



Executive Summary

This is the second *Two Ways Together Report on Indicators*. *Two Ways Together* is the NSW Government's ten year whole of government Aboriginal Affairs plan. The report provides indicators across the seven *Two Ways Together* priority areas of health, education, economic development, justice, families and young people, culture and heritage, and housing and infrastructure. These priority areas are also reflected in the NSW State Plan which was released in November 2006. The State Plan includes an Aboriginal specific priority known as Priority F1 – to improve health, education and social outcomes for Aboriginal people – as well as a range of other priorities of significance for Aboriginal people.

The report provides population indicators to measure the disadvantage gaps between the Aboriginal population and the general NSW population, and where possible, trend information to show whether these gaps are changing over time. Many of the population indicators show a wide outcomes gap between Aboriginal people and the general population of New South Wales. In some areas the gap appears to be narrowing, however, in many areas the gap remains either the same or is widening.

The report also provides performance or service indicators which indicate the extent and quality of service delivery to Aboriginal people in areas which may assist in closing the disadvantage gap. There is a need to develop more comprehensive information about many of the services provided for Aboriginal people, both mainstream and Aboriginal specific. Many of the initiatives aimed at reducing Aboriginal disadvantage are targeted in specific locations, in recognition of the need to avoid the 'one size fits all' approach. Ultimately such information is required to build an evidence base of what works to close the disadvantage gaps.

Each chapter has one or more case studies that illustrate a particular program or outcome of a program, including where possible, from the perspective of Aboriginal participants. The case studies provide details of the impact of Government programs on Aboriginal people.

Data quality remains an issue. Some improvements in the quality of data have been made since the *Two Ways Together Report on Indicators 2005*, but there is room for further improvement, and the NSW Government is undertaking data development work with assistance from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. A particular issue reflected in many of the indicators presented in this report is the increasing likelihood for Aboriginal people to identify as such in the Census and in client data systems maintained by agencies. This increasing identification makes trends difficult to read, as there is no agreed method across all data collections to estimate its impact. The data presented in this report needs to be interpreted with this in mind.

The report is divided into 10 chapters. This includes the executive summary, an introduction, a chapter on demography and a chapter each on the seven *Two Ways Together* priority areas. The key findings of each chapter are outlined below.

Demography

- At the 2006 census NSW had Australia's largest Aboriginal population at 148,178, or 2.2% of the population.
- Twenty nine percent of the total Aboriginal Estimated Residential Population of Australia live in NSW, and more Aboriginal people reside in NSW than Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, ACT and Northern Territory combined.
- Seventy seven percent of Aboriginal people in NSW live in major cities or inner regional areas, and 53% live in the corridor encompassing the major cities of Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong.
- Fifty seven percent of the Aboriginal population of NSW are aged 24 or younger and 83% are aged 44 or younger. (In the general population, these percentages are 33% and 62% respectively).
- The Aboriginal population of New South Wales grew by 13,290 people between 2001 and 2006, representing 6% of total NSW population growth.

Health

- Aboriginal people have a shorter life expectancy than the population as a whole. Aboriginal males in NSW have an average life expectancy of 60 years, 16.4 years less than all NSW males, and Aboriginal females in NSW have an average life expectancy of 65.1 years, 16.8 years less than all NSW females.
- The infant mortality rate for NSW Aboriginal infants, at 8.4 per 1,000 live births, is 79% higher than the total infant mortality rate. However, there has been a significant reduction in the gap between Aboriginal and total infant mortality rates. Part of this reduction in infant mortality may be attributable to the increasing percentage of Aboriginal expectant mothers making antenatal visits to health professionals within the first 20 weeks of pregnancy.
- Aboriginal people are more likely to report their health status as fair or poor than are non-Aboriginal people, and are more likely to report three or more long term health conditions. Hospitalisations for long term conditions, including diabetes and cardiovascular disease are higher for Aboriginal people than for the total NSW population and the gap in hospitalisation rates between the Aboriginal and total populations is increasing.
- While there is no significant difference in the percentage of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who report engaging in risky alcohol consumption, Aboriginal people are 2 to 3 times more likely to be treated in hospital for alcohol related trauma or disease, and almost 5 times more likely to account for closed treatment episodes in drug and alcohol treatment programs. The gap in hospitalisation and treatment rates for the Aboriginal and total population is increasing.
- More than a quarter of Aboriginal people report high or very high levels of psychological distress, around twice the level of non Aboriginal people. The hospitalisation rate for self harm is 2.7 times higher for Aboriginal people than for the whole population, and the gap is increasing.
- Hospitalisation rates for whooping cough, measles and influenza in the Aboriginal population have fallen and are now level with the general population rate. However, other conditions that are generally amenable to prevention and early intervention through primary health care, including injury and poisoning, otitis media and dental disease, account for increasing hospitalisation rates for Aboriginal people.
- Hospitalisation rates for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, injury and poisoning, alcohol trauma and ambulatory care sensitive conditions are far higher in the Western NSW region, though these rates have been falling, in contrast to other regions, where rates have generally been rising. This may be associated with improved access to primary health care in the Western region although no data on primary health care services are available.

