Issues

The responses of male and female respondents to this question were very similar. However, a marginally higher proportion of **females** (10%) than **males** (6%) considered that *printed material is often difficult to read or understand*.

2.5.12 Satisfaction with Face-to-Face Contact as a Way of Receiving Information From a Government Department, Service or Agency

Table 39 Face-to-face contact as a way of receiving information	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Highly satisfactory	28%	32%	441	30%
Somewhat satisfactory	31%	29%	439	30%
Somewhat unsatisfactory	8%	8%	118	8%
Very unsatisfactory	6%	6%	90	6%
Depends on the issue or situation	10%	8%	126	9%
Don't know / can't say	17%	17%	243	17%
Total	100%	100%	1457	100%

At a Glance

The majority (60%) of respondents said that face-to-face contact was a satisfactory way of receiving information from a government department, agency or service (30% *highly satisfactory*; 30% *somewhat satisfactory*). Only 14% said it was either *somewhat unsatisfactory* (8%) or *very unsatisfactory* (6%). A further 17% *did not know/could not say*, while 9% stated that *it depends on the issue or situation*.

Gender Issues

Male and female respondents' overall satisfaction with face-to-face contact as a way of getting information from a government department, service or agency were broadly comparable. However, slightly fewer **female** respondents (28%) than **male** respondents (32%) rated face-to-face as a *highly satisfactory* way of receiving information.

Other Issues

Compared with 60% for the sample as a whole, the view that face-to-face contact is a satisfactory way of receiving government information was *highest* among those:

- aged **under 39** years (64%)
- living in **rural** areas (63%).

Meanwhile, the view that face-to-face contact is a satisfactory way of receiving government information was *lowest* among those:

- aged **40-54** years (57%)
- with incomes **over \$65,000** (53%).

2.5.13 Satisfaction with Workshops / Seminars as a Way of Receiving Information From a Government Department, Service or Agency

Table 40 Workshops / seminars as a way of receiving information	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Highly satisfactory	10%	9%	136	9%
Somewhat satisfactory	19%	20%	283	19%
Somewhat unsatisfactory	8%	8%	114	8%
Very unsatisfactory	5%	9%	99	7%
Depends on the issue or situation	7%	6%	96	7%
Don't know / can't say	51%	49%	729	50%
Total	100%	100%	1457	100%

At a Glance

Just over a quarter (28%) of respondents said that workshops and seminars were a satisfactory way of receiving information from a government department, agency or service (9% *highly satisfactory*; 19% *somewhat satisfactory*). Fifteen per cent stated they were either *somewhat unsatisfactory* (8%) or *very unsatisfactory* (7%) and 7% said it *depends on the issue or situation*. However, a substantial proportion of respondents (50%) *did not know* or *could not say* whether workshops or seminars were a satisfactory way of receiving such information, indicating a lack of familiarity with this mode of communication.

Gender Issues

The responses of male and female respondents regarding satisfaction with workshops and seminars as a way of receiving government information were very similar. However, a slightly smaller percentage of **female** (5%) than **male** respondents (9%) rated workshops and services as *very unsatisfactory*.

Other Issues

Compared with 28% for the sample as a whole, the view that workshops and seminars were a satisfactory way of receiving government information was *highest* among those:

- with **technical / commercial** education (36%)
- of **Maori descent** (35%) (NZ respondents only)
- living in **rural** areas (33%)
- aged **under 39** years (32%).

Meanwhile, the view that workshops and seminars were a satisfactory way of receiving government information was *lowest* among those:

- living in **urban** areas (26%)
- who were **not employed** (24%)
- aged **over 55** years (23%)
- with an education level of **year 9** or below (22%).

2.5.14 Satisfaction with Newspaper Articles / Magazines as a Way of Receiving Information From a Government Department, Service or Agency

Table 41 Newspaper articles / magazines as a way of receiving information	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Highly satisfactory	20%	15%	253	17%
Somewhat satisfactory	49%	51%	724	50%
Somewhat unsatisfactory	8%	11%	139	10%
Very unsatisfactory	4%	7%	74	5%
Depends on the issue or situation	9%	6%	111	8%
Don't know / can't say	11%	10%	156	11%
Total	100%	100%	1457	100%

At a Glance

The majority of respondents (67%) stated that receiving information from a government department, service or agency via newspaper articles / magazines was satisfactory (17% *highly satisfactory*; 50% *somewhat satisfactory*). A minority (15%) stated that it was unsatisfactory (10% *somewhat unsatisfactory*; 5% *very unsatisfactory*). Some 11% *did not know* or *could not say*, while 8% said *it depends on the issue or situation*.

Gender Issues

The majority of both male and female respondents rated newspaper articles and magazines as a satisfactory way of receiving information. However, a significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) percentage of **female** respondents (20%) than **males** (15%) regard newspaper articles and magazines as a *highly satisfactory* way of receiving government information and significantly fewer females considered them unsatisfactory overall.

Other Issues

Compared with 67% for the sample as a whole, the view that newspaper articles / magazines are a satisfactory way of receiving government information was *highest* among those:

- aged **18-24** years (78%)
- with incomes **above \$35,000** (69%).

Meanwhile, the view that newspaper articles / magazines are a satisfactory way of receiving government information was *lowest* among those:

- aged **over 55** years (63%)
- living in an **extended or shared** household (63%)
- with incomes **under \$20,000** (60%).

2.5.15 Satisfaction with Radio as a Way of Receiving Information From a Government Department, Service or Agency

Table 42 Radio as a way of receiving information	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Highly satisfactory	18%	15%	234	16%
Somewhat satisfactory	39%	42%	588	40%
Somewhat unsatisfactory	11%	14%	179	12%
Very unsatisfactory	8%	9%	123	8%
Depends on the issue or situation	7%	5%	86	6%
Don't know / can't say	18%	16%	247	17%
Total	100%	100%	1457	100%

At a Glance

Over half (54%) of respondents said that the radio was a satisfactory way to receive information from a government department, service or agency (16% *highly satisfactory*; 40% *somewhat satisfactory*). A further 20% said it was either *somewhat unsatisfactory* (12%) or *very unsatisfactory* (8%), 6% stated it *depends on the issue or situation* and 17% did not know.

Gender Issues

Male and female respondents' overall satisfaction with radio as a way of receiving government information were broadly comparable. However, a slightly higher proportion of **female** respondents (18%) than **males** (15%) rated radio as a *highly satisfactory* way of receiving information from a government department, agency or service.

Other Issues

Compared with 56% for the sample as a whole, the view that receiving government information via the radio was satisfactory was *highest* among those:

- with incomes **between \$20,000 - \$49,000** (62%)
- living in a **shared or group** household (60%)
- aged **18-24** years (60%).

Meanwhile, the view that receiving government information via the radio was satisfactory was *lowest* among those:

- who were a **single parent with children** (52%)
- with a **diploma / degree** (52%)
- with an income **over \$65,000** (50%).

2.5.16 Satisfaction with Television as a Way of Receiving Information From a Government Department, Service or Agency

Table 43 Television as a way of receiving information	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Highly satisfactory	22%	17%	289	20%
Somewhat satisfactory	44%	47%	665	46%
Somewhat unsatisfactory	10%	13%	168	12%
Very unsatisfactory	7%	9%	116	8%
Depends on the issue or situation	9%	6%	110	8%
Don't know / can't say	8%	7%	109	8%
Total	100%	100%	1457	100%

At a Glance

The majority of respondents (66%) stated that receiving information from a government department, service or agency via the television was satisfactory (20% *very satisfactory*; 46% *somewhat satisfactory*). A minority (20%) said that it was either *somewhat unsatisfactory* (12%) or *very unsatisfactory* (8%), while 8% said it *depends on the issue* or and a further 8% said they *did not know/could not say*.

Gender Issues

Male and female respondents' overall satisfaction with television as a way of receiving government information were broadly comparable. However, a significantly higher proportion ($p < 0.05$) of **female** respondents (22%) than **males** (17%) rated television as a *highly satisfactory* way of receiving this information, and marginally fewer females rated it as *very unsatisfactory*.

Other Issues

Compared with 66% for the sample as a whole, the view that television is a satisfactory way of receiving government information was *highest* among those:

- aged **18-24** years (75%)
- with incomes **between \$35,000-\$65,000** (72%)
- living in an **extended or shared family** household (72%).

Meanwhile, the view that television is a satisfactory way of receiving government information was *lowest* among those:

- living in a **one-person** household (63%)
- who were **not employed** (63%)
- aged **over 55** years (61%).

2.5.17 Satisfaction with Posters and Billboards as a Way of Receiving Information From a Government Department, Service or Agency

Table 44 Posters and billboards as a way of receiving information	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Highly satisfactory	5%	4%	62	4%
Somewhat satisfactory	30%	25%	399	27%
Somewhat unsatisfactory	19%	21%	293	20%
Very unsatisfactory	22%	24%	337	23%
Depends on the issue or situation	6%	6%	83	6%
Don't know / can't say	19%	20%	283	19%
Total	100%	100%	1457	100%

At a Glance

Forty-three per cent of respondents stated that posters and billboards were an unsatisfactory way of receiving information from a government department, agency or service (20% *somewhat unsatisfactory*; 23% *very unsatisfactory*). Only one-third of respondents (32%) said that posters and billboards were a satisfactory way of getting information (*very satisfactory* (4%); *somewhat satisfactory* (27%). A further 19% *did not know* or *could not say*, while 6% said it *depends on the issue*.

Gender Issues

There were some minor differences between male and female respondents regarding the use of posters and billboards as a way of receiving government information. A significantly higher proportion ($p < 0.05$) of **female** respondents (35%) than **males** (29%) view posters and billboards as a satisfactory way of getting this information.

Other Issues

Compared with 31% for the sample as a whole, the view that posters and billboards are a satisfactory way of receiving information was *highest* among those:

- aged **18-24** years (47%)
- who were **single parents with children** (41%)
- working **part-time** (40%)
- who speak a **language other than English at home** (35%).

Meanwhile, the view that posters / billboards are a satisfactory way of receiving information was *lowest* among those:

- living in a **one-person** household (28%)
- with incomes **under \$20,000** (28%)
- aged **over 55** years (23%)
- with an education level of **year 9 or below** (22%).

2.6 HYPOTHETICAL PROBLEMS: INFORMATION-SEEKING

2.6.1 Family Law Matters

Table 45 Family law matter	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Private lawyer	50%	54%	754	52%
Legal aid / community legal service	15%	10%	178	12%
Family Court / local or magistrates court	5%	6%	82	6%
It's not relevant to me	4%	5%	62	4%
Internet	3%	5%	59	4%
Centrelink / citizens advice bureau	5%	3%	56	4%
Phone book / yellow pages	2%	2%	33	2%
Relationship counselling / mediation service	2%	1%	24	2%
Other government department or agency	2%	1%	20	1%
Law society	1%	1%	14	1%
Library	1%	1%	11	1%
Child support agency	<1%	<1%	6	<1%
Neighbourhood centre	<1%	<1%	5	<1%
Community agency	<1%	<1%	4	<1%
Other	2%	2%	31	2%
Don't know / can't say	8%	8%	118	8%
Total	100%	100%	1457	100%

At a Glance

Respondents were asked the hypothetical question, if they needed information in relation to a family law matter (for example, separation, divorce, child custody or a property settlement) who or where did they think they would actually go to first, apart from friends or family? Over half of the respondents (52%) said they would go to a *private lawyer* first, while 12% said they would go to *legal aid / community legal service* and 6% said they would go to the *Family Court / local or magistrates court* first.

Gender Issues

The responses of male and female respondents to this hypothetical question were broadly comparable. However, there was a slight difference between male and female respondents regarding where they would go to *first* for information on a family law matter. Slightly fewer **female** respondents (50%) than **males** (54%) said they would go to a private lawyer, while significantly ($p < 0.05$) more **females** (15%) than **males** (10%) said they would go to legal aid or a community legal service.

2.6.2 Consumer or Fair Trading Issues

Table 46 Consumer or fair trading issue	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Department of Fair Trading / Consumer Affairs	50%	53%	750	52%
Manufacturer / back to where it was bought	18%	16%	243	17%
Private lawyer	5%	7%	81	6%
Internet	3%	4%	52	4%
It's not relevant to me	3%	3%	45	3%
Phone book / yellow pages	3%	2%	36	3%
Legal aid / community legal service	4%	1%	35	2%
Citizens advice bureau	3%	1%	30	2%
Council / local government	1%	1%	14	1%
Neighborhood centre	–	–	7	1%
Law society	–	–	8	–
Financial counselling service	–	–	3	–
Community agency	–	–	2	–
Other	2%	3%	30	2%
Don't know / can't say	9%	9%	124	9%
Total	100%	100%	1457	100%

At a Glance

Respondents were asked the hypothetical question, if they needed information in relation to a consumer or fair trading issue (for example, faulty goods or purchases), who or where did they think they would actually go to first, apart from friends or family?. Over half (52%) the respondents stated they would go to the *Department of Fair Trading / Consumer Affairs* first, while 17% said they would go to the *manufacturer / back to where it was bought*, and 6% said they would go to a *private lawyer* first.

Gender Issues

The responses of male and female respondents to this hypothetical question were broadly comparable. However, slightly fewer **female** respondents (50%) than **males** (53%) said they would go to the Department of Fair Trading/Consumer Affairs first, and marginally more said they would take the goods back to the manufacturer or to the place where it was bought.

2.6.3 Employment Issues

Table 47 Employment issue	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
Centrelink / Work and Income NZ	33%	31%	465	32%
Employment agency	18%	18%	256	18%
Newspaper	16%	14%	223	15%
It's not relevant to me	7%	9%	111	8%
Internet	5%	6%	84	6%
Union	4%	2%	44	3%
Other government department or agency	3%	3%	40	3%
I'd approach employers	2%	2%	27	2%
Current employer	1%	1%	18	1%
Business or industry magazine	2%	<1%	14	1%
University / TAFE / polytechnic	<1%	<1%	4	<1%
Other	1%	2%	23	2%
Don't know / can't say	9%	11%	143	10%
Total	100%	100%	1457	100%

At a Glance

Respondents were asked the hypothetical question, if they needed information in relation to an employment issue (for example, help with getting a job) who or where do they think they would actually go to first, apart from family and friends. Almost one-third (32%) of respondents stated they would go to *Centrelink / Work and Income NZ* first for information regarding an employment issue. A further, 18% said they would go to an *employment agency*, and 15% to a *newspaper*.

Gender Issues

The responses of male and female respondents to this hypothetical question were very similar. However, a marginally higher proportion of **female** respondents (33%) than **males** (31%) said they would go to Centrelink/Work and Income NZ, or to a newspaper (16% **female** respondents; 14% **male** respondents).

2.6.4 Sensitive or Potentially Embarrassing Health Issues

Table 48 Sensitive or potentially embarrassing health issue	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male	n	%
GP	78%	78%	1137	78%
Medical centre / hospital	8%	8%	116	8%
Internet	3%	4%	49	3%
Women's / men's health service	2%	1%	20	1%
Community health service	1%	1%	19	1%
It's not relevant to me	1%	1%	16	1%
Specialist health service	1%	1%	12	1%
Other	3%	2%	31	2%
Don't know / can't say	4%	4%	57	4%
Total	100%	100%	1457	100%

At a Glance

Respondents were asked the hypothetical question, if they needed information in relation to a sensitive or potentially embarrassing health issue, who or where did they think they would actually go to first, apart from friends and family? By far the majority of respondents (78%) stated that they would go to a *General Practitioner* first for information in relation to a sensitive or potentially embarrassing health issue. A minority (8%) said they would go to a *medical centre / hospital*.

Gender Issues

The responses of male and female respondents to this hypothetical question were almost identical, with no discernible differences.

A summary of the key findings from the national telephone survey is presented in Section 7, together with a summary of the key findings from the in-depth interviews. A discussion of the qualitative phase of the research is now presented in Section 3 to 6.

3. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH WOMEN FROM A LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

In this section, the results from the in-depth interviews with ten women from a low socio-economic background are presented. The following issues are discussed:

- overview of the characteristics of the women interviewed
- information-seeking roles in the household
- information pathways
- views on different ways of seeking information
- information-seeking on specific issues.

3.1 OVERVIEW OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WOMEN INTERVIEWED

Seven of the women interviewed lived in urban locations, and three came from rural/regional areas.

The women were aged from 17 to 56 years, with an even spread across this age range. One woman was from a non-English speaking background (and was born in Turkey). One woman was Aboriginal. One had a physical disability.

All of the women were living solely or predominantly on government benefits. None were in paid employment, although one woman had been employed until recently. One of the young women was currently studying.

Three of the women were currently living with male partners (in all cases, their husbands). Another woman was recently widowed. One young woman's fiancé was in prison. Two of the young women lived in share accommodation.

Seven of the women had children living with them (including three with foster children). Four were single mothers.

3.2 INFORMATION-SEEKING ROLES IN THE HOUSEHOLD

3.2.1 Primary Information-Seeker

All seven of the women not living with partners were the sole seekers of government information for themselves and any of their children. The two young women living with flatmates (in both cases friends) predominantly found out information for themselves separately:

We both look after our own issues.

Of the three women living with their husbands, two took primary responsibility for information-seeking themselves since their husbands were in part-time employment. Information-seeking appeared to be perceived as part of the women's 'domestic' role, particularly in relation to any issues concerning the children. However, in both cases, joint responsibility was taken with male partners for financial issues. In one of these cases, the woman's husband took sole responsibility for dealing with legal issues. In relation to both the financial and legal issues, it appeared to be perceived that this was part of the traditional male role:

When we were going for a loan [fifteen years ago] I let my husband find out about it and go and do all the talking. I thought it would be better being a male – just easier for him to apply for it.

I let my husband talk to the solicitors – I don't know why – I just let him talk first.

For the third woman living with her partner, her husband was the predominant information-seeker. She had previously played a larger role in this activity but was now unable to due to poor health.

3.2.2 Changes in the Primary Information-Seeker and Nature of the Information Sought

Information-seeking roles could change over the course of women's life cycles, due to factors such as presence or absence of a partner, ill health and so on. For instance, Sarah [interviewees' names have been changed], whose husband had been the primary information-seeker until his recent death, was now having to fulfil this role herself. Although she had the skills to do so, Sarah admitted that it had been difficult taking over this role:

I should have had more input before.

The women interviewed all said they had had to find out about a wide range of government information in the last 12 months. The most common issues they needed information about were children's and adult health, financial issues, income support, and welfare/community services. For the younger women adult education and training, adult health, employment, housing and income support were particularly common issues, and for older women with children issues concerning children's health and education, income support and welfare/community services were very common.

The least common issues which women had had to find out about in the last 12 months were aged care, immigration, consumer/fair trading issues and planning/zoning regulations.

3.2.3 Skill and Assertiveness in Seeking Information

Overall, the women from a low socio-economic background generally appeared to be quite competent and familiar with seeking information about government services and programs. Indeed, several women were clearly extremely assertive and highly skilled in carrying out this task. These women had often *had* to develop this capacity as a crucial component of their life

survival skills. Some had been required (or forced) by their life circumstances to have contact with or seek information from or about a wide range of different government services which women in more favourable economic or social circumstances may not have been required to do. For instance, they may have had to find out about government benefits and other specific forms of financial and social assistance, government housing and so on. The following case illustrates, in a dramatic way, just how resourceful some women have had to be in the face of extremely difficult life circumstances.

Caroline is a 46-year-old woman. Her eldest daughter and the daughter's unborn child were killed by her daughter's de facto husband three and a half years ago. Caroline now lives with her husband, two of her own teenage children and her dead daughter's surviving 7-year-old son (as foster carers). Until recently Caroline and her husband had also provided long-term foster care for one of her granddaughters, who was removed from the home due to sexual abuse by the mother's partner.

Before her daughter's death, Caroline's husband had been in paid employment, but neither Caroline nor her husband has been able to work since due to the psychological impact of the murder. They have been declared bankrupt and lost their family home.

Since her daughter's death, Caroline and her husband have had to seek information about government benefits (both are on pensions), psychiatric services (Caroline was admitted to hospital following an overdose), family support services (to provide practical and emotional support to look after the children and home), the child welfare department (concerning foster care of the two grandchildren), the education department (to obtain children's school uniforms and books free of charge), and a non-government crime victims' fund (for other

expenses concerning the children). Caroline commented that:

My husband used to earn \$40,000, but now he's on \$16,000. It's quite humiliating to have to ask for help. You don't like to ask for clothes and books for your kids.

Two of the women interviewed had been in care as children. They reported that this experience had made them very knowledgeable about the types of services available and where to access various kinds of support:

I've been in the welfare for 18 years – I know how it runs. Because I've had to deal with official systems my whole life, that's made me really assertive. - - - I know about lots of resources. None of my friends live like me - they've had good families. I help out all my friends by telling them where to go when they've got problems.

Some women said they were forced by financial necessity to be very persistent and assertive in seeking out and pursuing financial assistance or issues in particular, since even a relatively small amount of money could make a big difference to them.

