

Searching Questions



A qualitative study of the accessibility and effectiveness of online information for communities living with disadvantage



ILLAWARRA LEGAL CENTRE INC.

SEARCHING QUESTIONS

A qualitative study of the accessibility and effectiveness of online information for communities living with disadvantage - Can we widen the pool of people using online self-help resources?

BY LINDA TUCKER

The aim of this project is to determine whether there are identifiable barriers that could be addressed in the design and accessibility of websites. To create even a small increase in the pool of self-help website users could generate significant benefits in communities living with disadvantage.



Background of the Author

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Executive Summary

This is a report on research undertaken to examine whether there is potential to improve access to effective online self-help for individuals and communities living with disadvantage. The research has a two-pronged objective:

- Obtain feedback from those people on the efficacy and accessibility of online legal resources and
- Pilot a research model that is as spontaneous and inclusive as possible by observing and recording participants as they work through a legal problem online, instead of surveying participants after they have used the sites.

Our participants were aged from 15 to 77 and live in the Wollongong area. The majority experienced some level of disadvantage that could create potential barriers to obtaining legal assistance, including: poverty, literacy, computer literacy, competing pressures, such as from insecure accommodation, and lack of awareness of available resources.

The research focuses on access to legal resources but should be just as applicable to the health sector. The overarching aim is to improve access to justice. This is not just about an individual's access to legal remedies, it is also about living in a just and equitable society, promoting social inclusiveness by dealing with intersecting problems which particularly beset those who live with disadvantage, which influences the health and wellbeing of all individuals. As one of the most expansive surveys of legal needs in Australia reported:

The most common adverse consequences resulting from the legal problems experienced by ... respondents were income loss or financial strain (29%), followed by stress-related illness (20%) and physical ill health (19%).¹

There are ongoing and increasing threats to access to justice, particularly from the reduction in funding for frontline services. The constant of time and funding pressures in the provision of free legal assistance has been a potent catalyst for diversionary legal assistance by way of self-help materials, both hard copy and, increasingly, online.

Wide ranging 'access to justice' surveys, including many targeting people living with disadvantage, caution against such reliance on self-help resources, given the invidious role they may play in undermining provision of more comprehensive assistance, particularly when online material is regarded as a "poor substitute" for help from a real person, as discussed in Section 1 of this report.

It is clear that face-to-face assistance will frequently be the ideal but such recognition has not necessarily translated into increased funding for such services.

This project acknowledges the concerns pithily encapsulated by reference to the 'digital divide' or 'digital

¹ C Coumarelos et al, *The Legal Australia-Wide (LAW) Survey: Legal Need in Australia* (2012), www.lawfoundation.net.au/publications, xvi. This reports findings from a survey of more than 20,000 participants across Australia.

caste system',² in relation to access to computers and the internet and a capacity to take advantage of its content, but this research operates within the reality of ever diminishing funding for community services.

Further, it recognises the potential benefits of improving capacity for autonomy, to break cycles of dependence and marginalisation.

Appreciation of the barriers to obtaining assistance via the internet, and that online self help may not be ideal, does not negate the importance of trying to broaden its appeal. If face-to-face legal assistance is hard to access – for whatever reason – the availability of alternatives becomes increasingly valuable.

Rather than dismissing its utility for people living with disadvantage, this research is seeking to understand how it may be made more user-friendly, to engage more members of the community who may be either excluded from internet resources or face significant barriers which compromise their access.

The aim of this project is thus to determine whether there are identifiable barriers that could be addressed in the design and accessibility of websites. To create even a small increase in the pool of self-help website users could generate significant benefits in communities living with disadvantage.

Central to this aim was the methodology adopted: data was collected from five research sessions in which researchers worked one-on-one with participants drawn from local community organisations. The participants created their own hypotheticals then were observed as they individually worked through the legal problem via several legal websites to enable collection of relatively spontaneous, first hand assessment of online resources.

In devising a forum in which participants living with varying levels of disadvantage could provide their direct responses to accessing and navigating self-help websites, we were able to obtain some insight as to whether the resources specifically designed for those communities do in fact achieve their objective.

The data does show a number of patterns in the nature of the obstacles in both gaining access to relevant websites and then obtaining information that may be useful to the participants, whatever the scenario.

Frustrations with computers and the internet were common with older participants. Younger participants were obviously more at ease with the online interaction but many lacked basic research skills or even the sense of being able to use the internet to help with a legal problem.

The participants were asked for their suggested improvements and these are referred to in Section 2.2.1. These included:

- Balance simplicity with not being patronising, particularly for sites directed to a youth audience;
- Predictive text within website search engines. Poor spelling often an issue so may exclude users from the site;
- Have one set of tabs for links, rather than across the top as well as down the side of the screen;
- Explain the categories for links as much as possible as users were reluctant to move away from one page to another.

The findings are summarised in Section 3 and full reports of the five research sessions are provided in the Appendices.

² Roger Smith and Alan Paterson, *Face to Face Legal Services and Their Alternatives: Global Lessons from the Digital Revolution*, at 8, who note that a significant minority remain excluded from the benefits of the 'new digital age'. Available at: <www.strath.ac.uk/media/faculties/hass/law/cpls/Face_to_Face.pdf>

Section 1. Introduction and Background to the Research

The ability to exercise rights to health and legal services is frequently determined by the intersecting and compounding factors of disadvantage arising from a range of socio-economic stressors including poverty, physical and mental health, literacy, language and location.

A plethora of research on access to justice particularly for individuals and communities living with disadvantage,³ has found that legal resources remain elusive for many people, aggravating legal problems, which also has consequences on many levels, such as social inclusiveness, financial stability, and physical and mental health and wellbeing.⁴

Work has been done in the health sector, which can translate to legal services, to identify and address the basket of factors which contribute to social exclusion.⁵

One characteristic common to the people and groups that typically fall within various categories of ‘social and economic disadvantage’ is that they tend to comprise people with lower capabilities across a broad range of social indicators (e.g. lower levels of education, poorer health and fewer financial resources).⁶

The surveys echo each other in their findings on the impact of living with disadvantage for obtaining viable access to vital services.⁷ They also indicate an understandable reluctance to engage with legal issues; it is particularly unlikely that many of those most subject to factors of disadvantage will act in a timely way to respond to legal problems.

Disadvantaged groups tend to have less legal knowledge, be more likely to ignore their legal problems and be less able to handle their problems without expert advice. Thus, disadvantaged groups are likely to benefit from legal information and education strategies that are specifically designed to direct them to appropriate legal advice services.⁸

It is not surprising that those most in need of legal assistance may also be those least likely to reach out for

3 Pleasence & Balmer 2014 *How People Resolve Legal Problems*, at 2: “Over the past two decades, at least 26 ‘legal needs’ surveys of the public’s experience of civil (i.e. non-criminal) legal problems have been conducted in at least 15 separate jurisdictions.”

4 Report of the Access to Justice Taskforce, *A Strategic Framework for Access to Justice* (2009); Balmer, NJ & Pleasence, P 2012, The legal problems and mental health needs of youth advice service users: the case for advice, Youth Access, London; Duffy, J, Basu, S & Pearson, KC 2012, ‘Older people and legal advice — the need for joined up and creative approaches’, *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 31–47; Smith, R & Paterson, A 2014, *Face-to-face legal services and their alternatives: global lessons from the digital revolution*, Centre for Professional Legal Studies: University of Strathclyde, UK.

5 K Brousalis, Community Legal Education Ontario, *Don’t smoke, Don’t be poor, Read before signing: Linking health literacy and legal capability*, CLEO Centre for Research & Innovation (April 2015). In this detailed study, CLEO examined how work undertaken to improve health outcomes, grounded in recognition of the social determinants of health and wellbeing, could be applied to public legal education and information.

6 Pleasence, Pascoe, et al, *Reshaping legal assistance services: building on the evidence base*, Law and Justice Foundation of NSW, April 2014, at 123.

7 One of the most comprehensive studies is the frequently cited ‘LAW Survey’, by C Coumarelos et al, above n 1.

8 Ibid 38.

it, whether through lack of awareness of the issues or reluctance to engage with the problem. Experienced community legal centre practitioners can all give examples of the clients who attend an appointment with bags of unopened correspondence; it is a constant of work in this sector that clients seek advice at the last minute, for example on the day before they have to go to court. A natural reluctance to face up to uncomfortable or distressing situations is clearly aggravated by compounding factors of disadvantage such as mental and physical health problems, literacy and language limitations and other multiple stressors such as domestic violence, childcare or other family demands, financial difficulties and insecure tenancy.

Given their findings on the barriers that present for those living with disadvantage, the surveys maintain that face-to-face advice will be the ideal and caution against reliance on diversionary resources. Coumarelos et al refer to earlier work in their finding that self help services are ineffective substitutes where there is no legal capability:

[Balmer et al] argued that initiatives promoting self-help might be best targeted at the demographic groups that have high legal knowledge, such as more educated, affluent people. In contrast, initiatives that signpost relevant legal advice services may be more beneficial for disadvantaged groups that have poor legal knowledge and capability.⁹

Pleasence et al, reiterate the findings in the 'LAW survey',¹⁰ commenting that resources such as self help materials may be "ill-suited and ill-matched to the legal needs and capacities of some groups, typically the minority of people who comprise the most disadvantaged and marginalised members of the community".¹¹ They comment:

A number of studies caution against self-help services being used as cheap 'substitute services' to replace more expensive and intensive forms of legal services.¹²

In response to their findings on legal needs, and the emphasis on face-to-face services, Coumarelos et al propose a range of measures to improve access to justice:

Legal services may need to be extended and provided with additional resources in order to widen accessibility and to meet current demand efficiently. For example, extension of operating hours, telephone, internet and video conferencing services, local services in readily accessible locations, outreach services in rural and remote areas, and services in appropriate languages may all be worth exploring as means of increasing accessibility.¹³

Notably, the Productivity Commission of Australia has recognised the need to increase funding, the range of services and options for access to assistance. The Commission has recommended that Australian governments provide an immediate injection of \$200 million per year to legal assistance services.¹⁴

In its submission to the 2016-2017 Federal Budget, the National Association of Community Legal Centres noted the "significant and rising demand for legal assistance in Australia":

CLCs turn away over 150,000 people seeking legal assistance each year, largely due to a lack of resources. Unresolved legal problems generate a range of flow-on effects, including multiple and related problems and significant costs to the government and broader community.¹⁵

9 Coumarelos, above n 1, at 214, referencing Balmer, NJ, Buck, A, Patel, A, Denvir, C & Pleasence, 2010, *Knowledge, capability and the experience of rights problems*, Plenet, London

10 Above n 1.

11 Pleasence, Pascoe, et al, *Reshaping legal assistance services: building on the evidence base*, Law and Justice Foundation of NSW, April 2014, at 122.

12 Ibid 145.

13 Ibid.

14 Recommendation 21.4, Productivity Commission of Australia, *Access to Justice Arrangements Inquiry Report No 72* (2014), at 63.

15 National Association of Community Legal Centres submission to the Federal Budget 2016-2017, p 1. Available at <www.nacclc.org.au/resources/NACLC_Federal_Budget_Sub_2016_17_Final_PDF.pdf>. See also the *Australian Council of Social Services, Australian Community Sector Survey 2013: National Report*, ACOSS Paper 202.

Such authoritative, evidence-based support for more money for community legal services is welcome. Since those reports were released, however, funding to community legal centres has been cut and the sector is facing what has been termed the “funding cliff” in July 2017 when funding will effectively drop nationally by 30%.¹⁶

Recognition of the issues has thus not resulted in any turnaround in funding levels for community services with a patchwork approach undermining the sector’s ability to plan for and provide direct service delivery.

There is a clear tension whereby the generation of effective self-help may enable and/or legitimise reduction in the resourcing of free direct legal assistance. This increases the threat of a downward spiral whereby provision of alternatives to face-to-face services may undermine efforts to maintain funding for such services.

Smith and Paterson note the intersecting dynamics and challenges at play in what they refer to as the coalescence of two enormously powerful movements: “the constraint of cost and the expansion of new technology”.¹⁷

All countries, those opening up new schemes as much as those with well-established provision, want to take advantage of the new digital potential. But, digital delivery has a very immediate attraction for those wishing to reduce the cost of existing provision. For those in such countries – both inside and outside government – who wish to maintain hard-won levels of service, this sets up difficult questions: Can digital capability deliver the political imperative of reduced spending as well as the constitutional responsibility of sufficient justice? Can we achieve the great win-win of less spending but more effectiveness? And all this in a situation where few countries can be complacent about their existing level of scope and eligibility – let alone at any reduction.¹⁸

With no relief in sight from the time and funding pressures on community organisations, it is increasingly unlikely that they can address unmet needs via direct client assistance alone. The pressures to do more work with less funding will mean an increasing reliance on self-help materials, whether or not they are contributing to the funding decline. Rather than reject self-help resources as an inadequate, ineffective or “cheap substitute”, recognition of the funding reality should spur heightened efforts to make such materials as accessible and effective as possible.

There may also be benefits of empowerment, generated by effective use of self-help materials, counteracting a central indicator of social exclusion, being lack of self-sufficiency. Online resources are not just a gap filler, they may be a preferred entry point for some people, enabling them to be more confident to seek help/follow up from the relevant service.

It is a core principle of all community organisations to promote individuals’ independence and sense of control in their own situations. Online access to high quality resources gives people a choice about how they access information.

It is important to recognise that, along with the relative convenience of using online services, there is empowerment inherent in self-help where an individual can at least begin to deal with a difficult issue themselves rather than be undermined by assumed incapacity which can be entrenched on many levels because of multiple reliance on service providers.

Research on self-help materials has cautioned against over estimating this aspect of online interaction.¹⁹

¹⁶ National Association of Community Legal Centres media release: ‘One year on: community lawyers across Australia call for funding of Productivity Commission recommendations’, 3 December 2015, available at <www.naclc.org.au/cb_pages/files/031215_Joint_MR_Anniv_PC_Report_FINAL.pdf>. See also National Association of Community Legal Centres submission to the Federal Budget 2016-2017, above n 15.

¹⁷ Roger Smith and Alan Paterson, above n 2, at 6.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ M Lawler, J Giddings and M Robertson, ‘Opportunities and Limitations in the Provision of Self Help Legal Resources to Citizens in Need’ (2012) 30 *Windsor Year Book Access to Justice*, at 226.

Lawler et al concluded from their study of users of self help legal materials that resources should focus on meeting immediate practical needs rather than 'citizen empowerment'. It is not clear, however, where meeting practical needs ends and empowerment, by successfully providing information, begins.

In community work, it is clear that being able to obtain information is empowering, particularly for people living with disadvantage, whether or not this is an express aim of information provision or simply inheres in the process.

It may be a more diffuse or incremental, but no less significant, outcome for a person: getting the information to help solve a problem, be it procedural or substantive, can be a win.

1.1 A different approach to data gathering

In their three year qualitative research study, Lawler et al adopted a case study approach which included documenting the experiences of people who had used self-help resources via "semi-structured and narrative based interviews".²⁰ The research subjects were not chosen based on any socio-economic or personal characterisation; recruitment was based on identification of participants who had already used a particular online self-help resource. Data was gathered based on what the participants had already experienced.²¹

We acknowledge the work undertaken by Lawler et al and the extensive survey work carried out in Australia, the UK and Canada on access to justice but it prompted the question as to whether it is possible to push the consultation process further. The ex post facto nature of the vast majority of the information gathering, prompted this research, which is an exploration of the potential for a more spontaneous, first-hand approach.²²

The aim was to create a research practice which directly incorporates the perspective of people living with disadvantage to determine how best we can accommodate the needs and interests of some of the people for whom legal resources currently remain off limits.

It was also directly inspired by a 1999 Canadian study, in which potential users of a website, which provides information for women in abusive relationships, were observed as they were in the process of using the site with their comments noted down contemporaneously.²³

The evaluator used a formative evaluation strategy known as a talk-aloud. In this procedure, the evaluator works with an individual participant and invites her to talk-through the experience of using the product, while closely observing and noting her reactions to the site.²⁴

Given the multiple influences on a participant in a research scenario, and the strong likelihood that answers to questions posed after an activity will not fully capture the emotions and thoughts experienced during the activity, the Canadian approach was compelling in its directness and also its potential for improving

20 Ibid 191.

21 The age, income and education level of respondents did form part of the analysis of the findings but recruitment was not on this basis. The researchers note that they encountered some resistance from potential participants who were "arguably reluctant to revisit experiences they viewed as either painful or annoying". Ibid 197. This resonates with some of the issues which arose with participants in this study and which are discussed in Section 2.1.3 on methodology, below.

