



TWO WAYS TOGETHER
REGIONAL REPORT
Public Report

Western and South-Western Sydney

– November 2006 –



TWO WAYS TOGETHER REGIONAL REPORT Western & South-Western Sydney

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report gathers together data¹ about Aboriginal people and the government services provided to them in the Western and South-Western Sydney Regions of NSW. The report has been developed as part of the regional implementation of *Two Ways Together*.

Two Ways Together 2003-2012 is the NSW Government's plan to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities. *Two Ways Together* recognises that in order to affect real and sustainable improvements in the wellbeing of Aboriginal people, a whole-of-government approach is required. It recognises that effective partnerships with Aboriginal communities must underpin government action if policies and programs are to be relevant to Aboriginal people. In developing sustainable partnerships between Aboriginal people and government it, aims to strengthen Aboriginal people's capacity to exercise their inherent rights as the first peoples of Australia.

At a state level, *Two Ways Together* targets seven priority areas to positively improve the lives of Aboriginal people. These areas have been identified as priorities by Aboriginal communities in New South Wales. They are: Justice; Health; Housing and Infrastructure; Education; Culture and Heritage; Economic Development and Families and Young People. Four cross-agency Cluster Groups have been established with responsibility for developing innovative initiatives which meet the needs of Aboriginal people in these priority areas. Each of the Cluster Groups is chaired by a lead agency and includes representation from 60 relevant NSW and Australian Government agencies and five Peak Aboriginal Bodies. *Two Ways Together* Action Plans for 2005-2007 are currently being implemented by the Cluster Groups.

At the regional level, Regional Engagement Groups (or REGs) have been established to ensure that government agencies are meeting community needs in the regions. The Regional Reports will be used by REGs to develop regional action plans to focus regional government activity on locally identified priority issues and areas. In most of the regions, regional action planning will include particular focus on up to three Partnership Communities. REGs are coordinated by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs' Regional Managers. The regional reports have been developed to inform the work of REGs and government agencies in the regions.

A description of the contents and major findings of the report are outlined below.

Chapter 1 outlines the characteristics of the region, noting its geographical location, the local government areas that fall within its borders and its population. It also outlines the Aboriginal cultural and language groups and the Local Aboriginal Land Councils. There is a brief overview of the local economy and an Aboriginal employment profile, in which employment is most commonly in the manufacturing, construction, retail and property and business services sectors. These are also sectors in which there are good prospects for employment.

¹ All data is from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' 2001 Census unless otherwise specified.

Chapter 2 presents a statistical profile of the region, focused on demographics. It reveals that the region has 19.4% of the Aboriginal population of New South Wales. As in the rest of the State, this population is a comparatively young one, with 59% under the age of 25 years. By contrast, the older age group is very small, with only 2.3% of the Aboriginal population aged 65 years and over. There are significantly greater numbers of Aboriginal people in the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Blacktown, Campbelltown and Penrith. Blacktown is the most populous LGA in New South Wales and the third largest in Australia.

In Chapter 3, socio-economic indicators are analysed to determine the areas in which Aboriginal people are particularly disadvantaged in Western and South-Western Sydney. These data reveal that the Aboriginal population in this region are most disadvantaged in the areas of justice, health, housing and education. Adult incarceration rates are amongst the highest in the State, while the rate of juvenile diversions from court is amongst the lowest in New South Wales. The region has the worst figures in New South Wales with respect to the first antenatal visit by pregnant mothers, and has a relatively high rate of low birth weight babies when compared with other regions. While levels of overcrowding in social housing are comparatively low, the proportion of the Aboriginal population that owns or is purchasing their own homes is very low. The proportion of the Aboriginal population that has received tertiary education is also very low when compared with other regions of the State.

Chapter 4 provides a snapshot of the current environment by summarising the needs identified through assessment of the demographic and socio-economic data and the community's priorities. Chapter 4 concludes by suggesting some areas for further examination at the local and regional planning levels.

Important note:

The *Two Ways Together* regional reports have been written based on the ten Regional Coordination Management Group (or RCMG) regions in New South Wales. REGs are constituted as sub-committees of RCMGs, which are coordinated by the NSW Premier's Department.

However, much of the data relied upon in this report is collected by ATSI region, and these boundaries are not consistent with the RCMG boundaries. Where this creates possible issues in interpreting the data contained in this report, it is noted. **Figure 1** notes the six ATSI regions, outlined in black, the ten RCMG regions by colour, and the Local Government Areas, outlined in white and by name. The six former ATSI regions are:

- Sydney
- Many Rivers (on the north coast)
- Kamilaroi (including north-west NSW)
- Murdi Paaki (including western NSW)
- Binaal Billa (including mid-west and south-western NSW)
- Queanbeyan (on the south coast).

The ten RCMG regions are:

- Coastal Sydney
- Western/South Western Sydney
- Central Coast
- Hunter
- North Coast
- New England/North West
- Western NSW/Murdi Paaki
- Mid-Western NSW
- Riverina/Murray
- Illawarra/South East.