Tina is a 32-year-old single mother of two children living on government benefits. She bought a water fountain worth around \$100 from a shop, which turned out to be faulty. She went back to the shop, but the shopowner refused to refund her money. Tina then approached the fair trading department to find out her legal rights, and was informed that either the shop-owner should refund her money or she could take him to court to sue for the money. Tina rang a lawyer to find out about suing the shop-owner but could not afford the

legal fees that this would require. She was also told it could take six months to achieve an outcome. Tina then started to ring the shop-owner every day demanding her money be refunded. The shop-owner tried to give various excuses why he should not refund the money. He eventually offered to replace the fountain but Tina did not want a replacement. Eventually, after Tina had rung every day for three weeks, the shop-owner refunded Tina's money. Tina said:

I only got what I wanted because I was very persistent – a lot of people give up and get scared.

3.3 INFORMATION PATHWAYS

3.3.1 Preferred Initial Contact Source

Most of the women (seven) interviewed reported that they would prefer to go direct to a government department as their first point of contact to find out information about government programs or services. This included two women who said they would prefer to go to a specific named government department they had had regular contact with and knew would be helpful in either providing the required information themselves or directing them where to go.

For these women, government departments were preferred as first contact points because they were felt to be the most efficient, direct, easy, quickest and reliable way to get the information they needed:

I'd go direct to the government department because it's easier, rather than going person-to-person. I'd go direct to the one person who could help.

Two women reported that they would prefer to go to specific 'one-stop-shop' community organisations they had been assisted by

previously which could provide one central place to find out where they should go for information:

The majority of departments will not necessarily help you. An organisation like this one, if they can't help you they'll exhaust avenues' til they can find help for you.

Only one woman (a 17-year-old woman in care) stated that she would prefer to approach a friend first *'because I can trust them'*, for confidentiality reasons and because *'if I went to a government department, they'd make a big fuss'*.

3.3.2 The Importance of a Knowledgeable First Contact Person

For successful information-seeking outcomes, it was critical for women from a low socio-economic background to have contact early in the information-seeking process with a knowledgeable individual who could advise the woman exactly which agencies to approach (and ideally, provide the name of a contact person). These 'information-brokers' helped the women to successfully and efficiently negotiate their way through to the people and agencies who could provide them with the required information. (Organisations which could – officially or unofficially – operate as 'one-stop-shop' information services were regarded as particularly valuable.)

The importance of a knowledgeable initial contact person is highlighted by the differences between the cases of Karen and Patricia.

Karen is a 40-year-old woman living in a rural/regional area. Her 13-year-old son has a disability (Aspergers Syndrome, a form of autism, and Attention Deficit Disorder, also known as ADD). Karen needed to find out information about her son's disorder and appropriate treatment. She approached her family GP, who advised her that she would need to consult a specific specialist in a metropolitan area. This specialist was able to provide all the advice Karen needed. Karen now travels with her son to see the specialist every six months. She described the process of obtaining information about her son's disability and treatment as 'easy'.

Patricia, a 34-year-old woman, first became aware that her 14-year-old son (now diagnosed with ADD) had a problem when he was five months old. He used to be *'quite violent and destructive'* and would get into trouble both at home and at school. Patricia first approached her son's school for assistance in identifying what was wrong with her son. Patricia went to various psychologists and psychiatrists, but they could not diagnose what the problem was. Patricia was told her son was *'just a bad boy and I was a bad parent'*. She eventually found out about a paediatrician who diagnosed her son as having ADD and put him on appropriate medication (as well as recommending that he continue to see a psychologist). Patricia's son's behaviour improved greatly after this (although he still exhibited some behavioural problems).

The aide at her son's school was apparently not aware of the range of other assistance Caroline could receive for her son due to his disorder; Caroline found out about these other sources of help accidentally soon after her son's diagnosis since another boy in her son's class had been diagnosed with the same disorder. She stated:

No-one tells you what help I can get for him – what I'm entitled to. It should just be placed on the table. It's pretty hard, just being aware of what you can get is a big thing.

In more recent years Caroline has been in contact with a family support service, which has assisted her with a wide range of issues concerning her son. She commented:

Overall it's been pretty difficult for me to get the information I needed [related to her son's ADD] – it was like hitting your head against a brick wall.

This service was the most help to me. The others I'd tried to get help from focused more on my son and his problems, but they'd turn it back on me to solve the problem. Then I'd still have to identify what channel to go to get assistance. If there's a problem my worker can't fix, she'll find someone who can fix it.

3.3.3 Delays in Obtaining Information

One of the problems women can encounter in seeking government information is delayed responses by government departments. For problems requiring urgent responses, these delays can reduce or eliminate the benefit of an eventual response by the government agency. Sarah's case graphically illustrates this.

One month before his death, Sarah's husband suddenly became ill and was informed by doctors that he was going to die shortly. Sarah cared for her husband at home until his death, requiring intensive 24-hour medical care. Sarah was *'extremely persistent'* in seeking a variety of assistance, with very little success.

She asked the hospital and a community nurse from the health department for assistance seeking access to people who had previously been in a similar situation to herself. This was refused, and no alternative suggestions were made. Eventually, but only after Sarah *'asked a lot of questions'*, she was given a very helpful book on palliative care by another community nurse who made home visits to her husband. This provided a considerable amount of useful information on people who are dying and what carers should expect during this time.

Sarah approached the government department which provides home care assistance in these situations to obtain some limited assistance with domestic chores. Two weeks before her husband's death, a home assessment was conducted. Sarah was told at that assessment that the assessors had never seen a case more deserving of assistance, in terms of *'all the things I'd had to do'* to care for her husband. A month later (two weeks after her husband's death) Sarah had still not heard anything further from the department.

Sarah also required financial assistance since she and her husband had previously run a training business together and now had no

income due to her husband's illness. Sarah approached the relevant government agency, and was told she could apply for a carer's pension. Sarah applied for this pension two weeks before her husband died. There were delays in approving payment. Two days after her husband's death, Sarah received a letter informing her she was no longer eligible for the payment since her husband had died. Sarah had not informed the department of her husband's death, and presumed they must have read about it in the local paper.

Sarah and her husband had been long-term foster carers for three children for the state child welfare department. Although the department was aware her husband was seriously ill, Sarah would have appreciated some assistance from the department in supporting the foster children to deal with her husband's illness and then death.

Sarah concluded from her experiences that:

Government support systems are not good at responding to emergency situations.

The lack of support had made what was already a stressful situation 'even more stressful'. Sarah reported that she was only able to cope with the situation due to the considerable amount of support provided by her own family.

3.3.4 The Lack of Services in Rural/Regional Areas

It was reported that services in rural/regional areas can be very scarce, particularly more specialist services. This can make seeking information about or access to government services more difficult in those areas.

3.4 VIEWS ON DIFFERENT METHODS OF SEEKING INFORMATION

3.4.1 Telephone

Some of the women (six) interviewed said they liked the telephone as a way of obtaining government information. One woman only liked using the telephone when she knew exactly who she needed to speak to.

Advantages of the phone included that it was convenient (particularly for women at home with young children), quick, confidential, and allowed the caller to obtain a lot of information.

Four women disliked using the telephone for information-seeking purposes. The most commonly identified disadvantages of using the telephone were delays and electronic routing systems:

I don't like the phone at all because every government agency has got queuing systems and delays. It's nice to ring and speak to a human being. I don't like having to listen to a whole list of options before I can select the one I want.

The phone is fine except when you get stuck on hold. When you're on hold, you're stuck – you've got no alternative but to hang on.

One woman who was partially blind commented that one of the reasons she disliked electronic routing systems was that due to her disability:

I press the wrong numbers on the phone, and I end up in the wrong bit of the system.

Other reported disadvantages of the telephone included that the person at the end of the phone may not be sympathetic. One woman also queried how confidential the telephone might be, given that the person providing information may be taking notes.

3.4.2 Internet

Half of the women had used the Internet to get information, but usually not at home and their Internet experience was generally limited. Only one woman had Internet access at home (a further two had computers at home but no access to the Internet). Positive features cited of the Internet included privacy, and ease of access when at home with young children.

Only one (teenaged) woman expressed a clear preference for obtaining information via the Internet.

Disadvantages of the Internet included limited access to computers (*'Not many single mothers have computers'*), difficulties in finding the required information, *'pages popping up all over the place'*, and payment being sometimes required to access information.

3.4.3 Printed Materials

All except one of the women interviewed liked printed pamphlets as a way to obtain information, although some commented that this method was only useful for certain types of information eg factual information, information on self-help groups or common medical complaints. The features of pamphlets which women liked included that they are convenient to pick up, *'easy to read'*, and *'you can take them home and read them... I always find out about things through them'*.

The one woman who did not like printed material at all could not read due to a sight impairment.

Negative features cited of printed materials included that they *'don't explain it in as much detail as you want'*, they are better at providing basic factual information than anything more complex, and that they can be easy to pick up but then never read.

3.4.4 Newspaper Articles and Magazines

Seven women read newspaper articles and magazines at least some times. However, while some thought these were good sources of information about government services and programs, others felt they provided more general information only:

I find newspaper articles and magazines a good source of information on government services – you know what the government's doing.

I don't see articles about the very specific issues I needed to know about [caring for a terminally ill husband].

Three women do not ever read newspapers or magazines.

One woman had concerns about the reliability of the information provided in newspaper articles and magazines: *'I think there's a lot of misleading information in the media'*.

3.4.5 Radio

Half of the women (five) listen to the radio. Although some of these women had used the radio for information on government services, others felt it was better for general information, music and so on. Disadvantages of radio included that it did not provide detailed information on topics.

Five women never or very rarely listen to the radio.

3.4.6 Television

The majority of the women (seven) watch television, usually very regularly. However, again some women felt it was a good source of information about government services and programs, while others felt that it largely provided more general information only.

Positive features of television included its visual impact (*'Things sink in more because of the pictures'*), its immediacy, and the fact that it is

convenient to have on regularly. Negative features included not providing enough detail on the issues covered.

3.5 INFORMATION-SEEKING ON SPECIFIC ISSUES

Women were asked where they would go to first for information if they had few identified (hypothetical) problems, other than friends or family.

3.5.1 Family Law Matters

Half of the women reported that they would first approach a lawyer or solicitor if they had a family law problem such as divorce or child custody. Three of these women would go to the lawyer who looked after all their household's legal issues.

Four women nominated Legal Aid as the agency they would approach first, and one woman nominated a known (non-legal) community organisation she had a pre-existing relationship with.

3.5.2 Consumer Issues

If the women interviewed had a consumer problem (eg faulty goods, problems with a lay-by or hire-purchase), the majority (seven) would go back to the shop where they had bought the goods. The remaining three would approach the government consumer affairs/ fair trading department.

3.5.3 Assistance with Job-seeking

The majority of the women (six) reported that they would go to Centrelink first if they required assistance with job-seeking. Two would approach known non-government (but government funded) employment agencies they had had previous contact with. One woman nominated a known (non-employment) community organisation which had assisted her

with a range of issues previously. One woman stated that she would look in the newspaper first.

3.5.4 Sensitive or Potentially Embarrassing Health Issues

Most of the women (eight) reported that they would approach their own doctor if they had a sensitive or potentially embarrassing health problem. One woman living in a rural/regional centre stated that she would go to a doctor in an urban centre for two reasons:

I wouldn't have confidence that they'd have the expertise here. There's also a major issue with privacy and confidentiality here. This is a particular problem in a rural community.

One young woman reported that she would only go to a friend first and would not approach a professional or agency:

I get embarrassed going to the doctors, especially since my doctor's a male doctor.

3.6 SUMMARY

Almost all of the women from a low socio-economic background were either the sole or primary information-seekers in their households. This reflected the fact that many of the women were not living with partners – and therefore had little choice about being the primary information-seeker. There was also a sense that information-seeking was part of a woman's 'domestic' role (particularly in relation to issues concerning the children), although in some households seeking information about financial or legal issues was also regarded as a joint or sole responsibility of male partners.

The most obvious feature of these women's information-seeking behaviour was their generally high level of skill, assertiveness and tenacity in seeking and obtaining the

information they required. Again, the women had often been forced by life circumstances to develop these skills to a high level. For example, many had had contact with a wide range of government agencies to seek financial and social assistance of various kinds. The women's often significant financial and social problems also meant that obtaining or not obtaining the information or assistance being sought could have significant repercussions. It could mean the difference between being able to pay for basic living expenses or 'surviving' psychologically – or not. The women were therefore likely to be very persistent, even when (or perhaps particularly when) faced with refusal of the desired information or outcome.

The women were generally comfortable with and used to contacting government departments directly for information. However, access to knowledgeable 'information-brokers' who could help the women efficiently access appropriate information sources was very important for successful information-seeking outcomes.

Some of the complaints about information-seeking included delays in obtaining information, the lack of services in rural and regional areas, and electronic routing systems when using the telephone.

4. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH WOMEN FROM A NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUND

This section reports on the in-depth interviews with ten women from a non-English speaking background (NESB). It covers the following issues:

- overview of the characteristics of the women interviewed
- information-seeking roles in the household
- information pathways
- views on different methods of seeking information
- information-seeking on specific issues.

Each of these issues is discussed in turn below.

4.1 OVERVIEW OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WOMEN INTERVIEWED

Eight of the women interviewed lived in urban areas, and two in rural locations. The women were of Indian, El Salvadoran, Italian, Chinese, Vietnamese (two women), Greek, and Lebanese (three women, including both Christian and Moslem) backgrounds.

The women ranged in age from 18 to 77 years. The life circumstances of the women varied considerably. Eight were adult women (ie women 20 years and older), six of whom lived with male partners (in all cases their husbands). In two of these cases, the women had experienced severe domestic violence by their husbands. One woman was widowed. One woman had a long-term partner who did not live with her and her children.

All eight of the adult women had children – six had at least some of their children living with them (including some adult children), and two

did not. One woman lived in an extended family situation.

All eight of these women were born overseas and had come to Australia as adults. Their formal education levels varied, with two having very low levels (the equivalent of fourth and fifth grade). Two had completed the equivalent of Year 12, and two had either started or completed a university course in their country of origin (in two cases) or in Australia (in two further cases). Three of the women were in current employment – two in shops they ran with their husbands, and one as a casual cleaner. Four had formerly been in employment (eg as clothes designers, or in gardening and cleaning work). Six were living solely or primarily on government benefits, and two earned an income from their family business.

All of the above eight women required some assistance with translation in conducting the interviews. In all cases, the interpreter was someone known to the woman, either a family member, a friend, or an ethnic community worker.

The two young teenage women (aged 18 and 19) lived with their families, including parents (in one case only her widowed mother) and siblings. Both these women had undertaken all of their education in Australia and were fluent in English – one was born in Australia and the other migrated here at the age of four. Both women were currently undertaking tertiary studies and undertaking part-time employment.

Seven of the ten women had at least some family living in Australia, and three did not. All of the women had some family still living in their country of origin.

It was noted that some difficulties were experienced in recruiting NESB women to interview for the project. This was despite the fact that a NESB woman with extensive contacts in NESB communities was employed to approach the women and seek their cooperation in the study. There was a

considerable amount of fear and suspicion about the project amongst the women because it was being done for 'the government'. This may reflect the fact that many of the women come from countries with repressive and authoritarian governments, where information may be gathered and 'used against' citizens. This is an important factor to consider in any initiative aimed at providing NESB women with access to information about government programs and services.

4.2 INFORMATION-SEEKING ROLES IN THE HOUSEHOLD

4.2.1 Primary Information-Seeker

There was some variation amongst the NESB women in who was primarily responsible for seeking information within their household.

- Five of the women interviewed said they were the primary information-seekers in their households. The four adult women in this group all had male partners, but three of these partners were totally 'unavailable' as potential information-seekers due to factors such as severe mental illness, the couple leading separate lives although still living together, and the male partner not living with the woman and children. One young woman living with her mother and younger brother was the primary information-seeker in her household. Her father had performed this role until his death.
- For two women, their male partners (in both cases, husbands) were the primary information-seekers.
- For two widowed women, their adult daughters were the sole information-seekers. In both these cases, the women's husbands had performed this role before their deaths.

- For another young woman living with her family, information-seeking was primarily carried out by both her parents, supplemented by herself and her siblings where the information required particularly related to them.

Several issues seemed significant in determining who was the information-seeker.

The level of English language skills of the household members was a critical factor. That is, the primary information-seeker was typically the person with the most developed English skills.

The five women with very limited English were all older NESB women (aged 48-77 years). Their lack of English appeared to be a key reason why four of these women were highly dependent for information-seeking on other family members, either husbands or adult children. For instance one stated:

I have no idea where I'd go to for information other than friends and family. I've never had to do this myself. If I didn't have anyone to help me, I'd go and drown myself. My husband [now deceased] was so good.

Woman of Greek background

The daughter of another woman (who accompanied her mother to the interview to assist with interpretation) similarly commented:

My mother is very dependent on my father. My father provides all the information – he dominates the whole thing. She's quite comfortable with that. She wouldn't even know the first place to start [to find out information about government services or programs]. She's never attempted it – it's frightening for her. She's frightened of not being understood and of not understanding what someone tells her.

Daughter of woman of Italian background

By contrast, the two young NESB women (aged 18 and 19), who had undertaken all their education in Australia and were fluent in English, were experienced and more comfortable with seeking information themselves. These women appeared to have more in common with their young non-NESB peers than their older NESB women counterparts with limited English in their information-seeking behaviours.

In addition to English language ability, views of appropriate gender roles also appeared to have some impact in determining who was the primary information-seeker in a household. However, it is of interest that there were differing views as to whether information-gathering fell within a woman or man's 'traditional' responsibilities. For some women, information-gathering was a primary responsibility for men, as part of their role in 'providing' for and 'looking after' their wives and children:

It's the job of the man – it's a decision the man should make.

Woman from an Italian background

For two women, the view that information-seeking was a man's responsibility was also associated with the view that their husbands were much more knowledgeable than they were. Both said:

He knows everything.

(Woman from a Vietnamese background, woman from an Italian background)

For other women, they regarded seeking information (particularly concerning children) as an extension of women's domestic and child-rearing roles. This was also the case with daughters who were the primary information-seekers for their elderly mothers – seeking information was one of a range of activities conducted in caring for an elderly, dependent parent. One of these daughters felt that women

tend to see their role as obtaining information and helping other members of their families. She also commented that:

My brother does help find out some information [about government services or programs] for my mother, but he works full-time and men aren't very helpful in things like that.

Daughter of woman from a Greek background

For most women (six), one person in the household tended to be responsible for seeking government information on all issues in their households. Even amongst the four women where there was some differentiation by topic area in who sought information, this differentiation was not very marked. Where there was this differentiation, this was most apparent with women tending to take responsibility for seeking information on issues concerning children's health and education (as an extension of their primary child care role):

Mum has more responsibility than Dad about finding out information about the kids.

Woman from an Indian background

Conversely, where there was role differentiation, men tended to take responsibility for financial issues, with again this being seen as an extension of their male role. However, for one woman in a violent relationship, it has been important for her to be the primary seeker of financial information since her husband used to give her very little money. The woman now runs her finances completely separately from those of her husband.

In the two households with teenage NESB women, for some issues of particular relevance to one individual only, there was a tendency for those individuals to take responsibility for seeking information.

4.2.2 Changes in the Primary Information-Seeker and Nature of the Information Sought

The identity of the primary information-seeker in the NESB household can change with different stages of the life cycle. For instance, where the primary information-seeker is no longer available as a member of the household (eg typically through death), this role may shift to others, such as adult children:

My mother speaks only a little English. Because I speak English fluently, when my father died the responsibility [for seeking information about government services and programs] naturally came to me, because I'm older than my brother.

Woman of Vietnamese background

Similarly, the nature of information required varies according to life circumstances and stages of the life cycle also. For instance for the adult women with young children, the types of information they typically needed to seek concerned children's health and education (including any special needs such as a disability) and determining eligibility for government benefits such as family allowance. For older women, they needed to find out information about government benefits such as the pension, adult health issues, and any problems with their adult children (eg drug addiction). For the two teenage women, their information needs concerned tertiary studies, eligibility for government benefits (eg Youth Allowance) and health issues involving their parents (eg where a parent was ill).

The government information sought by women also varies considerably in complexity and importance to the woman. When the women interviewed were asked to nominate the most important issue they had attempted to seek information about in the last 12 months, some were seeking relatively straightforward information eg whether they were eligible for a

particular government benefit. Some were seeking information about issues requiring collection of a wide range of information about options in order to select the most appropriate alternative eg selecting a course of study. Other women were seeking information about extremely complex and emotionally distressing issues with potentially life-and-death consequences eg leaving a violent relationship, treatment for a violent husband with paranoid schizophrenia or son with a major drug addiction, or treatment for a serious health problem.

4.3 INFORMATION PATHWAYS

4.3.1 Preferred Initial Contact Source

All of the NESB women except one reported that they would prefer to go to friends or family first when seeking information about government services or programs. This appeared to be for a variety of reasons:

- It is important to know and trust the person, particularly for a more sensitive or potentially stigmatising issue:

I'd go to a relative or friend first – because I know and trust them.