22 There has been some limited interactive research. For example, the LJF has published research on this issue, which indicated a need for further work. See: 'How do people access and use legal information? Implications of the research for delivery via the Internet' Sue Scott, 1999, Law Foundation of New South Wales, Sydney. In her paper, Scott draws together findings from the research literature on both information seeking behaviour and use and internet use. She discusses the implications of these findings for provision of legal information via the internet. There is no examination of a target community – the paper is commentary arising from a literature review and observing one person (a professional) trying to navigate through a legal information search. Available at <<http://lawfoundation.net.au/report/legalinformation>>

23 San San Sy and Kathleen Anderson, *VIOLET: Learning on the Net*, Final Report to the Office of Learning Technologies, 1999. Available at <www.cplea.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Violet_LearningontheNet.pdf>

24 Ibid, 61. As the report on VIOLET notes, this is a difficult and time-consuming strategy and this was also the case for this project, as discussed in Section 2.1.3 below.

the integrity of the data gathered (with the added feature of providing less deliberated and possibly more colourful responses).

Finally, this research ventures an optimistic view of the capacity of the internet to improve access to justice, if its potential is continually explored and challenged. It is inspired by impassioned advocates for embracing the capacity of new technology to improve access to justice by providing effective legal help to those who, for myriad reasons, may not obtain direct assistance from lawyers and legal services.²⁵

²⁵ Most notably, Richard Susskind, see *The End of Lawyers? Rethinking the Nature of Legal Services*. (2008) and *Tomorrow's Lawyers* (2013). See also Smith and Paterson, above n 2.

Section 2: Can we widen the pool of people using online self-help resources?

There will always be people excluded from self-help resources but what about those on *the margins of access?*

2.1 Methodology

As noted in Section 1, there has been extensive research undertaken, by way of surveys, regarding access to justice in Australia and around the world. They are a foundation for this work, which attempts a more interactive approach with the research participants, and deliberately targets participants living with disadvantage, as it is widely recognised that considerable gaps exist.²⁶

This research draws on first hand qualitative assessment whereby the research participants are observed as they are in the process of seeking assistance online and thus provide feedback that is as spontaneous as possible, in the circumstances.²⁷

The difficulty in formulating such a study includes both the labour intensive nature of one-on-one observation and the logistical hurdle of gaining access to participants who, by the nature of the project, would be people who may not normally seek out a legal service and by the nature of multiple exclusionary factors in their lives will be disengaged with the work we are doing. They may be uninterested or at worst actively distrustful or suspicious of lawyers coming into their lives.

The participants were drawn from several local services and included many people who don't normally use the internet, for reasons including: no computer, literacy levels and language. The aim was thus to explore whether there are particular barriers specific to this group and can they be overcome to draw them in to at least some internet use.

The research sessions were thus a learning process in determining what is possible; how far to push the recruitment of participants with regard to their level of interaction and understanding of online legal resources.

We took an informal approach to sessions, working through how best to work with participants who are living with poverty or other disadvantage, who may have physical and mental health issues, low literacy, or experiencing social exclusion resulting from a range of intersecting factors.

²⁶ See, for example, Evaluation of Public Legal Education and Information: An Annotated Bibliography, available at <www.plelearningexchange.ca/database/evaluation-public-legal-education-information-annotated-bibliography/>; Melina Buckley, 'Evolving Legal Services: Review of Current Literature' December 2013, available at <www.plelearningexchange.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Appendix-A-Evolving-Legal-Services-Literature-Review.pdf>

²⁷ With reference to the Canadian study, VIOLET, above n 23.

Different hypotheticals were formulated by the participants at each session; each group formulated its own scenario to maximise their engagement and promote the relevance of the scenarios they were researching.

This created some difficulties given the range of issues researched across the five sessions as different websites were accessed and the variety in search strategies within each group was potentially multiplied. The sessions produced extensive data – see Appendices A to E – related to the responses provided by participants but this should of course be viewed in light of the number of variables at play.

The benefits of set sessions that may have generated more robust data because of the consistency in the research framework, were traded off in this case for an approachable setting that remained as inclusive and responsive to the participants as possible.

A more ground-up approach to the research, guided by the participants, with an effort to have as light a presence as possible in relation to its structure and direction, was deliberately chosen, given the aim was as much to assess the viability of the research as it was to generate the data.

While some ‘back-up’ scenarios may have been useful, and could be generated for future sessions, the process of working through legal scenarios with the group created an opportunity to discuss with participants how their everyday experiences may be translated into a legal issue for which assistance may be available. The primary objective was that the participants had ownership of the scenario, to reduce the artificiality of the process and increase their engagement.

Naturally, in any group setting, even in these deliberately small cohorts, some participants will sit back and let others do the talking, so there is no guarantee that all of our scenarios were entirely relatable for the participants. It was, however, clearly relevant to some extent to all participants and they were often able to discuss the issues at length with the researchers.

Critiques of observational studies are rightly cautious in relation to the variables inherent in this approach but without them we may remain in a self-referencing spiral, with commentators lamenting the absence of evaluation while continuing to produce educational information relying on limited direct interaction with the target audience. We therefore need to start somewhere with constructing evaluation practices that can provide input that is as robust and applicable as possible.

2.1.1 Preparation for the research

The approach of this project, whereby several local organisations sourced the participants for the research sessions, was enabled by Illawarra Legal Centre’s close connections with service providers in our community. It required the trust of the organisations and the opportunity to establish working relationships with the participants.

We began meeting with potential collaborating community organisations in 2014 to discuss the project and whether their clients may be approached to take part. The organisations were given a copy of the participant information and consent forms and Linda Tucker also attended their groups’ meetings beforehand, where appropriate, to discuss the research and the sessions.

The one-on-one approach with the participants was made possible by the involvement of eight students from the University of Wollongong Law School. Because of their role and that we were working with people, we obtained ethics approval from the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee.²⁸ The application process also assisted us with the structure, preparation and conduct of the sessions to minimise

²⁸ Ethics Approval HE15/437.

the potential risks for participants and students in undertaking this work.

All of the research students signed confidentiality forms, had a Working with Children clearance, and were provided with the relevant sections of the *National Association of Community Legal Centres Risk Management Guide* regarding conflict of interest.

All participants received a project information sheet and consent form, setting out the aims of the project and how the research sessions will be carried out, with an explanation of the approach to developing the hypothetical and that they would take part in an observed computer session. It was made clear that the aim was to publish the results and they would not be identified in any reports of the sessions.

We also discussed with the participating organisations the potential for participants to divulge sensitive information. It was agreed that if a participant divulges a matter of concern to any member of the researcher group, this information will be given to Linda Tucker who will have a confidential discussion with the participant and offer them information and/or a referral for further assistance as appropriate.

2.1.2 The research sessions

As noted above, our participants were aged from 15 to 77 and the majority experienced some level of disadvantage that could create potential barriers to obtaining legal assistance.

At the beginning of each session, participants were reminded of the objectives of the research and encouraged to be as forthright as they wished in their commentary on the online resources. It was made clear that Illawarra Legal Centre had no connection with the resources they would be using.

Script for research sessions regarding provision of personal information and development of the hypothetical

“This session will begin with the group deciding on a hypothetical problem that you can all relate to. It may be something you have heard about that happened to a friend or family member or neighbour. We will not be talking about anyone’s personal legal issues so please do not refer to any problems you have had while this session is on. If you do need some legal help, we can offer free confidential legal advice after this session or I can make an appointment with you for free confidential legal advice at another time with Illawarra Legal Centre.”

The participants and the research students introduced themselves to each other and then the group formed its hypothetical, based on the input of the participants. Once the hypothetical was confirmed, the research students paired off with a participant to go through a ‘baseline’ interview to determine the participant’s level of knowledge and awareness of potential ways to address the hypothetical.

The participants then began their online search session with the research student sitting to the side and a little behind so as to minimise their presence. Participants spent up to 10 minutes undertaking a random search and were then directed to a specific online legal resource that should be appropriate to the hypothetical. Once there, they would search through the site to try to find information to address the problem. After a total of 30 minutes, the online session would end and the researchers then went through a follow up questionnaire with their participant. Finally the group would come together to discuss their sessions and provide any other comments on the resources.

2.1.3 Comments on methodology

The intention to create as relaxed and informal an atmosphere, with an emphasis on participants feeling free to make any comments they want about the websites, was not always successful. At times participants were hesitant to criticise the websites, despite clear instructions that we were looking for as honest an appraisal as possible and we were not asking for assessment of material we had created. This confirmed our concern prior to the sessions that many participants in any research exercise are likely to feel it is rude to be critical. Our attempts to overcome the natural inclination to be polite may need more work with the groups prior to commencing the online observation sessions.

The comments also indicated that on several occasions it was clear the participant persevered with searching for the sake of the research session when they otherwise would have given up.

I wanted to give up almost from the start because I was constantly trying to work out what was relevant. I was confused about how to get the right information from the websites as they were either too broad or too specific.²⁹ WL1

It was a gamble to rely on each group to be prepared to formulate a hypothetical but fortunately each group was able to create their own scenario. The research students were asked to give their feedback and helpful suggestions included having an icebreaker exercise so that participants are ready to get involved in developing the hypothetical. Some participants were reticent in the initial discussions and there will often be people who feel apprehensive in a group so it was a concern that the hypotheticals may not have been relevant to everyone. In future it would be useful to take more time with the introduction session so all members of the group are as relaxed as possible.

The one-on-one approach was very successful; when the research students paired off with a participant they were very quick to develop a rapport. In session 1, the participants were reluctant to speak at the beginning of the session. As soon as they were one-on-one, they opened up and there was quickly a buzz of energy in the room. (They just needed the research supervisor to be out of the way.)

The research students volunteered their time for this project (three of the eight undertook the project as part of their assessment for a Public Interest Law course).

They had different approaches with their information gathering and reporting. While this may have contributed to a more natural interaction between the research students and participants, the pilot sessions demonstrated that more time spent preparing the students would have helped with standardising data collection. Time and budget constraints in undertaking the project meant there was limited time spent with the research students prior to the sessions commencing and should be addressed in any future work.

Issues raised by the law students' involvement as researchers included understanding what objective observation entails, that is, the requirement to simply record what is occurring. There were opinions expressed which did provide depth to the observations but clearly added layers of subjectivity to the findings. At times, the students' assessment of the relevance of the materials the participants found, made it difficult to determine the extent to which a participant had in fact obtained information that would be helpful to them. Again this could perhaps be addressed with a longer build up in preparation for the research sessions.

A further issue was the disclosure of personal information regarding the participants' legal issues in the past. While participants were asked to not refer to their own legal problems, it was an understandable occurrence while in the one-on-one sessions with the research students. All students signed confidentiality forms, as noted above, and raised any such disclosures privately with the Research Supervisor at the end of

²⁹ As noted above, this echoes the comments of participants in Lawler et al, above n 21.

the session. The participants were referred to Illawarra Legal Centre for free advice if they wanted further assistance but in all cases the matters referred to were some time ago and none of the participants wished to revisit their matters. Again this was an important learning exercise in the necessary preparation for the research students.

2.2 Summary of findings

This research was not intended as a 'name and shame' exercise as the organisations involved are clearly working hard to provide access to relevant information for different communities, particularly those living with disadvantage. Where we had positive feedback we have named the websites in the Appendices as they can provide useful examples of what frequently worked for our cohort. Where we had criticism we have not named the site but will forward the comments directly to the organisations involved.

Examples include:

HIT

- The Fair Work Ombudsman gets a thumbs up for helping with employment matters with an intuitive approach which anticipates likely questions and is interactive.

MISSES

- A youth specific legal website was heavily criticised for being patronising:

"The first word out of his mouth was "condescending"; the "childish" cartoons and bright colours came across as patronising as opposed to engaging for someone his age. The layout of the website made it hard to navigate, it didn't seem to have been updated in some time and there was a distinct lack of useful information. He found it was useless and that he would never use it."

(WCC2)

- A tribunal website which would attract a lot of self-represented litigants was deemed impenetrable by most of the participants.
- Home pages with a lot of information were overwhelming for the participants.

We also asked participants where they would go for help with a legal issue. These included their bank manager, 'Nan', friends, parents, a teacher.

One of our research session participants, who was originally from India, proposed an online forum such as is popular in India, where issues can be discussed, a problem is posted and any lawyer can respond then others can engage with their own views. There are parallels with Susskind's model and his proposal for a web-based diagnostic system' and 'online communities where citizens pose and answer questions on discussion forums'.³⁰ It appears India has put into practice what many of the participants called for – an interactive online presence that can guide users through the legal process.

Several participants commented that they would just call for help when they got to a page with a telephone number for free legal advice. A potential further step would be to do research sessions with participants who have already tried to ring for advice in relation to a real life problem. Given the known frustrations with trying to get assistance over the telephone and the "referral roundabout", this might provide further depth to the research if participants are looking at the websites while cognisant of the accessibility or

³⁰ See discussion of Richard Susskind's work, particularly *The End of Lawyers?: Rethinking the nature of legal services* 2010, by Roger Smith who also refers to a Dutch model whereby individuals are encouraged and equipped to deal with their own legal problems: 'The internet and legal services for the poor,' *Justice Journal*, 2012 vol 9 no 1, at 56.

otherwise of other free resources.

In undertaking this research it is clear that a central issue in accessibility of information – relevant to many service areas, such as health as well as legal – is the tension between simplifying material to make it readable and losing crucial details that could affect accuracy of information and results for users.

Is there a sweet spot of online information for self-help resources? Can websites be accessible while maintaining the accuracy and integrity of the subject matter?

2.2.1 Suggested improvements

- Balance simplicity with not being patronising. Participants in their mid to late teens were sensitive to what they saw as condescension in a youth-specific legal website.
- Older participants asked for bigger type.
- Predictive text within website search engines. Poor spelling often an issue so may exclude users from the site.
- Have one set of tabs for links, most participants were confused or overwhelmed by having two sets of tabs and generally disliked the side bars.
- Make the tabs as clear as possible.
- Make very clear that jurisdiction may be relevant – be upfront that many laws are specific to the State or national jurisdiction. Ensure the accessibility and profile of the websites as they are competing with international and commercial sites and there is little awareness of different jurisdictions and the US and UK sites frequently trumped local links.
- Explain the categories, it is important to be as clear as possible when providing links to indicate subject matter. Frustrations were most apparent when participants clicked a link then found it to be irrelevant or, frequently, got an error message for the link. They were then often prevented from going back to the previous page and quickly felt disengaged and/or overwhelmed.
- Everyone wants the ability to ask a question: most users had a preference for typing in a question/sending an email; not knowing the category to search for and so being confused by the menus was a regular frustration for participants. There was very limited use of keywords.
- A mixed approach: some people are able to cope with lot of options and prefer to see everything available without having to click on links, often the biggest deterrent. Others don't want too many options and get overwhelmed by too many choices.
- Simple home pages with clear links to other options and explanations as to what those options will be, given reluctance to click on the menu/ links when there may be difficulty navigating back to the original page.
- Engage the active participation of members of your target community in creating resources.
- Follow the common directive to write for your audience.
- Be clear where people can go for help if they prefer to call for assistance.

“This page is good because it has a lot of information on it but it’s very confusing and not very clear about where each link takes you or what you’re going to find there. I don’t know which one (link) is relevant to me and which one to choose.”

“A section to send an email would be very useful and then they can respond telling you where to go in the website.”

“I need more explanations of important legal keywords and linking legal terms with specific situations.”

2.2.2 What they said, examples of participant comments

“Make it simpler.”

“Space it out more, shouldn’t put so much about different stuff on one page, easier when a short description so don’t need to go back because it will help you click on the right link.”

“There should be a full but brief summary at the start of every page about what was on that page. There should also be larger typeface as I needed to put on my glasses and most people my age would have trouble with it.”

“You should be able to put your full question in the search bar so you can get the full answer and not have to search everywhere”.

“Be clear about directions to legal help/ answers. Direct people to local, relevant assistance. Also, it’s good to give real life advice that is not strictly legal to help you handle the broader situation, eg keep communication lines open with neighbours.”

“It keeps sending you somewhere else ... you just run around in circles, end up coming back to seeing the same stuff again.”

“Put down lots of different types of accidents in the columns on the left (eg accidents, property) and include examples we can relate to so we know we’re in the right spot.”