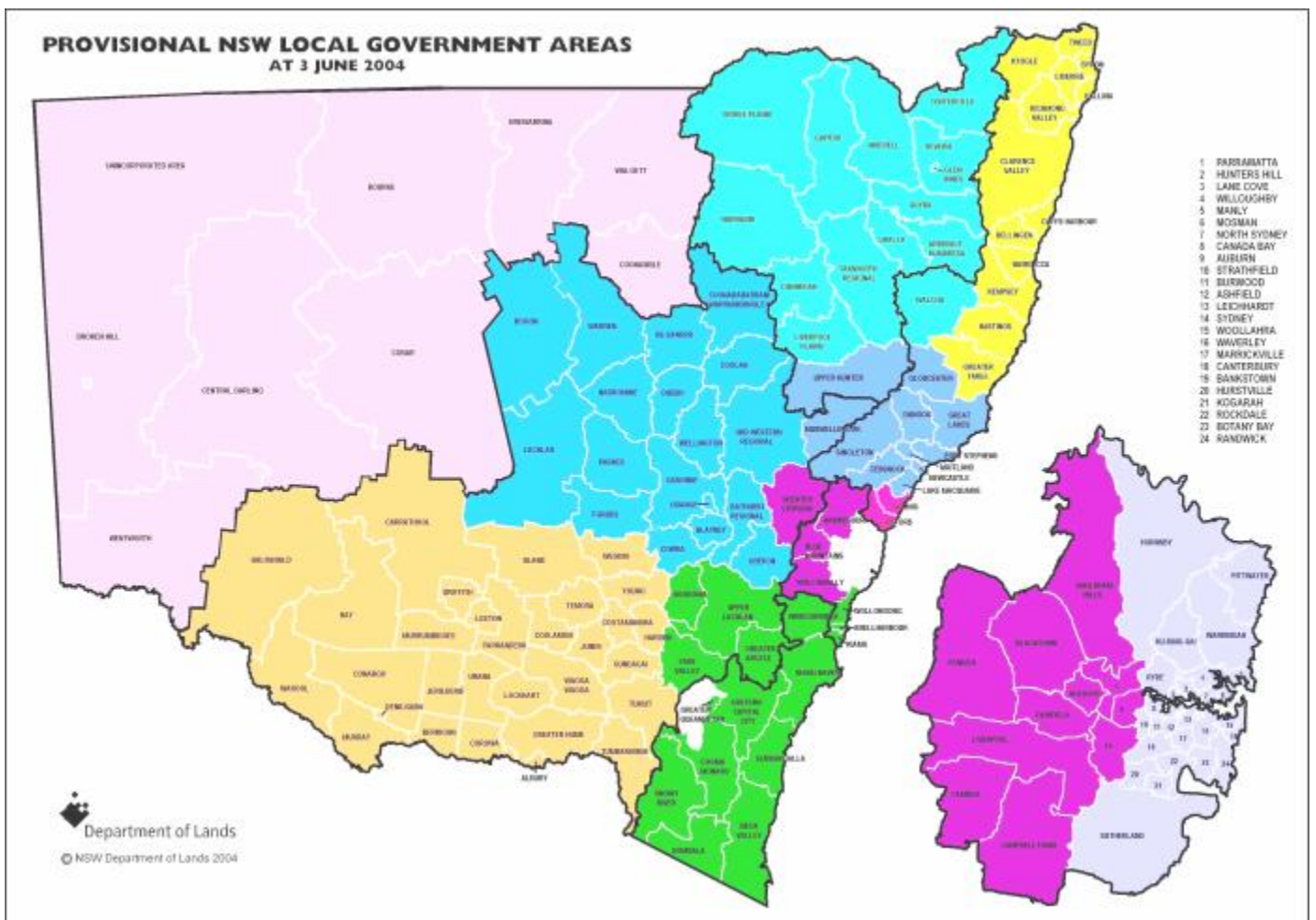


Figure 1: Map of RCMG, ATSI and LGA boundaries

Please note that for the purposes of this report Weddin, Young and Harden have been included in the Riverina Murray region as their statistics are collected with West Wyalong, Temora, Coolamon and Bland. Weddin is situated within the Mid-Western RCMG boundary and Young and Harden are situated within the Illawarra-South East boundary.

Also although the Wentworth LGA is part of the Riverina Murray RCMG boundary, the statistics have been captured with Western NSW as it is expected that the

information will be used to assist with the COAG Trial in the Murdi Paaki region, and Wentworth is part of the Trial site.

1.0 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REGION

1.1 Geography

The Greater Western Sydney (Western and South-Western Sydney) region is shown on the map at **Figure 2**. The region covers the Sydney Basin along a north-south boundary west of Parramatta and includes the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Wollondilly Local Government Areas (LGAs).

