This guide will help you when you need to:

- Know the difference between an Act and a Bill
- Get a copy of an Act that you know the name of
- Find legislation on a topic (but you don’t know the Act name/s)
- Check whether an Act has been amended recently
- Find information to help you understand an Act
- Find cases where judges have discussed the meaning of an Act (or section)

I need to... know the difference between an Act and a Bill.

**A Bill**

- Is the document introduced to Parliament. When passed by both Houses of Parliament, it becomes an Act.
- Not all Bills are successfully passed by Parliament. Sometimes amendments are made by Parliament while the Bill is before it. Sometimes the Bill is rejected altogether.
- A Bill is not “law” until it is passed by Parliament and the resulting Act commences operation.

**An Act**

- Is law.
- Comes about when a Bill has been passed by Parliament and proclaimed by the Governor General.
- Does not have any effect until it commences operation.
- Different parts of an Act may commence operation at different times.
- Some Acts exist only to amend other Acts. These are amending Acts.
- Acts which stand on their own are known as principal Acts.

I need to... get a copy of an Act that I know the name of.

Use Lawlex as the gateway to the preferred government legislation sites.

1. Go to the ECU Library website
2. Type Lawlex into the library One Search box and connect to the database
3. Alternatively, choose Lawlex from the database listing on the Library page
4. Click on ‘search legislation’

Once at Lawlex –

1. Enter one or two words from the Act name in the Keywords search box
2. Check or uncheck box for appropriate jurisdiction. Click Search or press enter
3. Choose the relevant Act from the results list
4. From the Core Document Home Page, click on the Act name to access the full text of the Act.

**Note:** Lawlex is a convenient and easy to use subscription only database acting as a gateway to preferred government legislative and parliamentary websites. These sites can also be searched independently, you should make yourself familiar with using Comlaw for Commonwealth legislation and State Law Publisher for WA state legislation.

I need to... find legislation on a topic (but I don’t know the Act name/s).

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4. Click on ‘search legislation’

Once at Lawlex –

Either:

1. Enter one or two words you’d expect to see in the Act name in the Keywords search box, or
2. Click on Browse Legislation
   a. Select a Jurisdiction (eg WA), and
   b. Expand the topic folders until you find legislation on your topic.
I need to... **check whether an Act has been amended.**

**Overview**
- **Principal Acts** are amended by other Acts.
- Governments make available “reprints” or “consolidations” which consist of the original Act, with all the amendments incorporated into it.
- Each reprinted Act has a **Table of Amendments** at the back, listing the amending Acts that are INCLUDED in the version you have. They usually have a note on the front cover with the “**effective date**” of the legislation.
- You may need to check if there are amending Acts in force that are **NOT yet included** in the reprinted or consolidated Act.
- If you discover that there are amending Acts not yet included in the reprint, you will need to get copies of those Acts and check what amendments they make to the principal Act.
- You will also need to check on which date each amending Act commences.

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4. Click on Search Legislation

**Once at Lawlex** –
1. Enter one or two words from the Act name in the **Keywords search** box
2. Click Search or press Enter
3. Choose the relevant principal Act from the results list
4. From the Core Document Home Page, click on **Check for Amendments Since the Last Consolidation** in the Premium Research box.
5. There will be two tables – the first is a long table showing amendments section by section. The second is a shorter table showing which Acts amend the principal Act.

I need to... **find information to help me understand an Act**

**Overview**
There are two types of information that can help you understand an Act.
1. **Secondary material** – such as journal articles, text books, and legal encyclopaedias.
2. **Extrinsic material** – such as second reading speeches and explanatory memoranda. These can be used as aids in statutory interpretation.

**Locating information about an Act**

**Journal articles:** try
- AGIS Plus Text,
- Proquest, or
- Oxford Journals
- See Law and Justice Subject Guide for other suggested databases

**Text books:**
- refer to your unit outline for set texts and recommended readings, or
- browse the shelves in the library in the 340 (law) area.
I need to… **find information to help me understand an Act**

**Legal encyclopaedias:** try
- Halsburys Laws of Australia on Lexis Nexis AU, or
- The Laws of Australia on Westlaw AU, both via the A-Z database listings on the Library webpage.

**Second Reading speeches or Explanatory memoranda:**

Use **Lawlex** as the gateway to the preferred government legislation sites.
1. Go to the ECU Library website
2. Type Lawlex into the One Search box and connect to the database
3. Alternatively, choose Lawlex from the database listing on the Library page
4. Click on Search Legislation

Once at Lawlex –
1. Enter one or two words from the Act name in the **Keywords search** box
2. Click Search or press Enter
3. Choose the relevant principal Act from the results list
4. From the Core Document Home Page links to the Explanatory Memorandum or the Second Reading Speech will be provided if electronic copies are available.

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I need to… **find cases where judges have discussed the meaning of an Act (or section).**

Use **Westlaw AU**
1. Go to the ECU Library website
2. Type Westlaw AU into the Library One Search box and connect to the database
3. Alternatively, choose Westlaw AU from the database listing on the Library page

Once at Westlaw AU –
1. Click on the Cases tag.
2. Expand the down arrow for **More options**.
3. Type the name of the act in the legislation cited (title) search box and if known, a section number in (provision) search box just below and search.
4. Browse results, click on link to judgment text or pdf to review case.
5. Use the refining tools on the left of screen to filter by jurisdiction or subject.