With reference to clown phobia says about computers: “This is my clown.”

“Clear layout, medium font, clear headings, clear sections.”

“It would be better if the main screen was less crowded and less “overwhelming” ... A good website would provide all the information ... without the clutter.”

“For each topic I looked at they needed more links to different answers. They need more headings and they need to be more specific, and they need to make it clear I’m in the right spot.”

Website: ‘Nothing here matches your search. Make sure words spelled correctly’
Participant: “What if you can’t spell?”

Section 3: Summary of the Research Sessions

Full reports are provided in Appendices A-E. The following is a summary of the data collected at the five research sessions.

Session 1 (Appendix A)

Participants

Four young people who are housed by Southern Youth and Family Services emergency accommodation, ages 17-22.

Group hypothetical

You worked at a café for 3 weeks. At end of your first shift you were told it was not paid as it was a trial. You were then told that you were on “special probation wages” of \$10 an hour. You talk to a friend working at another café who gets \$20 an hour so you ask your boss about the pay. He responds: “Do you really want the job? Because other people do.”

You don't say anything, then are asked to work the following Sunday at no extra pay. When you asked on the Monday about penalty rates, the boss lost his temper and said “Are you going to keep asking?” The following week you were told that they “don't need you” and you failed probation. You also didn't get paid for your last week of work.

Before the online session

Of the four, two would not take any action, other two would seek help, one would not pay for legal help. One would not use internet, other three would use Google.

After the online session

One commented that she would now see someone for help, another also said more confident about

his rights, another said now more confident about confronting an employer or business.

In the online session, the participants were clearly comfortable with attempting different searches and some found relevant, helpful information to deal with the hypothetical: minimum wages, what is a reasonable trial, where to get more help, and so on.

The Fair Work Ombudsman and NSW Industrial Relations sites were a hit with the participants for providing relevant information, including a pay calculator, which provided a more interactive and personalised experience.

There was a lot of criticism of a youth-specific legal site and general criticism of sites which had too much detail as this was a deterrent.

Session 2 (Appendix B)

Participants

Four participants, regular library users who had seen our advertisement. Aged 43-68. The participants were all well educated, to tertiary level. All had professional backgrounds, although not all currently in employment. They were therefore not representative of the project's target cohort but provided insight into how barriers may still exist for many people who would not have experience in researching a legal issue via the internet.

NB The preferred approach to participation was to capitalise on our relationships with local organisations. We tried one 'drop-in' session

where we advertised at the Wollongong library for a session. This meant we did not have any control over the background/situation of the participants. This was not the original intention but it was offered by the library so we took it up to provide an alternative group. In fact this session did provide interesting input, particularly as some older participants attended who, despite having a good level of education, were still frustrated by using a computer and searching for information on the internet.

Group hypothetical

New neighbours moved in next door recently. They are very noisy and have also damaged the fence between your properties. You have tried talking to them to ask them to be quieter and to discuss repairs to the fence but they have been hostile to you since then and have continued to have loud parties late at night.

Before the online session

All of the participants could relate to the issue and considered it would be a common problem; all said they would take some action to try to deal with it. They all suggested options to address the issue: try talking directly to neighbours, go to the council, call the police if the neighbours were violent. Two of the four participants would not think to use the internet (one said he couldn't afford internet access at home).

During the session

One commented on the difficulty in selecting links when it's not clear as to what information they will provide. There was also frustration from links not working and an error message coming up then the participant being unable to return to the previous page.

Another had no difficulty with navigating the websites he used, which were the NSW Law Society and Find Legal Answers sites.

One struggled with the content of the sites, according to the research student. This observation did raise questions as to the standard applied by the research student, however, as noted in the comments on methodology, as the participant did not consider he had any difficulty.

WL4 had a research background and was able to locate and comprehend legal information. His approach varied from other participants as he appeared at ease with the websites and the information. He did, however, have some difficulty with reading the websites, including missing a link that was in purple. He noted that it was difficult to find the information on noise because it was under pollution as in 'noise pollution'.

After the online session

The participants gave positive feedback from their online sessions, commenting that they had learned about different options such as mediation to deal with a dispute. While one commented that the links "looked good", he did not want to click on them as he would go "down the rabbit hole and get bogged".

Session 3 (Appendix C)

Participants

Five people, aged 47 to 61, who attend the Warrawong Community Centre for its free lunch and other activities. The participants represented the main target of this research: people who may have only limited access to computers and the internet (via a community organisation or library, for example).

Group hypothetical

You are taking the dog out for a walk when another dog attacks it. The other dog also rips your shirt but doesn't do any major damage to you. The other owner is claiming that your dog started the fight and has injured his dog and wants you to pay the veterinary bills.

Before the online session

Three of the five participants said this problem sounded like something that could happen to them or someone they know and four said they would take action. Three would use the internet; one said he didn't own a computer.

During the online session

This group was not generally comfortable using computers but most of the participants had some awareness of being able to search for legal help on the internet.

One participant clicked on the Google ads for legal advice without realising that they were advertisements rather than information sites. References to 'free legal advice' on these sites acted as a lure for some while others realised that they could in fact cost them money.

While the hypothetical of a dog attacking your dog seemed like a common scenario to the group, entering 'dog attacks' in to a search engine whether on Google or on the specific legal resource websites – Find Legal Answers and Legal Aid NSW – did not provide any results and frustrated the participants.

After the online session

The participants commented that, understandably, they preferred the option of calling for advice and noted the phone numbers provided on sites so would likely have stopped searching and just called if not for the exercise. This heightened the artificial nature of the research but given the aim of the project is to examine whether people on the margins of internet use can be better accommodated by online self help resources, this group provided valuable insight into the likely boundaries of effective online use.

Session 4 (Appendix D)

Participants

Four men, from the Port Kembla Community Project's Men's Group. All worked in trades, aged 57 – 73.

Group hypothetical

You are mowing the lawn when your mower flicks a rock into a car passing by, smashing its window. The owner of the car sends a letter of demand claiming you owe him damages for the broken window.

Before the online session

All four participants could relate to the hypothetical as something that could happen to them or has happened to them or someone they know. Of the four, only one said he would go straight to a solicitor. Two were aware the costs should be covered by house insurance and would be reluctant to get legal help. None of the four was interested in using the internet for help with this issue and two were actively suspicious/ reluctant to use it.

During the online session

One of the users only persevered for the sake of the exercise and would have given up almost immediately on seeing a phone number for free legal assistance. Although he had done a computer course he had very limited ability to obtain information from the online sources.

Another user was more at ease with the computer but still could not find any information to assist him with the problem. He tried 'stone hit car / advice' – but got no relevant results, only getting references to family violence links. On the Law Access site he typed into the search: 'I hit a car with a rock, some advice'.

Response: 'Nothing here matches your search.'
Suggestion: 'Make sure words spelled correctly.'
He commented: "what if you can't spell?"

Only one of the users made it to a site that was relevant and useful for dealing with the hypothetical as he searched for 'small claims' which brought up the NSW Justice site and the 'Is someone chasing you for money' flowchart which he described as "not a bad site".

The other three tried different wording and searching on a range of sites and could not find anything of use.

After the online session

This group expressed a lot of frustration with working on the computers. They had difficulty getting any results and demonstrated the problem of trying to find information without knowing the right terms to search for. There was a clear lack of trust in some of the sites, which was reassuring, given some searches led to requests for contacts and credit card details.

Session 5 (Appendix E)

Participants

Seven secondary school students, 14-16 years old, who attend the Links to Learning program with Southern Youth and Family Services which provides assistance to students "at risk of disengagement".

Group hypothetical

You are at the mall skateboarding with friends on a Thursday night. The police have asked you and your friends to leave the mall. You all refuse. Your friend is grabbed by police and pushed onto the ground. You try to intervene and police arrest you both. You are charged with offensive behaviour, assaulting a police officer and resisting arrest and you have now received a court attendance notice regarding these charges.

Before the online session

All of the participants could relate to this issue, and knew people who had been in this situation. Three of the seven would look for help, the others would try to sort it out themselves. Four would look on the internet for help; one mentioned social media, one thought that the charge of assaulting a police officer is too serious to search on the internet.

Only two said they would seek legal help. The participants suggested going to family members or friends for help.

During the online session

The age of the participants was a likely factor in their lack of engagement. Despite being briefed on the research and their involvement in devising the hypothetical, some of the students were frequently distracted while online. They did demonstrate how easy it was to get caught up in websites from the US and the difficulty in finding relevant information even when directed to the sites most likely to be of use: Find Legal Answers and Law Access. A regular issue for these and the other groups, was working out which category their legal problem fell into. The students appeared to randomly click on different areas of law as well as try typing in a summary of the legal problem but had difficulty finding anything of relevance.

When a participant typed in 'resisting arrest' in the Law Access search engine, he got "nothing matches your search". The session demonstrated the difficulty in finding relevant sites even when the participants did type in what seemed to be appropriate search terms.

Spelling was also a frequent challenge for this group.

After the online session

It is important to work more with groups such as this

one. While at ease on computers there seemed little engagement with the concept of getting assistance for a legal problem online at the beginning of the session but all of the participants did provide positive feedback after the online session in relation to their increased awareness of using the internet to deal with a legal problem. While they were not necessarily enthusiastic about the sites they searched, they all commented that they would now think to use the internet for help which was not the case before the session.

Some of the SYFS school students were the most difficult to engage in the research project. This could be youth, their backgrounds (given they were part of a group at risk of being disengaged from school) or that this type of session just was not suitable for them. That said, all of the students indicated some improvement in their awareness of the internet as a source of legal assistance and it may have been helpful to spend longer with this cohort.

What our research also demonstrated is that development of youth friendly online resources should be accompanied by work to ensure students are aware that the internet is useful for providing some assistance when faced with a legal problem.³¹

31 See Pleasence et al who reference survey data which "indicates that some young people and some older people lack the skills necessary to identify and use appropriate forms of online assistance", above n 6, at 146, citing, inter alia, Denvir, C, Balmer, N & Pleasence, P 2011, 'Surfing the web — recreation or resource? Exploring how young people in the UK use the internet as an advice portal for problems with a legal dimension', *Interacting with Computers*, vol. 23, pp. 96–104.

Conclusion

Many people I have worked with over the years become frustrated over trying to walk through accessing various services, invariably leading them to give up on trying to get assistance.³²

This research centres on people on the margins of internet use, to explore the ways in which online information can more robustly respond to as broad a community as possible as well as hopefully move beyond the ‘digital leaflet stage’.³³ The aim of this study was to begin work with a research model that enables the gathering of direct feedback from individuals living with disadvantage, working with them on assessing the accessibility and effectiveness of online legal resources.

As a small pilot project, this research has taken the first steps in working within a community to remove as many barriers as possible to obtaining input. We accept that this research does not truly constitute “fly on the wall” observation but this can be weighed against the benefits of an inclusive and conversational approach, which made the sessions more ‘user-friendly’ for our participants. It is also likely we could strengthen the data with more training of the research students and more time spent with the participants, as discussed in our comments on methodology in Section 2.1.

The findings, as set out in Section 2.2, include examples of participants’ feedback, which is provided in detail in the Appendices. The suggestions of our participants, listed at 2.2.1, may contribute to making resources more user-friendly, particularly for people living with disadvantage who currently are excluded from the online community.

As the comments, particularly of the younger participants, indicated, websites could better respond to the perspectives and interests of their target audience, taking care to demonstrate respect for users. Participants wanted clarity not condescension.

If online resource development is undertaken with the direct feedback of its target community, such as that obtained in this research, it may provide a positive response to the question we pose as central to this project: can we widen the pool of online legal information users?

The feedback from the participants also confirmed the access to justice surveys, with many preferring to call a lawyer or legal service rather than persevere with a website to obtain legal information. As noted, however, the option to ‘call a lawyer or legal service’ faces ongoing limitations and has its own frustrations – particularly the widely identified issue of the ‘referral roundabout’ whereby callers are referred from one service provider to another without success. This has created a concomitant increased need to explore the potential for internet resources to better engage with those currently excluded or on the margins of internet use.

The participants’ suggested improvements may push up costs of developing online resources but any cost benefit analysis of work to achieve greater accessibility should be favourable. Money spent on the resource should be weighed against the broader community benefits of greater engagement of individuals living with disadvantage, improving their ability to sidestep or deflect legal problems by dealing with them more quickly and effectively.

32 Sheryl Wiffen, Port Kembla Community Project, a collaborator for this project:

33 Smith, R, The Internet and Legal Services for the Poor” *Justice Journal* 2012 vol9 no1 at 52. Available at <<http://2bquk-8cdew6192tsu41lay8t.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/JUSTICE-Journal-2012-vol9-no1.pdf>>

Appendix A

Participants are not named in this report but are identified as follows:

Session 1:

Warrawong Community Centre
WCC1, WCC2, WCC3, WCC4

Session 2:

Wollongong Library
WL1, WL2, WL3, WL4

Session 3:

Warrawong Community Centre
WCC5, WCC6, WCC7, WCC8, WCC9

Session 4:

Port Kembla Men's Group
PK1, PK2, PK3, PK4

Session 5:

Southern Youth and Family Services,
Links to Learning (high school students)
SY1, SY2, SY3, SY4, SY5, SY6, SY7

Session 1 Warrawong Community Centre

Four young people who are housed by Southern Youth and Family Services emergency accommodation.

Participants:

- WCC1 Female, 17, just finished Year 11.
- WCC2 Male, 17, just finished Year 11.
- WCC3 Female, 22, studying social work at University and currently taking time off studies due to mental health issues.
- WCC4 Female, 18, just finished Year 11, doing legal studies.

Hypothetical

You worked at a café for 3 weeks. At end of your first shift you were told it was not paid as it was a trial. You were then told that you were on “special probation wages” of \$10 an hour. You talk to a friend working at another café who gets \$20 an hour so you ask your boss about the pay. He responds: “Do you really want the job? Because other people do.”

You don't say anything, then are asked to work the following Sunday at no extra pay. When you asked on the Monday about penalty rates, the boss lost his temper and said “Are you going to keep asking?” The following week you were told that they “don't need you” and you failed probation. You also didn't get paid for your last week of work.

Question Sheet A

WCC1

1. Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?

Yes it does.

2. If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?

Would not seek help for an issue such as not getting paid for a work trial but maybe for some more serious problem.

3. Who would you ask for help?

Ask the career's advisor and possibly ask parents for their advice.

4. Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?

No, would not use the internet.

5. Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?

Yes, from Legal Aid.

6. Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?

Aware of Legal Aid.

7. Would you go to the library for help?

Probably not.

8. Would you pay for legal assistance?

In a more serious case, prefer to go through legal aid than to pay for legal service.

WCC2

1. Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?

The participant suggested that this was quite a common problem for his age group, and while he may have heard of something similar occurring, he could not think of any specific examples involving his direct peer group.

2. If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?

Participant was concerned that he wouldn't be able to "go it alone" on something like this as it would be "their word against [his]". Would seek help because he would feel threatened by his employer.

3. Who would you ask for help?

Participant would likely contact Legal Aid, but would do own research using the internet first.

4. Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?

The participant stated that he had never faced a legal problem before, so he wouldn't be sure which sites to use, as such he would just rely on Google.

5. Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?

Participant would "more than likely" seek help from Legal Aid. Wasn't aware of other legal services.

6. Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?

Participant was not aware of any legal services other than Legal Aid.

7. Would you go to the library for help?

Participant would try to use both the library and the internet to do some background research before contacting Legal Aid.

8. Would you pay for legal assistance?

Participant “probably wouldn’t bother” in this situation considering the small amount of money involved. It “just doesn’t seem worth it”.

WCC 3

1. Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?

This problem sounds like something that could happen to her.

2. If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?

If she had this problem ‘I’d leave it.’

3. Who would you ask for help?

Would not try to solve this problem. ‘I’d probably talk to other people like friends who would probably say confront it. But I’m not good at confrontation. It’s just not in my personality.’

4. Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?

She is ‘not sure’ about whether she’d use the internet. If she did ‘I’d probably just try a Google search.’

5. Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?

If she were to seek help from a legal service she would go to the ‘Illawarra Legal Centre, [because] I know it’s here already.’

6. Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?

She is aware that the Illawarra Legal Centre provides free legal services ‘through [studying] social work but if I wasn’t, probably not.’

7. Would you go to the library for help?

She would not go to the library for help.