Education

- There is a gap of more than 10 percentage points between Aboriginal students in NSW and all NSW students reaching national literacy and numeracy benchmarks in Years 3, 5 and 7 with the gap increasing from Year 3 to Year 7. There was no narrowing of the gap between Aboriginal and all students from 2001 to 2005.
- Since 2001 there has been an increase in the percentage of NSW Aboriginal 3 and 4 year olds attending a preschool and the percentage is now higher than for all 3 and 4 year olds.
- There is a 14 percentage points gap between the rates for Aboriginal and all children aged 15 attending a secondary school in NSW and the gap widens to 33.5 percentage points at age 17 years.
- Year 10 Aboriginal students in NSW are around half as likely to complete Year 12 as all students.
- However, the numbers of Aboriginal TAFE enrolments, TAFE qualifications completed by Aboriginal students, TAFE qualifications completed by Aboriginal students aged 15 to 19 years, and TAFE qualifications completed by Aboriginal students aged 20 to 24 years at AQF 111 and above have all increased substantially since 2002.

Economic development

- Labour force participation by Aboriginal people in NSW was 7.4 percentage points lower than for the total NSW population in 2006 and the gap has increased from 5.6 percentage points in 2002.
- The unemployment rate for Aboriginal people in NSW was 11.5 percentage points higher than for the total population, however the gap has narrowed from 12.3 percentage points in 2001. It is difficult to draw firm conclusions about movements in participation and unemployment rates because of possible sampling errors in the data.
- Unemployment is highest for Aboriginal people with education to Year 9, and lowest for those with a postgraduate degree, similar to the non Aboriginal population.
- Unemployment rates were highest for Aboriginal people in the New England North West region, and lowest in the Coastal Sydney region. The highest unemployment rates for non-Aboriginal people were in the North Coast region, and the lowest rates, as with Aboriginal people, were in the Coastal Sydney region.
- In NSW the main industries employing Aboriginal people are health care and social assistance (14.5%), public administration and safety (9.9%), education and training (9.4%) and retail trade (9.1%).
- The representation of Aboriginal people in the NSW public sector has increased from 1.3% in 2001 to 1.9% in 2006, close to the *Two Ways Together* target of 2%. However, the proportion of Aboriginal staff in the Australian Public Service in New South Wales fell from 2.2% in 2002 to 1.7% in 2006.
- In 2006, the median personal income for Aboriginal people aged 15 and over in NSW was \$296, compared to \$461 for all NSW residents. The median weekly income for Aboriginal households was \$727, compared to \$1,034 for all NSW households.
- Incomes across regions vary considerably. The highest median income for Aboriginal people in any region was Coastal Sydney, at \$416, while the Western NSW region had the lowest median income at \$242.
- The percentage of Aboriginal people in NSW owning or purchasing their home in 2006 was 36.2 compared to 64% of non-Aboriginal households. The gap has narrowed since 2001.

Justice

- The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal reported crime in NSW did not change between 2002 and 2006.
- Aboriginal people in NSW, particularly women, remain significantly over-represented among reported victims of sexual assault, domestic violence related assault and personal crimes. Aboriginal females are 4.3 times more likely than the general female population to be the victim of one of these crimes.
- Aboriginal people in NSW, particularly males, remain significantly over-represented as victims of non-domestic assault. In 2006, the rate of recorded personal violence against Aboriginal males was 80% higher than the general male population.
- Aboriginal adults and young people in NSW are around 7 times more likely to appear in a criminal court than the general population. In 2006, 22% of adult Aboriginal males in NSW appeared in court, compared to 3% of the total adult male population, and 7% of adult Aboriginal females appeared in court, compared to less than 1% of all females.
- In NSW, Aboriginal incarceration is significantly higher than the total population. In 2006, 20% of the adult male prison population was Aboriginal and 33% of the adult female prison population was Aboriginal. The rate of imprisonment among Aboriginal men and women rose in 2006.
- Aboriginal males in NSW had a remand rate 12 times higher than the total male rate and this rate has risen by 49% since 2001.
- The rate of NSW Aboriginal juveniles on remand and the rate of juveniles serving control orders were both 10 times higher than the rates for all juveniles and this has not changed since 2001.
- Repeat offending among NSW Aboriginal adults is 24 percentage points higher than for all adults although the Aboriginal repeat offending rate has dropped by 3 percentage points from 2000 to 2004.