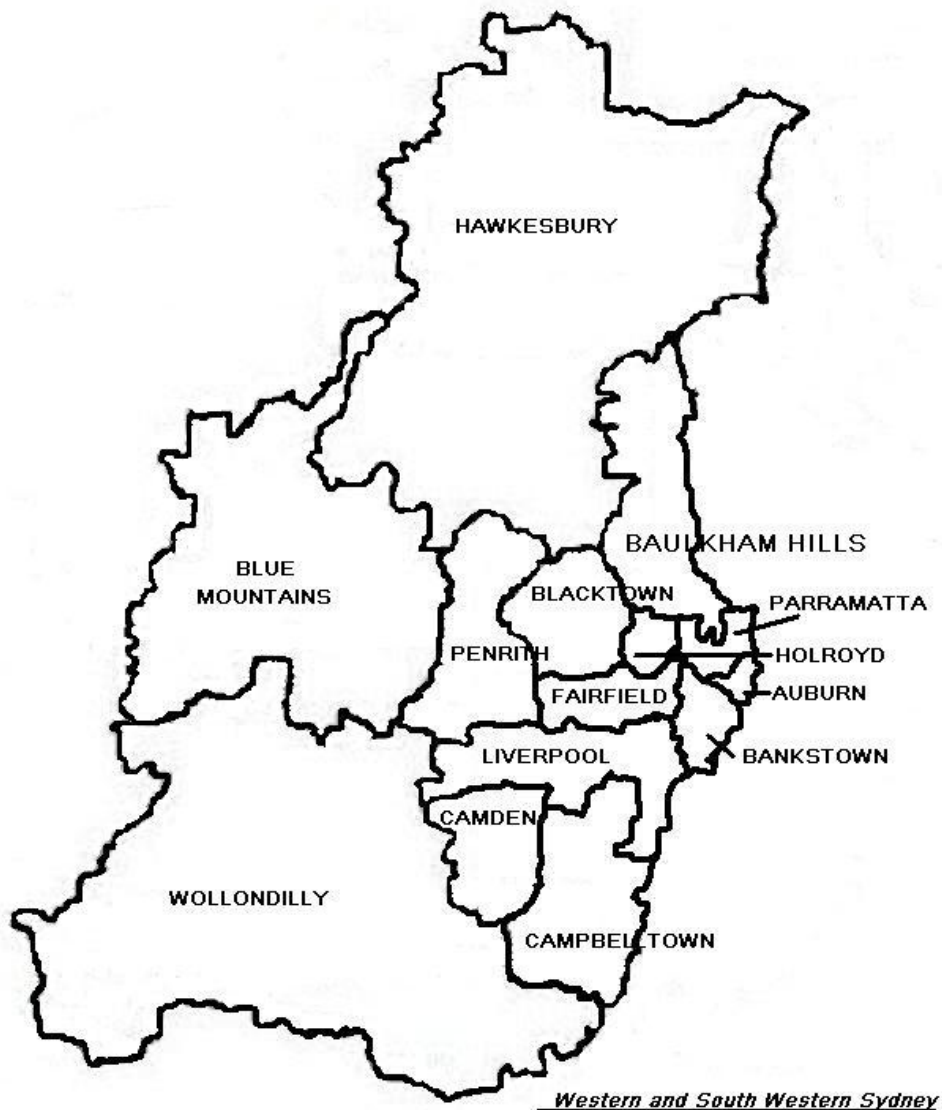


Figure 2: Local Government Areas of Greater Western Sydney.

There are 14 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the Greater Western Sydney region:

- Auburn
- Bankstown
- Baulkham Hills
- Blacktown
- Blue Mountains
- Camden
- Campbelltown
- Fairfield
- Hawkesbury
- Holroyd
- Liverpool
- Parramatta
- Penrith
- Wollondilly

The region is broken into two sub-regions: the South-Western region and the Western region. This reflects the geographical boundaries of the Regional Co-ordination Management Groups (RCMGs) in the region. The LGAs contained in each of the two sub-regions are:

Western Sydney

Auburn, Baulkham Hills, Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Holroyd, Parramatta and Penrith; and

South-Western Sydney

Bankstown, Camden, Campbelltown, Fairfield, Liverpool and Wollondilly.

The region includes seven National Parks, two State Conservation Areas and four regional parks.

There is a great deal of variation in the socio-economic status of the populations that make up the region. Even within the different LGAs there are significant demographic variations. Therefore, the aggregation of information and statistics for the region does not necessarily provide an accurate indication of what is happening on the ground. This is illustrated by comparing some key socio-economic indicators for different areas in the Campbelltown LGA as shown in the table below.

| | Airds | Claymore | Glen Alpine |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Total Population | 4,107 | 3,387 | 4,433 |
| Persons per Household | 3.3 | 3.5 | 3.6 |
| Median Age | 23 | 20 | 32 |
| Renting | 87.0% | 89.0% | 3.9% |
| Average cars per household | 0.9% | 0.8% | 2.1% |
| Unemployment rate | 30.10% | 35.90% | 3.5% |
| Median Weekly HH Income | \$400-499 | \$400-499 | \$1,500- 1999 |

Table 1: Key Socio-Economic Indictors for Campbelltown LGA

1.2 Local Planning for Aboriginal Communities

Shires and councils in New South Wales are required by law to have social plans that make specific mention of local Aboriginal communities and issues of concern to the communities. While most of the local governments in the region have prepared such plans, some of these plans are out-of-date, some are still at draft stage, and some have been recently instituted under newly created councils.

The following issues have been raised consistently by each LGA in its Social Plan:

- A lack of awareness by non-Aboriginal people in offering services to Aboriginal people as well as lack of confidence and pride by the Aboriginal population in their culture and heritage
- The difficulty experienced by Aboriginal people accessing mainstream services and a lack of culturally appropriate services being offered to them
- The difficulties Aboriginal people have physically accessing services due to lack of private and public transport.

In 2004 Gandangara LALC, the Metropolitan LALC and Tharawal LALC entered into the Biala Agreement with the NSW Government. The agreement includes an Action Plan on Aboriginal Issues for the area.

Four LALCs were members of the Biala Implementation Group that developed and improved the Biala Agreement and the Biala Action Plans, although Deerubbin LALC did not sign the Agreement.

The Biala Implementation Group no longer meets, but will be incorporated within the work of the Greater Western Sydney Regional Engagement Group.

There are also the Macarthur Regional Organisation of Councils and Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) Plans that identify some of the issues pertaining to the Aboriginal population.

1.3 Aboriginal Cultural Groups

Broadly speaking, Western Sydney and South-Western Sydney are the traditional lands of the following Aboriginal peoples:

- Eora/Dhawal
- Dharug
- Gandangara
- Eora
- Tharawal

The main language groups in the region are Dharug and Tharawal.

1.4 Land

There are four Aboriginal Land Councils in the region:

- Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council;
- Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council;
- Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council; and
- Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council.

There have been no native title claims approved in the region.

1.5 The Regional Economy

Sydney has one of the highest employment rates of all the capital cities in Australia. The largest occupation is professionals. The top five occupations in Sydney accounted for 72% of employment in the region and three of these occupations were in the more highly skilled occupations of tradespersons and above.

The Western and South-Western Sydney region however shows a different employment profile to that of Sydney as a whole. According to the WSROC study, *Suburbs in the Global City: Employment Profile of Greater Western Sydney (2004)*, the Western and South-Western Sydney region is “one of Australia’s principal manufacturing regions”. Although manufacturing is third placed behind the property, business sector and retail trade in the economy of Greater Sydney, manufacturing industries employed just over 211,000 people. Significantly, the Western and South-Western Sydney region contained about 51% of these jobs.

From 1996 to 2001, employment grew by 21% overall in the Western and South-Western Sydney region. The region has the largest concentration of workers in part-time and lower paid employment. Much of the Western and South-Western Sydney region is residential, with accompanying commercial and light industrial, although some areas have maintained rural land used for farming and other agricultural industries.