8. Would you pay for legal assistance

She might pay for legal services ‘depending on the problem. If it was a tenancy issue I probably would, because it would be affecting my life. Or if it was a family or relationship issue.’

WCC 4

1. Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?

Yes. Not personally, see it happening.

2. If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?

Seek help, ask around if anyone knew anything.

3. Who would you ask for help?
Parents, teacher (legal studies)

4. Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?
Yeah, Google – see what comes up. Facebook page of the café

5. Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?
Maybe, if you knew one – next door (ILC). Might just walk away.

6. Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?
No, wouldn't know what's free.

7. Would you go to the library for help?
No.

8. Would you pay for legal assistance
No, not worth it.

Online Search Session

WCC1

Participant was unaware of state jurisdictions and surfed sites such as 'Legal Aid Queensland' etc.

Found 'Youth Law' site very difficult to use, there was a lack of clarity and the site had not been updated in a while.

A general search of rights of children was useful for more common law violations but since the scenario was for pay of a trial, there was less information that came up initially.

WCC2

Participant first started Googling fairly ambiguous phrases such as "legal help work/pay/ fired; this failed to turn up anything of any real relevance with most of the material being from other jurisdictions. The participant then headed to the Legal Aid website where he did discover a few online "fact sheets" which helped.

After some "random searching" I directed the participant to the 2 prescribed websites.

Find Legal Answers:

The participant stated that the home page was "quite overwhelming" and when he first opened the page he was visibly intimidated by the sheer volume of information presented on the page. Once overcoming his initial shock however, he found the site easy to navigate and quickly located the relevant information. A lot of the links on the site took him back to electronic pamphlets on the legal aid website. He quickly located all the relevant information that was required to solve his problem. Also, through Find Legal Answers he was able to locate the Fair Work Ombudsman website. Overall he found this website very helpful.

'Youth Law' site:

The first word out of his mouth was “condescending”; the “childish” cartoons and bright colours came across as patronising as opposed to engaging for someone his age. The layout of the website made it hard to navigate, it didn’t seem to have been updated in some time and there was a distinct lack of useful information. He found it was useless and that he would never use it.

WCC3

WCC3 types ‘should I get paid’ into a Google search. Google’s predictive word function provided the words ‘for a work trial’ to finish the sentence. WCC3 searches using this phrase. WCC3 clicks on the first website that appeared in the search results which was the Fair Work Ombudsman <http://www.fairwork.gov.au/pay/unpaid-work/unpaid-trials>. The website has information on unpaid trials.

WCC3 sees on the website and reads aloud that you don’t need to be paid if ‘a brief trial was reasonable to demonstrate skills.’

WCC3 comments ‘that’s fair enough.’

WCC3 returns to the search results and selects the third search result, a website hosted by the NSW Government called Industrial Relations: http://www.youngpeopleatwork.nsw.gov.au/irypw/Got_the_job/Trial_work.page.

WCC3 is impressed with the website and comments ‘this website has even got tips on what you should keep like the job advertisement, names and phone numbers of witnesses.’

WCC3 returns to the search results and selects the fourth option, a ‘Youth Law’ website that provides information on pay issues:

WCC3 comments that ‘this website looks ridiculous. Just saying.’

WCC3 comments ‘that’s good you can actually change the state you are in’ to get information relevant to your location.

WCC3 clicks to change the location to NSW.

WCC3 clicks the link below the heading ‘How do I know if I’m being paid the right amount?’

The link provided beneath this heading, is out of date and the page cannot be found.

WCC3 comments that ‘Youth Law’ website ‘has some good stuff’ but it is difficult to ‘get past the layout.’

WCC3 notes that the website says the same thing as on the NSW Government Industrial Relations website, regarding what should be kept to prove you worked that job, eg the job advertisement, names of witnesses who saw you working that day.

WCC3 does a new Google search for the ‘Illawarra Legal Centre.’

WCC3 briefly looks at the headings on the Illawarra Legal Centre website, under ‘General Law’ however does not see anything she finds relevant and exits the page.

WCC3 does a new Google search for ‘wage calculator.’ Again the Google predictive function operates to finish the search, this time with ‘wage calculator Fair Work.’

WCC3 clicks on the link to the Fair Work pay calculator located on the Fair Work Ombudsman website.

WCC3 enters details, such as the hypothetical occupation (café worker) and age, and is given the legal wage, including variations for weekends and public holidays.

WCC3 does one last Google search for ‘find legal answers’ to locate the website (hosted by the NSW State Library) recommended to the group by the Research Supervisor.

WCC3 clicks on the website and the tab ‘work and employment’ then ‘wages and entitlements.’ WCC3 clicks on the link provided to NSW Justice.

WCC3 comments ‘it just gives links to a whole bunch of different websites, where to go for different things. That’s alright.’

Out of all the websites, WCC3 comments that the Fair Work Ombudsman site was WCC3’s favourite, ‘that one was really helpful.’

WCC4

GOOGLE:

What to do if not getting paid minimum wage

Opened 'pay' – Fair Work Ombudsman.

Found UK Website – indirect.gov.uk – which provided phone number.

Switched back to Fair Work Ombudsman.

Clicked on:

Overview

Agreements

Awards - how can we help you

National minimum wage orders

National employment scheme

Fairwork.gov.au

How we help you

Unpaid work?

Pay Guides

Took a while to find Hospitality industry award

Fairwork.gov.au has resources and a test for young workers needing help.

National minimum wage orders 2015

\$17.29 per hour full time for an adult

Had to click through several things to find this fact.

FWC

National Employment Standards

Statement from Fair Work Ombudsman.

Student suggested trying their twitter page so she could tweet them a question.

Also online training

Find Legal Answers State Library

Lots of text

Work and employment

Wages and links to ombudsman

Lawaccess.nsw.gov.au

rights to wages and entitlement: what are my entitlements if not getting paid

starting a court case?

Talk to employer

Another case study

Found hotline: GEERS

Department of Employment website

1300 numbers to call

20 Minute limitations "everyone"

Although some people preferenced.

Looking at different opinions

Law Society

Bar association

WCC4 student suggested she would like to call someone first, and explain that you've been under paid wages

Fair Work Ombudsman – doesn't investigate every complaint

Unfair dismissals

Mediation

\$17.29 found again

Law Access Number

Speak to someone else

WCC4 comments that \$20 an hour "threatening".

Finds ABC article on minimum wages to reduce poverty

Legal studies had learnt about wages

Another article about \$4 an hour pay in New Jersey (USA)

Opinion pieces: ABC – have your say

Twitter/facebook

Posting on page etc.

'Youth Law' Website: employment, legal advice: A legal advice inquiry site – submit your problem, get receipt next business day. Makes it clear it will not help with assignments.

A legal advice inquiry site doesn't explain how old a young person is? Up to 18 or 21?

Possibly age is under 25, assume person in situation is 18.

WCC4 didn't like website, small font and childish images and pictures.

Lots of links - not much information about what they are.

Not updated enough (many out of date things)

Bad/belittling jokes etc.

Unfair Dismissal links: Fair Work Ombudsman, Fair Work Commission, Law Society, Fair Work Act.

21 days after dismissal

6 months at least (so doesn't apply to us)

Worked out that it isn't an unfair dismissal case as only worked for a few weeks.

Minimum wage advice: employerline.com.au

1300 734 895

WCC4 preferred the Fairwork website. "Information that doesn't make you feel stupid"

Thought 'Youth Law' was childish and not helpful.

Find Legal Answers was okay, but links involved mainly back to the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Also too much writing and links.

Question Sheet B

WCC1

1. Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

Yes, researching the issue online was really useful as it provided information on how much the minimum wage is etc. The pay calculator was also great.

2. Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

Yes, would see someone instead of not doing anything about it.

3. Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

Would get help from a lawyer if the process was not a lengthy one.

4. What was good about using this site?

Preferred find legal answers as it provided a pay calculator and the information was easy to find.

5. Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

Yes, whenever the site had too much information, this discouraged continuation of the site.

6. Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

Yes, would have a look at it in the future.

7. Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

Prefer face-to-face interactions to online researching.

Recommendations: personalised services such as the use of a pay calculator, which are catered from individual needs, would encourage use of websites.

WCC2

1. Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

Absolutely” The participant stated that he had a general idea before of how he would deal with said problem, but now feels as if he knows exactly what he will need to do and, further, he knows the timeframe within which he will need to lodge a complaint.

2. Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

The participant stated that his approach hasn't really changed, just that he's more confident and “sure” about his position and rights.

3. Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

Yes...” The participant thought that realistically (with the information obtained through Find Legal Answers) he would be able to handle the issue himself, but he would prefer to have a lawyer by his side to make sure everything is done properly.

4. What was good about using the site?

Find Legal Answers: The layout was very clear and concise, the website was easy to navigate and the relevant information was all available on the one website.

'Youth Law' website: Found the whole experience of using this site very condescending and frustrating, didn't enjoy being "spoken down to" by the site. It also seemed as if there was scant useful information available, information presented was broad and "dumbed down".

5. Were there any that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

Find Legal Answers: No complaints.

'Youth Law' website: Found the whole experience of using this site very condescending and frustrating, didn't enjoy being "spoken down to" by the site. It also seemed as if there was scant useful information available, information presented was broad and "dumbed down".

6. Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

Participant would use Find Legal Answers, would not use 'Youth Law' site.

7. Any other comment, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

It would be better if the main screen was less crowded and less "overwhelming" than Find Legal Answers but websites also need to be less informal than 'Youth Law' site. A good website would provide all the information of Find Legal Answers without the clutter.

WCC3

1. Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

WCC3 says she does know more about how to deal with this problem than she did before.

2. Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

In regards to whether WCC3 would change her approach to this problem after looking for information online, WCC3 says 'yes I definitely would. I'd actually be more confident to confront that employer or that business.'

3. Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

WCC3 would 'probably not' seek help from a lawyer.

4. What was good about using this site?

WCC3 comments that the Fair Trading website 'had a lot of information that was put simply – it was simple. And it had the wage calculator.'

WCC3 comments that the 'Youth Law' website 'layout was cringe worthy. Are you for real?'

WCC3 comments that the Find Legal Answers (State Library) website was 'good, it wasn't really specific but took me to a few other websites.'

5. Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

WCC3 comments that "Youth Law' website sucked. It had very very simple information and it just gave the information I had previously read on Fair Trading. If I went to 'Youth Law' first it would have been helpful but I got a lot more from Fair Trading.'

6. Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

If WCC3 had a real legal problem WCC3 would use the following websites:

- a. Fair Trading: 'I would yes.'
- b. 'Youth Law': 'probably not.'
- c. Find Legal Answers: 'yeah I would use that one.'

7. Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

WCC3 says that in terms of website design and / or information provided are 'if you are going to design a website, use big bold headings specific to each scenario – every person [looking for information] is going to be different but you could have a general scenario. [With the language] don't use words that are too simple because you'll make the person looking for information feel stupid.'

WCC4

1. Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

Yes – for sure

2. Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information? Before wouldn't have done much – too hard for young people.

3. Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

Maybe – if nothing else worked.

4. What was good about using the site?

Not much – just links – outdated

5. Were there any that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

Yes.

6. Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

Try – links better than the site.

7. Any other comment, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

Easy links, nicely set out, broken up easily.

Have a young workers/students page. Good to have a pay calculator

Have example on website of what an unpaid trial would look like.

Appendix B

Session 2 Wollongong Library

Four participants, regular library users who had seen our advertisement.

Participants:

- WL1, female, 68, Australian, social worker (recently retired due to illness). Bachelor of Arts, Diploma in Social Work, Masters in Arts (Australian Lit Attended Sydney University for all qualifications.
- WL2, male, Indian born, science graduate with PhD. Extremely competent with the use of computers and the internet.
- WL3, male, 43 years old, unemployed (had a previous career in nursing before being, in his words “indefinitely suspended”), local Wollongong resident.
- WL4, male, 60s, US born, past work experience in labouring and day care. A Masters degree in social policy and social work, currently working on a PhD in oral history.

Hypothetical

New neighbours moved in next door recently. They are very noisy and have also damaged the fence between your properties. You have tried talking to them to ask them to be quieter but they have been hostile to you since then and have continued to have loud parties late at night.

Question Sheet A

WL1

1. Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?
Yes, definitely

2. If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?
Initially I would try to solve the problem myself by talking to the neighbours. I actually had a situation similar to this and it was quite scary as they were completely unapproachable. If it got too bad, like that situation I would seek help.

3. Who would you ask for help?
I would probably ring the council first and make a complaint and ask if they could tell me what my options were. If they were a tenant I would also ring their landlord and make a complaint. If they were ever threatening or violent I would ring the police. If they were just having noisy parties (and were not threatening) I would leave the police as a last resort. Once you call the police on them it deteriorates any relationship you had with them or chance to talk to them.

4. Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?
I don't know. It wouldn't be my first thought.

5. Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?
I would go to the Illawarra Legal Centre. I have gone to them in the past and had a very good experience. They were very helpful which built my confidence in their services.

6. Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?

Illawarra Legal Centre

7. Would you go to the library for help?

Yes maybe but it wouldn't be my first choice when looking for help.

8. Would you pay for legal assistance

If I absolutely had to pay for legal assistance I would, but only as a last resort. I have had to pay for a lawyer before and it actually worked out well.

WL2

1. Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?

Yes this is a common issue.

2. If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?

I would start out trying to solve on my own by writing a letter to the neighbour, but at a certain point I would get the police involved.

3. Who would you ask for help?

I would ask for help from police as a last resort, however prior to this I would get some free legal advice with legal aid.

4. Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?

Yes, google search.

5. Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?

Legal aid or a private law firm.

6. Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?

Legal Aid

7. Would you go to the library for help?

I would prefer to do an internet search and if anything came up that I could only find in hard copy at the library I would then go to find it.

8. Would you pay for legal assistance?

If it became a major issue I would pay for legal assistance

WL3

1. Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?

Yes, this sounds like a very common issue.

2. If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?

The participant said that at first he would try to solve the issue by speaking in person to the neighbours and would, if they could, call the neighbour's landlord to complain.

3. Who would you ask for help?

Participant would try to call the council or they might try Department of Housing if they

believed it was public housing. Also mentioned that he might try calling the law society.

4. Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?

Would “definitely” use the internet. Would probably just “Google it”. Did mention that he would look for the Illawarra Legal Centre website.

5. Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which ones?

Participant stated that he would attempt to book an appointment with Illawarra Legal Centre.

6. Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?

Illawarra Legal Centre, “Law Society”, Tenants Union... may try to get a free first appointment with a solicitor.

7. Would you go to library for help?

Yes, the participant would use the library to look up relevant books that may be of assistance.

8. Would you pay for legal assistance?

“No, I wouldn’t need a QC to deal with a dispute with a neighbour”

WL4

1. Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?

Yes, WL4 had friends who had similar issues with noisy neighbours. WL4 himself had a much more severe problem of delinquent teens stealing from his house and daughter who was the same age as the neighbours’ girls. This was about 20 years ago.

2. If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?

Yes, in WL4’s case he went next door “backed up” by another neighbour after another serious theft. According to the neighbour who went with him he sounded very authoritative and stern, though WL4 admitted later he was just putting it on. It still didn’t solve the issue anyway, they told him to leave.

3. Who would you ask for help?

He asked the neighbour for help. Afterwards WL4 assumed the only other avenue to pursue would be to contact the police and did not even consider it to be a legally relevant issue in any other sense. WL4 however did not contact the police and said that he would never do so, he would never “be a dog”.

4. Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?

No, WL4 couldn’t afford Internet access at the time and now only has access to the web because of going to university.

5. Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which ones?

No, he wouldn’t think of it at all—not for this kind of situation (noisy, disrespectful neighbours).

6. Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?

Yes, WL4 was aware of Legal Aid as he and his partner sought help after the loss of their house due to debts, which were due to his partner getting cancer and WL4 not being able

to find enough work. They were deeply unsatisfied as Legal Aid said there was nothing they could do. He said he would not go back again.

7. Would you go to library for help?

WL4 wouldn't go to the library for anything as he feels he has all the resources he needs at the university. He did not consider the library could be of help either he just saw it as free computer access for people like his partner (who regularly uses libraries for this purpose).

8. Would you pay for legal assistance?

Probably not, maybe a \$5-10 fee for information but WL4 would never hire a lawyer.

