

# Enhancing Community Knowledge of Law at the End of Life

## Online resources

We conducted a review of consumer-centred online information about law at the end of life in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria to assess how easily this information could be found and how clearly the information was presented. These are **our major findings**.

### End of life resources available online

- 75% of resources were authored by a government department or statutory body, or diagnosis-specific organisation.
- Most resources were aimed at the general community. Others targeted specific community groups.
- Most resources addressed the end of life decision-making hierarchy or focused on: advance directives; default decision-makers; enduring powers of attorney; guardianship; consent and capacity issues; and refusal of treatment.
- Few resources discussed legal duties (e.g., the powers and responsibilities of substitute decision-makers) or how to resolve conflict with health professionals.
- Almost none referred to case law or sections of legislation (e.g., when explaining legal rights).

### Ease of location

- Search hits varied significantly depending on whether lay or expert search terms were used.
- Half of the searches using lay terms failed to identify any relevant search results.
- Except in NSW, more government-authored websites were located using expert search terms.
- In all states, resources from diagnosis-specific organisations were mostly returned by expert search terms.
- In Queensland and NSW, more resources from legal organisations were located using expert search terms.
- Websites containing nationally applicable information were most often located by lay search terms (few lay searches included the state name).

## Recommendations

1. Develop clear, accessible online resources about: community members' legal rights, powers and duties at end of life; and how to resolve conflict with health professionals

- Resources should include links to other relevant information sources.

2. Make resources easier to locate

- When developing resources the author needs to consider how consumers search for information online. Resources should be tagged using everyday language and search engine optimisation techniques.
- Resources should include key questions as headings to increase retrieval (e.g., How do I get power of attorney?).
- Resources should identify the State the information is relevant to.

3. Make resources easy to understand

- Webpage and resource titles and content should: use everyday language; explain medical terms; and include simple visual aids.

4. Resources should make clear that end of life decisions are governed by state-based law

- This will prompt community members to check that resources relate to their State.

**About the larger research project:** This project explores how and if community members understand and act upon their legal right to participate in decisions about medical treatment for themselves, or for their loved ones, at end of life. For more information, see [www.qut.edu.au/research/eol-law](http://www.qut.edu.au/research/eol-law)

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