The top five industry employers of **men** (from the ABN census statistics for this region) are:

| <i>Non-Aboriginal Men</i> | <i>Aboriginal Men</i> |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing (20%) • Retail (13%) • Construction (12.6%) • Property & Business Services (10%) • Wholesale Trade (8%) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing (20%) • Construction (13%) • Retail (10%) • Transport & Storage (9%) • Property & Business Services (7%) • Wholesale Trade (7%) |

The top five industry employers of Aboriginal men have average or above prospects

for future employment and growth, except manufacturing, which has below average prospects, and transport and storage, which has minimal projected growth.

The top five industry employers of **women** are:

| <i>Non-Aboriginal Women</i> | <i>Aboriginal Women</i> |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail (16.7%) • Property & Business Services (11%) • Manufacturing (10.6%) • Health & Community Services (10.5%) • Education (9%) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail (15.6%) • Education (12%) • Property & Business Services (10%) • Health and Community Services (10%) • Manufacturing (7.4%) |

The top five industry employers of Aboriginal women all have good prospects except education, which has average prospects, and manufacturing which has below average prospects.

1.5.1 Where are the job vacancies?

In March 2006, Job Networks in the Western and South-Western Sydney Region listed 2,369 job vacancies. The top five occupations with vacancies were:

- 1 Labourers, Factory and Machine Workers (21% of vacancies)
- 2 Marketing and Sales Representatives (10%)
- 3 Sales Assistants and Store persons (10%)
- 4 Food, Hospitality and Tourism (8%)
- 5 Clerks, Receptionists and Secretaries (7%)

1.5.2 Community Development and Employment Project (CDEP)

There are three CDEPs currently operating in the Western and South-Western Sydney region. As at March 2006, they had a total of 249 participants. Of these 103 were women and 146 were men.²

² Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

2.0 STATISTICAL PROFILE OF THE REGION

2.1 Demographics

In 2001, the Aboriginal population of the Western and South-Western Sydney region was estimated at 23,282³, constituting almost a fifth of the State's Aboriginal population. The number of Aboriginal people living in the Western Sydney sub-region, at 11.4% of the total NSW Aboriginal population, is higher than that in South-Western Sydney, which is around 5.8% of the total.

For the Western and South-Western Sydney region, there were 11,356 Aboriginal men and 11,926 Aboriginal women, or 49% and 51% respectively of the total population. Unlike most other regions of the State, there are only slightly more males than females in the 0-24 year age range, but this is reversed for all categories from 25 + onward.

The Aboriginal population distribution throughout the region varies enormously, as the figures listed below indicate. The population breakdown by LGA is:

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-------|----------------|-------|----------------|-----|
| Blacktown | 6,093 | Parramatta | 1,147 | Wollondilly | 576 |
| Campbelltown | 3,602 | Fairfield | 1,118 | Camden | 525 |
| Penrith | 4,117 | Hawkesbury | 384 | Auburn | 464 |
| Liverpool | 2,038 | Blue Mountains | 863 | Baulkham Hills | 372 |
| Bankstown | 1,303 | Holroyd | 680 | | |

The three LGAs with the highest Aboriginal populations in the region are Blacktown, Campbelltown and Penrith. For the total population, Blacktown is the most populous LGA in New South Wales and the third largest in Australia.

A comparison of the age structure of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations in the region illustrates the youthfulness of the Aboriginal population, with 59% of Aboriginal people in 2001 being less than 25 years old. In contrast, only 2.3% of the Aboriginal population is aged 65 years and over, whereas 9% of the non-Aboriginal population is aged 65 years and over.

In the Blacktown LGA, the Council's *Social Plan November 2000*, notes that in 1996, the 0-25 year old group made up 18.1% of the total population.

In the Campbelltown LGA at the 2001 census, the median age of the population was 30, compared to 34 years of age for Sydney as a whole. The 0-14 age group made up 26.5% of the total population, compared to 16.1% for Sydney as a whole.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics advises that there was an under-reporting of Aboriginality in the 2001 census. Estimates for the population at a regional level are not currently available.

3.0 SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS

The social and economic indicators confirm that Aboriginal people in the Sydney region are significantly disadvantaged compared to non-Aboriginal people, although they are less disadvantaged with respect to most of these indicators when compared with Aboriginal people in other regions of the State. In Sydney, Aboriginal people are over-represented in the poorest suburbs and, within these neighbourhoods, show the worst economic outcomes as is demonstrated by the unemployment rates of the Aboriginal population compared to the rates of the non-Aboriginal population⁴. The following sections examine particular indicators in detail.

3.1 Health

The health profile of Aboriginal people in the Western and South-Western Sydney region is generally above average when compared with other areas of the State, including comparisons with the non-Aboriginal population. For example, rates of cardiovascular disease and infectious diseases of Aboriginal people in Western Sydney are slightly lower when compared with non-Aboriginal people in the region and throughout the State, and significantly lower than the total Aboriginal population. Rates of hospital separations attributed to alcohol in the Aboriginal population are higher than those for the non-Aboriginal population throughout the State, but significantly lower than for the whole Aboriginal population. Diabetes rates are similarly much lower than the average for the Aboriginal population across the State, but still significantly higher than that of the non-Aboriginal population. On the other hand, the Western and South-Western Sydney region had the fourth highest proportion of low birth weight babies by Aboriginal status in New South Wales after New England and the Northwest, the North Coast, and Murdi Paaki regions between 2002 and 2004, and the worst statistics for the first antenatal visit by pregnant Aboriginal women in the State. These data suggest that much more attention needs to be paid to the health needs of Aboriginal mothers and babies in the region.