Online search session

WL1

Student researcher brought up Google search to start the session

WL1: "Let me think about what I can put on Google". Was hesitant when typing as she was still thinking about what to write. Finally searched 'help with noise from neighbours'

The first 10 results included pages from the US and UK

WL1: "It's all getting too far away"

[WL1 recognised that they were foreign pages. WL1 was looking for local pages that said Wollongong or Sydney in them]

WL1 ended up choosing the first result that said 'dealing with neighbourhood noise' which was the NSW Environment Protection Authority (NSW EPA)

WL1: "oh, I didn't think of going to the EPA..."

WL1 scanned the page: "It just tells you all the obvious things, like talking to neighbours, going to the council....oh what's the Community Justice Centre (CJC)?"

WL1 clicked on CJC hyperlink but the link was invalid and showed an error message.

Computer wouldn't let WL1 click back arrow to get back to EPA website.

WL1 ended up closing the Internet window [WL1 was mildly frustrated but not quite put off from continuing the search just yet].

Student researcher opened Google to start again

WL1 was unsure what to search and hesitated when typing again and eventually settled on searching for 'Community Justice Centre'

WL1 clicked on CJC NSW link [she specifically chose NSW result]

WL1: "Oh mediation is free, I didn't know you could get free mediation. That would be helpful."

WL1 noticed phone number in top left hand corner

"Contact details are really important on websites, especially when you can't find the right information" [WL1 indicated that at this point she would call that number in a real life situation and may not need to continue the internet search]

WL1 went back to the Google search results and clicked on a result that took her to a University of Wollongong webpage that had legal factsheets and links to other sites. WL1 examined page for a few seconds.

WL1: "oh it links to the Illawarra Legal Centre....and to Fair Trading, I've gone to them before"[WL1 explained that she went to them for an unrelated matter and they wouldn't be relevant in this situation]. WL1 settled on clicking on the Law Access link but it didn't work

(invalid link) so went back to UOW page.

WL1: "This page is good because it has a lot of information on it but it's very confusing and not very clear about where each link takes you or what you're going to find there. I don't know which one (link) is relevant to me and which one to choose."

WL1 went back to Google search page and searched 'help with noisy neighbours'

WL1 chooses NSW Police website and get to the make a complaint page which refers her to the EPA page again for more information.

WL1: "I'm still not sure who is better to go to in this situation, all of this information is very general. I think I would give up at this point in real life, I usually don't stay on the internet for very long and just give up."

[WL1 says she will keep going out of interest and because we have more time left and she feels like she should try to test out the websites we haven't gotten to yet. I advise her that she doesn't have to but she insists]

Directed to Find Legal Answers (State Library website)

WL1 clicks on 'Neighbours, Housing and the Environment' link and then 'noise'

WL1: "this looks like the right one"

WL1 chooses link that leads her to the 'Neighbours and the Law' handbook and skim reads the chapter 'Disputes and how to resolve them'

WL1: "This sounds pretty good"

WL1 notices it links back to the CJC website with information on a mediator and says again that she would seriously consider this as an option if she were in this situation and that this service is very useful

- Note that WL1 probably would have stopped the internet search once she found the Legal Aid number and then again before visiting the Find Legal Answers website.
- We did not make it on to the Law Access page, partly because of time and partly because the link to the page didn't work earlier so WL1 did not bother looking for the website via Google

WL2

The participant's initial google search was very broad, typing in 'NSW neighbour problem legal help' into the search engine however this did produce links to a series of helpful websites.

Initially WL2 found the NSW law society website which he was very positive about. He noted that he liked that they showed the option of mediation was available. He then went to the NSW police force website in which he categorised this dispute as needing to involve 'crime stoppers'.

WL2 went to the Find legal answers website and didn't appear to find it daunting that there was a lot of information, he read the pamphlet that was given and said it was very informative. He appeared to have a good sense of how to categorise this legal issue, linking it to an issue of freehold land and then further as a nuisance issue.

In general WL2 appeared to be more focused in finding mediums which he can complain via as opposed to finding out legal information about disputes with neighbours. He did also appear quite hesitant to criticise the websites.

WL3

WL3 struggled to properly navigate the search results given during his “random searching”. He also clicked on several ads for law firms which said things like “NEED ADVICE?”. He found the tenants NSW site, but seemed to struggle to navigate it.

Overall, WL3 did not seem to find relevant information that would help him.

After some “random searching” WL3 was directed to Find Legal Answers website.

Find Legal Answers:

WL3 struggled to find any relevant information or to find his way around the website. He did find a section called “Neighbours and the Law” but had difficulty navigating it to find any relevant information.

NSW Civil & Administrative Tribunal (NCAT):

WL3 struggled with this website, stated that he didn’t think he would ever take them to NCAT. Just seemed to get frustrated with the website.

WL4

WL4 couldn’t find any links on the library page that was already up and didn’t know where to put in any search terms. I showed him how to open a new tab and that brought up the BING search engine.

WL4 then searched Neighbours legal and read through the first four to five links. He chose the first link because it looked legitimate and said NSW in the title. The link was to the site Find Legal Answers, which was the site I was to direct him to in case he couldn’t find anything. WL4 stayed only on this site for the remainder of the session.

He clicked the link to Dividing Fences (that was also a component of our hypothetical) and immediately started reading through the summary and Act that had come up.

He verbally noted that you have to pay half for fences, pay the extra if you want extra fence stuff and was particularly surprised to find you pay to lop a tree branch over your fence even if it’s your neighbours tree.

After a few paragraphs he started scrolling down to look for the relevant section. He found a heading with Disputes in it and again noted that you will have a mediation before further legal action.

He then re-read this section again and noted that NCAT was where people dealt with these issues.

WL4 then scrolled down to the tips section at the bottom of the page. He liked that there were multiple options. The first, to call police, he ruled out again because “he wasn’t a dog”, but the second point, to see a Community Justice Centre (‘CJC’) he wrote in his book.

WL4 then read the section about the advantages and disadvantages of using the law generally and seemed to appreciate the many non-legal avenues to pursue such as talking to your neighbours.

WL4 then copied down the phone number for Law Access as well as LIAC and CLC; he said he'd appreciate the face to face aspect of such advice.

WL4 then went to the links on the left and found the Animals link (also relevant to the hypothetical, a noisy dog). Again WL4 read the Act summary at the top of the page and the first few paragraphs before scrolling down to look for the relevant section—not attacks but noise and trespassing.

WL4 found information from the relevant Act and wrote down the whole name of the Act: Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 “so that I'd sound like I had authority”. It seemed that WL4 was totally uninterested in taking the neighbour to court but appreciated the technical terms as ammunition for intimidation when he went to talk to them.

WL4 then wrote down that he could go and talk to a CJC.

WL4 continued reading the act and was dismayed but unsurprised to find out that in order for him to get a noise abatement officer out and to place restrictions on the neighbour would “attract a fee and compliance costs” for him.

WL4 kept reading and liked the bit about building relationships with one's neighbours. He joked about the feral kids that stole from him and how if he tried to play music they would crank the electric bass and play over him.

WL4 noted s51 from the act, which related to no playing between 8pm and 10am and was sad to see that it included the nights before public holidays. He believed this would rob you of your public holiday.

He again noted the strong mediation theme in the comments.

WL4 said that should probably do it, but decided to go back and try a different search term anyway. He searched Neighbours Law and was surprised that the same link did not come up (actually it had because it was in purple, but WL4 didn't notice because the name was not Find Legal Answers. He thought perhaps it had brought him to the Victorian websites so he clicked on the NSW suggestion at the bottom of the page).

The same links came up and WL4 clicked the first one and was surprised to find it was the same website he'd found earlier—Find Legal Answers. He then said further searching would be pointless because he doesn't understand the technical legal stuff anyway.

Question Sheet B

WL1

1. Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

Yes, but I still didn't think any of them were specific enough. The library site [find legal answers] was probably the most helpful.

2. Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

Yes, now I would seriously consider trying ordinary things like mediation. I didn't know

that was available for neighbour disputes. I would still try hard to resolve it [possibly by mediation] before I went to council, the police or lawyers. I would try and keep communication open with my neighbours. I would now also use the library site for help, seeing as I use the library computer for internet access anyway. It's handy to know that [Find Legal Answers] exists.

3. Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

Yes as I have found them helpful in the past. In some situations it's important to go to the expert and lawyers are experts in law. Lawyers know what they're doing so it gives you confidence. They also have the force of the law behind them and can sometimes fix things up with just one letter on legal letterhead. However, I would still leave going to a lawyer as a last resort.

4. What was good about using this site?

Both Find Legal Answers was fairly straightforward and contained relevant and local [NSW] information for my hypothetical problem. It was also easy to access once I knew it existed. Whichever page told me about mediation, that one was good too; I can't remember which one though. [I'm fairly sure she was referring to the CJC NSW page, although other pages also referred to mediation as an option]

5. Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

I wanted to give up almost from the start because I was constantly trying to work out what was relevant. I was confused about how to get the right information from the websites as they were either too broad or too specific. It was helpful when they referred you on to other websites if they didn't have the right answer though.

I then asked WL1 whether she kept going because I was helping her with the computer a bit and also whether she felt obligated to keep going because of the study. She answered yes to both questions.

6. Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

Yes I would have a look at them – but mainly to get directions on where to access other help, kind of like a referral type thing. [Noting that WL1 would have just called the Legal Aid phone number once she found it and was looking for contact details from that point onwards on the websites.]

7. Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

Yes – be clear about directions to legal help/answers. Direct people to local, relevant assistance. Also, it's good to give real life advice that is not strictly legal and will help you handle the broader situation eg keep communication lines open with neighbours.

WL2

1. Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

Yes there was a lot of information available.

2. Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

Yes. I would first use the internet and search the issue and approach based on that advice.

However I would still involve the police at a certain point as I would of before, however my initial response has changed.

3. Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

Yes, however I would be more inclined to get free legal advice as opposed to paid.

4. What was good about using this site?

The law society website allowed people without a non-legal background to find out information about legal issues. The Find Legal Help website was informative. The NCAT website would be used as a last resort but still found it helpful. This website was difficult to find specific information about our legal issue. The NSW police website was helpful in showing where to go with this issue as well.

5. Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

No I found them all helpful.

6. Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

Yes

7. Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

I think that it would be useful to create a forum like website (like they have in India) whereby it acts as a form of social media for legal issues. People post their legal problems to the website and legal professionals will answer their problems, with other others expanding or negating the advice given.

WL3

1. Do you know more about how to deal with this problem than you did before you went on the website?

Found some "great" information. Definitely feel more confident about the situation now.

2. Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

"Nah, already had the same approach" stated that he wouldn't change anything.

3. Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

"Only if things got worse" stated that he would attempt mediation first and wouldn't go straight to a lawyer as he does not want to "escalate things" if he can avoid it.

4. What was good about using the site?

Find Legal Answers: It was easy to navigate and he could locate some information, would rather use the legal aid website.

NCAT: Didn't like it, found it close to impossible to navigate, couldn't locate information.

5. Were there any that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

Find Legal Answers: No, found it easy to keep going through the site, it wasn't daunting or overwhelming.

Law Stuff: Yes, the experience of using the website felt “hazy” everything was ambiguously worded and it was frustrating trying to find information.

6. Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

Participant may use Find Legal Answers, would never use NCAT, would probably prefer Legal Aid over both of them.

7. Any other comment, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

Participant would definitely rather use a website made by a community legal centre than one made by a private lawyer. “Honestly, would probably just Google it”

Would rather just speak to someone on the phone, would be good if they put a contact number on all the pages so he could just call them.

WL4

1. Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

Yes, WL4 says he definitely knows more.

2. Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

Yes, WL4 would have talked first and then if they were aggressive assumed the police were the only other option so would not taken it further. Now he realises the Community Justice Centre would be available.

3. Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

Only cops would get a lawyer.

4. What was good about using this site?

WL4 found Find Legal Answers really easily. He liked the way it was broken into sections.

WL4 said the noise section was a bit tricky because it was under pollution as in ‘noise pollution’ but still fine. He liked the options that were given at the end.

WL4 said it was all very clear and not too technical. Also the layout was simple and the links looked good but he didn't want to click to any other sites as he thought he would go “down the rabbit hole and get bogged.”

WL4 liked the “positive” line of action and that it didn't recommend consulting your council. He also liked that it talked about what seemed fair generally without legal jargon.

5. Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

No issues, though WL4 commented that the pages seemed lengthy but he said it was worth it and the highlighted and emboldened sections were helpful to navigate.

6. Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

Yeah he would good clear process.

7. Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

WL4 said it should have an official name. He also commented that he could understand his generation having trouble finding the site if they didn't know to use keywords in their search instead of whole sentences. He said that he knew to do this already from searching academic databases.

He also said that there should be a full but brief summary at the start of every page about what was on that page. The last thing he noted was that they should have a larger typeface as he needed to put on his glasses and most people his age would have trouble with it.

Appendix C

Session 3 Warrawong Community Centre

Five people who attend the community centre for its free lunch and other activities.

Participants:

- WCC5, female, 61, Scottish born (now Australian). Lives in Warrawong area. Performing artist and a secretary to pay the bills. High School to Year 10.
- WCC6, male, 52 living in Windang, unemployed. Left school aged 15 in 1978. Recently completed a Certificate 1 and Certificate 2 in Computers at TAFE and has also completed a literacy and numeracy course at TAFE. He can read but cannot write or spell well. He does not own a computer.
- WCC7, male, 63, left school at 14. Born in Brisbane, but grew up in Ballina and Wollongong. Managed caravan parks, security, cane cutter, shunter. Been in prison
- WCC8, male, 47. Born in Sydney, moved to local area in 1977. Finished school at year 10. Work: drove trucks and laboured for 7 years. Stopped work to be carer for sick mother in 1990. Disability pension since then. Has previously contacted LA line before about a legal issue and found it to be useful.
- WCC9, male, 57. From the country, near Dubbo, moved to Wollongong for more work opportunities. Worked at hospitals, worked for Shirework. Finished high school.

Hypothetical

Taking the dog out for a walk when another dog attacks it. The other dog also rips your shirt but doesn't do any major damage to you. The other owner is claiming that your dog started the fight and has injured his dog and wants you to pay the veterinary bills.

Question Sheet A

WCC5

1. Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?

Yes

2. If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?

First I would try and solve it with the owner of the other dog. If that wasn't working I would seek help.

3. Who would you ask for help?

I would probably ring the RSPCA.

4. Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?

No I wouldn't think to go on the Internet, I'm a bit of a novice with computers.

5. Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?

Illawarra Legal Centre, because it's local.

6. Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?

Illawarra Legal Centre.

7. Would you go to the library for help?

Yes, I have used the library for finding information in the past (I got brochures on a neighbor dispute).

8. Would you pay for legal assistance?

If it got to the point where I had to spend a lot of money upfront on vet bills, I'd consider it [using a lawyer to seek damages]. I would go to the Illawarra Legal Centre first though before resorting to paying for a lawyer in case I lose and then lose more money.

WCC6

1. Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?

WCC6 says this kind of problem happens all the time at Lake Illawarra, particularly along the cycleway. WCC6 recently encountered an owner with an aggressive dog on the cycleway while walking with her sister and her dog.

2. If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?

If faced with this problem, he would try and find out who the other owner was, and if they didn't tell him, would follow them to where they live, and then tell the police. WCC6 says after calling the police, who would give him an event number (implying his familiarity with police complaint processes). If he was able to find out who the person was he would check if their dog was registered, if it was not, he says the other owner would be 'double responsible' for the attack.

3. Who would you ask for help?

He would ask the police for help. Once he spoke to a ranger he would seek legal advice.

4. Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?

WCC6 says he doesn't own a computer. If he did he might try a Google search. WCC6 says if his Google search led him to Wikipedia, he would find something else, because Wikipedia is just opinion.

5. Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?

WCC6 says he would contact Legal Aid after being to the police and the ranger. He thinks the police would recommend that he seek legal advice.

6. Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?

WCC6 says he has heard that Legal Aid and the Illawarra Legal Centre provide free legal services. He has seen advertisements for Kells, which he thinks is in Albion Park, that say they provide free legal advice depending on the problem. He thinks Kells offer free legal advice on Saturday's, but after one free consultation you have to pay for extra consultations.

7. Would you go to the library for help?

WCC6 would probably go to the library to use a computer as he doesn't have his own.

8. Would you pay for legal assistance?

WCC6 says if he had to pay for legal assistance he would. However he believes that if the other person was in the wrong they would have to pay. WCC6 says the court has benefits because you can use witnesses. WCC6 says he would tell the other person that if they pay a solicitor to go to court they will likely end up paying his legal fees, and give the other person the option to settle out of court instead.

WCC7

1. Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?
No, Not really.