Families and young people

- Young NSW Aboriginal people aged 15 to 24 years are twice as likely as non-Aboriginal people in the same age range to be hospitalised for self-harm. Hospitalisations for self-harm have been rising in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in recent years, especially in young people. The rise has been greater in the Aboriginal population.
- Aboriginal children and young people in NSW are 3 times more likely than all children and young people to be reported to police as victims of domestic violence related assault and sexual assault. Aboriginal females are nearly 6 times more likely than are all NSW females to be recorded as victims of domestic violence. The gap in victimisation rates between Aboriginal and other children and young people has narrowed slightly because of greater rises in victimisation rates in the general population.
- Aboriginal clients accounted for 23% of all clients accessing SAAP services with children in NSW in 2005/06. Two thirds of all Aboriginal SAAP clients are female and the proportion is rising slowly. Over 90% of Aboriginal people who access SAAP services to escape domestic violence are female.
- The number of children involved in child protection reports referred to the NSW Department of Community Services for further assessment is increasing and the number of Aboriginal children involved is increasing at a faster rate than for all children. Despite accounting for just 4% of the total population of children and young people in the NSW population, Aboriginal children and young people make up 13.7% of all reports referred for further assessment in 2006/07.
- Thirty percent of all children in out-of-home care in NSW are Aboriginal, a significant over-representation, and this percentage has increased from 27% in 2003.
- In 2007, 85% of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care in NSW were placed in accordance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle and 64% were placed with relatives or kin.

Culture and heritage

- Almost one quarter of Aboriginal people aged 15 years or over in NSW live in homelands or traditional country. Aboriginal people in remote areas are more likely than those in non-remote areas to be living in traditional country.
- Forty two percent of Aboriginal people in NSW identify with a particular clan, tribal or language group but only about 800 Aboriginal people in NSW speak an Aboriginal language at home.
- The number of Aboriginal owned or controlled lands in NSW rose from 10 in 2002 to 81 in 2006. This increase was largely due to the granting of 62 land claims under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* over the period.
- The number of formal access agreements providing for Aboriginal community access to NSW public lands rose from 3 in 2002 to 30 in 2006. Many access agreements between Aboriginal communities and government agencies are informal.

Housing and infrastructure

- The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in NSW owning or purchasing their own home has narrowed between 2001 and 2006. However, the proportion of Aboriginal households owning or purchasing a home is still 31.7 percentage points lower than non-Aboriginal households.
- The proportion of NSW Aboriginal households living in social housing is higher than the general population, reflecting the socio-economic disadvantage that many Aboriginal people experience, and the difficulties that Aboriginal people can face in securing housing in the private market, including a lack of affordable housing, lack of appropriate housing and discrimination.
- The proportion of Aboriginal households living in mainstream public housing is generally higher in the NSW western regions, and the proportion of new public housing allocations has been highest in the Western NSW region.
- Homelessness is a considerable issue for Aboriginal people, who are significantly over-represented as clients of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). It has been estimated that 1.1% of the NSW Aboriginal population is homeless.
- A range of environmental health factors can impact on disease rates and can contribute to poorer outcomes in education and employment. Such factors include overcrowding in housing, and poor standards of housing and infrastructure.
- Within social housing in NSW, Aboriginal households are nearly three times more likely to live in overcrowded conditions.
- The provision of safe and effective water, sewerage and waste collection services is a critical issue for discrete Aboriginal communities in NSW. While data on the number of communities with water, sewerage or waste disposal problems is limited, it is clear that Aboriginal people living in discrete Aboriginal communities face much greater environmental health risks and receive a much lower level of water, sewerage and waste disposal services than do mainstream communities.
- The Housing for Health program improves health hardware in houses with Aboriginal residents, and has been provided to 871 houses in Aboriginal communities in NSW since 2002 as part of the Aboriginal Community Development Program (ACDP). Almost 3,300 Aboriginal people have benefited from the Housing for Health program.