All of the material in the Health and Environmental Health sections of this report was sourced from the *Report of the New South Wales Chief Health Officer*, accessed on 31 March 2006.⁵

3.1.1 Maternal and Child Health

A birth weight of less than 2,500 grams for babies is considered to be low and may be indicative of poor health of the mother, her environment or the lack of available antenatal care. The proportion of Aboriginal babies in the Western and South-Western Sydney region that were born with a low birth weight decreased slightly between 1993 and 1998, from 11.8% to 11.4%, but increased slightly between 1999 and 2004, from 12% to 13.3%. This latter figure is double that for non-Aboriginal

⁴ J. Taylor, *Population and Diversity: Policy Implications of Emerging Indigenous Demographic Trends*, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, The Australian National University, (2006)

⁵ Population Health Division, *The health of the people of New South Wales – Report of the Chief Health Officer*, Sydney, NSW Department of Health at: http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/public-health/chorep/atsi/atsi_anteprocatsi_rcmg.htm.

babies in the region, only 6.5% of which were born with low birth weight in the period from 2002 to 2004. It is also the fourth highest figure by RCMG region for Aboriginal babies in the State, and higher than the state average for Aboriginal babies.

A low birth-weight baby is not necessarily associated with long-term disability. However, there is a correlation between being premature and low birth-weight, and these babies require additional attention at a primary health level. This is not always available, affordable or delivered in an appropriate manner for the Aboriginal population.

The higher rates of Aboriginal babies born with low birth weights may be in part related to a high incidence of Aboriginal mothers' smoking in the second half of pregnancy (58% in 2000, compared with 15.3% of non-Aboriginal mothers), and the younger overall age of Aboriginal mothers (smoking rates among younger women are higher than among older women).

It is also possible that the birth-weight data collected by NSW Health is under-reporting data on Aboriginal babies. For example, the Midwives Data Collection (MDC) only collects information on the Aboriginal status of the mother and not the father. Maternal Aboriginality is also under-reported on the MDC. In 2002, it was estimated that of all babies born to Aboriginal mothers, only 69% were reported as having an Aboriginal mother.

Another factor that may skew the figures is that in the cases of birthing complications, some Aboriginal mothers are brought to a Sydney hospital for delivery.

Risk factors for delivering a premature baby include:

- social factors such as low socio-economic status
- maternal age (under 20 or over 40)
- maternal substance abuse
- maternal illness – including diabetes and hypertension.

Linked to low birth weight is the time of the first antenatal visit by pregnant women. Ideally, this should occur before 20 weeks of pregnancy. Between 2002 and 2004, the Western and South-Western Sydney region had by far the worst figures in New South Wales for visits to antenatal clinics, with only 57.2% of pregnant Aboriginal women consistently having their first antenatal visit before 20 weeks. This figure is significantly lower than the average for Aboriginal mothers throughout the State (69.3%), and much lower than that of non-Aboriginal mothers throughout the State, 87.3% of which had their first antenatal visit before 20 weeks of pregnancy. It is also significantly lower than the average for non-Aboriginal mothers in the region, which is also the lowest in New South Wales, at 81.1%. These data suggest that there is a low awareness of the need for antenatal visits amongst all mothers in the region, and particularly amongst Aboriginal mothers. It also suggests a lack of Primary Health input at a community level.

3.1.2 Cardiovascular Disease

Between 2002 and 2005, rates of hospital separation⁶ for cardiovascular disease amongst Aboriginal people in the Western and South-Western Sydney region were the third lowest in the State, and around 30% lower than the NSW average for Aboriginal people: 2,095 per 100,000, compared to 3,071 per 100,000. Interestingly, the rate is 3% lower than the rate for the non-Aboriginal population of New South Wales over the same period (2,164 per 100,000).

The rate of hospital separations for cardiovascular disease in the region has increased markedly between 1993 and 2005 (a 60% increase) as it has across the Aboriginal population as a whole. This may in part be attributable to increased Aboriginal identification.

Data from the *2001 National Health Survey* shows that the prevalence of key risk factors for cardiovascular disease and diabetes are higher in the Aboriginal population compared with the non-Aboriginal population. Aboriginal adults aged 15 years and over were more likely to be classified as overweight or obese (61%) when compared with non-Aboriginal adults (42%).

Aboriginal people aged 18 years and over were more than twice as likely to be current smokers (51%) compared with non-Aboriginal people (24%): the majority of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal adults living in non-remote areas (around 70%) reported their levels of exercise as either sedentary or low.

3.1.3 Diabetes

Diabetes continues to be a major health problem amongst the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population. The rate of diabetes amongst Aboriginal people in the Greater Western Sydney region rose dramatically from 1993-96 (65 per 100,000) to 2002-05 (352 per 100,000). The rate in the period from 2002 to 2005 was therefore almost six times higher than the rate from 1993 to 1996. However, it is still more than 50% lower than the average rate of 746 per 100,000 for the total NSW Aboriginal population in the period from 2002-05, but is 50% higher than the rate for the total NSW non-Aboriginal population (236 per 100,000).

The higher rate of patients in the region identifying as Aboriginal may have contributed to the six-fold increase in diabetes rates. However, the significant overall worsening of the statistics across the total NSW population over the last decade indicates a major public health crisis for Aboriginal people in relation to diabetes.

3.1.4 Infectious Diseases

Hospital separation rates for pertussis, measles and haemophilus influenzae meningitis throughout the State amongst Aboriginal people have dropped by 80% over the period from 1993 to 2005.

⁶ Hospital separation: A formal separation is a discharge, transfer or death of a patient. It refers to the process by which a same day patient or inpatient completes an episode of care. A type of change separation occurs when an episode of care ends because the type of care provided to the patient changes.