2. If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?
Try to seek help.

3. Who would you ask for help?
Would first speak to the people im having the issue with then go to the police.

4. Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?
No , because I can't use the internet.

5. Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?
Depends on the money involved and the seriousness of the issue.

6. Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?
Illawarra Legal Centre.

7. Would you go to the library for help?
No.

8. Would you pay for legal assistance?
No, I'm on the pension

WCC8

1. Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?
No, not specifically for dog or similar disagreement eg common assault.

2. If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?
No, would forget about it.

3. Who would you ask for help?
Law access line, phone them.

4. Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?
Yes, type in law access, find out what sort of things I can do.

5. Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?
Law access line, local courthouse for further reference, legal centre.

6. Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?
Law access line, local courthouse for further reference, legal centre, no others known.

7. Would you go to the library for help?
To access a computer and internet.

8. Would you pay for legal assistance
Not inclined for something that is relatively minor.

WCC9

1. Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?
Interactions with other dogs are common so yes this situation does sound like something that could have to someone I know.

2. If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?
Seek help for this sort of problem as a dog attack could result in serious injuries.

3. Who would you ask for help?
RSPCA and maybe go to a lawyer.

4. Would you use the Internet? If so, which sites?
Yes, possibly have a look online. No particular site, just search on google.

5. Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?
Yes, from Legal Aid.

6. Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?
Yes aware of Legal Aid and Legal Centres.

7. Would you go to the library for help?
Yes, possibly.

8. Would you pay for legal assistance?
Yes, but try and avoid paying for assistance

Online search session

WCC5

Student researcher directed J to a Google search to get started because she wasn't sure how to use the laptop.

WCC5 slowly typed in 'free legal advise' [sic] into Google and hit enter.
Read over the first few hits of the search and hesitated for 30 seconds before choosing one.
Clicked on 'help over the phone Legal Aid NSW' and scanned the page for roughly a minute [noticed the Law Access number]

"So...do I ring them? Probably not right? Because this isn't real."

Clicked back to search results and chose the result 'free legal advice' from the right side of the screen [which she was not aware were all Google Ads]. Looked through a quite bare page she clicked on from the Google Ads for a minute or so before student researcher intervened and explained what the ads were and why to avoid them.

Back to Google search. Student researcher prompted WCC5 subtly to think of more specifically relevant terms from the hypothetical to search [student researcher commented unsure how much she should have said/prompted at this stage].

WCC5 searched Google for 'legal help for dog fight'. This returned a lot of results for

criminal dog fighting rings and WCC5 read through the different results (not clicking on any links) and said “this is not what I want at all, this is about dog fighting rings”.

WCC5 then directed to Find Legal Answers. WCC5 had a quick look at the home page and didn't know what to click on. Student researcher suggested she search for something.

Searched for 'dog fights', 'dog attacks in the community', and 'dog attacks' and got no results for any of those phrases [WCC5 was getting a bit frustrated by this point].

Student researcher directed WCC5 to the Legal Aid NSW page. She had a quick look at the homepage and saw the Law Access hotline number again and indicated again that she would call it.

Used search bar to search for 'dog attacks' and got no results, then searched for 'animals' and got no relevant results

By this point it was clear WCC5 was only searching for the purposes of the study which student researcher confirmed by asking her.

WCC6

WCC6 is not very familiar with computers despite completing computer training at TAFE. He required assistance using the cursor, scrolling, returning to the search results page, and was not able to identify hyperlinks and drop down information contained on the websites viewed.

WCC6 begins looking for information by typing the words 'legal advice' into the Google search engine. He selects the third option that appeared in the search results, 'Ask A Solicitor Online.' WCC6 comments as he made this selection because the website advertised 'Questions Answered Every 9 Seconds.'

WCC6 types into the space that read 'Type Your Legal Question Here...'

WCC6 types 'I was walking my dog on a leash and my dog was attacked by an other dog being walked by its owner. My coat sleeve [sic] was also ripped by the other dog, while trying to protect my dog.'

WCC6 asks for help spelling the word attacked and comments 'sorry for being slow.' WCC6 explains he left school in 1978 when he was 15 and does not have much experience with computers.

WCC6 clicks 'Get an Answer' after typing his question and the website asks for him to enter his email address. WCC6 comments 'I don't have an email. Well this one is no good to me. It looks like it's a way to get your personal information. Why didn't they ask for that first. This is not a site I'd trust. And it says trustee at the top. More like dodgy.'

WCC6 does a second Google search using the words 'free solicitor advice.' The results are largely the same as the first search.

WCC6 clicks 'Ask' which again gave results largely the same as before.

WCC6 notes some websites advertised a 'no win no fee' service.

WCC6 clicks 'popular Q & A' from the side panel of Ask. He looks at the question 'How can I have free solicitor advice' which provides a link to ask.answers.yahoo.com.

WCC6 comments 'what that tells me is that we'll give you advice depending on what the question is, but not if you ask the wrong question. That'll put people off. Sounds like they're not really offering much.'

WCC6 returns to the search results and clicked on the link to the Legal Advisory Service which advertises 'Free Legal Advice': <http://legaladvisory.com.au/>.

WCC6 notes that the site offered 24 hour help, 7 days a week, 'but it says you have to call.' He comments that he does not have access to a phone with credit, but 'I'd probably go to my mum's place.'

WCC6 does not notice that the website is specific to Queensland.

WCC6 contemplates the website and says 'it's not very helpful- it doesn't make you want to run out and look for advice or find advice.'

Directed to Legal Aid NSW website <http://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/>

WCC6 clicks the link 'Get legal help.' He comments 'see this one says over the phone again.'

WCC6 looks at the tab 'What we do' that divides legal information into different categories. He asks 'what would this come under civil or criminal? It's a dog so civil law probably.'

WCC6 clicks the link to 'Civil law' and commented 'that's sort of like tenancy issues, disputes, unpaid fines, discrimination. So I'll go back and see what this says about criminal.'

WCC6 has difficulty navigating back to the home page. WCC6 returns to the tab 'Get legal help' and clicks 'legal advice.' He comments 'it's a bit confusing. They say "what is legal advice?" Its asking me what legal advice is!'

WCC6 is frustrated and not sure how to proceed – prompted to look at the factsheets. WCC6 considers the list of recommended topics and comments that they do not look relevant.

WCC6 tries a keyword search with the words 'dog attack' [sic].

WCC6 comments: "They'll probably say right, pay \$1.50 now."

WCC6 reads that the website 'only retrieves single words' and comments 'so I'll try bite or bit. That's a bit dodgy, no thanks.' WCC6 is not interested in searching for information past this point.

"It seems like they're not interested unless you've got dosh or a credit card or unless they got you in the office, and a lot of people get disheartened about it.

"They want all your personal information- I'm getting disheartened. All I can see is they're not giving you much advice over [the internet] unless you got your credit card – or getting in there to their office. It's discouraging, I'd rather come here [to the Warrawong Community Centre] and talk to Maxyne [Centre coordinator]."

WCC6 mentions clown phobia and says [about computers] 'this is my clown.'

WCC6 directed to the State Library Find Legal Answers website, and requires assistance, identifying where to click and how to scroll down the page.

"They're trying to let me know what different things they have like family, neighbor dispute – I'm still not sure what it would go under. Neighbours or police and crime? I'd say it would have to be neighbours because family looks like domestic violence and neighbours is disputes. I'll put in dog attack [into the search] and see what they say."

The search results state: 'No records.'

WCC6 comments: "Surely they have dog attacks reported."

"I'd probably stop looking about now. Then I'd have to walk into the office. That's how they set it up. If I had of phoned they'd say 'yeah okay, make an appointment and come into the office.' I'd probably just wait until the next day [after the dog attack] and come here [to the Warrawong Community Centre] and see Maxyne or Donna. But people would get to this point and they wouldn't know to see Maxyne.' I ask who Donna is and WCC6 explains "Donna serves the food. She is in charge of the kitchen."

"It's just discouraging. Unless I had money then I'd pursue it further. I'm sure if I got on the phone they'd talk to me about dog attacks but not here [WCC6 points to the website]. There's not enough information to get me curious."

WCC7

General comments/observations: WCC7 struggled with reading and writing; was computer illiterate: didn't know spacebar, backspace or what Google was; couldn't read the size of the font.

Search Process: WCC7 states that it would 'take an hour to fill out' the search question. Wanted to type 'find animal attack', then decided to change it to 'dog attack' to be more specific.

WCC7 then changed his mind and decided to search 'What is the law on dog attacks with each other'.

OLG.nsw.gov.au came up, he clicked on this and found it not very useful commenting: "What's this got to do with dog attacks though?" and "This make no sense."

Directed to Find Legal Answers: commented that there was nothing he could use on there. He said maybe he could use the 'crime and police power' heading, but then decided this was irrelevant.

He read all the headings and found nothing."

Stated: "I wouldn't know where to go."

Directed to Law Access NSW website: WCC7 did not want to continue, and chose not to look at this page. Ended session.

WCC8

Could not find internet explorer – had to be shown that Google Chrome was the same and could be used.

Google search: started with term 'dogbite' (no space, did not know how to do space).

Results not helpful.

Tried another google search:

Term: 'dogbitethelaw' (no spaces again)

Google auto corrected and displayed results for 'dog bite the law'

First result displayed was the Office of Local Government (OLG) page.

OLG Site:

Lots of information about dog offences with subheadings.

Comment: "Easy to use and fathom."

The legal access line was listed in the first paragraph.

"I would call the line for assistance to speak to someone about it."

He believed the extra information listed about penalties was good background to have.

He did not want just a number to call and did like the extra information and the table layout.

Law Access Flyer:

Asked to try to find the Law Access page. Google searched 'lawaccline'.

No results.

Closed browser to start a new Google search.

New search: 'lawacc'

Did not click search as Google auto displays results from what has been typed so far.

Law Access page was suggested from the auto display function.

Clicked a link listed under the Law Access main result: this page was a PDF flyer for Law Access.

From this page he would call the number listed as there was no information specific to the problem.

Directed to the Law Access homepage.

WCC8 said he was inclined to call the Law Access number listed at the top of the page rather than search any further.

He examined the 'popular content' table on the right hand side of the page but did not click on any of the links as they did not relate to dog attacks.

"I cannot see anything further so would call the number."

Clicked 'legal dictionary' link.

WCC8 noted that nothing listed about dog attacks so not useful and would therefore call someone.

Student Researcher prompted WCC8 to use the search bar at the top of the page to search the Law Access site internally.

Searched for 'dogbite' [sic].

No results.

Would therefore call the number

Searched for 'dogatack' [sic].

No results.

Student Researcher comments: it was clear the Law Access site would be more useful if it had predictive text to suggest or determine what someone meant when they entered a search term without spaces or with a spelling error.

WCC9

WCC9 had trouble using computers and walked out of this experience wanting to improve his knowledge on computer/ Internet use.

Distracted by the advertisements from law firms, effective use of pop-up 'chat with a lawyer' to entice people.

He found the whole searching process very tedious and just wanted to know if he had a claim or not.

He preferred the 'Shine Lawyers' site and was enthusiastic about the 'no win no fee' promotion. He was hesitant to continue searching for answers to the legal problem so was satisfied with the first site that came up on Google.

Question sheet B

WCC5

1. Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

Maybe if I'd made that phone call [to Law Access via Legal Aid website], but other than that no.

2. Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

I would leave my approach as it is, the Internet didn't provide any new or good information.

3. Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

If I had it, yeah.

4. What was good about using this site?

Only finding that phone number [to Law Access via Legal Aid website], everything else was useless.

5. Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

Yeah as soon as I found that number I would have stopped and just rang that. I kept going because of the study [did not tell me this until after the session ended].

6. Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

No, they're unusable.

7. Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

Give specific information on what your rights are in a matter. Maybe provide contact details to call someone. Maybe even have a chat room with someone to help you or with people going through the same thing.

Student researcher comments:

- WCC5 had a bit of trouble using the laptop but could complete basic functions like typing and scrolling fairly well once she was used to it [probably helped by her job as a secretary for various companies which required computer use]
- WCC5 still had a bit of trouble with Internet searching both with navigating Google and the websites and with thinking of the right keywords or sentences to search for.
- WCC5 seemed to prefer contacting someone for an answer because she wasn't sure how to get the right information from the websites herself.
- She felt that if she contacted someone she would know she was getting the right information and not just guessing

1. Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

WCC6 says he does not know more about how to deal with the problem than before he went to the websites. WCC6 says if faced with this problem he would just come to Warrawong Community Centre, where the research session was held. WCC6 explains that this is because he doesn't know much about computers. WCC6 says he has done a computer course and gotten his Certificate 1 and Certificate 2 through TAFE, but he still doesn't know how to do much on the computer. WCC6 says the only reason he got his Certificates is because there was a teacher explaining what to do as he sat in class. WCC6 says that out of the computer classes he is hopeless. WCC6 says he can read but can't spell very well. He compares himself with computers to the phobia people have with clowns, 'as soon as something goes wrong . . . I start to panic.'

2. Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

WCC6 says that after his unsuccessful attempts to use the internet, he would not seek legal information online. Instead he would come to the Warrawong Community Centre and speak to someone who knows more about computers.

3. Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

WCC6 says the websites offering free advice seemed to be a ploy to get people to their office where they'd have to pay for more information. WCC6 says you can see why the Americans hate solicitors.

4. What was good about using this site?

WCC6 says there is nothing good that he can recommend about using the websites.

5. Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

WCC6 says he wanted to give up on all the websites he looked at because they were not giving him the advice or information he needed. He says that after looking at the websites, he was left with more questions than answers. He says in reality he would see his sister, who is a police officer, and she would give him the advice he needed.

6. Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

WCC6 says that in reality he could not afford to use the websites. He has neither a computer nor internet access. WCC6 says 'I don't think there's any such thing as real free legal advice.'

7. Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

In relation to website design and content WCC6 comments:

- Make websites easier for laymen.
- Legal Aid should have a bigger variety of topics on their websites.
- Make it easier for normal people to understand the information.

WCC6's final comment is that he knows 'a little bit about law, but some people don't know anything and get sucked into coming into an office and paying.'

WCC7

1. Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

No, working the computer was difficult.

2. Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

No.

3. Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

Depends on how much money you had to spend.

4. What was good about using this site?

No.

5. Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

No, because I was learning something new about computers and the internet.

6. Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

No.

7. Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

More specific headings like 'laws pertaining to dog attacks'

WCC8

1. Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

Office of Local Government site: yes, what I need to do as far as the law is concerned. Legal Access site: only a tiny bit, nothing specific, would use the phone number but could get this number elsewhere.

2. Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

Without computer would just call the LA line. Would still just call the line even with the website.

3. Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

Yes, speak to one on the phone from LA.

4. What was good about using this site?

OLG site: Basic information, not complex information. LA site: Popular content table.

5. Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

Yes, could not find relevant information.

6. Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

Would call the number because could not find answers on the website.

7. Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

Info lines (phone lines) with detailed information. More detailed information on the page. Improving the search so it suggests results after searches are made with phrases containing typos, language appropriate site (did not see the scrolling bar with different languages)

WCC9

1. Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

Yes, know more about my rights.

2. Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

Yes, would talk to 'Shine Lawyers'.

3. Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

Yes.

4. What was good about using this site?

The 'no win no fee' is great and the content was easily accessible.

5. Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

No.

6. Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

Yes I would.

7. Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

There is nothing catered for people that do not have an idea about law such as linking laws etc to facts about a case. WCC9 struggled to come up with search terms for this scenario and we found limited information for this problem. Issues such as these discouraged WCC9 from using legal services.

Appendix D

Session 4 Port Kembla Men's Group

Four men with a background in trades, regularly attend Port Kembla Community Project for the men's group.

Participants:

- PK1, male, 73, Australian, lives Port Kembla area. Plumber. Attended Blacktown High School up until around year 8.
- PK2, male, 64. Born Italy, came to Australia in 1954. Left school in Year 10 to do apprenticeship. Electrician, now retired. Volunteers at the Men's Group, Botanic Gardens and Greenhouse Park.
- K3, male, 57. Born and grew up in Wollongong. HSC, numerous TAFE certificates. Worked at Bluescope for 30+ years, recently finished there.
- PK4, male, 65. Born and grew up in Wollongong. Left school in Year 8. Worked as metal manufacturer.

Hypothetical

You are mowing the lawn when your mower flicks a rock into a car passing by, smashing its window. Owner of the car sends a letter of demand claiming you owe him damages for the broken window.

Question Sheet A

PK1

1. Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?
Yes, possibly.