Woman from a Lebanese background

- Limited English skills – fear that they will not be able to communicate effectively with people not from their ethnic background. People from their own ethnic background will also be aware of other cultural issues which may be of relevance.
- Lack of knowledge about alternative sources of information.
- Lack of confidence to approach 'official' organisations. Even one of the teenage NESB women commented that she would generally prefer to approach friends or family first rather than go to a government

department because *'it seems quite daunting'*.

The only NESB woman who stated that she would not approach friends and family first was an 18-year-old woman who said:

I'd go direct to the government department. I wouldn't ask around [with friends and family] because the chances are they wouldn't know much about it.

Woman from an Indian background

The examples of information-seeking provided by the women consulted confirmed that for NESB women, the person they initially contact when seeking information about government services was usually a friend or family member.

Other contacts or organisations within the women's own ethnic community were also favoured contact points in the initial stages of information-seeking. For instance, two women had approached ethnic women's organisations in their local areas. However, in both these instances, the organisations had not been regarded as helpful. In one instance this was because the organisation did not deal with the particular issue the woman wanted assistance with, and simply referred her elsewhere. In the other case the woman wanted to leave her violent husband. The ethnic women's organisation she approached advised her that they could only assist her if she wanted to go to a woman's refuge. The woman did not want to do this.

4.3.2 The Importance of a Knowledgeable Initial Contact Person

For NESB women seeking information about government information or services, there appeared to be one particularly critical factor leading to successful outcomes, especially where information was being sought about more complex or serious problems. This was

contact early in the information-seeking process with a knowledgeable individual who could direct the woman to the exact departments/agencies she needed to contact (and ideally, provide a contact name in those agencies). This person may or may not have been from a government (or government - funded) organisation.

Souhala is a 36-year-old Lebanese woman. Her husband has paranoid schizophrenia and has been physically and emotionally abusive towards her. Souhala wanted to find out about treatment for her husband's mental disorder. Initially she had tried to seek information herself, but had found it *'very difficult'* and was not able to find the information she needed.

At a later stage, Souhala approached a relative, who had considerable professional experience concerning mental illness and domestic violence. Her relative, she said:

Gave me a lot of information – she told me exactly which services to go to, and who to speak to there. She also would speak to them on my behalf because my English is not really fluent. I went to all of the services, and they were able to give me the help I needed – referral of my husband into a service, providing medication and health advice, and advice about welfare from the Department of Social Security.

4.3.3 Interpreters

Several women emphasised the importance of interpreters being available for NESB women with limited English skills.

Li, from a Chinese background, reported that she wanted to find out if she was eligible for a particular type of government benefit. When she rang the relevant government department, she was able to select an option to speak to a person who spoke Chinese. This made it easy for her to explain the issue she needed to find out about, and make an appointment to talk to someone in the department. Li attended the appointment (with a Chinese-speaking person), and was told during that appointment that she was eligible for the benefit. She described it as *'quite easy'* to find out the information she needed.

4.3.4 The Difficulty in Attending Appointments in Working Hours for Women in Full-Time Employment

It can be difficult for women in full-time employment to attend appointments with government departments to find out information in business hours. It was suggested that it would be preferable if appointments could be made outside these hours also.

4.3.5 The Impact of not Finding Appropriate Information

From the examples given by the women interviewed, it appeared that when women do not obtain the information they require there may be a number of different outcomes.

Some women persist in seeking the information until they obtain it, particularly if they are being assisted by other family members who take primary responsibility for information-seeking.

Other women give up altogether or postpone further investigation of the issue, as the following case of Juanita illustrates.

Juanita, a Spanish woman, wanted to find out about obtaining employment or undertaking further training to enhance her employability. She approached an ethnic woman's organisation *'because I thought they would help since I'm from a non-English speaking background'*. She was, however, disappointed to discover that the organisation does not provide assistance with these issues, and only told her to contact TAFE. Juanita had not contacted TAFE or any other organisation about this issue at the time of the interview.

Some women give up seeking information, but may pursue the issue further at a later stage if they come in contact with someone who can provide specific direction or assistance in finding out the information.

Some women can end up in a 'stalemate' situation where they have not resolved their problems despite expending considerable effort in seeking information. For women with complex and serious problems it was apparent that information-seeking could be a very difficult, bewildering and emotionally draining process due to language barriers, lack of knowledge of where to go, lack of useful options available even where information is obtained, and other constraints on the woman's life which may restrict which options are viable in any case. The case of Maha, below, illustrates this further.

Maha, a 67-year-old woman from a Lebanese background, has wanted to leave her violent husband for many years. Maha has an adult son living with her who is currently in methadone treatment following a lengthy history of heroin addiction.

Before she retired, Maha ran a shop. Ten years ago she spoke to a client who came into the shop (from the same ethnic background as herself) about her problems with her husband. The client referred her to her daughter, a professional counsellor with expertise in

domestic violence. The counsellor provided counselling to Maha and directed her to the various organisations she should approach.

Maha approached the various organisations suggested. She contacted an ethnic women's organisation, but was told that they could only help her if she was willing to go to a women's refuge, which she did not want to do.

Maha also contacted the state government housing organisation. An interpreter was not available, and Maha *'really struggled to communicate'*. She requested housing so that she could leave her husband, but was told this could not be provided. Maha described the department as *'very unhelpful'*.

Maha also went to a government agency to obtain free legal advice and assistance about a divorce. She found it easy to communicate with this department since an interpreter was appointed for her. Maha is currently finding out information about a divorce from this agency.

Maha is still living with her husband. She is very depressed, and would like to obtain free counselling to assist her. She has no housing to go to if she leaves her husband, and knows that she will be in danger of violence from her husband or his associates if she leaves. Her responsibility for looking after her drug-addicted son who lives with her also presents another barrier to leaving her husband.

Maha stated that she would never advise others to seek advice about government services because it *'has been so difficult'*.

4.4 VIEWS ON DIFFERENT METHODS OF SEEKING INFORMATION

4.4.1 Telephone

Only two NESB women had a clear preference for the telephone as a means to seek information. Four disliked it, and four had mixed

views about it (but generally preferred other means such as face-to-face contact).

The positive aspects of using the telephone to obtain information were that:

- It can be quick and convenient, particularly for women who find it difficult to leave the house due to child-care responsibilities, illness or old age:

You can get the information you want straight off, you don't have to run around, trying different websites – it's very easy to access.

Woman from an Indian background

- It allows for privacy, particularly when you do not want other family members to find out you have been seeking information about the issue.

The negative aspects of using the telephone were that:

- It can be very difficult to communicate by telephone when you have limited English skills. This was the most frequently raised problem with using the telephone. It was reported that it is rare to be able to speak to someone on the telephone who speaks the same language as the caller (although where this is available, it improves communication considerably). The view was that face-to-face contact makes communication much easier than the telephone.

- There can sometimes be lengthy waits before getting through to someone:

I avoid using the telephone because you tend to be put on hold, placed in a queue, you ask questions they can't answer.

Woman from a Vietnamese background

- The people providing assistance can:

Vary in their helpfulness. You never know who you're going to get and what they're going to act like.

Woman from an Indian background

4.4.2 Internet

Less than half of the NESB women (four) had ever used the Internet. Three of these women had used the Internet regularly at home, although only two of these (both teenagers fluent in English) had used it to obtain information about government programs or services. One woman had used the Internet occasionally at TAFE.

The six women who had not used the Internet had limited English skills. Four of these women did not have computers at home, while two had a computer (one with Internet access the woman had not used, and the other without Internet access).

Of those women who had used the Internet, the things they liked were that it is easy and quick to use (if access is available at home):

I find it very convenient to use – I can do it in my own personal time rather than asking people.

Woman of Vietnamese background

The disadvantages of the Internet cited were that it can take a while to find the information required if you do not know the exact site to go to, and that 'you need to be computer literate' to be able to use it.

4.4.3 Printed Materials

Seven of the NESB women said that they liked (and had used) printed materials such as booklets and pamphlets as a means to obtain information. For those with more limited English skills, the clear preference was for materials in their own language, although one woman preferred materials in English because 'you sometimes need to read things in English'.

Two women had never used printed materials and one had only used them very rarely.

The advantages of printed materials identified included that they were in a simple format. It was also noted that for a complex information-seeking task, printed materials could provide a useful starting point in the initial stages of information-seeking, to help identify the more detailed information that might be required.

Indira, a young woman from an Indian background, was provided with pamphlets about a variety of courses by her school careers counsellor to help her decide which course she wanted to do. She then rang the relevant institution and was directed to its website to obtain more detailed information about the course and how to enrol in it. This provided all the information Indira needed, and she enrolled in the course.

The disadvantages of printed materials identified included that they may not provide detailed enough information, particularly for a more complex or serious problem. One woman did not like brochures because they are 'too congested - they're not simple and understandable', even when they were translated into her language. A Lebanese translator also noted that:

The written Arabic word is totally different to spoken Arabic. You have to be very educated to be able to understand written Arabic. Many government departments aren't aware of this.

4.4.4 Newspaper Articles and Magazines

All of the women interviewed said they read and liked newspapers and magazine articles. Those women with less developed English skills only read newspapers or magazines in their own language.

While some women had found newspapers and magazines to be good sources of information about government services or programs, others felt they were better at providing general information and current affairs and did not necessarily provide the detailed information that might be required, particularly for a more complex problem. One young woman had concerns about whether the information provided in newspapers and magazines was impartial, or just gave a positive view of what the government was doing.

4.4.5 Radio

Six women listen to the radio, and five of these liked this medium a lot and use it very regularly. For women with limited English, there was again a preference for radio in their own language.

The women who did not use radio cited reasons such as lack of time. One of the women was not aware that radio is available in ethnic languages.

The main advantage of radio identified is that it is easy to understand and to listen to while doing other things.

The disadvantages included that, like newspaper and magazine articles, radio is better at providing general information and current affairs, and rarely provides the very specific information that might be required for a more complex problem.

4.4.6 Television

Eight women watch television and generally liked it as a medium, since it is easy to understand. Again, women with limited English preferred television in their own language, and television was regarded as better for general rather than very specific information.

4.5 INFORMATION-SEEKING ON SPECIFIC ISSUES

Women were asked where they would go to *first* about four specific issues, *apart* from friends or family. Those with limited English skills tended to emphasise that in practice they would approach friends or family first.

4.5.1 Family Law Matters

Half of the ten women (five) reported that they would go to a lawyer if they had a family law issue such as a divorce or child custody issue. Two of these women indicated that they would approach the lawyer who dealt with all the family's legal issues. In both these cases, the lawyers were from the same ethnic background as the woman herself.

One woman nominated an ethnic community organisation as the source she would approach first.

Four women reported that they had '*no idea*' where they would go to for assistance, other than friends and family. Three of these women had very limited English skills and were very dependent on other family members for government information.

4.5.2 Consumer Issues

Most of the women (six) reported that if they had an issue concerning faulty goods or purchases, problems with a lay-by or a hire purchase agreement, they would go directly to the shop itself. One woman said she would approach an ethnic community worker, while another young woman said she would go to the Department for Consumer Affairs. One woman said she would do nothing, and one did not know who she should approach.

4.5.3 Assistance with Job-Seeking

Half of the women (five) women stated that they would approach Centrelink if they needed assistance with getting a job. Two said they would go to newspaper advertisements for jobs.

Two women reported that they would either approach or find members of their own ethnic community. One woman did not know where she would go. These three women spoke very little English:

I'd find someone who spoke my language – even if it was just in the post office – and ask their advice.

Woman from a Greek background

4.5.4 Sensitive or Potentially Embarrassing Health Issues

All the women said they would approach a doctor if they had a sensitive or potentially embarrassing health problem. For seven women this would be the regular doctor they went to for all their health issues. Four of these women (all with limited English) had doctors from the same ethnic background as themselves.

4.6 SUMMARY

Amongst the NESB women, there was some variation as to the person who took primary responsibility for information-seeking in the household. The level of English language skills was a very important determinant of this, and women's information-seeking behaviour generally. Women with no or limited English skills (who were all in older age groups) were typically highly dependent on other family members such as partners or adult children for information-seeking about all issues. Indeed, many of the women in this category reported that they would have no idea where to start to obtain information if forced to do so. On the

other hand, the younger women who were fluent in English were confident and competent in seeking information from government agencies.

Views about appropriate gender roles appeared to have some impact on who was the primary information-seeker, but there were differing views as to whether information-seeking was regarded as being a traditional 'male' or female' responsibility.

Almost all of the women stated that they would prefer to go to friends or family first when trying to obtain information about government services or programs. There was also a strong preference for contacts within the woman's own ethnic community.

To obtain positive outcomes, it was vital for the women to have contact early on in the information-seeking process with a knowledgeable person who could help them negotiate their way to the information they required. This was particularly important for more serious or difficult issues.

Some women reported difficulties in obtaining the information they required due to factors such as language barriers, not knowing where to go for assistance and so on. It was clear that some women became quite demoralised from unsuccessful information-seeking experiences, and either gave up trying to obtain the information or continued in 'stalemate' situations where their problems had not been resolved despite having spent considerable energy and time attempting to do so.

The telephone was not a preferred source of obtaining information due to factors such as language barriers. The ethnic media was frequently used, particularly by women with limited English.

Several women stressed that interpreters need to be available for NESB women with limited English skills.

5. INDEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH ABORIGINAL WOMEN

This section reports on the in-depth interviews with ten Aboriginal women in South Australia. It covers the following issues:

- overview of the characteristics of the women interviewed
- information-seeking roles in the household
- information pathways
- views on difference methods of seeking information
- information-seeking on specific issues.

All of the interviews were conducted by an Indigenous researcher with many years' experience in consulting on a wide range of issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

5.1 OVERVIEW OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WOMEN INTERVIEWED

Nine of the women interviewed lived in and around Adelaide, although one had recently moved there from Ceduna. The tenth woman lived in a rural area 80kms from Adelaide. Nine were Nungas but one, originally from Perth, was Nyoongah.

The women ranged in age from 21 to 56 years. Five of the women shared similar life circumstances as single mothers / grandmothers either studying or working and receiving some government benefits. The other five had partners living with them (all male).

All but one of the ten women had children. Each household had children living in it, except for one couple who did not have children living with them. Two women and their partners were foster parents: one family had six children, the other family, seven children

The women who worked included a road-house cook, a cook at a childcare centre, an Indigenous Services Consultant for early Childhood Services, a finance/administration worker in the local council and a voluntary worker. Some of the women had only completed schooling to Year 7, some to year 10, and some to Year 11/12. Some had already obtained, or were in the process of obtaining, various education diplomas or degrees in, primary health care, accountancy, community health and community development, and paralegal work.

It was not difficult to recruit Aboriginal women for these interviews as they were organised through a well-known community service-provider in Adelaide. The women were not at all apprehensive, happy to contribute to the study and grateful for the incentive fee paid to them. The grandmothers all commented they would buy their 'grannies' (grandchildren) something with the money. As half the women were on some form of pension (eg carers, sickness), the incentive payment was a welcome contribution to their household income.

5.2 INFORMATION-SEEKING ROLES IN THE HOUSEHOLD

5.2.1 Primary Information-Seeker

Most of the women interviewed reported they were the main information-seekers in their households, as they were the matriarchs, the most articulate, the most knowledgeable or the oldest in the family. Some of them also saw it as their jobs to fulfil the role of information-seeker, but commented that it was more about being a parent than being a woman. As one commented:

I feel it is my duty as a mother and grandmother. There's also an expectation that I do it.

If they weren't seeking the information themselves, they often relied on another woman in their family:

[I rely on] my sister-in-law, 'cos she's more experienced.

Only in one instance was the male partner said to be the main information-seeker from government agencies because:

I usually get annoyed with being put on hold [on the phone].

Nevertheless, this same woman said that she and her husband were each responsible for their own education and training, and health needs. Also as the house and bank accounts were all in her name, she largely looked after the financial and property responsibilities.

Two young sisters (one 25 and one 21 years old) sharing a house commented that they often go to their grandfather for advice and assistance. This was because he has 'the phone on' and there's always someone home for return calls. The younger woman said she relies on her older sister to do much of the information-seeking because:

She knows how to talk better than me.

One woman said she was the information-seeker for her extended family (even though they didn't live with her) because:

They know I'm a family member who lives in Adelaide and they're too shy. They know I can do it. I know a lot about the resources that are out there. I have studied and know a lot of people in the community as a child-care worker, going to meetings and such. I can get to a lot of what's available to Nungas. They rely on me 'cos they know I can get the info they need. Some relations can't even read and write.

One woman talked about her role in seeking information for her foster children:

The younger fellas get shame about phoning up to get information. It's a colour issue, being shame.

The other foster mother said similar things:

'Cos they are too shame or not confident enough. They are not taught these things at school. So if it's Aboriginal-related, I'll get the information. If it's anything else, my husband will do it.

Another woman said she was the main information-seeker in the house because she worked in a government department and knew the system, so there was an expectation that she would find out whatever the household needed.

5.2.2 Changes in the Primary Information-Seeker and Nature of the Information Sought

There was some variation in the primary information-seeker depending upon the information sought. One Aboriginal woman married to a non-Aboriginal man said that she generally dealt with all the Aboriginal-related issues, and her husband dealt with the other issues, because:

He raises the questions that need to be asked and is more articulate.

In terms of *children's health*, a grandmother (rural mother with spouse) who is the main care-giver for her grandchild assumed the role of information-seeker for her grand-daughter who lived in the same house because the child's mother was not capable. She said:

I think it's the woman's role.

In one house with four adult women, all assumed the role of looking after their own health information needs. In the couple situations, each adult was said to be responsible for their own health information needs.

Generally, the person in whose name the bills were in was regarded as the main person for dealing with *financial matters* in the household. Most women dealt with their own individual financial needs and sought their own information. In the case of the women living in relationships, the women were largely financially independent:

We handle our finances independently.

We both do it. But I make initial contact.

I've always done it. I'm more dominant about money things. My husband doesn't have much knowledge in that area.

Generally, all adults were responsible for information-seeking regarding their own *pensions and other benefits*, while the mothers, grandmothers or older women in the households were responsible for child allowance payments and the like. As one commented:

I've always done it.

One woman said she would also go as support with her extended family to the appropriate agency.

Generally, the main care-giver (whether mother, grandmother or aunt) of the child in the household was responsible for their *education or schooling information*. In the instance of married couples, they shared this responsibility:

We always do it together, but if it's something serious at the school, my husband will step in to articulate our concerns.

Generally, the *housing and accommodation issues* were dealt with by those whose name the rental agreement was in. In the case of married couples / partners, the information seeking was generally shared:

We go through information together, but I usually make the first contact.

One woman who has an ATSI housing loan said the loan was in her name so she acted on behalf of herself and her husband when getting information from ATSI.

Most of the women sought the information needed for their *own education and training* needs, as did the other adults in the households. One said she got assistance from her step-mother.

In terms of *legal rights and issues*, most women said they'd call Aboriginal Legal Rights themselves:

I'd call Aboriginal Legal Rights to find out which Aboriginal organisations I need to speak to first to get advice and then I'd phone them.

I've been doing it all my life, I keep the routine.

One woman said that as a parent, rather than a woman or mother, she sought legal advice for custody of her grandchild, and then her son went to the meetings. She explained to the son about the custody issue and then he went to Aboriginal Legal Rights and organised the court hearing.

However, one married woman who managed the finances and property issues, said her husband tended to handle the legal information because she was *'too frightened'*.

In terms of getting information on *relationship issues or other personal problems*, it was generally seen as the role of the woman being the nurturer and in most instances, the main figurehead in the house, and often mother and grandmother. One woman said:

They [the kids] won't do it and they mightn't like it. But it's not as though my own mother would have done it either.

5.3 INFORMATION PATHWAYS

5.3.1 Preferred Initial Contact

In most cases, the women were confident that if they had the correct contact person and number for their information needs, they would go straight to the appropriate agency.

Two women said they would go straight to the agency:

If I could access information myself, I'd go straight to the government agency. If there was any red tape, I'd go to a community organisations who could help.

I'd go straight to the point of contact. Ring, send a letter or fax. I prefer to put something or get something in writing, so then you've got a back up.

Some of the women were themselves the preferred initial contact people for their extended families and friends because of their roles in the community or because they held a position in a government department or community agency.

Where the women were less confident or did not have a contact person or number, they were more likely to go to 'informal' sources of information first and/or to a community agency.

Thus, one woman said she'd prefer to go to a friend or family member first because '*I can talk better to them*'. Another woman said she'd go to a family member first because '*they work higher up in government and know more*', while another said she'd rather go to a friend because '*I just want it to be my business instead of the family knowing about it*'.

One woman said she preferred to go to a community organisation because:

They have information on everything and lots of pamphlets. I'll ask at the desk for referrals etc.

One woman said she would use all three avenues: friends, family and organisations.

5.3.2 The Importance of a Knowledgeable Initial Contact Person

When seeking information the women talked about 'buck-passing', agency staff not making file-notes of phone conversations or noting appointments made, and a general lack of consistency in information received from government organisations. The comments suggest the women had not spoken or dealt with a sufficiently knowledgeable or skilled person in the particular agency, which effected the outcome of their enquiry/ need and obviously their view of the service-provider. When information was not obtained through the appropriate channels, many women saw the attitude of the staffer, and their commitment to the job, as the main problem. Their experience left them critical of the agency.