The rate of hospital separations for these infections amongst Aboriginal people in the Western and South-Western Sydney region during the period from 2002 to 2005 is significantly lower than the rate for all Aboriginal people in New South Wales, at 1.2 per 100,000, compared to 4.2 per 100,000. It is also less than half the rate of non-Aboriginal people in the State (3 per 100,000), and less than a third of the rate for non-Aboriginal people in the region (3.8 per 100,000). However, these rates have fluctuated markedly in the region between 1993 and 2005, from 2.9 between 1996 and 1999, to 10.1 between 1999 and 2002. Similar, although less dramatic, fluctuations were apparent in the rates for the non-Aboriginal population in the region.

Skin infections are related to the later onset of heart and kidney disease. Hospital separation rates for skin infections throughout New South Wales amongst Aboriginal people have increased by 16% over the period from 1993 to 2005.

The rate of hospital separations for skin infections amongst Aboriginal people in the Western and South-Western Sydney region during the period from 2002 to 2005 is almost 20% higher than the rate of non-Aboriginal people in the region and in the State, at 296 per 100,000, compared to 241 per 100,000, and 235 per 100,000, respectively. However, it is half the rate for all Aboriginal people in New South Wales (583 per 100,000).

The doubling of the rate of hospital separations for skin infections amongst Aboriginal people in the region between 1993 and 2005 may partially be a result of under-identification of Aboriginal people in the region during the earlier period, although there has been a general trend upward in the statistics across the whole population over this period.

3.1.5 Alcohol-related Issues

The rate of hospital separations attributed to alcohol amongst Aboriginal people in the Western and South-Western Sydney region during the period from 2002 to 2005 is 40% lower than the rate for all Aboriginal people in New South Wales, at 1,028 per 100,000, compared to 1,790 per 100,000. However, it is around twice the rate for non-Aboriginal people in the region and the State during the same period.

The rate of hospital separations for trauma attributed to alcohol amongst Aboriginal people in the Western and South-Western Sydney region during the period from 2002 to 2005 is 40% lower than the rate for all Aboriginal people in New South Wales, at 288 per 100,000, compared to 497 per 100,000. However, it is almost 30% higher than the rate for non-Aboriginal people in the region, and around 25% higher than the rate for non-Aboriginal people throughout the State during the same period.

In the period from 2002 to 2005, the incidence of hospital separations for trauma attributable to alcohol for Aboriginal people in the Western and South-Western Sydney region were the lowest in the State, and were the second lowest in the State for hospital separations attributable to alcohol. Nevertheless, there has been a three-fold increase in the latter statistics over the period from 1993 to 2005, and a doubling of the former statistics over the same period.

The three-fold increase in the rate of hospital separations attributed to alcohol and more than two-fold increase in trauma attributed to alcohol amongst Aboriginal people in the region between 1993 and 2005 may be partially a result of under-identification of Aboriginal people in the region during the earlier period. However, the general upward trend in these statistics for Aboriginal people across the State indicates that alcohol-related problems are on the increase in the Aboriginal population.

3.2 Housing

A substantial number of Aboriginal people in New South Wales are assisted with public housing. In 2004-05, 934 Aboriginal households were newly assisted, while there are currently around 8,700 Aboriginal tenants in public housing. Mainstream community housing also houses an additional 600 Aboriginal households.

The following data on housing apply to the Sydney region as a whole, unless otherwise indicated.

In 2001, 31% of Aboriginal people owned or were purchasing their homes in the Greater Sydney region, compared with 67% of non-Aboriginal people. Home ownership trends within the Aboriginal community are vastly different to the general population: owning houses outright (8.5% compared to 30.2%), lower rates of houses being purchased (22.9% compared to 36.7%), and much higher rates of public housing rental (43.6% compared to 13.8%).

The 2001 Census data and data from other sources reveals that 50% of Aboriginal households pay more than 25% of their income on rent. In the Greater Sydney region, housing costs have risen by 40-50% over the last five years. When rent is taken into account, 30% of Aboriginal households are considered to be living in poverty.

In 2002-03, the Sydney and Murdi Paaki ATSI regions had the equal highest proportion of overcrowded Aboriginal Housing Office dwellings, at 3%. While overcrowding rates had decreased significantly in Murdi Paaki and Queenbeyan between 2000 and 2003, in most other regions, including Sydney, these rates had remained much the same. With respect to social housing, however, rates of overcrowding in Aboriginal housing were lower in Sydney in 2001 than in any other ATSI region, at 5.4%. However, this rate was still more than double the rate for the total NSW population, at 2.5%.⁷

3.2.1 Environmental Health

Hospital separations for acute respiratory infection, gastrointestinal infection, rheumatic heart disease, skin infections and tuberculosis are conditions related to environmental health. In particular, they may be related to poor housing factors, such as overcrowding and lack of access to adequate means of sanitation.

⁷ *Two Ways Together Report on Indicators*, June 2005, pp. 83-4.

Aboriginal households in the Western and South-Western Sydney region are comparatively less crowded than in other parts of the State, and environmental health standards appear to reflect this fact.

Hospital separations for acute respiratory infection amongst Aboriginal people during the period from 1993 to 1996 were 327 per 100,000, but had doubled to 651 per 100,000 for the period from 2002 to 2005. The Western Sydney figures for the period 2002-05 are 55% lower than the NSW average for Aboriginal people (1,504 per 100,000), and only 4% higher than the rate for non-Aboriginal people in the region and the State over the same period (622 and 627 per 100,000, respectively).

Hospital separations for gastrointestinal infection amongst Aboriginal people during the period from 1993 to 1996 were 36 per 100,000, but had risen to 168 per 100,000 for the period from 2002 to 2005: an almost five-fold increase over twelve years. The Western Sydney figures for the period 2002-05 are, however, 20% lower than the rate for non-Aboriginal people in the region over the same period (216 per 100,000), and 40% lower than the NSW average for Aboriginal people (285 per 100,000).

3.3 Justice

No disaggregated data was available for the Western and South-Western Sydney region for the purposes of this report. The data to follow has therefore been taken from the *Two Ways Together Indicator Report, July 2005*, and relates to the Sydney region as a whole.