2. If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?
I would try and solve it myself first by talking to him. If I didn't think I was at fault and talking was getting me nowhere I would just tell him to take me to court.

3. Who would you ask for help?
If it got to legal proceedings I'd get help. I'd go to a friend that's good with legal matters. Is he a lawyer, or was he a lawyer?
PK1: No, he was a bank manager but he dealt a lot with legal stuff

4. Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?
My home laptop doesn't work and it's very frustrating. So I wouldn't really use the internet to look for help. I took two computer courses (at Warrawong and Unanderra) and I still can't use the bloody thing. I even rang Telstra and took it into the shop and spent \$128 on this thing they told me to buy and it hasn't worked.
Would you go somewhere else to use a computer and the internet?
PK1: no probably not.

5. Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?
I probably wouldn't seek legal help for this small matter, no. If they took me to court I

probably still wouldn't get legal help.
Would you get legal help if it were free?
PK1: Yes I probably would if it was free.

6. Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?
Legal Aid.

7. Would you go to the library for help?
Probably not.

8. Would you pay for legal assistance?
Not in this situation

PK2

1. Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?
Yes.

2. If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?
If not excessive, would pay for damage but if OP asks for \$1000 when it could be fixed for \$250, I'd say 'take me to court'. I'd try to negotiate – if I know I'm in the wrong I would want to sort it as long as it's a reasonable amount, a fair decision

3. Who would you ask for help?
It would be covered by house insurance – if I asked for legal advice it could end up costing more than the damage – I'd try to get free advice.

4. Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?
Possibly - not aware of sites. Don't like it when I'm asked for information – eg, 'confirm phone number'.

5. Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?
Only if free. Could ring up my lawyer but once I go in to talk to them it costs \$300.

6. Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?
Legal Aid – got to qualify. Not aware of ILC.

7. Would you go to the library for help?
Yes – use it a lot. Son in Adelaide wanted to come home and accidentally booked 2 tickets – I went to the computer bloke at the library to get help – it took an hour just to find the right icon to click on to sort it.

8. Would you pay for legal assistance?
Yes.

PK3

1 .Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?
Yes – probable victim of scenario in the past.

2. If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?

House insurance policy.

3. Who would you ask for help?

Probably not worth going to lawyer. First free session from private legal service or legal aid for general information.

4. Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?

Not something I'd think of straight away. Trust of sites low, would not put much faith in them. Many sites are forums and not reliable. Potentially more trust if the site is legit.

5. Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?

Kells at Dapto – free session.

6. Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?

Kells at Dapto. Legal Aid NSW – not sure about eligibility.

7. Would you go to the library for help?

Possibly.

8. Would you pay for legal assistance?

Try to negotiate with the party first. Depends on advice from Kells or Legal Aid.

PK4

1. Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?

Yes.

2. If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?

Straight to solicitor.

3. Who would you ask for help?

Legal aid.

4. Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?

No.

5. Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?

Solicitor or legal aid.

6. Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?

Legal aid.

7. Would you go to the library for help?

No because not a good reader

8. Would you pay for legal assistance

Yes, If it got serious.

Online search session

PK1

Student brought up the Google search page to start

PK1 took a few minutes to get used to the laptop and the track pad to move the mouse

PK1 settled on searching for 'legal aid' and had a bit of trouble finding the keys on the keyboard

I had to help direct PK1 to use the track pad to navigate around the screen and then how to click on a search result,

PK1 chose to click on NSW Legal Aid website noticed a bold phone number almost immediately

PK1: "Maybe we should ring up first?"

[At this point in real life PK1 would have given up on the computer and just rang the Legal Aid number. I asked if he would like to stop but PK1 wanted to continue]

PK1 clicked on 'Facts and Resources' on Legal Aid webpage but couldn't scroll down the page as he was unsure how to use the laptop track pad

PK1: "We've come to a dead end here"

PK1 looked to me for help so I directed him to look to the side bar menu and see what he thought he might want to look at. PK1 took a few second to decide before clicking on 'Traffic and Driving'.

PK1 read through page for a few seconds and said "no, that's not the right one, We'll have to go back I think" [Note that PK1 uses 'we'll' instead of 'I'll' – I take this to indicate he wouldn't have gotten here without my help and would in real life have given up already]

I then directed him to Find Legal Answers [to save time I just brought it up ready for him to look at rather than let him find it himself]

PK1 took a minute to look over the whole front page.

Clicked on heading 'Cars and Driving' and then 'Accidents, Compensation and Insurance'.

PK1 then went back to 'Cars and Driving' and then forward again to 'Accidents, Compensation and Insurance' [seemed to be going around in circles and unsure if he was on the right page].

PK1 had trouble using the trackpad to scroll down the page so I assisted him.

PK1 clicked on the 'insurance' link and had a look at that page.

PK1: "mmm we don't seem to be getting to where we need to go".

I directed PK1 to Law Access's homepage [Again, I brought up this page so it was ready for PK1 to look at].

PK1 looked at page for a minute and brought the mouse over the 'my legal problem is' tab.

He hovered the mouse over the tab for a few seconds before he realised he had to click on it.

He skim read the page that came up and said, "hmm it doesn't give me examples of what my legal problem is" and took his hands off the keyboard.

I suggested maybe he could search for his problem in the search bar up the top of the page He went to search bar slowly and hesitated about what to type, eventually settling on searching 'compensation'.

He looked at the first result that said 'consumers: resolve a problem' and said, "that might be

it, resolve a problem.” I indicated that link was for consumer law and he moved on. After 2 more minutes of looking at the results page PK1 decided he couldn’t find anything useful.

Student comments: I must note that the assistance I gave PK1 with the computer was partly because the session would have stalled/ended without it, and partly because I was curious to see if he could find an answer at all even with help. He did appear to be a bit skeptical about the exercise, but overall willing to give the research a go. Although it is clear PK1 was mostly interested in participating so he could practice his computer skills, rather than from a belief he could find any helpful information about the hypothetical.

PK2

Google – typed ‘leagal’ – Legal Aid NSW came up – added ‘w’ – got Wollongong
Added ‘free advice’ – didn’t like results

Clicked on Legal Aid Wollongong – clicked Find a Service – map came up

- General page
- Looked for about a minute or so
- Clicked ‘legal advice’ at bottom of page
- Comment: “It keeps sending you somewhere else. Suppose could go to ‘help over the phone’ – I know, so far, what’s happening, you just run around in circles, end up coming back to seeing the same stuff again.
- ‘What you need is, you get to ask a question and you don’t get 15 pages of stuff. I want ‘ask a question’ as an option.”

On Legal Aid NSW page, likes the drop menus at the top, not the menus down the side – likes to look at the options without clicking on links.

Tried search: ‘stone hit car / advice’ – no relevant results, references to family violence links.
“It wasn’t any help. It could ask me for more detail. Sometimes you put one thing in and get reams of stuff you don’t want”.

Find Legal Answers

“It’s got a lot there. From what I see there, there’s nothing that covers what we want.”

Search: typed ‘car hit by rock’ – no records – “That happens a lot to me”
Checked drop down ‘information’, ‘accidents compensation and insurance’ – no help
Went back to FLA home page

“You end up with a lawyer. I can’t see it in a category, it’s fallen through the cracks.”

Law Access

Tried all the drop down menus, clicked ‘About Law Access’ – no help.
Accidentally clicked on ‘listen’, “that hasn’t helped”.

Went to search: ‘I hit a car with a rock, some advice’

Response: ‘Nothing here matches your search.’

Suggestion: ‘Make sure words spelled correctly’ – “what if you can’t spell?”

“I don’t want general, don’t want everything, you get too much information.

“I don’t know which category.”

Researcher discussed scenario with PK2 – what has created the problem – the other guy is chasing him for money with a letter – would you think of putting in ‘letter of demand’?

“No”

Google search 'LEGAL AID'

Selected first link to official LANSW site

'Find info' clicked

Use search at top of page, searched for 'property damage'

Only result being a page 'Have you crashed your car?'

Clicked this result

Some relevant info about what to do in a car crash

Back to Google to try another search result

Legal Aid Australia: 'I don't think this will help me very much'

Google search for 'Property damage LEGAL AID'

Link to Austlii crimes act result clicked for s 195

Not deemed relevant

Back to results

QCAT result clicked regarding property damage disputes

Some good information about what to do

Directed him to Legal Answers on State Library site

'Would not have thought to go to state library for legal info'

'None of the green boxes seem relevant'

Clicked 'accident compensation and insurance' box

'Compensation' clicked

Used search box at top of page and searched for 'property damage'

No results

Legal advice tab clicked

Acts and cases are presented - 'just goes through the acts which is not what you want'

Searched for 'small claims' using internal search

'Debt - small claims' result clicked

This linked to NSW Justice website

'Is someone chasing you for money flowchart' link clicked

Info re responding to letter of demand

Info about responding to the situation in general

Negotiate with a mediator option suggested

'Not a bad site'

FAQ clicked which linked to Community Justice Centre page

'Sub-menus a slight nuisance

Info re mediation between parties found

'would not have thought of this [site and meditation as an option]'

Link clicked which linked to Attorney-General of Australia's page

Clicked on pdf re alternative dispute resolution

20+ page guide presented seemed too in-depth but may have been considered if more time was available

PK4

Observations:

General search

- Typed 'road rage' and did not find it useful
- Types 'road rage stone hitting car' and didn't find it useful. Became clear at this point the participant was maybe not very clear on what the legal issue was
- Typed 'stone hitting car on street' . Respondent looked through whirlpool forum about how to protect your car from dings and found it not to be useful
- Looked through google books

Law Access

- Generally seemed to find this better
- Looked through 'popular content' option
- Went to driving offences and crime then to frequently asked questions and then realised he was not in the correct section
- Went to 'responding to a charge' then to 'owed money after an accident' then 'who was at fault'. Seemed to find this irritating stating that he 'was not getting any closer to my issue'. He felt it was too general and not specific enough

Find Legal answers

- Read through all the boxes available and clicked on 'accidents compensation and insurance' then to personal injury
- He then proceeded to use the link to find his nearest legal aid office and the hours they were open
- He wanted to find a place to send an email asking for help with this problem

Question sheet B

PK1

1. Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

No.

2. Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

No.

3. Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

Yes, if it was free.

4. What was good about using this site?

It was good to practice on a computer, that's about all.

5. Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

No, I would've kept trying to look until lunch time because it would be good practice on the computer.

6. Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

Neither of them [Find Legal answers and Law Access] were very helpful but I guess I would have a look at them [now that I know they exist].

7. Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

Not really – other than it wasn't very helpful to find what I was looking for.

Advice for web page designers: Put down lots of different types of accidents in the columns on the left (eg accidents – property) and include examples we can relate to so we know we're in the right spot.

PK2

1. Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

No

2. Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

Yes.

3. Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

Yes.

4. What was good about using this site?

Confused – lot of websites not helpful unless highly skilled.

5. Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

Yes – hate going round in circles so couldn't work through it.

6. Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

Probably not – go to a real lawyer, prefer dealing with people than with a computer – all you want to do is scream.

7. Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

Make it simpler – reasonable to read but have to keep in mind that a lot of us are getting older so need bigger writing.

PK3 (Not provided by student researcher)

PK4

1. Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

Yes.

2. Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

Would do a bit of research, although wouldn't really know what to search, and then go to solicitor.

3. Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

Possibly, depends what comes up on the search.

4. What was good about using this site?

Law Access was good in that it had a lot of scenarios so you could find your issue, or give alternative answers. Find Legal Answers was not good at all.

5. Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

Probably should have gone through websites a bit longer but was frustrated.

6. Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

Yes.

7. Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

A section to send an email would be very useful and then they can respond telling you where to go in the website because these websites seemed to focused mainly on car accidents.

Appendix E

Session 5 Southern Youth and Family Services

A group of seven secondary school students who attend the Links to Learning program with Southern Youth and Family Services.

Participants:

- SY1, male, 15, Australian. Lives with mother, step-father and sister. School student, Year 9. Has a trade lined up for next year, which he will start on weekends and during school holidays. He plans to leave at the end of year 10 to undertake the trade full time.
- SY2, female, 14, Year 9 school student.
- SY3, male, 15, Year 9, lives with mother, step father, siblings and step-siblings.
- SY4, female, 15, Year 10. She lives with her grandparents and other relatives following a family breakdown. Her favourite subject at school is music as she loves to sing. She wants to finish Year 10 and study to become a beauty therapist.
- SY5, male, 16, hardly ever uses a computer, preferring to use his smartphone instead and only for music and Facebook. He does own a laptop but the technology he uses most are game consoles. His auntie is a lawyer and his family would normally go to her for advice if they needed it.
- SY6, male, 15, Year 9. Lives with his mother, would like to be a carpenter.
- SY7, male, 15. Year 9. Favourite subject English. Doesn't like reading, doesn't like teachers, no idea what will do when leave school. Will probably leave at Year 10.

Hypothetical

You are at the mall skateboarding with friends on a Thursday night. The police have asked you and your friends to leave the mall. You all refuse. Your friend is grabbed by police and pushed onto the ground. You try to intervene and police arrest you both. You are charged with offensive behaviour, assaulting a police officer and resisting arrest and you have now received a court attendance notice regarding these charges.

Question Sheet A

SY1

Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?

Yes, someone I know.

If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?

Ask someone for help.

Who would you ask for help?

Family, close friends, actually someone in the family is a lawyer so I'd ask them.

Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?

I think it's gone too far for the Internet to help. I'd maybe do a little bit of research so I knew what was going on, but not much

Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?

Probably not, I'd probably go to the lawyer in my family.

Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?

Not sure.

Would you go to the library for help?

Um...yeah for research about what's going to or could happen, I'd maybe look for a legal textbook.

Would you pay for legal assistance?

No but my family might (parents).

SY2

Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?

Yes the situation of a friend abusing a police officer does sound something that could happen to someone I know.

If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?

Go to someone else for help

Who would you ask for help?

Firstly go to family for help.

Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?

No, think the charge of assaulting a police officer is too serious to search on the Internet.

Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?

Yes from Legal Aid

Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?

Legal Aid

Would you go to the library for help?

No would not go to the library.

Would you pay for legal assistance?

Yes for legal services when in a serious problem and when the free services are inadequate to solve the problem

SY3

Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?

This problem does sound like something that would happen to his friends. He says he and friends have been stopped by police walking home at night. The police thought they were doing something wrong.

If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?

If he had this problem he would probably run and grab police [who had pushed his friend on the ground] and tell them to get off.

Who would you ask for help?

He would ask his friends for help or Marcus (who runs the SYFS program).

Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?

Would probably use the internet. But he says he would not really know where to start.

Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?

He would not seek help from a legal service.

Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?

Does not know of any free legal services.

Would you go to the library for help?

He might go to the library to use a computer. SY3 also has a computer at home.

Would you pay for legal assistance?

SY3 would pay for legal assistance depending on how bad or serious the charges against him were.

SY4

Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?

Yes.

If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?

Try and solve it myself.

Who would you ask for help?

No one. Probably get advice from Nan.

Would you use the internet?

Yes. Google probably or Wikipedia or something.

Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?

Probably not.

Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?

No.

Would you go to the library for help?

No.

Would you pay for legal assistance?

Yes.

SY5

Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?

Yes, has happened to a friend.

If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?

Ask for help.

Who would you ask for help?

Lawyer – my aunty.

Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?

No.

Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?

No.

Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?

No.

Would you go to the library for help?

No.

Would you pay for legal assistance?

No.

SY6

Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?

Yes.

If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?

Try to sort it myself – doesn't cause as much stress as it would if there are a lot of people.

Who would you ask for help?

Parents, closest friends, family.

Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?

Youtube, Facebook – social media.

Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?

No.

Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?

Email.

Would you go to the library for help?

No.

Would you pay for legal assistance?

No but my family might (parents).

SY7

Does this problem sound like something that would happen to anyone you know?

Yes, friends in room.

If you had this problem would you seek help or try to solve it yourself?
Seek help!

Who would you ask for help?
Police, hopefully give you a lawyer or someone to talk to.

Would you use the internet? If so, which sites?
Yes, Facebook, Google.

Would you seek help from a legal service? If so, which one?
Yes (hadn't heard of Legal Aid).

Are you aware of free legal services? Which ones?
No.

Would you go to the library for help?
Probably not.

Would you pay for legal assistance?
No.

Online search session

SY1

SY1 brought up Google search himself but after that sat there for roughly 2 minutes thinking about what to search for.

SY1: "...uhhh I've got nothing" [I was trying my hardest not to intervene too much but felt we would get nothing done in the session if I didn't try and prompt him a little bit]
I directed him to think of possible key words but didn't suggest any for him. I also mentioned that he could maybe think of the hypothetical charges against him as inspiration and went over them again [offensive behaviour, assaulting a police officer and resisting arrest].