One example was that of a single mother seeking information on child support and the garnisheeing of her ex-partner's wages:

I rang up to get information and one person told me one thing. I asked to speak to the supervisor who told me something totally different. I provided them with the information on where he works etc, and filled out the necessary forms. They said they didn't know where he worked. They sent me re-assessment forms that most wouldn't understand, but I have a legal background and filled them out and sent them back. My frustration is that they should do it in three weeks and they still haven't [done it].

Another woman also complained about the Child Support Agency:

I had to do all the work and it took me a long time to find anything. The leaflet is hard to understand, and they need a written form that can be understood. It

should simply say: How to go about getting child support? What are your rights? What are you entitled to? How child support can affect your pension.

Few organisations were praised for their ability to communicate information effectively to their clients. However, one family and youth service was highly praised by one woman. She was given information on how to get bond and rent assistance, she was helped to organise a budget, and the service wrote a support letter in order to assist her secure housing through the Aboriginal Housing Trust.

5.3.3 Delays in Obtaining Information

Obtaining timely or adequate information is especially important when someone's health is at risk. Delays in getting access to health information and/or service was especially problematic for two Aboriginal women, one of whom lived in a remote community, and the other reliant on the public health system. Some were left puzzled by the delays and confused about why it was taking so long to get information or treatment. The following two cases illustrate these points further.

One woman interviewed received such poor information about her health, she actually had to move from Kathryn to Port Adelaide in order to be diagnosed with arthritis. She says the doctors in Kathryn couldn't find out what was wrong with her. But she had been reading books, brochures in chemists, pamphlets and articles in *Woman's Day* and said to her doctor, 'I think I have arthritis.' She went to the hospital and the health clinic in Kathryn, but they didn't take X-rays of her lower back where the pain was. She saw a friend with arthritis and figured out that's what she must have. She said that the doctor said she was not arthritic, but that she'd pulled a ligament and he prescribed Panadene Forte. 'He didn't look at my medical record'. She said she moved to Port Adelaide and went to a doctor who did X-rays on her back and sent her immediately to a rehab clinic.

One woman - a grandmother - was very concerned about her grand-daughter's health. She has sephacophillis of the throat and is suffering badly. Although she has been referred to a specialist at the Women's and Children's Hospital, they couldn't get an appointment until December 2001 (they have been waiting since July). She says she's been given no information on why it's taking so long for her grand-daughter to get into hospital to have her tonsils out, and the child is in pain, having been on medication for 12 months.

5.3.4 Other Difficulties in Obtaining Information

Some of the women used the opportunity of this study to voice their concerns and complaints about the poor service they had received when trying to obtain information from a government agency. It is not so much the information, but the attitude of the information-providers which was viewed as problematic by some of the women, and the fact that some of the women were in a vulnerable state and in need of support and assistance, as well as information, and this additional help was not forth-coming. The following case illustrates these points further.

A single mother with a hyperactive thyroid condition had a \$500 loan from Centrelink. She went to the office to ask how much she had left to pay. She was not well and asked the same question twice, to which the staffer responded 'You should remember. I'm going to teach you some manners'. The woman says she got 'thrown out' of the office and went to Aboriginal Legal Rights, but then didn't take the matter any further.

While in hospital later, the same woman wanted to organise some assistance for herself at home. There were Aboriginal health workers at the hospital but they were said to be no help at all. According to the woman, they just said 'Here's the phone. Here's some numbers. Good luck. The phone's over there'. She said she

rang the Adelaide Day Care Centre, Nunkawarrinti Aboriginal Health Service, St Vincent's de Paul, the Salvation Army and the Smith Family. She said she was 'desperate' as she had nothing and got no assistance from the hospital staff at all. She said the organisations that helped her were good but it was hard work given she was quite ill.

Another woman who acts as the information-seeker for her extended family said that a lot of her tribal relations go into Adelaide for health care and she has to translate for them as they have little or no English language skills.

5.4 VIEWS ON DIFFERENT METHODS OF SEEKING INFORMATION

5.4.1 Telephone

There was a mixture of 'pros and cons' in using the telephone as a means of seeking information. Only two women (both living in rural areas) said they preferred using the phone because 'It's cheap and efficient', and 'you don't waste time catching buses'. For most women, getting taxis was not an option.

The rest of the women interviewed complained about the telephone as a means of getting government information. They said they disliked voice-mail, holding times, having to go through button-pressing and recorded messages, and the lack of personal contact government agencies provide via the phone. Many women said they preferred to discuss their needs face-to-face:

I don't like using the phone. I like it like this - face-to-face. They forget if you rang last week. I rang Centrelink to make an appointment to stop my son-in-law's payment. There was no record of the phone conversation or the appointment. They say we'll get back to you....They never get back to you. They

reckon they left a message, but no-one got a message from them.

I don't really like using the phone - rather do it face-to-face, so I can do it there at the office.

You always get put on hold and you wait for so long. Centrelink takes a good 20 minutes to get through to someone. I end up hanging up.

Push this number / that number. Takes 15 to 20 minutes to get through to a government agency listening to prompts and music. I haven't got time for that.

I used to use the phone until about two years ago, but now there are too many buttons and hold times. No-one speaks to anyone anymore.

I don't talk very well on the phone. I forget what's been said.

Centrelink were so rude on the phone. Please hold, please press this and then buck- passing.

5.4.2 Internet

Only three of the ten women said they used the Internet for any information-seeking. Most had no access to the internet or had 'no idea' about what it did. Of the three that used the Internet, one used it for looking for property and jobs:

I go-online to see what jobs there are and then e-mail for a duty statement.

Of the other Internet users, one said she used it to check out the websites of organisations she needed to look up, and the other used it to find out information about adoption and looking for families.

5.4.3 Printed Materials

Only one woman interviewed said she didn't make use of or read pamphlets or other printed material. All the others discussed the value of

printed material being readily available, portable and useful in getting information, particularly on health, employment and schooling matters:

I always read materials, pamphlets on medical issues, health. Get it from local organisations and my bag's always full.

I like to get pamphlets. You can sit and read and then ask somebody.

I read anything, especially what's in the letterbox.

When I go into organisations I always grab pamphlets. It's always handy to know what organisations offer what.

I always pick up pamphlets for other people. They are very, definitely effective and people like something to take away.

Some women also commented on the need for Nunga-specific publications (that is language that can be understood by the local Nunga community):

Nunga-specific publications are needed.

We're trying to put the information into our languages, makes it easier to understand if in Nunga language.

Some literature is interesting and straightforward. We have some at work on parenting, vaccines, bed wetting, immunisation. And [it's] set out easy to understand. No good if it's jargon with big words, we need specifically for Nunga families to understand.

One woman spoke about the difficulty of filling out government forms for things like child support. Said also that information relating to the child support needed to be provided in 'plain English for everybody to understand' with contact numbers.

5.4.4 Newspaper Articles and Magazines

Four of the women said that they used newspaper articles and magazines as sources of getting information from government agencies and the news:

I always turn to the medical pages first, use it as a point of reference and keep the whole paper.

I read the paper everyday, and although I don't necessarily look for the information, there's always stuff on courses and employment.

There's a lot in the paper – information about cancer, jobs, traineeships.

One woman, however, said she was:

Not much of a reader.

5.4.5 Radio

Three women said they used the radio for getting information: two listened to the news and the third used it to find out 'where the speed cameras were around town'.

5.4.6 Television

Seven of the ten women used the television as a means of getting the news. One watched documentaries and another said she watched programs only relating to health matters. She added:

And I do believe that ads on smoking do make people think.

5.5 INFORMATION-SEEKING ON SPECIFIC ISSUES

5.5.1 Family Law Matters

When asked where they would go if they had a family law problem (apart from family or friends), one woman said she would go to

mainstream Legal Aid, while four said they would go to Aboriginal Legal Rights:

Because it's free.

To find out my options, because they would know where I stand on it.

Because I feel much more comfortable speaking to my own mob.

To see where I could go from there.

Two women said they would go straight to the Yellow Pages to find out where to go. One had had a family law matter recently and went to the Yellow Pages to find a lawyer for her nephew and cousin. (In this case, she was the information-seeker for her extended family.)

One woman said she would go to her family lawyer, while another said the Family Court was the most logical place to go. As she explained:

I can go there and talk to them face-to-face.

Two women said they would also use the Internet at first, with one saying:

I'd use the net to find out where to go, then have enough confidence to make an appointment and find out what I need to know.

5.5.2 Consumer Issues

All the women interviewed were adamant that they would go back to the retailer / manager of the store to resolve any consumer goods complaint or issue. If not resolved, they said they wouldn't hesitate to go to Consumer Affairs or contact the Ombudsman by phone. One woman said she would go to Legal Aid for advice, and another said she'd go to a solicitor as a last resort. One woman said she would go to *A Current Affair* if she was not happy with the outcome, and another said she would go to the police to '*sort it out*'.

While one woman said she would go to the store and then Consumer Affairs, the amount of time she devoted to resolving the issue would depend on the value of the purchase. For example, a \$20 kettle wouldn't be worth spending hours arguing about. In contrast, another woman said, '*I have no hesitation in following up my rights.*'

5.5.3 Assistance with Job-Seeking

One woman was comprehensive in where she would go for information on jobs / employment saying she would go to Indigenous and non-Indigenous Commonwealth Services, Aboriginal Employment Development, Business South Australia and personal contacts. Three women said they would go specifically to Centrelink:

I ring and then make an appointment.

One of these women commented, however:

Take Centrelink, you go in there and you feel like a nuisance to them. I hate going in there.

Other women were specific about the job agencies they would use including the Aboriginal Employment Service, Job Search Employment Office, Job Development agencies, Job Network 'cos they help young people get jobs'.

One woman said she would ask her aunty, another said she'd use the Internet and two said they'd look in the newspaper.

One woman said she would go to the TAFE library to use the resources available on how to do resumés and then use the computers to put it together.

5.5.4 Sensitive or Potentially Embarrassing Health Issues

All women said they would see their local doctor or family GP if they had a sensitive or potentially embarrassing health issue. One

woman said she would go to the Nunga Health Service and get a referral to a specialist. One woman added that to see a social worker she would go to the Aboriginal Health Centre *'because she talks to you and it's personal.'*

5.6 SUMMARY

Most of the Aboriginal women interviewed for this study were the primary information-seeker in their households. This related to their role as matriarch within the family, their duties as a mother and grandmother, and their knowledge of, or contacts within, relevant government or community services. Their role as primary information-seeker often went beyond 'domestic' and 'childrearing' issues and relationships and extended into financial, legal and benefit-entitlement dealings. A number of these women were single parents and were well-used to dealing with government departments as a result.

Many of the Aboriginal women interviewed were resourceful in their information-seeking, and showed little hesitation in their willingness to contact government departments direct for information, assuming they had a contact person and/or number. 'Informal' sources of information, such as friends and family as well as community organisations, were the preferred source of government information amongst those women who were less confident or knowledgeable about 'the system'. The Aboriginal women's experiences of trying to obtain accurate and timely information from government departments and services were, unfortunately, not always positive. A range of attitudinal, regional, language, cultural and communications barriers (eg lack of telephone access, lack of knowledge of, or access to, the Internet) were identified which hindered their ability to access information which they were able to understand and which they felt was credible.

The Aboriginal women raised questions about the quality and consistency of information provided by some government departments and agencies (particularly telephone services), and their ability to clearly communicate with Aboriginal people in a language and format that they understand.

6. INDEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH MĀORI WOMEN FROM AOTEAROA/ NEW ZEALAND

This section reports on the in-depth interviews with ten Māori (indigenous) women from Aotearoa/New Zealand. It covers the following issues:

- overview of the characteristics of the women interviewed
- information-seeking roles in the household
- information pathways
- views on different methods of seeking information
- information-seeking on specific issues.

6.1 OVERVIEW OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WOMEN INTERVIEWED

Five of the women interviewed lived in large urban centres, and five in smaller provincial towns. The women came from a number of iwi (tribes), including Kai Tahu, Ngati Kahungunu, Ngati Porou, Ngati Whatua, Nga Puhi, Taranaki, Ngati Mutenga, Ngati Mahuta and Ati-hau-nui-a-Paparangi. Not all lived within their tribal area.

The women ranged in age from 16 to 85 years. The life circumstances of the women varied considerably. Two of the adult women with children lived with their child(ren) in the woman's parents' home and, in one case, the woman's sister was also present. Two women lived with male partners (in both cases their husband) and, in one case, her son. One woman lived with her female partner. Two women lived in flatting situations with other adults, in one case with a widowed female cousin. One woman lived with one of her children and one grandchild plus her sister's

family had moved in temporarily. One woman spent time in two households; one with her daughter, son-in-law and grandchild, and the other with her granddaughter, grandson-in-law and two great-granddaughters.

Nine of the women had children – five had a least one of their children living with them. Six of the women had some children living in their household (including some adult children). These children might have been the woman's children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews, or cousins. One woman often had her grandchildren to stay and had a spare room in her house for them. Two women with young children (2 years and 13 years) did not have their children staying with them.

All ten of the women were born in Aotearoa / New Zealand. Their formal education varied, with seven having between three to four years of secondary school education. One of the seven mentioned gaining a high school qualification, School Certificate. Four had either started or completed Polytechnic qualifications. Seven were in current employment – two were in managerial positions, one worked in a family business, one was a chef, one was a secretary, one was a part-time domestic at a rest home (and also full-time caregiver for her ill husband), and one worked in social services within the Court. One woman was on the Domestic Purposes Benefit and one was retired and on a pension.

One young teenage woman (aged 16) lived with her auntie, uncle and nephew and attended high school.

Annual household incomes, when disclosed, ranged from \$14,000 to \$118,000. Four of the women were unsure of their household income.

6.2 INFORMATION-SEEKING ROLES IN THE HOUSEHOLD

6.2.1 Primary Information-Seeker

There was some variation in who was primarily responsible for seeking information within the household.

- Four of the women were the primary information-seekers in their households regardless of the type of information that was being sought. These women took responsibility for gathering information for other household members. Two lived in extended family households, one with a flatmate and one with her husband who was housebound because of illness.

Two of these women had extensive networks within their communities and were therefore able to source information with relative ease. They also knew information and people from their work in social services:

I think a lot of it's been put on me because I've been out in social services for a number of years so they just assume that I know everything - - - 9 times out of 10 I don't really know everything, but it's the people that I know.

Woman living with extended family

One woman (85 years) attended a number of hui (meetings) so that she could find out information for herself and for her whānau (family), including her mokopuna (grandchildren). She saw her role as presenting the information back to them so that they could discuss it and make decisions:

I like to work things out, how best to get it out, best that I make use of it, that information and, if I was doing it for my mokos, then talk it over with them.

Woman living with extended family between two homes

- Three women sought information that was relevant to themselves and/or their children and left others in their household to do the same for themselves:

It depends what the information is. If it pertains to me, I do it myself. If it's for my husband, he does his own.

Woman living with husband and adult son

- Two women actively avoided seeking information. One was very fearful and her partner was the primary information-seeker. The other stated that if she really needed information then she would seek it herself. Both women had little confidence in their ability to deal with departments and agencies:

For most things it's difficult; [I] find it hard to speak to them. Departments always put lots of blocks in the way and hard to get round them, not having the know-how – feel wrong or something.

Woman living with partner

- For the young woman who lived with her auntie and uncle, information-seeking was primarily carried out by her auntie.

For the adult women, age and household composition did not seem to be factors in who the primary information-seeker in the household was.

6.2.2 Changes in the Primary Information-Seeker and Nature of the Information Sought

Women's roles as primary information-seekers can change with different stages of their life cycle and with changes in their living arrangements. One woman, for example, had relied heavily on her partner as the primary information seeker. However since they had

broken up, the woman had had to adopt this role herself. This had not prevented her from seeking information; rather she found it took her longer to 'get to the point':

I think there's been a change, 'cause when I was in the relationship, a lot of those jobs would have been my partner's jobs. But now when I'm not in a relationship, I'm taking a lot of these myself.

Woman living with two adult flatmates

The experience of one woman whose husband had fallen ill was similar. This woman had become the primary information-seeker. However information was discussed with her husband and joint decisions were made.

The roles that at least two of the women had taken on as primary information-seeker about their children's health had, in later life and with adult children, been maintained for their grandchildren. These older women did *not* talk about pensions and retirement issues. On the whole they were concerned with issues related to their family rather than with their own personal issues.

In the past twelve months, the women had sought information about health issues, housing/accommodation, welfare/community services, child support, income support, immigration, employment, and education/training. Only two women had made inquiries about consumer/fair trading issues and aged care was not mentioned at all.

Women had sought information for themselves as well as for members of their family. One of the women, in particular, seemed to have very broad information-seeking responsibilities for her extended family, both those living with her and those not.

One woman also talked about her role as a person who seeks information when she is engaged as an information gatherer by a

government agency. Her information-seeking served a cultural purpose:

Now the information I need to recover is, when they submit their plan, I need to find out who the original owners [of the land] were so I start from the information they give. Then you end up going to Lands and Survey to get the DP titles for the land, the previous title. So it may involve going to the library to find out who the original owners; all the land transactions, you follow them until you get back to the original descendants of the land and the reason for it is to check whether there's a wahi tapu [sacred site] on the land; if there's anything sacred that needs preserving. So if they're going to subdivide that there's no destruction of historical sites. A lot of information – it usually takes 2-3 days to pick up all the information for a Resource Consent and, at the end of the day, there may not be anything significant on the land but to protect wahi tapu, if there are any, this information needs to be researched right then and there.

Woman living with husband and adult son.

6.3 INFORMATION PATHWAYS

6.3.1 Preferred Initial Contact Source

Six of the women stated that they preferred to get information about government programs, services and benefits initially from friends and family. Two preferred to read written information, one woman preferred to get information from community hui (meetings), and one woman said that she preferred to read about information in the paper and then talk with her husband.

When they talked about the issue that was the most important to them over the last 12 months, half of the women (5) reported that they had spoken first to their family or friends when seeking information. This was for a variety of reasons:

- they thought that they would know about the issue.
- they needed their support
- their family and friends had networks that they could put the woman on to.

Five women had spoken with medical professionals first because of the seriousness of the circumstances that they needed information about. In these cases their family and friends were often at a loss, and looking to support them in their contact with medical services:

I went to my GP and she's very on-to-it. [Did you need cajoling?] It took me quite a while the first go and my partner came with me the first time which was helpful. And that support was welcomed at the doctor's.

Woman living with partner

Overall the women were looking for people who could provide them with information and support. Sometimes they were able to access both information and support when their friends or family members were also the professional people they needed to seek information from:

I rang up a friend who was a doctor. He gave me as much information as he could give. And then I referred to another friend who worked for [a health organization]. And I asked her... about preferred referrals and she gave me a list of four who had good credentials.

Woman living with husband and adult son

Contacts with helping organisations and networks were also accessed when other options for gaining information were not available. For example, an encounter with a 'new' disease within a family might lead to a connection with, for example, the Cancer Society or the Renal Support Group. These groups were seen as invaluable sources of support and information:

Somebody in the Renal Support Group got our name and these people who were unknown to me at the time sent me a letter and a get well card to [my husband] and on my next visit back to home, I made a point of going and visiting these people and I was very taken back by their warmth, their welcome.

Woman living with ill husband

I couldn't even understand what the doctor was saying. He didn't use words that I understood, didn't matter what I said. [Where did you go for that?] I returned to the Cancer Society. I went straight to them because, and I don't know whether I couldn't understand the doctor or I just didn't want to understand it.

Woman living with extended family

6.3.2 The Importance of a Knowledgeable Initial Contact Person

Making contact with knowledgeable people was essential in smoothing the information-seeking pathways of Maori women. However, these 'information-brokers' not only need to be knowledgeable, they also need to know how to communicate that knowledge to a lay audience.

6.3.3 Finding the 'Right' Knowledge-Broker

Some of the best information-brokers encountered by Maori women were people who

were highly practised at disseminating information. One woman received information in a number of ways and left feeling happy because she had understood:

Very happy. I get written information, I get verbal information, I feel I get told in a way that I understand it. It's very clear... Breast cancer clinic. They were polite, they gave you privacy, they explained what they were doing and why they were doing it, they showed you the X-ray, showed you what was there, explained ultra-sound as they were doing it. They were just on-to-it.

Woman living with partner

This was common for many of the women. For information from an 'information-broker' to be useful it needed to be:

- knowledgeable and credible source
- presented face-to-face
- provided on a one-to-one basis
- clearly explained in language that the women can understand
- presented in a number of modalities: visual, oral, written:

So it was one-to-one, it was in person. He listened very well. He didn't use intimidating language. He showed me information, not just in pictures but he also turned the computer screen around to show me exactly what he was doing on the computer and he showed me visually and explained it quite well as well. So all those things and he was very informal. It was great.

Woman living with two other adults

- be presented and re-presented patiently and in understandable chunks until all those involved understand.