The Sydney region had the lowest rate of juvenile persons diverted⁸ from court by Aboriginal status in New South Wales in 2002. The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal juveniles being diverted from court was the greatest in the State.

In the Sydney region, the proportion of persons refused bail by Aboriginal status was greater than that for the total prison population, but the difference was smaller than the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal rates of remand and imprisonment.

The proportion of Aboriginal prisoners on remand in the Sydney region increased by 75% between 1982 and 1998. This increase represents 37% of the growth experienced by the total prison population over the same period, and suggests that the use of remand has had a relatively minor long-term impact on the size of Sydney's Aboriginal prison population. Given that so many Aboriginal people are refused bail, it is understandable that so many will be on remand.

The Sydney region had the highest rate of Indigenous adults on remand in New South Wales in 2002. There was a significant gap between Sydney and the region with the second highest rate, Murdi Paaki.

⁸ Diversion: This is where juvenile persons of interest (POI) have their charges proceeded against by legal processes other than referral to court. Not all crimes have an associated POI and not all POIs have legal proceedings taken against them. The legal processes available to police include referral to court, referral to a youth justice conference, the issue of a caution or warning, or the issue of an infringement notice. There are many factors that can affect the likelihood of POIs being diverted from court by police, including the nature of the offence or the offending history of the individual.

The rate of assault victimisation by Aboriginal status was lower in the Sydney region than any other region in New South Wales in 1999/2000.

For the June 2002 quarter, there were 19.6 times as many Aboriginal women as non-Aboriginal women in custody, compared to 15.2 times as many Aboriginal men as non-Aboriginal men. Aboriginal adults are 15 times more likely to be in prison than non-Aboriginal people.⁹

The rate of imprisonment of Aboriginal adults was highest in the Sydney region in 2003. In that year, more than 1% of the adult Aboriginal population in Sydney was imprisoned.

3.3.1 Victim rates

According to the *Two Ways Together Indicator Report July 2005*, the rate of assault victimisation by Indigenous status was lower in the Sydney region than any other region in New South Wales in 2002. Nevertheless, rates of assault involving Aboriginal people in the Sydney region were double those of the non-Aboriginal population, at approximately 2,000 per 100,000, compared to approximately 1,000 per 100,000 people for the non-Aboriginal population.

The rate of hospitalisations for assault by Indigenous status was lower in the Sydney region than any other region in New South Wales in 1999/2000. However, when compared with the non-Aboriginal population, the rate of hospital separations for assault-related injuries for Aboriginal people was five times higher than the non-Aboriginal rate, at 250 per 100,000, compared to approximately 50 per 100,000 for non-Aboriginal people.

3.3.2 Adults

In December 2005, the rate of imprisonment of adults and the rate of adults on remand was the highest of any region in New South Wales. The gap between Aboriginal people in these circumstances and non-Aboriginal people is extremely disturbing. For example, the number of Aboriginal people on remand is 320 per 100,000, compared to 25 per 100,000 for the non-Aboriginal population.

It is very clear from these statistics that Aboriginal adults in the region have far more contact with the justice system than the non-Aboriginal population.

3.3.3 Juveniles

Data collected by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research indicates that Aboriginal juvenile persons of interest (POIs) who come into contact with police are less likely than the general population of POIs to be diverted away from court. Diversions might include a referral to youth justice conferencing, or the issuing of a caution or an infringement notice.

In 2002, the Sydney ATSI region had the lowest rate of Aboriginal juveniles diverted from the court system of any region in New South Wales, at around 47%. The state

⁹ ABS 2003

average for Aboriginal juveniles in the same year was 58%, and 81% for all juveniles.

The gap between the proportion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal juveniles diverted from court was the largest of any of the ATSI regions, and requires serious and concerted attention by the relevant agencies.

3.4 Economic Development

3.4.1 Employment and Unemployment

In 2002 for the Western and South-Western Sydney region, 52% of Aboriginal males and 39% of Aboriginal females were employed. Those who were not in the labour force were 36% of Aboriginal men and 53% of Aboriginal women. This meant that there were 12% of Aboriginal men unemployed and 8% of Aboriginal women.

Levels of Aboriginal employment in the region were still much higher than the average for Aboriginal people in non-Sydney New South Wales using the latter criterion (36%).

3.4.2 Income

In 2001, the median Aboriginal family income was \$200 – \$399 per week as compared to the non-Aboriginal median weekly income of \$400- \$499 per week.¹⁰ Lower incomes are a product of lower employment rates, employment in lower paying occupations and the younger age of the Aboriginal population.

In the Blacktown LGA (*Social Plan 2000*) the proportion of Aboriginal residents receiving an individual weekly income of \$100 - \$159 was 24.7%, slightly lower than the NSW average of 26.4%. On the other hand, a slightly higher proportion of Aboriginal residents earned zero or a negative income (7.6%) compared with the NSW average (6.5%).

3.5 Education

The Western and South-Western Sydney region ranks average to above average in most aspects of Aboriginal educational achievement compared to other regions of New South Wales.

The following data has been sourced from the Department of Education and Training's *Mid-Year Census 2003-2005*.¹¹

Levels of literacy and numeracy in Year 3 for Aboriginal students in Western and South-Western Sydney in 2005 are slightly higher than the state average for Aboriginal students, but are around twelve percentage points lower than the state average for all students (Band 2 and above). Levels of literacy and numeracy in Year 5 for Aboriginal students in Western and South-Western Sydney in 2005 are between three and five percentage points higher than the state average for

¹⁰ ATSI Sydney Region Plan 2004-2007

¹¹ Department of Education and Training, Planning and Innovation Directorate, Data Collection Unit, *Mid-Year Census 2003-2005, LGA 2005, NonGov Historical*.

Aboriginal students, but around ten percentage points lower than the state average for all students (Band 3 and above).