SY1 searched Google for 'self defense' [sic] and clicked on a search result from the US. SY1 read over the website for a little bit and got caught up reading about SWAT teams. "Do you think this page is helpful?"

SY1: "Oh no it's not relevant to me because it's talking about SWAT teams."

SY1 then goes back to search results and chooses Findlaw.com.au which tells him a little bit about resisting arrest.

Directed to Find Legal Answers:

SY1 scanned homepage for a few seconds trying to find a relevant heading to click on. SY1 clicked on 'cars and driving' and scanned page, then clicked on 'work and employment' and scanned that page, then on 'police and crime' and he stayed on this page for longer [SY1 seemed to be interested in exploring the page for things that weren't necessarily relevant to the hypothetical].

Student researcher comments: SY1 seemed to be easily distracted in the Internet search session and would often come across something I knew that he knew was not relevant but he still wanted to have a look/brief read – which was good as it showed he was interested in the law and how it affected him in real life (eg he clicked on 'cars and driving' and 'work and employment', two things that might be relevant to a 15 year old).

SY2

Find legal answers did not come up until we searched specifically for the website.

SY2 was distracted by sites from other states such as the South Australia law handbook on rights of children.

The advertisements also enticed SY2 and she spent quite some time on other law firm websites.

Overall limitation: difficulty in thinking of initial search terms and a preference for face-to-face interaction.

We also came across problems with spelling which Google was able to rectify but legal websites were not

Also people are not aware of the free legal services that are on offer and therefore are reluctant to take legal help.

SY3

SY3 began with a Google search typing the phrase 'what can you do about police' – predictive text finished the sentence with 'brutality.'

Clicked the first website that appeared in the search results – an article from the Huffington Post called 'What Can You Do Right Now About Police Brutality.' http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ravishly/what-you-can-do-right-now_1_b_7050424.html?ir=Australia

Browsed the page for approximately 30 seconds.

Returned to the search results and looked at the eighth search results – a page on Wikipedia called 'Police Brutality.'

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Police_brutality

SY3 recognised the information on the page related to different countries but there was no information on Australia.

He returned to the search results and looked at the fourth result 'What We Do – Communities Against Police Brutality.'

<http://www.cuapb.org/what-we-do>

SY3 says that this website is for communities and provides the 'communities' perspective [on police brutality] instead of the cops.'

He says the website shows 'how its happening more that it usually was.'

He says the website is good because it has a 24 hour crisis line with a phone number provided 'so you can call and report issues.'

SY3 says he does not know what country the website is from.

He returned to the search results and the second search results – an article on Indetitted.Mic called '15 Things Your City Can Do Right Now to End Police Brutality.'

<http://mic.com/articles/121572/15-things-your-city-can-do-right-now-to-end-police-brutality>

SY3 read a paragraph out loud called 'Stop criminalizing' and says the website is good because it makes police 'think before they do' and consider whether the thing they are arresting someone for 'is an actual law or not.'

SY3 reads that the state of California has created 1000 new crimes in the last year.

He says he would probably stop looking for information here or after about 10 minutes.

SY3 says 'the websites haven't really said what the police have done is wrong.'

Find Legal Answers – State Library

SY3 was directed to the State Library's Find Legal Answers website.

He looked at the boxes on the website containing different categories of information.

He says he would probably look at the categories 'Police and crime, and Library.'
SY3 clicks the category 'Police and crime' and scrolls down to 'Police powers' – clicks on the link and is taken to a page of related articles.
SY3 clicks the first article called 'Police powers: your rights and responsibilities' and is taken to the Legal Aid website.
He says the website is good because it has information on 'arrest, who can arrest me and why, it says the cops may have reasonable grounds to suspect, so like they think you've done it but don't have proof yet, they can arrest you.'
SY3 says 'it says what they have to say when they arrest you so if they didn't do that they failed the command.'
He says the information is helpful.
He says 'they can use force to arrest you. Unreasonable force is assault.' (However SY3 construes this to mean his use of unreasonable force against the police would be assault).

Law Access

SY3 is directed to the Law Access website.
He scrolls through popular content and says 'it looks like it's easy to find things if you get arrested and it has different language which is good like if you speak German.'
SY3 clicks the tab that read 'My legal problem is about.'
He looks at the categories and says 'they don't have police abuse.'
SY3 types 'police abuce (sic)' into the search bar and finds no results.
He asks how to spell abuse and tries the search again with correct spelling. The only result relates to domestic violence in same-sex relationships.
SY3 says 'they don't have anything.'

SY4

1 Google

11:18am

- The first search terms in Google were 'What can I do about police assault'
- The participant looked through the results for a period of time

11:19am

- Search terms used were 'What can I do about assault from a police officer'
- Participant clicked into one of the results 'assaultandbattery.org (a USA website)

11:20am

- Criminaldefencelawyer.com was the next site the participant entered
- Search terms used in Google – 'can a police officer assault you'
- Participant used auto cues from Google to add 'for no reason'
- The participant clicked into 'tuffs blog' (another USA website)
- The participant was asked what it was about. She responded that it was an article about a police officer who assaulted someone
- The participant was asked where the article was from. She said 'New York'
- I stated that the information probably didn't apply here
- The participant then clicked into 'whocanisue.com' and found out that "you can sue a police officer for assault"
- I asked the participant whether the site was from Australia
- I asked whether she thought that it could help her friend
- The participant answered: "No (because) he was in the wrong as well"

11:24am

- The participant was highlighting parts on the site that she thought were helpful
- The participant wasn't sure whether it was an Australian source or not

- The participant thought that the 'whocanissue.com' site was easy to use
- When asked if she would keep searching after this she said that she "wouldn't keep looking for answers"

11:27am

- The participant opened a new tab
- Search terms used in the search bar were 'what can I do if I have been assaulted by a police officer'
- The participant opened the link to quora.com – an article
- When asked where the site was from she said it was an "American site"
- When asked how she knew this, she pointed to the fact that it had made reference to the emergency number "911"
- When asked whether she has answered her legal questions she said that she didn't think that she had all the answers

State Library 'Find legal answers' <<http://www.legalanswers.sl.nsw.gov.au/>>

11:30am

- The participant used the search bar to search
- The first search terms used were 'what do the police officer has assaulted me' – no results
- The second search terms used were 'where can I find help if police officer has assaulted me' – no results
- I pointed out to the participant that there were tabs on the side as she was struggling with getting results from the search bar
- The participant clicked into the 'Assault' tab but did not find anything
- The participant clicked into the 'Police' tab and then into 'police powers'. The participant was looking over the summary of information provided to see what was relevant.
- The participant opened one of the links to a pdf document titled 'Police powers and your rights'
- The participant pointed out that she had found an answer in regard to the use of force by police against citizens and when force could be used and what was unreasonable force
- The participant was asked what she would do with that information once she had it. She replied that she would "take it to court with her"
- When asked what the participant thought of the state library website she stated that she liked it and it was easy to use

Law Access NSW <<http://www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au/>>

11:36am

- The participant looked over the front page of the site for a period of time and seemed lost as to where to start or what to do
- The participant was asked what she liked about the site
- The participant responded that it was "annoying" and that she "can't find anything"
- Using the tabs up the top of the webpage, the participant hovered over 'my legal problem is about'
- The participant clicked into 'family law and relationship'
- I asked the participant whether any of the tabs fit the scenario
- The participant replied "no"
- I asked the participant whether she wanted to try another one
- The participant clicked into 'wills and estates'
- I asked the participant whether anything was helpful
- The participant replied "no"
- The participant asked "should I go fines?"
- I replied: "Do you think it's a fine?"

- The participant replied: "No. Maybe"
- The participant then clicked on and downloaded NSW Policy and Services Standards Manual
- The participant was asked whether there was anything in there
- She replied: "No"
- 11:42am
- Using the search bar in the home page of LawAccess NSW the participant used the search term 'abuse'
- The participant was asked whether they found anything with that one
- The participant replied: "No"
- The participant went back to the home page search bar and used the search term 'assault' (after asking me how to spell it)
- The participant then clicked into 'District Court NSW Types of cases'
- The participant wasn't finding any answers on this site

SY5

At first SY5 had no idea what he was meant to do or what the hypothetical was meant to be, even though we had just covered it in the Section A questions. After asking him just to type whatever he thought of he Googled 'lawyers illawarra'.

The first link was to a legal practice which he clicked on, the site was covered in ads for 'free quotes' and 'no appointment necessary drop-ins', SY5 looked at me and shrugged and said 'no clue about that'.

I reminded him again of our hypothetical and he went back and searched 'police bashing people'. This brought up a journal article as the first link which SY5 clicked on. It was a story about a Melbourne police bashing incident, but SY5 didn't read it he just looked at me again.

I suggested adding something about law and SY5 typed 'police bashing legal advice'. He already seemed uninterested. One of the links that came up from this search was 'Community Legal Centres NSW'. SY5 clicked on this one and scrolled through the list of legal centres before clicking back to the search engine.

SY5 then clicked on the next link, titled 'Victoria Legal Aid' but clicked back almost immediately – he commented that the page looked a bit intimidating with so much information.

SY5 then clicked on another link still from the same earlier search and was directed to a blog written by a 'police bashing' victim. SY5 read the whole article.

At this point SY5 admitted he was ready to give up so I directed him to 'Find Legal Answers'. He went through the drop down menus at the top but said he didn't understand it.

SY5 clicked on a link called 'Youth Justice' but was unhappy to find it only directed him to a page about a book of the same title and clicked back to the homepage of Find Legal Answers.

I started prompting areas he might want to look at as he was now not touching the mouse unless I said something. He found a 'Legal Advice Guide' with a list of legal issues. But he didn't get further and said it was 'hard'.

SY5 then clicked on 'Youth Issues' but was directed to a glitzy website advertising a 'Youth and Enterprise Legal Centre' so he clicked back. He mentioned again he would have turned the

computer off by now.

SY5 found another link and was directed to a website advertising ENYA, I didn't understand what this was about either so we decided to call it quits there.

SY6

Starts with Find Legal Answers

Clicks on 'Courts and Legal System' – 'Get Court Smart' – telling you about being under 18 and going to court

'Police and Crimes' – arrest – online resources

Checked 'crimes and offences'

Law Access

– 'going to court' – not relevant

Enters search – 'resisting arrest' – gets: 'nothing matches your search.'

Back to MSN

Types – 'worst case scenario about resisting arrest'

Gets – 'Allexperts' site – 'Crime & Law Enforcement & Death Penalty'

Discussed his searches – would only think to put in what happened rather than use keywords.

'I'd be frustrated and probably end up going to the Yellow Pages – look through the government contacts – but you have to know how to access the services.

'If you're poor or starving you'll be looked after.'

SY7

Student struggled a lot with understanding the situation and spelling or to think of terms to search. Possibly too young to access such services, although could relate to the incident as similar things had happened to his friends.

Typed into Google: 'offensive' - Findlaw: definition

Assault definition – Wikipedia

'aggravated assault'

'underage drinking' – found US site.

Legal Aid page (hadn't heard of Legal Aid)

White pages came up with law firm suggestions.

NSW LEGAL AID

help over the phone

phone number

Youth (Specific) hotline

Factsheets and resources

What is legal advice? Who can get legal advice?

Criminal law offence. Childrens Court

Do you have to pay for advice?

Self defence law

Findlaw.com.au

Student comments: "All right, not too unclear."

Find legal answers: assault, going to court

Goes back to Legal Aid website: bail, Legal Aid guide to bail.

Back to Find Legal Answers – types in "police", doesn't appear to read anything.

Law Access again: types in 'arrested' – gets "aboriginal legal system".

Googles again: 'child legal service Wollongong' - Stubbs Law Firm advertisement.

Back to legal Aid website – children's legal service.

Lawstuff NSW – alcohol link – illegal in public.

Student comments that he gets information from the news or from asking people; unlikely to go online.

Child custody comes up (parents divorced).

Types in 'Assaulting police' in Google – Find law website comes up.

Overall, spelling was the greatest challenge, I had to suggest words and then spell them out for him to type in.

Question Sheet B

SY1

Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

I probably learnt a few things from the internet.

Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

I would do more research now that I know I can and how to actually search for legal help – you [interviewer] have helped me learn how.

Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

Yes, at the very least I'd ask a family member for advice.

What was good about using this site?

Both sites were good. They had different information on the same topics.

Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

No, I could've kept going.

Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

Yeah.

Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

For each topic I looked at they needed more links to different answers.

- What do you mean by that?

They need more headings and they need to be more specific, and they need to make it clear I'm in the right spot.

Student researcher comments: I'm concerned with the level of help I gave SY1 during the computer session. I am not sure he would have searched for much if I hadn't prompted him to start and throughout the session as he just seemed unsure what to type or where to start looking. Once he got started though, he was on a roll and he said he could have kept going but we had to wind the session up. In the follow-up questions I got the sense that SY1 just wanted to be helpful and give us good answers for the study and may not have found the websites as useful as he said.)

SY2

Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

Yes, I do.

Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

Yes, would seek legal help instead of asking parents or trying to solve the problem myself.

Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

Yes, I would.

What was good about using this site?

The information was clear on the Legal Aid website and now am more aware of my rights
Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

The [Youth Law] website was not helpful because the information was unclear and did not match the searches.

Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

Yes would use Legal Aid and find law answers.

Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

Require more explanations of important legal keywords and linking legal terms with specific situations.

SY3

Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

SY3 feels like he knows more about how to deal with this problem than he did before he looked at the websites. SY3 says he knows more about how and why police can arrest people.

Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

SY3 says he would probably be more confident about confronting the problem.

Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

SY3 says he would probably not get help from a lawyer.

What was good about using this site?

SY3 says the Legal Aid website was pretty good. SY3 liked it and found a lot of useful information.

SY3 says the State Library website was a bit confusing and didn't have all the answers.

SY3 says website on communities against police brutality was alright because it had information on how to prevent assault by police and help friends assaulted by police.

Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

SY3 says he wanted to give up on the site re 15 facts. SY3 says most people who have a problem like this wouldn't post online but would confront the problem themselves.

Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

SY3 says he would use Legal Aid if he had a real legal problem.

Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

SY3 says he thinks it is better to get information online. SY3 thinks more information should be added online because he read that 1000 new crimes have been created [in California] so there needs to be new information about how to deal with those crimes if you get in trouble. SY3 thinks the State Library website should provide more examples of legal problems and how to deal with them.

SY4

1. Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the websites?

Yep.

2. Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

Before I would go 'schiz' but now I would remain calm. I would tell my friend that he had the right to protect himself (from the police).

3. Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

Yep.

- Why?

You can get Attorneys for assault by police.

- How do you know that?

Found it out when online searching.

4. What was good about using this site?

State Library: You didn't have to search everything. The layout was good.

5. Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

State Library: No (didn't want to give up)

Law Access: Wanted to give up.

6. Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

State Library: Yep 100%

Law Access: Probably not.

7. Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

You should be able to put your full question in the search bar so you can get the full answer and not have to search everywhere.

SY5

Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

Find Legal Aid, Find your rights.

Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

Look for different legal services.

Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

No.

What was good about using this site?

Lots of information.

Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

Yes, too much work. No, I stopped.

Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

Yes, lots of information.

Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

Telephone online call centre. Good to just have one section – too many links, hard to find.

SY6

Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

Yes.

Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

No.

Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

Yes.

What was good about using this site?

Tells me all about the offences – Find Legal Answers and Prime Lawyers..

Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

Would keep reading, didn't want to switch off.

Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

Yes, Prime Lawyers.

Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

Space it out more, shouldn't put so much about different stuff on one page, easier when a short description do don't need to go back because it will help you click on the right link.

SY7

Do you know more now about how to deal with this problem that you did before you went on the website?

Not really, lots of text.

Would you change your approach to this problem now you have this information?

Yes – would find some information but ultimately call and ask for help.

Do you think you would still get help from a lawyer?

Yes – pretty confusing.

What was good about using this site?

Find Law – search button, information links to different websites. Layout ok

Were there any times that you wanted to give up on the site? Why? Were you able to work through this?

Yes but could work through it.

Would you use this site if you had a real legal problem?

Probably not – look for a different site.

Any other comments, thoughts about going online to get legal help? And if you had a meeting with the people designing a legal help website, what would you suggest to them about how it's designed and the information it provides?

Clear layout, medium font, clear headings, clear sections etc.



Searching Questions
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