In relation to this last point, one woman spoke about gaining information about her grandson's medical condition:

Absolutely, [the doctors, the specialists] were very, very good. You couldn't fault them. Even the nurses who came on different shifts, they were brilliant. You could ask them the same question ten times and they'd give you the answer. And it didn't matter if you didn't understand the first time, they'd just keep breaking it down, breaking it down, until we all understood, before they moved on to the next question or next whatever we had to do. They were very good.

Woman living with extended family

For one woman the most suitable 'knowledge-brokers' that she had found were those who knew from their own experience what she was going through and could support and help her:

When we're together, we all speak the same language. We all bounce off one another and we all learn off one another.

Woman living with her ill husband

6.3.4 Culturally Appropriate 'Knowledge-Brokers'

One woman talked about the importance of finding Maori 'knowledge-brokers' who could interact with her and her family on a cultural level. She was much relieved to locate a Maori chaplain, Maori social workers and Maori support network within a hospital setting.

Cultural competency, knowledge and a familial relationship were important for one woman. When she sought information about building houses on Maori land she located a relative in a position within a relevant agency:

Seeing that [name of person] is one of ours from home and he's the head man

in the Maori Affairs, he speaks Maori. I met him at So I told him about it and he said, come to the office one day when I'm free and then he can talk to me and tell me about it.

Woman living with extended family, two locations

Women who spoke to their friends and/or family about good contact people were also likely to be pointed in the direction of a Maori person within an agency or, at the very least, someone who was known to be 'Maori-friendly'.

6.3.5 'Jumping Through Hoops' to Get Information

Seeking knowledge can be disrupted because the aims of an agency and those of a woman do not quite match. A woman's requests for support may therefore be unanswered, but they may pursue answers nevertheless.

Sometimes Maori women on low incomes find that they are required to jump through a number of hoops to obtain relevant information. One woman found this when she tried to get a bank loan. While agency policies and rules dictate eligibility, there is a need to deliver information clearly. In spite of the various setbacks, however, this woman remains determined to fulfil her dream:

I asked for brochures, whatever they had available to read and I also talked to them. [Helpful?] Yeah, they said because you're on the benefit you probably won't get it, a loan. Because I wasn't earning and the benefit wasn't enough. [Did this worry you?] Didn't worry me but I was just pissed off because I had to do something more, like get a job. And then when I got the job then I went back again and they said it would be better if you had a second income, like a partner with an income. So, it's like, I just can't win. Now I have to go look for me a man to

have the second income. Surely you don't need that just to get a loan, my gosh. And [Mum] and, I went; she went to the bank by herself' cause I was at work. But when she came home she said that she couldn't, I couldn't get the house, she was actually going to, what's that – goodwill? – for my deposit so I didn't have to have any money. But they wouldn't do that because they said that I haven't saved for two years in with them. So that's that. [Go back after two years?] I've opened an account with them now, after that. Opened up with that and, yeah, I'm saving from there. So, yes, I'll get there, next year.

Woman living with her mother, father, two daughters and sister

Even with this experience, the woman was adamant that she would not approach the government housing agency for a house loan because they had treated her so poorly in the past when she had inquired after rental accommodation.

Frustration was also experienced by one woman who wanted to take some control over her diabetes and discovered the key to doing this when she was reading a newspaper. In spite of her persistence, however, she remains unable to use the testing kit she worked so hard to acquire:

I want my own blood actual count thing, you know. So I can learn how to prick my finger and what you always test your own blood. So I want to do it myself instead of every time I've got to go to the doctor. Then I've got to pay \$20 ...and sometimes I'm going there just for him to prick my finger. So then I read about it in the papers, what you apply for and get it for nothing. So I went to see [the diabetic nurse] and she told me yes, she can do it. I had to sign a lot of papers and she had to send away to the [University]. I had to wait for three

weeks and I got it. The only thing is, she won't have time to come out to teach me. The nurse at the oral health clinic said she'll help me, she can teach me how to do it. And then she was not able to help me out at all because she's the only nurse. She was paging the other nurses in the hospital and then she can't come out, home visits. So I haven't yet learned how to... I've only been shown once.

Woman living with extended family, two locations

6.3.6 Agency Frustrations

Not all 'knowledge-brokers' within government agencies have the skills to communicate information clearly. The women interviewed provided many examples of when their information-seeking was disrupted by an individual who did not know the information that they required, talked down to them, and/or appeared reluctant to help.

One woman's experience with the Immigration Department suggested that the Department was uncomfortable handling a query from a same-sex couple. The 'information-broker' had gone away and to talk to superiors when in fact the policies affecting the couple were no different from any other de facto relationship. This also happened with the same woman contacted the Inland Revenue Department. These experiences left her frustrated in the knowledge that she and her partner did not quite fit the service specifications of these agencies:

I didn't fit within their little picture of what a family should be and because I co-parented with another woman. Like that can cause confusion, having two women as the parents. So it didn't quite fit neatly within their idea of what it should be like.

Woman living with two other adults

One woman also found a great difference between the knowledge and understanding of an agency office in Auckland compared to the office of the same agency in her provincial home town. Rather than dealing with the regional office she now seeks information from the Auckland office and asks them to liaise with the regional office:

And when I came back with this info from Auckland, in fact you know, the ACC office up in Auckland is actually quite different from the ACC from here. They're both government departments, they're both run by the same government department I believe but they have totally different information. They have no idea what you're on about.

Women living with extended family

6.3.7 Knowledge-Seeking Intermediaries

When 'knowledge-brokers' are not sufficiently knowledgeable or seem reluctant to disclose entitlements at least two of the women had enough knowledge themselves to take things into their own hands in rather an assertive way:

I actually went with [my daughter-in-law] through Income Support while we were in Auckland – the mother to my moko. And there was lots of benefits that she was entitled to that she actually was not aware of and they actually didn't want to give her the information out. The woman didn't give the information out and I only knew about it because when I worked in the WINZ, well it was called Income Support then, and I only knew about the different things, you can actually tap into on the computer. So I sat my daughter-in-law there and I showed her how to go through the computer with the social worker, with her case-manager on the other desk really upset because there were lots of

things, with this moko being in hospital, she was actually entitled to. But they don't give out that info and again [it was my personal knowledge] from actually being inside the department here that I actually knew.

Woman living with extended family

For another woman, the role of knowledge intermediary was played by a knowledgeable aunt:

Before I started work I was on the benefit, DPB, and I wasn't shy when it came to them. My auntie who was on the benefit before me, she helped me because I didn't know anything much about the benefit. And when I had my daughter, who had asthma with disability, I had her for two years and she was chronic asthmatic and was going into hospital quite a bit and my auntie asked if social welfare, if I was getting any assistance from them. I wasn't so she took me in there and that's how I got it otherwise I would have never, ever have known about it because they never told me. So thanks to my auntie I got about \$200 more in my pocket, for my girl. [Did they tell you about any other entitlements at the same time?] Yes, but that was because the lady we got at that time, she also knew my auntie and I think my auntie gave her a hard time in her days and so I didn't have a problem when my auntie and I went. We didn't have a problem. She actually gave all the rest of the entitlements to us. We didn't actually have to ask for anything, she more-or-less just gave it to us.

Woman living with her two daughters,
her parents and her sister

Other women interviewed also reported that in certain circumstances, they were the support and knowledgeable person sought out by their

friends and family when information was being sought.

6.3.8 Feelings of Shame and Worthlessness

It was notable that for at least two of the women there were times when their information-seeking was hampered by what they described as their feelings of insecurity, shame and/or worthlessness. They too described information-seeking incidents that had made them feel this way through the actions and feedback of an 'information-broker'.

One woman, when asked how she would feel if her partner (whom she relied heavily on as the primary information-seeker) was not around and she had to get information, responded:

I would feel fear – fear of not knowing enough, not being able to answer their questions, feeling inadequate. Makes you feel like you're lying or wrong, or wanting something that you're not entitled to, not deserving... Just feel like you're being checked out.

Woman living with partner

One woman had helped her sister access information when her sister experienced shame over a problem with her rental accommodation. Although the problem was the responsibility of the landlord, the woman's sister was hesitant about demanding that it be fixed:

She was too ashamed to go and see the landlord which I found quite ridiculous. I just went back to the real-estate. It's because they found this great big flash house and, you know, I said to them, 'I assumed', everybody goes to the toilet and it was the sewerage that actually ruptured and they didn't want to fix it. And she was too ashamed to keep going down there and telling them about the sewerage problem, so I went off to the real-estate.

Woman living with extended family

6.4 VIEWS ON DIFFERENT METHODS OF SEEKING INFORMATION

6.4.1 Telephone

Six women used the phone a lot and had no problems with it as a communication tool:

Mainly I use the phone because I get to talk to them. The phone takes you to a further area than what you could visit yourself. [I've] no problems accessing government department information over the phone

Woman living with husband and adult son

The positive aspects of using the telephone were that:

- It put the women in touch with a person.
- It is quick to use.

Some other women commented on the lack of face-to-face contact when using the telephone. One woman found that she could not get the information she required from some agencies and that a personal visit was more effective:

I find that they can fob you off [on the phone]. They can just, you know. If they didn't want to they didn't have to talk to you. If they're having a bad day they can just; whereas if you're in front of their face they need to talk with you nicely. Sometimes they don't do that when they're over the phone.

Woman living with female cousin

Two women who did not like to use the telephone also commented that they preferred to communicate with people face-to-face:

I don't like the phone at all. I don't know, I think, I mean I'm really put off the phone. I can't see what people's reactions are. I can't see what they think. I get flustered on the phone.

Woman living with partner

The negative aspects of using the telephone to obtain information were:

- The lack of face-to-face contact.
- The frustration of having to push different buttons for different services before being able to talk with someone:

Sometimes I find it frustrating, especially when it's that push button thing where you're going from one thing to another and you're waiting on the line. I actually like something to look at as well so I can go back over it as well and, I don't like not being able to see people's faces.

Woman living with two adult flatmates

- The difficulty of communicating with a hearing loss:

As time went by, [it's] harder for me to hear as I've got to take the hearing aid out on account that it buzzes, whistles. I can still hear but I've got to push my ear much more into the phone. Sometimes I don't understand. I know they're talking but I can't hear properly. So I don't want to answer the phone.

Woman living with extended family, two locations

6.4.2 Internet

Seven of the women were either using or learning to use the Internet. One woman had used the Internet to download electronic application forms. Others used the Internet to seek information and to stay in touch with people:

I needed to import some rugby players so I rang up the Immigration Department. I e-mailed for the information and it was promptly sent.

Woman living at home with husband and adult son

Of the women who had used the Internet, the things they liked were their ability to stay in touch with people and events. For one woman this was her main motivation for learning to use the Internet:

I see what other people are doing – I see that they can communicate with each other really quickly and it's much more immediate than writing a letter or something like that so they're about to keep in contact with a wider range of people really quickly and easily. And they can gain information really easily.

Woman living with two adult flatmates

Three women talked about accessing government department websites in their information-seeking:

I knew I needed to have immigration form and the rules and regulations so I just asked for all those pieces of information. Just went into their web page and all the information is there. I worked out what I needed and then passed on this information. Electronic information is quite easy.

Woman living with husband and adult son

Three women (aged 20, 49 and 85 years) had little or no experience of using the Internet.

6.4.3 Printed Materials

Seven women said they would use printed materials such as brochures as a source of information. One woman accessed information brochures only after she had met face-to-face with a good friend who worked in a polytechnic and gave her verbal information about the courses she might be interested in.

Positive aspects about printed material were that:

- They can be kept and referred back to:

They're good because people can just read it whenever they want and they can read what they want to read.

Woman living with her aunt, uncle and cousin

- They are a good way to learn information:

I bought most of the pamphlets, I photocopied them to make up my own library for when we were coming home so that I can pass all that information to my own whānau when I arrived home.

Woman living with ill husband

- They are usually 'straight-to-the-point'.

Three women did not read brochures or would only pick them up if they fully caught their attention:

To me, you've only got that long [clicks fingers] to catch my interest and if it don't, it's not worth reading. And when you see a whole lot of pamphlets there they all start to look the same. Unless, something's bright, yeah, I will read that one. But if it's all the same bits of white paper, it won't hold my interest.

Woman living with extended family

Negative aspects about printed material were that:

- It is sometimes difficult to understand.
- It is sometimes long and boring.
- It is no substitute for face-to-face communication.

6.4.4 Newspaper Articles and Magazines

All the women said they read newspapers and/or magazines. The newspapers were a

regular and important source of information for four women:

Quite honestly I think I get most of my information from the Herald because I read it on a weekly basis. I read a lot of information and I tend to keep cuttings that are important.

Woman living with husband and adult son

The other women read a variety of newspapers and magazines and some would sometimes follow-up information. One woman, however, said that she did not follow up information:

I read them and I get interested but I probably never follow it up.

Woman living with partner

6.4.5 Radio

Six women listened to the radio and two of these women said they listened to it a lot. One woman gained her information primarily from the National program whereas two other women listened to local Maori radio stations.

One woman did not listen to the radio because of her hearing loss.

6.4.6 Television

Four women watched television a lot and enjoyed it. It was also a source of information:

I actually enjoy television. I like all the documentaries and stuff like that. So if there's something in particular I read in the paper I will make a point of watching TV.

Woman living with extended family

Three others will put the television on only if there's something that they want to see, for example, the news:

Always watch the six o'clock news and, if I miss that, watch the 9.45 news.

Woman living with her mother, father, two daughters and sister

Three women seldom watched television. For one reading was easier because of her deafness. The other two were unimpressed with the program on television:

Television is crap really. Not a lot of it is based on what's going on here, not a lot of it's based on what's going on in my life or in my community or, people I know apart from some of the Māori programs would be more in that direction or, yeah, but a lot of it is from overseas.

Woman living with two adult flatmates

6.5 INFORMATION-SEEKING ON SPECIFIC ISSUES

Women were asked where they would go to *first* about four specific issues, *apart* from friends or family. Many women found these questions difficult because their family and friends were their first option for information-seeking.

6.5.1 Family Law Matters

Four women had their own lawyer or law firm contacts and said that this would be where they would go first. Two women thought that they would go to a lawyer and use the Yellow Pages to find one.

One woman said that said that she would go to the Citizen's Advice Bureau first so that they could help her find the right sort of help:

I might go to the Citizens' Advice Bureau because that's a name that I know and I know that they've got information on a broad area and they might be able to point me in the right direction.

Woman living with two adult flatmates

One woman said that she would go to a Maori hui (meeting) and ask there for advice or information about where best to go.

One woman thought that she would go first to the District Court and one woman did not know initially where she would go and eventually said that she would probably go to a Women's Centre.

6.5.2 Consumer Issues

Nine of the women reported that if they had a problem with faulty goods or purchases, problems with lay-bys or a hire purchase agreement that they would first go back to the place of purchase. As one commented:

I think I'd refer it back to them... directly to the people that I was dealing with. They generally give a replacement or else they just take the article back.

Woman living with extended family, two locations

One woman said that she would go to a consumer organisation or service first.

6.5.3 Assistance with Job-Seeking

Four women said that they would approach the Work and Income Service (WINZ) in the first instance as WINZ was seen as helping people to get jobs. One woman, however, did not know where she would go, only that she would not go to WINZ:

I don't know. I wouldn't go to Work and Income. I would just feel like nothing again there; just a number.

Woman living with partner

Two women said that they would look in the newspaper first. Two said that they would approach the organisation that they wanted to work for. One said that she would look on the Internet.

6.5.4 Sensitive or Potentially Embarrassing Health Issues

All the women said that they would talk to their doctor about a sensitive or potentially embarrassing health issue:

If it was something really nasty, I would go there so they could fix it straight away and I wouldn't have to be so embarrassed anymore.

Woman living with her mother, father and baby

Disclosing such an issue to a doctor might, however, depend upon:

- The woman having confidence in her doctor.
- The woman being able to trust her doctor and feeling safe.
- The doctor being female.

When these factors are not present, some women may delay dealing with a sensitive health issue. Such was the case with one woman interviewed:

I did, I left it for a long time until it was really bad and then I had to seek medical attention about it.

Woman living with two adult flatmates

6.6 SUMMARY

The Maori women interviewed clearly saw families and friends as a major, and first, point of contact for information about government services and programs. Whether or not women sought information directly from their friends and family, they invariably used their friends and family members as referral agents. Through their networks, Maori women were able to access not only knowledge but also good 'knowledge-brokers'. However, this seemed to break down in government

departments responsible for benefits and allowances. In these agencies, information was said to be actively kept from some of the women. Only the use of a knowledgeable intermediary ensured access to information and access to entitlements.

Overall, the Maori women interviewed preferred receiving knowledge from people face-to-face. A Maori saying captures this notion: 'He reo e rangona, engari, he kanohi kitea'.¹ Brochures, newspapers, the telephone and the Internet supplemented personal encounters, with Maori women becoming more interesting in the Internet in particular.

Finally, with the support of friends and family Maori women remain assertive in their information-seeking efforts.

¹ Translated as 'A voice may be heard but a face needs to be seen'.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 KEY FINDINGS FROM THE NATIONAL TELEPHONE SURVEY

7.1.1 Women's Government Information-Seeking Experiences and Preferences

Need for Government Information

- The majority of the 756 women surveyed (66%) reported that they had personally tried to get information from a government department, service or agency during the previous 12 months.
- The most common types of issues these women needed to get information about from these government sources during the previous 12 months were:
 - education and training (30%)
 - health (29%)
 - income support (24%)
 - welfare/community services (21%)
 - employment (17%)
 - planning/zoning regulations (13%)
 - consumer/fair trading (12%)
 - child support (11%)
 - housing/accommodation (11%)
 - aged care (9%)
 - immigration (5%).
- The majority of women (53%) reported it was *very important* for them to get some information about this issue, and a further 36% said it was *fairly important*.
- Most women (67%) reported that the problem or issue they needed information

on was straightforward (42% *fairly straightforward*; 25% *very straightforward*). However, about one in four (23%) said the problem or issue was *fairly* (16%) or *very complex* (7%).

- Although most women (60%) indicated the problem or issue was not causing them any anxiety at the time, over a third (39%) reported that it caused them either considerable, some or a little anxiety.

Pathways to Obtaining Government Information

- The majority of women surveyed (57%) said that their first point of contact for information about these issues was a government department, service or agency. Government sources were by far the greatest single first source of information used by the women. Following that, the Internet (9%), a community organisation (9%) and a private professional (7%) were the most common first points of contact for government information. Only a small minority of the women (4%) said they had gone to friends or family as a first point of contact for the information. Subsequent persons or places contacted broadly followed this pattern, with government departments, services or agencies predominating and friends and family and other sources being less often utilised as sources of information.
- Although government agencies were the most common sources of information first contacted, it is nevertheless notable that a sizeable proportion of women (43%) first went to *another* source to obtain government information. This is an important point for government information and communications departments to note.
- Of those women who went to more than one person or place to get the information they needed, government departments,

services or agencies were identified as the most useful source of information or assistance (40%), followed by the Internet (13%), a private professional (12%), a community organisation (8%) or friends or family (7%).

- By far the majority of women (81%) who had tried to gain information from a government department, service or agency in the last 12 months had been successful in obtaining some information from this source. Most (92%) said this information had met their needs (66% *fully met their needs*; 26% *partially met their needs*). Only 7% of the women said the information *didn't meet their needs at all*.
- The majority of women (75%) who had obtained some information indicated that it had been easy to obtain this information from the government department, service or agency (38% *very easy*; 37% *fairly easy*). The most common reasons given for it being easy were that the department or agency was helpful, knowledgeable and had the correct information, the information was readily accessible by telephone or the Internet, and that the information was obtained quickly and was not particularly complex or difficult.
- A minority (16%) of women reported that it had been difficult (13% *fairly difficult*; 3% *very difficult*) to obtain the information. The most common reasons for this being difficult were that the department or agency did not appear to have the knowledge and/or the willingness to provide the required information, the respondent was constantly referred on to other sources of information, it took considerable time to get the information and various problems were experienced with obtaining the information by telephone (eg always being 'put on hold').

Preferred Ways of Obtaining Government Information

- Overall, the women surveyed rated printed material as the most satisfactory way of receiving information from a government department, service or agency: almost three-quarters (74%) of the women rated this form of information as satisfactory overall. This was followed by:
 - newspaper articles and television (69%)
 - television (66%)
 - face-to-face contact (59%)
 - radio (57%)
 - telephone (54%).
- Less satisfactory ways of receiving government information included:
 - the Internet (43%)
 - posters and billboards (35%)
 - workshops and seminars (29%).
- The major *positive* aspects of *printed material* identified were that:
 - you can take time to read and digest the material
 - you can refer to the information again, if need be
 - printed material usually provides enough basic or helpful information
 - printed material is generally easy to read.
- The major *negative* aspects of *printed material* identified were that such material is:
 - usually too general or too brief to be of much assistance
 - often difficult to read or understand

- has too much information or is too impersonal.
 - The major *positive* aspects of using the *telephone* as a source of government information identified were that:
 - ‘you actually get to speak to someone’,
 - it is quick and less time-consuming than other methods
 - it requires no need to travel or go anywhere
 - it can be accessed regardless of where the woman lives.
 - The major *negative* aspects of using the *telephone* identified were:
 - you have to wait a long time to speak to someone/it is often difficult to ‘get through’
 - dislike of ‘routing’ and ‘button-pressing’ to get through the telephone system
 - it is hard to locate the right person to speak to.

These comments suggest it is not the telephone *per se* as a method of information-provision that women dislike, but difficulties with obtaining access to and navigating within telephone service systems that they find frustrating and problematic.
 - The major positive aspects of using *websites and the Internet* identified were that:
 - you can quickly get information at any time of the day or night and when you need it
 - the information is easy to find/informative
 - the information can be accessed from home or from work
 - the information is up-to-date.
 - The major *negative* aspects of using *websites or the Internet* identified were that:
 - it is ‘difficult to find what you are looking for’, the sites are ‘poorly designed’, ‘not user-friendly’ or have ‘too much information’
 - obtaining information can be slow
 - information on websites ‘tends to be too general’ or ‘too brief’ to be of much assistance
 - the information presented is ‘too impersonal’ and ‘you can’t ask questions’.
- Where Information Would be Sought on Specific Issues**
- When asked who or where they would go to first (*apart* from friends and family) if they needed information on a *family law matter*, the most common response amongst the women surveyed was to a private lawyer (50%) or to legal aid or a community legal service (15%).
 - When asked who or where they would go to first (again, *apart* from friends or family) to obtain information on a *consumer or fair trading issue*, the women surveyed most commonly mentioned the Department of Fair Trading or Consumer Affairs (50%) or the manufacturer or place where the goods were bought (18%).
 - In relation to an *employment issue*, the women most commonly mentioned Centrelink or Work and Income NZ (33%), an employment agency (18%) or a newspaper (16%) as their first point of contact.
 - With regard to a *sensitive or potentially embarrassing health issue*, by far the majority of the women identified a GP (78%) as their first point of contact.

7.1.2 Gender Similarities and Differences

- Women and men's government information-seeking pathways, preferences and experiences were, in general, very similar. Any differences between female and male respondents were marginal rather than substantial. This would seem to confirm the findings of the (limited) previous research which has been conducted which indicates that generally, gender, in and of itself, is not a major factor in differentiating information-seeking behaviours and preferences. Depending on the issue, other factors such as age, socio-economic status and level of education are more significant factors than gender in influencing respondents' information-seeking behaviour and preferences.
- What the survey did reveal, however, is that women play a major role in information-seeking in their household. Thus, a significantly higher proportion of the women interviewed in the survey (62%) identified themselves as the person in their household most often responsible for finding out information from an outside body compared to 54% of the men interviewed. Furthermore, significantly fewer women (9%) than men (14%) identified their spouse as the main information-seeker in their household. Both these findings give some weight to previous research which has found that women are generally more likely to seek information or help from outside sources than men. Indeed, on the evidence of this survey, women are the primary information-seekers in the majority of Australian and New Zealand households.
- Nevertheless, many aspects of women's and men's information-seeking behaviours and preferences were found to be broadly comparable. They were generally similar concerning:
 - the proportion who had tried to obtain information from a government department, service or agency in the previous 12 months
 - the importance and complexity of the information sought
 - the first point of contact for this information
 - the most useful source of information or assistance
 - their ability to obtain any information from a government department, service or agency
 - the extent to which government departments, services or agencies were able to meet their information needs
 - the degree of ease or difficulty they experienced in obtaining information from government sources
 - the *overall* level of satisfaction with the telephone, printed material, face-to-face contact, workshops and seminars, newspaper articles and magazines, radio and television as ways of receiving information from a government department, service or agency
 - the identified positive and negative aspects of using various media as a way of getting information from or about government services or programs
 - where they would go to first (apart from family and friends) if they needed information about a family law matter, a consumer or fair trading issue, an employment issue or a sensitive or potentially embarrassing health matter.
- The main statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) to emerge between women's and men's information-seeking behaviour and preferences concerned the following issues:

- The actual (past) use of the *Internet* to look up information about a government department, agency or service. Significantly fewer female respondents (38%) than male respondents (47%) had ever used the Internet to look for government information.
- The perceived usefulness of using *websites or the Internet* as a way of receiving information from a government department, service or agency. Female respondents (43%) were significantly less likely than male respondents (51%) to rate websites or the Internet as a satisfactory way of receiving government information.
- The perceived usefulness of *posters or billboards* as a way of receiving government information. A significantly higher proportion of female respondents (35%) than males (29%) view posters and billboards as a satisfactory way of receiving this information.
- The perceived usefulness of *printed material* as a way of receiving information about a government department, service or agency. While similar proportions of women (74%) and men (72%) rated printed material as a satisfactory way of getting this information, female respondents (26%) were significantly more likely than male respondents (19%) to rate printed material as a *highly satisfactory* way of receiving government information.
- The perceived usefulness of the *telephone* as a way of receiving information from a government department, service or agency. While identical proportions of women (54%) and men (54%) rated the telephone as a satisfactory way of getting this information, female respondents (22%) were significantly more likely than male respondents (18%) to rate the telephone as a *highly satisfactory* way of receiving government information.
- The perceived usefulness of *newspaper articles and magazines* as a way of receiving government information. Although broadly comparable numbers of women (69%) and men (66%) rated newspaper articles and magazines as a satisfactory way of getting this information, significantly more female respondents (20%) than male respondents (15%) rated newspaper articles and magazines as a *highly satisfactory* way of receiving government information.
- The perceived usefulness of *television* as a way of receiving government information. While a similar proportion of women (66%) and men (64%) rated the television as a satisfactory way of receiving government information, female respondents (22%) were significantly more likely than male respondents (17%) to rate television as a *highly satisfactory* way of receiving this information.

7.2 KEY FINDINGS FROM THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH 40 WOMEN

7.2.1 Overview of Information-Seeking Roles and Information Needs

- In-depth interviews with 40 women from various backgrounds (10 from a low socio-economic background; 10 Aboriginal women; 10 women of NESB – all from Australia; and 10 Maori women living in New Zealand) were undertaken in order to obtain a better understanding of some of the issues these women face in obtaining information from or about government services and programs.

- It needs to be emphasised that these interviews cannot be taken as being representative of each of the groups interviewed. Accordingly, we do not know how typical or otherwise these women's experiences and preferences are of all women in their cultural or socio-economic group. What these interviews can do, however, is provide some context, flavour and understanding of the experiences of these 40 individual women in seeking government information. They can also assist in identifying any possible similarities and differences within and across the groups of women.
- The first point to note is the diversity of the women's experiences in seeking government information, both within and across the different groups. Aboriginal women, NESB women, women from low socio-economic backgrounds and Maori women are not homogenous groups. They sometimes exhibit as many differences as similarities in terms of information-seeking preferences and experiences. Thus, in regard to some issues (such as use of communications technology) there may be more similarities say between *young women* across these cultural boundaries than there are between these women and older women of the same culture or background.
- The second major point to emerge from the in-depth interviews was that although these women were drawn from groups commonly regarded as socially or economically disadvantaged, by no means were all of these women disadvantaged in their information-seeking behaviour and experiences. Indeed, many of the women interviewed were remarkably resourceful and tenacious in their government information-seeking endeavours. They often had to be – as the sole parent or carer in their family, as someone of status or standing in their community, or as someone thrown into a difficult situation due to a family crisis – their survival and that of their family often depended upon their ability to obtain information about government services and programs. Several of the women had had many years' experience in dealing with government departments and agencies, and some had themselves become 'information-brokers' for their community – particularly those in the Aboriginal and Maori groups.
- A third major point to emerge from the in-depth interviews was that many of the women interviewed identified themselves as the primary information-seeker in their household (echoing the findings in the national telephone survey). This was particularly notable amongst the women who were sole parents, Aboriginal women, and amongst women who had responsibility for caring for a sick partner or elderly relative. Women who were *less* likely to identify themselves as the primary information-seeker in their household tended to be some of the older women who had a fairly traditional or gendered view of the division of roles and responsibilities between themselves and their (male) partner; some women who felt shame, fear or a lack of confidence in seeking information; some older women of NESB with limited English language proficiency; some women who were socially isolated by reason of domestic violence, illness or a disability; and some younger women – who still tended to rely on older members of their family (eg their mother or father) to seek information on their behalf.
- Women's role as information-seeker is not limited to certain types of information. Some of the women took on the major responsibility for obtaining information regardless of the nature of that information. In other instances, there was some role differentiation – with the women being more likely to be the person in the household to

seek information on more 'traditional' female concerns of family, health, children and relationships, with their male partner taking more responsibility for information-seeking in relation to legal, housing or financial matters. In yet other instances, most or all of the information-seeking was shared between the women and others in the household, most commonly their partner. There were few instances where the woman did not take on any responsibility for any information-seeking within their household.

- The in-depth interviews revealed that women's role as information-seeker is not static, but changes over time – in line with the life-cycle and changing family and life circumstances. Separation, family crisis, illness or death of a partner, unemployment, domestic violence etc can radically change women's information-seeking role. Finding herself alone, with sole responsibility for children, a dependent or sick husband or partner, or with responsibility for an ageing parent, may in some cases force women to take on an even greater information-seeking role than they had previously. This may require them to develop new skills and knowledge to do this effectively. This posed a major challenge for some women, particularly the more elderly women who may have previously been reliant on their husband in this regard.
- Similarly, women's actual information needs are not static and change over time, again as one might expect, reflecting the life cycle and changing family and life circumstances. Thus, for example, for younger women, adult education and training, health, employment, housing and income support are often important issues they need information on. For older women with children, issues concerning their children's health and education, income support and welfare/community services are particularly important. For women with elderly or sick

relatives, information about aged care, pensions and benefits etc become more important. For women with an illness or a dependent sick relative, information about health issues becomes critical. For women considering leaving their partners or who are in a violent relationship, potentially a whole host of housing, income support, legal, children's and health issues come into play.

- Although it may seem to some extent to be 'stating the obvious', it is misconceived to think of women as a group generally having a distinct set of information needs. Their information needs are highly situational and are largely determined by age, socio-economic status, health status, family circumstances, ethnicity etc rather than by gender *per se*. Moreover, their information needs change over time, in line with changing social, economic, health and personal circumstances.

7.2.2 Information Pathways

- There was considerable variation in the information pathways used and preferred by the women in the various groups. For some women, particularly those with a history of contact with government departments and agencies, the preferred method of obtaining government information was through direct approach to the department or agency concerned – particularly if the information required was fairly straightforward. Single parents and women largely dependent on government benefits and pensions, for instance, were often very used to dealing directly with government agencies and services of various kinds.
- Other women, however, preferred going to a 'one-stop' shop or to a community organisation with which they were familiar (and may have had good experiences with in the past). These women sometimes had more complex problems they needed

information on, or multiple issues that needed to be addressed. For instance, some of the women in domestic violence relationships and women facing major health crisis or a family breakdown were shown to have a range of information needs, which often required a more 'holistic' approach and response to their situation than could be provided by a single-purpose service or agency. It was also apparent that some women with a complex or difficult issue to deal with had a reduced capacity to absorb or act on the information provided, or to follow-up on information leads and referrals. Due to their vulnerable or distressed state, they needed support as well as information, and needed some assistance in being able to act on the information provided.

- Another major reason that some of the women preferred going to a community organisation first, was that they felt more comfortable and less threatened going there than to a government department or agency. Some of the Aboriginal women, the Maori women and the women of NESB clearly felt more comfortable going to an organisation operated or run by people of a similar cultural background. (However, it should be noted this did not necessarily mean that they were always able to obtain the information they required.)
- Yet other women amongst those interviewed said they would go to family or friends first for information about government services or agencies. This was particularly evident amongst the Maori and NESB women interviewed, and a few of the Aboriginal women. Often the decision to approach a family member or friend first for information was highly strategic: the women identified a person whom they knew to be a good 'information-broker', someone who had knowledge of, or contacts within, government agencies or services. This could also be someone who had experienced a similar problem or who would be likely to give them some support; someone who worked in a government job; someone who dealt with government agencies on a regular basis; or someone generally considered to be knowledgeable about 'the system'. Often this person was another woman.
- The decision to approach family members or friends first for information was also influenced by how confident or otherwise the women felt about directly approaching a government department or agency; their expectations regarding the degree of respect or level of service they would be afforded from people working in the agency (a particular concern for some Aboriginal and Maori women); their perceived ability to speak English well and/or communicate effectively with people working in government departments; and also by their past experiences of (ever) having to deal with official agencies. Some of the more isolated women (ie isolated from the general community – such as older women who speak little or no English, or women whose male partners have traditionally taken on the role of information-seeker) did not know where they could or would go for certain types of information and as a result, said they were highly dependent on others (such as their adult daughters) to obtain this information for them. Many of these women clearly felt they needed the support of a knowledgeable person to help them successfully and efficiently negotiate their way through to the people or agencies who could provide them with the required information.
- Finally, some of the women (particularly NESB women) indicated that in regard to certain matters (eg health or legal issues), they would first seek assistance from an appropriate professional – eg a doctor or lawyer of the same *cultural background*

and, depending on the issue, also of the same *gender*.

7.2.3 Ability to Obtain Information Required

- The women's experiences of actually being able to obtain the information they needed were very mixed. Some of the women, particularly those with less complex problems or issues, reported being able to get the information they required relatively easily. This generally occurred when they had a contact person or agency they knew and when the agency personnel were knowledgeable, responsive, had the required information 'at their finger-tips', were able to communicate effectively with the women and provided the information in various formats (eg verbally and in printed material).
- For women whose English language skills were limited, who were in a crisis situation or who were simply unfamiliar with the subject area, the provision of information in a language they could understand and in a number of formats (to reinforce the information provided) was especially valuable.
- Other women, however, spoke of the difficulties they had experienced in obtaining the information they needed, due, for example, to problems in actually being able to contact or 'get through' to a knowledgeable person on the telephone; inconsistent, inaccurate or incomplete information being provided by government or agency personnel; the inability of the agency to communicate effectively (eg for language, cultural or attitudinal reasons) or to provide the information required in a timely manner.
- The consequences of not being able to obtain the information required for the women varied. Some of the women were clearly determined to obtain the information, and pursued their enquiries accordingly. Others, however, 'floundered' somewhat while some appear to have given up or suspended their search for information. In a few cases, these women remain in a distressed or dangerous situation as a result.
- Another important issue to emerge from the interviews was that women with little confidence in themselves, who feel shame fear or embarrassment in approaching government agencies (particularly some NESB, Maori or Aboriginal women) can be 'put off' extremely quickly or easily by an unsuccessful or unpleasant initial contact with a department or agency. This may deter them from seeking information again from that source. In some cases (such as situations where the women is living in a domestic violence situation, or dealing with an ongoing health problem), the consequences of this can be severe. For some of these women, the importance of their initial first contacts (be they friend or family, a government or non-government agency) can be influential in their subsequent information-seeking endeavours.

7.2.4 Preferred Modes of Information-Provision

- There were both similarities and differences between the groups of women interviewed regarding the preferred modes of information-provision.
- The telephone was used a lot by some of the women and was viewed as a quick, convenient, time-saving, cheap and accessible way of obtaining information – particularly for women living some distance from services and/or with young children at home.

- However, the telephone was not the preferred mode of communication amongst some of the Aboriginal women (quite a large proportion of Aboriginal households do not have a telephone); women whose English skills are limited; women who prefer to discuss issues face-to-face (eg some Aboriginal women and Maori women); and amongst women with a sight or hearing impairment (sight-impaired women can experience difficulty in pressing the right numbers and buttons to navigate through a telephone inquiry system). Echoing the findings of the national survey, many women expressed their extreme dislike of, and dissatisfaction with, some telephone information systems – including lengthy delays in getting through on the line, considerable time spent queuing on systems, and difficulties in ‘getting through to the right person’. Some women also said they did not like the telephone because of the difficulty of taking in and absorbing the information which is (only) provided verbally.
- Again, echoing the results from the national survey, many of the women in the various groups identified *printed material* as an important way of receiving basic information, particularly if that material is provided in a community language. Printed materials usually provide information in a clear way. They can be read and re-read and digested, and are also a useful starting point for further information-seeking if the problem is more complex or difficult. Lack of material available in community languages (or printed in a way that is not accessible to people of NESB with low literacy or education levels) was a barrier to information-seeking amongst Aboriginal and NESB groups.
- Many of the women in the groups identified *newspaper articles and magazines* as a good way of obtaining general information about government services and programs, similarly *television* and *radio*. Ethnic radio was a particularly important mode of communication for women with limited English language skills. The limitation of these forms of communication were that they were sometimes not sufficiently detailed or timely to meet the women’s information needs at any given time. Nevertheless, as a general consciousness or awareness-raising mechanism, they can be an important way of communicating information about government services or programs.
- The Internet was used by several of the women and found to be a satisfactory way of locating general information about government services and programs. However, many of the women of low socio-economic background, the Aboriginal and Maori women and the more elderly NESB women had no access to, or knowledge of, the Internet. Given that many of these women are likely to have greater need of government information than women in other circumstances, their lack of access to – or familiarity with – the Internet is important given the increasing use of websites as a way of providing government information.

7.3 CONCLUSIONS

Several conclusions can be derived from the research material obtained from the national survey and from the in-depth interviews with 40 women.

- First and foremost, it is apparent that women play a major role as information-seekers in Australian and New Zealand households, regardless of the type of household. As a single parent, as a member of a couple family with or without children, as a member of a shared or extended family or household, women’s

information-seeking role is significant. As such, government agencies need to recognise and acknowledge this fact when designing information and education campaigns and materials.

- On the evidence of this research, women's information-seeking role is not only significant: it is often greater than that of men. In Australian and New Zealand households, women are more likely than men to be the main information-seeker in their household when it comes to a range of issues that may require information about government services and programs. Again, this fact needs to be recognised and acknowledged in the design and distribution of government information products and initiatives.
- The research material clearly demonstrates that women's information-seeking role often extends beyond the traditional 'domestic' or family spheres. Many women are *the* major information-seeker in their household for *all* types of issues that may require government information. Other women share this responsibility with their partner or someone-else in their household or family, while yet others mainly focus on domestic, family, health and relationship issues. The wide-ranging nature of women's information-seeking role needs to be acknowledged: women need to be a major target of information campaigns which are quite outside the 'domestic' sphere (eg in areas such as education and training, immigration, planning and zoning regulations, housing).
- Women's information needs are enormously varied, and largely reflect the life-cycle, and changing social, economic, health, family and personal circumstances. As such, women's information needs are highly situational and ever-changing.
- Women's information-seeking behaviour and preferences are also highly variable – reflecting a range of situational, cultural and demographic factors. There is relatively little to distinguish between women's and men's overall information-seeking pathways and preferences. Instead, factors such as education, age, ethnicity or socio-economic status may be more influential in determining these patterns. As such, it may not always be women *per se* who need to be targeted in government information campaigns and initiatives, but women in particular situations, or from particular backgrounds, that need to be specifically targeted.
- There is evidence to suggest that certain women may be more constrained than others in their government information-seeking roles or capabilities. These include women who have limited English language skills; women who have a disability of some kind; women who are socially isolated due to domestic violence or ill-health; women (particularly older women) who live or have lived in relationships where their partner has traditionally taken on most or all of the responsibility for information-seeking; and women who for various reasons – fear, shame, embarrassment, anticipation of racist or discriminatory attitudes – are reluctant to contact government services direct for information. As such, they require particular strategies to ensure government information is effectively targeted.
- Government departments, services and agencies are women's primary first contact for information about government services and programs. As such, they play a critical role in providing information direct to women.
- A minority of women, however, use or prefer to use 'intermediaries' to obtain information about government services and programs – including prominent people or

female 'information-brokers' in their community and community organisations they are familiar with or feel comfortable approaching. Some (but not all) women of NESB, Aboriginal women and Maori women clearly prefer this approach – emphasising the importance of community organisations (particularly women's community organisations) as a source of information.

- Health, legal and other professionals of the same cultural background (and sometimes gender) as the women are another source of information identified by NESB women in particular. As such, they may be an important information point for this group of women.
- Women's preferred modes of communication vary widely. However, printed material, face-to-face contact and telephone services are valued particularly highly by women.
- While the Internet is an important source of government information for many women, government departments and agencies need to be aware that women are less likely to have access to the Internet than men. Women of low socio-economic background, women with limited English language skills, women in rural areas and some Aboriginal and Maori women often have limited knowledge of, or access to, the Internet. Insofar as government departments and agencies are increasingly moving towards the provision of government information by electronic means, they need to recognise that a large proportion of their clients or potential clients may be disadvantaged.

***Communicating Effectively with Women:
Key Issues for Government Departments***

The research findings from this study have a number of implications for the design and dissemination of government information to

women. To maximise information-provision to women, the information and public relations sections of government departments and agencies should:

- > Recognise the major 'information-seeker' or 'gatekeeper' role played by women in Australian and New Zealand households and plan and distribute their information and education campaigns and products accordingly.
- > Recognise the diversity of women's government information-seeking experiences and preferences. This means that different 'products' and approaches will be required for different segments of the female population, including older women, women of NESB, Aboriginal and Maori women.
- > Recognise also that there may be some diversity of government information-seeking experiences and preferences within these groups. Aboriginal women, Maori women and NESB women may require a range of information strategies relating to their age, level of education, and English language literacy.
- > Recognise that women do not have the same level of access to the Internet as men, and that only just over a third have ever used websites or the net to obtain government information. The challenge is for government to continue to make information available through websites, but not regard these as substitutes for the provision of information in 'traditional' formats. Older women, women from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and women from various cultural backgrounds still prefer and require government information in a range of formats, in particular printed materials, face-to-face contact and telephone services. It should also be noted that many women are highly receptive to receiving government

information via newspapers and magazines, radio (particularly ethnic radio in the case of NESB women) and television.

- Produce material in community languages wherever possible. This material needs to be developed (in print, radio and television) in close consultation with *women* from non-English speaking communities and ideally be developed and written in the community language, rather than merely translated from the English format.
- Noting that a sizeable proportion of women first go somewhere else rather than a government source to obtain government information, distribute government information material via relevant women's community networks and organisations – especially NESB, Aboriginal, Maori and other women's organisations. Also distribute relevant material via relevant legal and health professionals from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds.
- Ensure all government department, agency and service information personnel receive appropriate customer service training and supervision regarding dealing with women from cultural and ethnic minorities.
- Ensure women's telephone and general information services and systems are properly resourced, accessible, and staffed by knowledgeable and skilled personnel.
- As far as possible, integrate information services with service options or referral mechanisms so that women requiring support as well as information can be assisted.

APPENDIX A
TELEPHONE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

CATI Department, 411 Collins Street, Melbourne, Vic., 3000
 Tel: (03) 9629-6888

CM2567
 SEPTEMBER 2001

WOMEN'S INFORMATION NEEDS

+-----+		Male 50+.....	4
Good %A. My name is (SAY NAME)			
from Roy Morgan Research, the			
people who conduct the Morgan		Female 18-24.....	5
Gallup Poll. Today we are			
conducting a short survey about		Female 25-34.....	6
how people find out information			
about various services and we		Female 35-49.....	7
would like your help.			
May I speak to the youngest male		Female 50+.....	8
at home aged 18 years or over?			
IF NO MALES ASK: Then may I speak		IF QUOTA'S FULL, SAY:	
to the youngest female at home			
aged 18 years or over?		+-----+	
THE FOLLOWING QUOTAS ARE STILL		Thank you for your time and	
OPEN:		assistance but we have interviewed	
		enough people in your age group.	
		+-----+	
%317,/ MALES 18-24/		+-----+	
/%319,/ FEMALES 18-24//		Before we start, I would like to	
%321,/ MALES 25-34/		assure you that all answers you	
/%323,/ FEMALES 25-34//		give in this survey will be	
%325,/ MALES 35-49/		treated in the strictest	
/%327,/ FEMALES 35-49//		confidence.	
%329,/ MALES 50+ /		+-----+	
%331,/ FEMALES 50+//			
+-----+		Q1a. First of all, which one of the	
QSEX. RECORD SEX OF RESPONDENT		following best describes this	
MALE..... 1		household?	
FEMALE..... 2		READ OUT	
		IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN	
		RESPONSE	
QAGE. Would you mind telling me your		A Couple With	
approximate age please?		Children.....	1
IF REFUSES, READ OUT. IF STILL REFUSES		Single Parent	
TERMINATE.		With Children....	2
18-19..... 1		A Couple With No	
20-24..... 2		Children.....	3
25-29..... 3		A One-Person	
30-34..... 4		Household.....	4
35-39..... 5		A Shared Or Group	
40-44..... 6		Household (eg	
45-49..... 7		Unrelated Adults	
50-54..... 8		Sharing).....	5
55-59..... 9		Extended Or	
60-64..... 10		Shared Family....	6
65+..... 11		(DON'T READ)	
SEX BY AGE		OTHER (SPECIFY)..	97
Male 18-24..... 1		IF HOUSEHOLD IS A COUPLE WITH	
Male 25-34..... 2		CHILDREN, SINGLE PARENT WITH CHILDREN,	
Male 35-49..... 3		EXTENDED/ SHARED FAMILY OR SOMETHING	
		ELSE (CODES 1, 2, 6 OR 97 ON Q1A),	
		ASK:	
		Q1b. Do any children under 18 years	
		generally live in this household?	
		YES.....	1
		NO.....	2

WOMEN'S INFORMATION NEEDS
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+-----+ +-----+	
ASK EVERYONE. The next questions are about types	
+-----+ of information you may have sought	
recently.	
I am going to read out a list of	
topics. For each topic, please	
indicate whether you have	
PERSONALLY tried to get	
information on this topic from a	
government department, service or	
agency during the last 12 months.	
This can include information from	
government-funded organisations	
such as some schools and community	
services and public hospitals.	
+-----+	
IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN RESPONSE	
YES, ME..... 1	+-----+
	Q4A-K WILL BE ROTATED.
	+-----+
YES, MY PARTNER/ SPOUSE..... 2	Q4a. HEALTH?
	(Have YOU PERSONALLY tried to get
	information on Health from a
	government department, service or
	agency during the last 12 months?)
YES, MY DAUGHTER(S)..... 4	YES..... 1
	NO..... 2
YES, MY MOTHER... 5	
	NOT SURE/ DON'T
	KNOW..... 3
YES, MY FATHER... 6	
	Q4b. HOUSING/ ACCOMMODATION?
	(Have YOU PERSONALLY tried to get
	information on Housing or
	Accommodation from a government
	department, service or agency during
	the last 12 months?)
YES, OTHER FAMILY MEMBER..... 7	YES..... 1
	NO..... 2
YES, A FRIEND.... 8	
	NOT SURE/ DON'T
	KNOW..... 3
YES, SOMEONE ELSE WHO IS NOT A FRIEND (SPECIFY ROLE)..... 97	
	Q4c. WELFARE/ COMMUNITY SERVICES?
	(Have YOU PERSONALLY tried to get
	information on Welfare or Community
	Services from a government department,
	service or agency during the last 12
	months?)
NO, IT VARIES/ THERE IS NO-ONE IN PARTICULAR.... 98	YES..... 1
	NO..... 2
DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY..... 99	
	NOT SURE/ DON'T
	KNOW..... 3
IF MENTIONED SOMEONE WHO IS MOST RESPONSIBLE FOR FINDING OUT INFORMATION BESIDES THEMSELVES (CODES 2 TO 97 ON Q3A), ASK:	
	Q4d. CHILD SUPPORT?
	(Have YOU PERSONALLY tried to get
	information on Child Support from a
	government department, service or
	agency during the last 12 months?)
YES..... 1	YES..... 1
NO..... 2	NO..... 2
+-----+ +-----+	
ASK EVERYONE.	
+-----+ +-----+	

NOT SURE/ DON'T KNOW.....	3	Q4j. CONSUMER/ FAIR TRADING ISSUES? (Have YOU PERSONALLY tried to get information on Consumer or Fair Trading Issues from a government department, service or agency during the last 12 months?)
Q4e. INCOME SUPPORT (EG BENEFITS OR PENSIONS)? (Have YOU PERSONALLY tried to get information on Income Support from a government department, service or agency during the last 12 months?)		YES..... 1 NO..... 2 NOT SURE/ DON'T KNOW..... 3
YES.....	1	
NO.....	2	Q4k. PLANNING/ ZONING REGULATIONS OR ISSUES? (Have YOU PERSONALLY tried to get information on Planning or Zoning Regulations or Issues from a government department, service or agency during the last 12 months?)
NOT SURE/ DON'T KNOW.....	3	YES..... 1 NO..... 2 NOT SURE/ DON'T KNOW..... 3
Q4f. IMMIGRATION? (Have YOU PERSONALLY tried to get information on Immigration from a government department, service or agency during the last 12 months?)		IF PERSONALLY TRIED TO GET INFORMATION FOR MORE THAN ONE ISSUE (CODE 1 ON MORE THAN ONE OF Q4A-K), ASK: +-----+ ONLY CODES SAID YES TO ON Q4A-K WILL BE SHOWN AT Q5. +-----+
YES.....	1	Q5. Which of these was the most recent issue you tried to get information on?
NO.....	2	INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF RESPONDENT CAN'T REMEMBER WHICH IS MOST RECENT, ASK RESPONDENT TO PICK ONE OF THE ISSUES SHOWN BELOW.
NOT SURE/ DON'T KNOW.....	3	HEALTH..... 1 HOUSING/ ACCOMMODATION.... 2 WELFARE/ COMMUNITY SERVICES..... 3 CHILD SUPPORT.... 4 INCOME SUPPORT... 5 IMMIGRATION..... 6 EMPLOYMENT..... 7
Q4g. EMPLOYMENT? (Have YOU PERSONALLY tried to get information on Employment from a government department, service or agency during the last 12 months?)		EDUCATION/ TRAINING..... 8 AGED CARE..... 9 CONSUMER/ FAIR TRADING ISSUES... 10 PLANNING/ ZONING REGULATIONS..... 11
YES.....	1	
NO.....	2	
NOT SURE/ DON'T KNOW.....	3	
Q4h. EDUCATION/ TRAINING? (Have YOU PERSONALLY tried to get information on Education or Training from a government department, service or agency during the last 12 months?)		
YES.....	1	
NO.....	2	
NOT SURE/ DON'T KNOW.....	3	
Q4i. AGED CARE? (Have YOU PERSONALLY tried to get information on Aged Care from a government department, service or agency during the last 12 months?)		
YES.....	1	
NO.....	2	
NOT SURE/ DON'T KNOW.....	3	

WOMEN'S INFORMATION NEEDS
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IF PERSONALLY TRIED TO GET INFORMATION FOR AT LEAST ONE ISSUE (CODE 1 ON AT LEAST ONE OF Q4A-K), ASK:		Q6d. Would you say that was...? READ OUT	
		Considerable Anxiety.....	1
		Some Anxiety.....	2
		Just A Little Anxiety.....	3
		(DON'T READ) DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	4
Q6a. Now thinking about that %191. issue, how important was it for you to get some information? Was it %409,/very important, fairly important, neither important nor unimportant, fairly unimportant or not at all important/ not at all important, fairly unimportant, neither unimportant nor important, fairly important or very important/?			
VERY IMPORTANT...	1		
FAIRLY IMPORTANT.	2		
NEITHER IMPORTANT NOR UNIMPORTANT..	3		
FAIRLY UNIMPORTANT.....	4		
NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT.....	5		
DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	6		
Q6b. Would you describe the problem or issue that led you to seek the information as %411,/very complex, fairly complex, neither complex nor straightforward, fairly straightforward or very straightforward/ very straightforward, fairly straightforward, neither straightforward nor complex, fairly complex or very complex/?			
VERY COMPLEX.....	1	Friends/ Family..	1
FAIRLY COMPLEX...	2	Government Department, Service Or Agency	2
NEITHER COMPLEX NOR STRAIGHTFORWARD..	3	Community Organisation.....	3
FAIRLY STRAIGHTFORWARD..	4	Private Professional (eg A Lawyer Or Accountant).....	4
VERY STRAIGHTFORWARD..	5	Commercial/ Private Company..	5
DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	6	Internet.....	6
		(DON'T READ) OTHER (SPECIFY)..	97
		(DON'T READ) DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	98
Q6c. Was the problem or issue causing you any anxiety at the time?			
YES.....	1		
NO.....	2		
DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	3		
IF PROBLEM OR ISSUE WAS CAUSING ANXIETY (CODE 1 ON Q6C), ASK:		IF MENTIONED TO WHO OR WHERE WENT FIRST FOR INFORMATION (CODES 1 TO 97 ON Q7A), ASK:	
		Q7b. Where, if anywhere, did you go next (to get information on this issue)?	
		IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN RESPONSE	
		FRIENDS/ FAMILY..	1

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT, SERVICE OR AGENCY	2	GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT, SERVICE OR AGENCY	2
COMMUNITY ORGANISATION.....	3	COMMUNITY ORGANISATION.....	3
PRIVATE PROFESSIONAL (EG A LAWYER OR ACCOUNTANT).....	4	PRIVATE PROFESSIONAL (EG A LAWYER OR ACCOUNTANT).....	4
COMMERCIAL/ PRIVATE COMPANY..	5	COMMERCIAL/ PRIVATE COMPANY..	5
INTERNET.....	6	INTERNET.....	6
OTHER (SPECIFY)..	97	OTHER (SPECIFY)..	97
DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	98	DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	98
NOWHERE/ NO-ONE ELSE.....	99	NOWHERE/ NO-ONE ELSE.....	99
IF MENTIONED TO WHO OR WHERE WENT SECOND FOR INFORMATION (CODES 1 TO 97 ON Q7B), ASK:		DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	98
Q7c. Anywhere else after that (to get information on this issue)?		NOWHERE/ NO-ONE ELSE.....	99
IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN RESPONSE		IF WENT TO MORE THAN ONE PLACE FOR INFORMATION (CODES 1 TO 97 ON Q7B), ASK:	
FRIENDS/ FAMILY..	1	+-----+ ANSWER PLACES TO Q8 WILL BE ROTATED +-----+	
GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT, SERVICE OR AGENCY	2	Q8. Who or where did you get the MOST USEFUL information or assistance from on this %191. issue? READ OUT.	
COMMUNITY ORGANISATION.....	3	IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN RESPONSE	
PRIVATE PROFESSIONAL (EG A LAWYER OR ACCOUNTANT).....	4	Friends/ Family..	1
COMMERCIAL/ PRIVATE COMPANY..	5	Government Department, Service Or Agency	2
INTERNET.....	6	Community Organisation.....	3
OTHER (SPECIFY)..	97	Private Professional (eg A Lawyer Or Accountant).....	4
DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	98	Commercial/ Private Company..	5
NOWHERE/ NO-ONE ELSE.....	99	Internet.....	6
IF MENTIONED TO WHO OR WHERE WENT THIRD FOR INFORMATION (CODES 1 TO 97 ON Q7C), ASK:		(DON'T READ) OTHER (SPECIFY)..	97
Q7d. And anywhere else after that (to get information on this issue)?		(DON'T READ) DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	98
IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN RESPONSE			
FRIENDS/ FAMILY..	1		

<p>IF DID NOT OBTAIN MOST USEFUL INFORMATION FROM GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT, SERVICE OR AGENCY (NOT CODE 2 ON Q8, OR WENT TO ONLY ONE PLACE FOR INFORMATION, NOT CODE 2 ON Q7A AND CODES 98 OR 99 ON Q7B), ASK:</p>	<p>VARIED/ WENT TO MORE THAN ONE GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT, SERVICE OR AGENCY 6</p> <p>DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY..... 7</p>
<p>Q9a. Earlier in the interview you mentioned that you tried to obtain some information on this issue from %436,/a Government department, service or agency/ Government departments, services and agencies/. Looking back, were you able to obtain any information at all from %438,/this Government department, service or agency/ any of these Government departments, services or agencies/?</p>	<p>IF VERY OR FAIRLY EASY TO OBTAIN INFORMATION (CODES 1 OR 2 ON Q9C), ASK:</p> <p>Q9d1. In what ways was it %448,/very/fairly/ easy? Any other reasons?</p> <p>PROBE AND RECORD FULL RESPONSE.</p> <p>IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN RESPONSE</p>
<p>YES..... 1</p>	<p>OTHER (SPECIFY).. 97,</p>
<p>NO..... 2</p>	<p>DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY..... 98,</p>
<p>DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY..... 3</p>	<p>IF NEITHER EASY NOR DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN INFORMATION (CODE 3 ON Q9C), ASK:</p>
<p>IF ABLE TO OBTAIN INFORMATION (CODE 1 ON Q9A OR CODE 2 ON Q8 OR Q7A), ASK:</p>	<p>Q9d2. In what ways was it neither easy nor difficult? Any other reasons?</p> <p>PROBE AND RECORD FULL RESPONSE.</p>
<p>Q9b. Would you say that this information from a Government department, service or agency fully met your needs, partially met your needs, or didn't meet your needs at all?</p>	<p>IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN RESPONSE</p>
<p>FULLY MET MY NEEDS..... 1</p>	<p>OTHER (SPECIFY).. 97,</p> <p>DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY..... 98,</p>
<p>PARTIALLY MET MY NEEDS..... 2</p>	<p>IF VERY OR FAIRLY DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN INFORMATION (CODES 4 OR 5 ON Q9C), ASK:</p>
<p>DIDN'T MEET MY NEEDS AT ALL..... 3</p>	<p>Q9d3. In what ways was it %454,/fairly/very/ difficult? Any other reasons?</p> <p>PROBE AND RECORD FULL RESPONSE.</p>
<p>DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY..... 4</p>	<p>IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN RESPONSE</p>
<p>Q9c. How easy or difficult would you say that it was to obtain this information from %442,/that Government department, service or agency/ those Government departments, services or agencies/? Would you say it was %444,/very easy, fairly easy, neither easy nor difficult, fairly difficult or very difficult/very difficult, fairly difficult, neither difficult nor easy, fairly easy or very easy/?</p>	<p>OTHER (SPECIFY).. 97,</p> <p>DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY..... 98,</p> <p>+-----+ ASK EVERYONE. +-----+</p> <p>+-----+ The following questions are about how satisfactory you find different ways of receiving information from Government departments, agencies or services. +-----+</p> <p>+-----+ Q10A-I WILL BE ROTATED. +-----+</p>
<p>VERY EASY..... 1</p>	
<p>FAIRLY EASY..... 2</p>	
<p>NEITHER EASY NOR DIFFICULT..... 3</p>	
<p>FAIRLY DIFFICULT. 4</p>	
<p>VERY DIFFICULT... 5</p>	

Q10a. In general, how satisfactory do you find

THE TELEPHONE

as a way of receiving information from a government department, agency or service?

(Would that be %457,/highly satisfactory, somewhat satisfactory, very unsatisfactory or depends on the issue or situation/ very unsatisfactory, somewhat unsatisfactory, somewhat satisfactory, highly satisfactory or depends on the issue or situation/?)

HIGHLY SATISFACTORY..... 1

SOMEWHAT SATISFACTORY..... 2

SOMEWHAT UNSATISFACTORY... 3

VERY UNSATISFACTORY... 4

DEPENDS ON THE ISSUE OR SITUATION..... 5

DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY..... 6

Q10b. In general, how satisfactory do you find

WEBSITES OR THE INTERNET

as a way of receiving information from a government department, agency or service?

(Would that be %459,/highly satisfactory, somewhat satisfactory, very unsatisfactory or depends on the issue or situation/ very unsatisfactory, somewhat unsatisfactory, somewhat satisfactory, highly satisfactory or depends on the issue or situation/?)

HIGHLY SATISFACTORY..... 1

SOMEWHAT SATISFACTORY..... 2

SOMEWHAT UNSATISFACTORY... 3

VERY UNSATISFACTORY... 4

DEPENDS ON THE ISSUE OR SITUATION..... 5

DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY..... 6

Q10c. In general, how satisfactory do you find

PRINTED MATERIAL (FOR EXAMPLE PAMPHLETS OR BOOKLETS)

as a way of receiving information from a government department, agency or service?

(Would that be %461,/highly satisfactory, somewhat satisfactory, somewhat unsatisfactory, very unsatisfactory or depends on the issue or situation/ very unsatisfactory, somewhat unsatisfactory, somewhat satisfactory, highly satisfactory or depends on the issue or situation/?)

HIGHLY SATISFACTORY..... 1

SOMEWHAT SATISFACTORY..... 2

SOMEWHAT UNSATISFACTORY... 3

VERY UNSATISFACTORY... 4

DEPENDS ON THE ISSUE OR SITUATION..... 5

DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY..... 6

Q10d. In general, how satisfactory do you find

FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT

as a way of receiving information from a government department, agency or service?

(Would that be %463,/highly satisfactory, somewhat satisfactory, somewhat unsatisfactory, very unsatisfactory or depends on the issue or situation/ very unsatisfactory, somewhat unsatisfactory, somewhat satisfactory, highly satisfactory or depends on the issue or situation/?)

HIGHLY SATISFACTORY..... 1

SOMEWHAT SATISFACTORY..... 2

SOMEWHAT UNSATISFACTORY... 3

VERY UNSATISFACTORY... 4

DEPENDS ON THE ISSUE OR SITUATION..... 5

DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY..... 6

<p>Q10e. In general, how satisfactory do you find</p> <p>WORKSHOPS OR SEMINARS</p> <p>as a way of receiving information from a government department, agency or service? (Would that be %465,/highly satisfactory, somewhat satisfactory, somewhat unsatisfactory, very unsatisfactory or depends on the issue or situation/ very unsatisfactory, somewhat unsatisfactory, somewhat satisfactory, highly satisfactory or depends on the issue or situation/?)</p> <p>HIGHLY SATISFACTORY..... 1</p> <p>SOMEWHAT SATISFACTORY..... 2</p> <p>SOMEWHAT UNSATISFACTORY... 3</p> <p>VERY UNSATISFACTORY... 4</p> <p>DEPENDS ON THE ISSUE OR SITUATION..... 5</p> <p>DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY..... 6</p> <p>Q10f. In general, how satisfactory do you find</p> <p>NEWSPAPER ARTICLES OR MAGAZINES</p> <p>as a way of receiving information from a government department, agency or service? (Would that be %467,/highly satisfactory, somewhat satisfactory, somewhat unsatisfactory, very unsatisfactory or depends on the issue or situation/ very unsatisfactory, somewhat unsatisfactory, somewhat satisfactory, highly satisfactory or depends on the issue or situation/?)</p> <p>HIGHLY SATISFACTORY..... 1</p> <p>SOMEWHAT SATISFACTORY..... 2</p> <p>SOMEWHAT UNSATISFACTORY... 3</p> <p>VERY UNSATISFACTORY... 4</p> <p>DEPENDS ON THE ISSUE OR SITUATION..... 5</p> <p>DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY..... 6</p>	<p>Q10g. In general, how satisfactory do you find</p> <p>THE RADIO</p> <p>as a way of receiving information from a government department, agency or service? (Would that be %469,/highly satisfactory, somewhat satisfactory, somewhat unsatisfactory, very unsatisfactory or depends on the issue or situation/ very unsatisfactory, somewhat unsatisfactory, somewhat satisfactory, highly satisfactory or depends on the issue or situation/?)</p> <p>HIGHLY SATISFACTORY..... 1</p> <p>SOMEWHAT SATISFACTORY..... 2</p> <p>SOMEWHAT UNSATISFACTORY... 3</p> <p>VERY UNSATISFACTORY... 4</p> <p>DEPENDS ON THE ISSUE OR SITUATION..... 5</p> <p>DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY..... 6</p> <p>Q10h. In general, how satisfactory do you find</p> <p>TELEVISION</p> <p>as a way of receiving information from a government department, agency or service? (Would that be %471,/highly satisfactory, somewhat satisfactory, somewhat unsatisfactory, very unsatisfactory or depends on the issue or situation/ very unsatisfactory, somewhat unsatisfactory, somewhat satisfactory, highly satisfactory or depends on the issue or situation/?)</p> <p>HIGHLY SATISFACTORY..... 1</p> <p>SOMEWHAT SATISFACTORY..... 2</p> <p>SOMEWHAT UNSATISFACTORY... 3</p> <p>VERY UNSATISFACTORY... 4</p> <p>DEPENDS ON THE ISSUE OR SITUATION..... 5</p> <p>DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY..... 6</p>
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Q10i. In general, how satisfactory do you find	NONE I CAN THINK OF.....	99,
POSTERS OR BILLBOARDS	Q11b. In general what are the negative or bad aspects of using the TELEPHONE as a way of getting this information? Any other negative or bad aspects?	
as a way of receiving information from a government department, agency or service?		
(Would that be %473, highly satisfactory, somewhat satisfactory, somewhat unsatisfactory, very unsatisfactory or depends on the issue or situation/ very unsatisfactory, somewhat unsatisfactory, somewhat satisfactory, highly satisfactory or depends on the issue or situation?)	IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN RESPONSE	
HIGHLY SATISFACTORY.....	DISLIKE ELECTRONIC 'ROUTING' THROUGH THE SYSTEM.....	1,
SOMEWHAT SATISFACTORY.....	HAVE TO WAIT A LONG TIME TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE/ ON THE QUEUE SYSTEM.....	2,
SOMEWHAT UNSATISFACTORY...	NUMBERS ARE CONSTANTLY ENGAGED/ CAN'T GET THROUGH.....	3,
VERY UNSATISFACTORY...	EXPENSIVE.....	4,
DEPENDS ON THE ISSUE OR SITUATION.....	TOO IMPERSONAL...	5,
DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	UNABLE TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE LOCAL/ IN MY AREA.....	6,
Q11a. In general, what are the positive or good aspects of using the TELEPHONE to get information from or about government services or programs? Any other positive or good aspects?	HAVE DIFFICULTY UNDERSTANDING SPOKEN ENGLISH...	7,
IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN RESPONSE	DON'T LIKE USING THE TELEPHONE INTERPRETER SERVICE.....	8,
CHEAP/ INEXPENSIVE.....	HARD TO LOCATE RIGHT PERSON TO SPEAK TO.....	9,
SAFE.....	NO ACCOUNTABILITY/ NO RECORD OF ADVICE/ NOT BINDING.....	10,
ANONYMOUS/ PRIVATE/ CONFIDENTIAL.....	OTHER (SPECIFY)..	97,
NO NEED TO TRAVEL OR GO ANYWHERE...	DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	98,
CAN ACCESS SERVICES FAR FROM WHERE I LIVE.....	NONE I CAN THINK OF.....	99,
GET TO ACTUALLY SPEAK TO SOMEBODY	Q12a. In general what are the positive or good aspects of using PRINTED MATERIAL (ie pamphlets, booklets) as a way of getting information from or about government services or programs? Any other positive or good aspects?	
QUICK/ LESS TIME CONSUMING.....		
CHOICE OF DIFFERENT LANGUAGES.....	IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN RESPONSE	
OTHER (SPECIFY)..		
DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	CAN TAKE TIME TO READ IT/ DIGEST IT.....	1,

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GOOD BACK-UP TO/ CONFIRMATION OF VERBAL INFORMATION.....	2,	NONE I CAN THINK OF.....	99,
GENERALLY EASY TO READ.....	3,	Q13AA. Have you ever used the Internet to look up information about a government department, agency or service?	
USUALLY PROVIDES ENOUGH BASIC INFORMATION.....	4,	YES.....	1
PROVIDES FURTHER CONTACT DETAILS/ PLACES TO GET INFORMATION.....	5,	NO.....	2
CAN REFER TO IT AGAIN.....	6,	DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	3
CAN USE IT TO SHOW OTHER PEOPLE	7,	IF EVER USED THE INTERNET TO LOOK UP INFORMATION ABOUT A GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT, AGENCY OR SERVICE (CODE 1 ON Q13AA), ASK:	
IF IT'S IN WRITING, IT'S BINDING.....	8,	Q13a. In general, what are the positive or good aspects of using the INTERNET AND WEBSITES as a way of receiving information about government services and programs? Any other positive or good aspects?	
OTHER (SPECIFY)..	97,	IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN RESPONSE	
DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	98,		
NONE I CAN THINK OF.....	99,	CAN ACCESS IT FROM HOME.....	1,
Q12b. In general what are the negative or bad aspects of using PRINTED MATERIAL as a way of getting this information? Any other negative or bad aspects?		CAN ACCESS IT FROM WORK.....	2,
IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN RESPONSE		CAN GET INFORMATION AT ANY TIME OF THE DAY OR NIGHT/ WHEN I NEED IT...	3,
IMPERSONAL.....	1,	ANONYMOUS/ CONFIDENTIAL.....	4,
USUALLY TOO GENERAL/ TOO BRIEF TO BE OF MUCH ASSISTANCE..	2,	DON'T NEED TO SPEAK TO ANYONE..	5,
OFTEN PRINT TOO SMALL TO READ....	3,	INEXPENSIVE.....	6,
MATERIAL IS OFTEN DIFFICULT TO READ OR UNDERSTAND....	4,	EASY TO FIND THE INFORMATION I WANT.....	7,
OFTEN CAN'T GET MATERIAL IN MY LANGUAGE.....	5,	CAN GET QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY EMAIL	8,
DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN.....	6,	INFORMATION IS UP-TO-DATE.....	9,
HAVE TO WAIT FOR IT TO BE SENT TO YOU.....	7,	GOOD FOR AN OVERVIEW OR INITIAL GUIDE....	10,
TOO MUCH INFORMATION.....	8,	CAN DOWNLOAD/ PRINT INFORMATION	11,
OTHER (SPECIFY)..	97,	OTHER (SPECIFY)..	97,
DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	98,	DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	98,
		NONE I CAN THINK OF.....	99,

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Q13b. What are the negative or bad aspects of using the INTERNET AND WEBSITES as a way of getting this information? Any other negative or bad aspects?		PRIVATE LAWYER...	2
		LEGAL AID/ COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE.....	3
IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN RESPONSE		RELATIONSHIP COUNSELLING/ MEDIATION SERVICE	4
IMPERSONAL.....	1,		
		FAMILY COURT/ LOCAL OR MAGISTRATES COURT	5
NEED ACCESS TO A COMPUTER OR THE INTERNET.....	2,	CHILD SUPPORT AGENCY.....	6
NEED TO KNOW HOW TO USE A COMPUTER OR THE INTERNET..	3,	(ETHNIC) COMMUNITY AGENCY.	7
INFORMATION ON WEBSITES TENDS TO BE TOO GENERAL/ TOO BRIEF TO BE OF MUCH ASSISTANCE.....	4,	NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE.....	8
IT'S DIFFICULT TO FIND WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR.....	5,	%478, /CENTRELINK/ CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU/.....	9
EMAILS ARE NOT RESPONDED TO.....	6,	LAW SOCIETY.....	10
CAN BE SLOW.....	7,	OTHER (SPECIFY)..	97
INFORMATION MAY HAVE BEEN TAMPERED WITH/ SECURITY ISSUES..	8,	DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	98
OTHER (SPECIFY)..	97,	Q14b. If you needed information in relation to a CONSUMER OR FAIR TRADING ISSUE, for example faulty goods or purchases, who or where do you think you would actually go to FIRST, apart from friends or family?	
DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	98,	IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN RESPONSE	
NONE I CAN THINK OF.....	99,	IT'S NOT RELEVANT TO ME/ I'VE NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT IT.	1
-----+ ASK EVERYONE. +-----+		DEPARTMENT OF FAIR TRADING/ CONSUMER AFFAIRS OR EQUIVALENT....	2
-----+ Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about where you would FIRST go to for information in relation to some particular issues or problems. +-----+		PRIVATE LAWYER...	3
		LEGAL AID/ COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE/ CONSUMER CREDIT LEGAL SERVICE.....	4
Q14a. If you needed information in relation to a FAMILY LAW MATTER, for example, separation, divorce, child custody or property settlement, who or where do you think you would actually go to FIRST, apart from friends or family?		FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE.....	5
		LAW SOCIETY.....	6
		NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE.....	7
IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN RESPONSE		(ETHNIC) COMMUNITY AGENCY.	8
IT'S NOT RELEVANT TO ME/ I'VE NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT IT.	1	MANUFACTURER/ BACK TO WHERE IT WAS BOUGHT.....	9

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CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU.....	10	THE INTERNET.....	7
OTHER (SPECIFY)..	97	OTHER (SPECIFY)..	97
DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	98	DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	98
Q14c. If you needed information in relation to an EMPLOYMENT ISSUE, for example help with getting a job, who or where do you think you would actually go to FIRST, apart from friends or family?		+-----+ I'd now like to finish by asking you some general questions. +-----+	
IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN RESPONSE		Q15a. Do you speak a language other than English at home?	
		YES.....	1
		NO.....	2
IT'S NOT RELEVANT TO ME/ I'VE NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT IT.	1	IF NZ INTERVIEW, ASK:	
%480,/CENTRELINK/ WORK AND INCOME NZ SERVICE CENTRE/.....	2	Q15b. Are you descended from a NZ Maori, (that is, did you have a NZ Maori birth parent, grand parent, or great grand parent etc)?	
EMPLOYMENT AGENCY	3	YES.....	1
NEWSPAPER.....	4	NO.....	2
INTERNET.....	5	IF NZ INTERVIEW AND HOUSEHOLD IS A COUPLE WITH OR WITHOUT CHILDREN (CODE 1 OR 3 ON Q1A), ASK:	
BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY MAGAZINE/ JOURNAL	6	Q15bb. Is your partner descended from a NZ Maori, (that is, did your partner have a NZ Maori birth parent, grand parent, or great grand parent etc)?	
UNIVERSITY/ %482, /TAFE/POLYTECHNIC/.....	7	YES.....	1
UNION.....	8	NO.....	2
CURRENT EMPLOYER.	9	DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	3
OTHER (SPECIFY)..	97	+-----+ IF NZ INTERVIEW, ASK: +-----+	
DON'T KNOW/ CAN'T SAY.....	98	Q15c. Do you belong to a Pacific Islander ethnic group?	
Q14d. If you needed information in relation to a SENSITIVE OR POTENTIALLY EMBARRASSING health issue who or where do you think you would actually go to FIRST, apart from friends or family?		YES.....	1
IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN RESPONSE		NO.....	2
IT'S NOT RELEVANT TO ME/ I'VE NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT IT.		IF AUS INTERVIEW, ASK:	
GP.....	2	Q17a. What is the highest level of education you have reached?	
MEDICAL CENTRE...	3	IF OTHER, HIGHLIGHT OTHER AND TYPE IN RESPONSE.	
SPECIALIST HEALTH SERVICE.....	4	PRIMARY SCHOOL...	1
WOMEN'S/ MEN'S HEALTH SERVICE...	5	SOME SECONDARY SCHOOL.....	2
COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICE.....	6	SOME TECHNICAL OR COMMERCIAL.....	3
		PASSED 4TH FORM/ YEAR 10.....	4

PASSED 5TH FORM/ YEAR 11/ LEAVING.	5	+-----+ ASK EVERYONE. +-----+
FINISHED TECHNICAL SCHOOL, COMMERCIAL COLLEGE OR TAFE..	6	Q18. Are you now in paid employment? IF YES, ASK: Is that full-time for 35 hours or more a week, or part-time? YES, FULL-TIME... 1
FINISHED/ NOW STUDYING H.S.C./ V.C.E./ YEAR 12..	7	YES, PART-TIME... 2 NO..... 3
DIPLOMA FROM C.A.E.....	8	IF NOT EMPLOYED (CODE 3 ON Q18), ASK:
SOME UNIVERSITY/ C.A.E.....	9	Q18a. Are you now looking for a paid job?
DEGREE FROM UNIVERSITY OR CAE	10	IF LOOKING, ASK: A full-time job for 35 hours or more a week, or a part-time job?
OTHER (SPECIFY)..	11	IF NOT LOOKING, ASK: Are you retired, a student, a non-worker or home duties?
IF NZ INTERVIEW, ASK: Q17b. What is the highest level of education you have reached?		LOOKING FOR FULL-TIME..... 1 LOOKING FOR PART-TIME..... 2 RETIRED..... 3 STUDENT..... 4 NON-WORKER..... 5 HOME DUTIES..... 6
SOME PRIMARY SCHOOL.....	1	
FINISHED PRIMARY SCHOOL.....	2	
SOME SECONDARY SCHOOL.....	3	
SOME TECHNICAL OR COMMERCIAL.....	4	
PASSED 4TH FORM/ INTERMEDIATE.....	5	+-----+ ASK EVERYONE. +-----+
COMPLETED 5TH FORM/ SCHOOL CERTIFICATE/ LEAVING CERTIFICATE.....	6	Q18b. What %495,/was your last/is your/ occupation - the position and industry? 1: Professional 2: Owner or Executive 3: Owner of Small Businesses 11: Sales 12: Semi-Professional 4: Other White Collar 5: Skilled 6: Semi-Skilled 7: Unskilled 8: Farm Owner 9: Farm Worker 10: No Occupation
FINISHED TECHNICAL OR COMMERCIAL COLLEGE OR TAFE INCLUDING TRADE CERTIFICATE.....	7	
FINISHED OR NOW STUDYING FOR HSC/ BURSARY.....	8	
SOME UNIVERSITY TRAINING.....	9	__ _+
TERTIARY DIPLOMA/ NOT UNIVERSITY...	10	Q19. Can you please tell me which of the following best describes your annual total household income, before tax? READ OUT!
NOW AT UNIVERSITY	11	
DEGREE.....	12	IF CAN'T SAY, ASK: What is your best estimate?
POST GRADUATE DEGREE EG. PhD, MASTERS.....	13	Less Than \$20,000 1

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Between \$20,000 and \$34,999.....	2	Q20. And may I have your postcode please?
Between \$35,000 and \$49,999.....	3	IF CANT SAY, ESCAPE O AND ENTER SUBURB _ _ _ _ _ + +-----+ That's the end of the survey. Thank you for your time and assistance. +-----+ \$65,000 Or More.. 5 +-----+ (DON'T READ) END-OF-QUESTIONNAIRE REFUSED..... 6 +-----+

APPENDIX B
IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

WOMEN'S INFORMATION NEEDS STUDY INDEPTH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Introduction/Background

Can I start by asking you a little bit about yourself and your family situation.

- Do you have any children? If yes, how many do you have? How old are they? How many do you have living with you at the moment?
- What is your home situation at the moment - do you live on your own, with your spouse/partner, with your partner and children, with other relatives, with friends etc?
- (If of NESB) have you been living in Australia for long? Apart from your immediate family, do you have any other family or relatives living in the country at the moment?

Information-seeking roles

- Now, as you know, this study is about how women go about getting information or help from government services or programs. In your family/household, is there someone who usually takes on the role of information-seeker? That is someone who is *most often* responsible for finding out information from an outside source, when you or someone else in the family/household needs information or assistance. For example, is it usually you, your spouse/partner, someone else - or does it vary?

If there is one person, why is it that they usually take on this role? Any other reasons?

- Now, let's think about getting information or help for a *particular* problem or issue. Who in your family/household is *most likely* to be the one to seek information or help for the following types of problems or issues:
 - your children's health
 - adult health
 - personal finance (eg savings, finances, superannuation, mortgages, credit cards, hire purchase)
 - income support (eg pensions, benefits or entitlements)
 - children's schooling or education
 - housing, accommodation or tenancy
 - adult education or training
 - legal information or advice
 - personal problems (eg relationship issues, drug or alcohol problems, counselling)?

(EXPLORE RESPONSES TO THE ABOVE QUESTIONS. WHY IS IT THAT IT IS USUALLY YOU/YOUR PARTNER WHO USUALLY DOES THIS?)

Seeking information or assistance in the last 12 months

- During the last 12 months, have you personally tried to get any information or help from or about a government department or service? (This can include places such as schools, hospitals, colleges etc which are government-funded)

For instance, did you try to get some information or help about any of the following:

- health problem or issue (including domestic violence)
- housing/accommodation
- welfare/community services
- child support
- income support (eg benefits or pensions)
- immigration
- employment
- education/training
- aged care
- consumer/fair trading
- planning/zoning regulations?

- Let's pick one of these to talk about in some more detail. Which of these was the most important, as far as you were concerned? Can you tell me a little bit more about the problem or issue, and why you needed some information or help? How *important* was it for you to get that information or help? Why was that? Was it something that was causing you a lot of worry or anxiety at the time? Why was that?
- Now let's think back to how you went about getting that information or help. Who did you **FIRST** go to? (This can include friends or family). Was there any particular reason that you went to them/there first, rather than somewhere else? How helpful or useful were they in giving you the information or help you needed?

Did you go anywhere else for information/help after that? If yes, why did you go here/to them? Were they able to give you the information or help you needed? What happened after that? (ASK ABOUT ALL PLACES/PEOPLE APPROACHED)

- Looking back, how easy or difficult was it to get that information or help? Why was that? What, if anything, would have made it *easier* for you to get that information?
- Who did you eventually get the *most useful* information or help from? Why was that?

- Was there any information or help that you wanted but weren't able to get? What was that and how has that affected you?
- (If there had been direct contact with a government department or service) how useful or helpful were they in providing the information or help you needed? Why was that?

Preferred ways of getting and receiving information

- Do you have a preferred way of getting information about government programs, services or benefits? For example, do you usually prefer to ask a friend or family member, go to a community worker or organisation or go straight to the government department or agency? Why is that?
- As you know, there are different ways of getting information, for example, using the telephone, going to see someone face-to-face, reading pamphlets and booklets.

What do you think about using the *telephone* as a way of getting information? Is there anything that you particularly like or dislike about using the telephone to get information about a government program, service or benefit? (EXPLORE RESPONSE)

What about the *Internet/websites*? (EXPLORE RESPONSE)

What about *printed materials* (eg booklets, pamphlets)? (EXPLORE RESPONSE)

Newspaper articles/magazines? (EXPLORE RESPONSE)

Radio? (EXPLORE RESPONSE)

Television? (EXPLORE RESPONSE)

Information-seeking in relation to specific issues

- We're almost finished the interview. I'd now like to ask you a few questions about where you would FIRST go to for information or help in relation to some particular problems or issues.

Apart from friends and family, who or where do you think you would actually go to *FIRST* for information or help if you had a problem with a *family law matter* (eg separation, divorce, child custody/access, property consultant)? Is there any particular reason why you would go there first?

What about a problem about *faulty goods or purchases, problems with a lay-by or a hire purchase agreement*? (EXPLORE RESPONSE)

Help with *getting a job*? (EXPLORE RESPONSE)

A sensitive or potentially embarrassing health issue? (EXPLORE RESPONSE)

- *Final background details*

(OBTAIN DETAILS OF THE RESPONDENT'S AGE, LEVEL OF EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT STATUS, USUAL OCCUPATION AND HOUSEHOLD INCOME.)