With respect to overall literacy results for Year 3 students in the region, 17.9% of Aboriginal students were placed in the two highest skill bands, while 18.6% were placed in the two highest skill bands for numeracy. These compare with 16.5% of all Aboriginal students in the State for Year 3 literacy, and 21.1% of all Aboriginal students in the State for Year 3 numeracy. On the other hand, 36.6% of all students in the region were placed in the two highest skill bands for literacy, 40.2% in the two highest skill bands for numeracy, and 42.2% and 46.2% respectively, for all students across the State.

With respect to overall literacy and numeracy results for Year 5 students in the region, 21.7% of Aboriginal students were placed in the two highest skill bands. These compare with 18.4% of all Aboriginal students in the State for Year 5 literacy, and 21.5% of all Aboriginal students in the State for Year 5 numeracy. On the other hand, 43.4% of all students in the region were placed in the two highest skill bands for literacy, 46.2% in the two highest skill bands for numeracy, and 47.4% and 50.7% respectively, for all students across the State.

3.5.1 School Retention Rates

The Western and South-Western Sydney region had the fourth highest retention rate in the State for Aboriginal students in Years 10 to 12 across all schools in 2005, at 42.5%. This was slightly higher than the state average for Aboriginal students, at 39.3%. It was, however, significantly lower than the state average for all students, at 74.2%. There were no disaggregated figures available for the region for retention rates from Years 7 to 10.

These statistics do not fully capture all of the students who may be enrolled in Year 11 and 12 coursework, such as part-time students, mature-aged students, and repeating students..

3.5.2 Tertiary Education

In 2001, an estimated 22% of Aboriginal people aged 15 years or over had tertiary qualifications, compared to 39% of the total population.

Table 2: What qualifications do people in the Sydney ATSI Region have?

| Qualification | Aboriginal | All persons |
|------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Postgraduate Degree | 0.8% | 2.9% |
| Bachelor Degree | 4.1% | 12.5% |
| Advanced Diploma and Diploma | 3.8% | 6.9% |
| Certificate | 12.8% | 15.3% |

In general, non-Aboriginal men and women are more qualified than Aboriginal men and women. However, these figures do not necessarily provide an accurate picture of regional variations. For example, in a large number of suburbs, including Airds, Ambarvale/Rosemeadow and Auburn, there were no Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal males or females who had postgraduate degrees. In Camden, Campbelltown and Fairfield, on the other hand, there was a higher proportion of Aboriginal people than non-Aboriginal people who had a postgraduate degree.

3.6 Culture and Heritage

An Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee was recently established under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. The Committee will advise the Minister for the Environment and the Director General of the Department of Environment and Conservation about any matter relating to Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in New South Wales. The Committee will not replace existing local, regional and state-wide consultative processes of the Department of Environment and Conservation or other NSW Government agencies. The Committee will provide strategic advice about the development and administration of Aboriginal culture and heritage programs, policies and projects.

3.6.1 Environmental and natural resource management

The broad environmental and natural resource management themes are land (land quality, land use and management), atmosphere (air quality, climate), biodiversity conservation, water (water quality and ecology, water use and allocation) and human settlement (waste, noise, Aboriginal heritage and non-Aboriginal heritage).

According to the Department of Environment and Conservation, there are 4,734 known and recorded sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance registered on the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) for the 14 LGAs in the region. The lack of systematic surveys and recording of Aboriginal cultural heritage items limits the accuracy and comprehensiveness of this information. Most items are recorded as part of the environmental assessment preceding development.

Aboriginal people are actively involved in the protection of Aboriginal heritage and rights in the management of land and natural resources. For example, there is one Aboriginal Place declared within the region, i.e., Upper Kedumba River Valley Aboriginal Place, and one Voluntary Conservation Agreement, i.e., Medallist Schofield VCA, a site consisting of 2 hectares of land.

There are no management agreements, non-statutory co-management agreements or Aboriginal Land Use Agreements in the Western and South-Western Sydney region.

3.6.2 Inland Development

Increased migration into the Western and South-Western Sydney region is creating new demands for land and therefore new demands on Aboriginal communities. There are pressures on the regional LALCs to sell land for development purposes,

but as in other urbanised parts of the State, developments on non-Aboriginal land are happening so quickly that traditional owners are struggling to protect heritage sites or make land claims over areas of significance to them.

3.6.3 Aboriginal Land Claims

Ownership, control of and access to land increases opportunities for Aboriginal people to practice, promote and protect their culture and heritage and participate in natural resource management, which has both cultural and economic benefits. In addition to an individual’s private purchases, there are several mechanisms through which Aboriginal people can own or control land in New South Wales. These are: the *Native Title Act 1993*; *NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*; the Indigenous Land Corporation; management agreements; non-statutory co-management agreements and Aboriginal Land Use Agreements.

As of 12 October 2005, the Indigenous Land Corporation owns or has granted four properties in the Sydney region, totalling 0.168 hectares.

Under the *NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*, 339 claims have been granted in the Sydney region as of 6 December 2005. These numbers are estimates based on LALC boundaries not ATSIC boundaries.

There are no native title determinations in the Western and South-Western Sydney region.

3.7 Families and Young People

The profile of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal families in the Greater Western Sydney region is markedly different in key respects to that of non-Aboriginal people.

While the proportion of families that are a couple with dependents (including children or students) is slightly higher for the Aboriginal community, there are more than twice as many single parent families with dependents in the non-Aboriginal community and almost twice as many couple families without children.

| | Non-Aboriginal | Aboriginal |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Couple family with dependents (children or students) | 36% | 40% |
| Single parent family with dependents | 24% | 10% |
| Couple family without children | 40% | 23% |

Table 3: Profile of family structures in the Western/South-Western Sydney region

According to Campbelltown City Council’s Social Plan, there is a higher incidence of single parent families in the Aboriginal population (35.9%), compared to 21.6% for the non-Aboriginal population.

3.7.1 Violence, Abuse and Neglect

In 2002, the victimisation rate for domestic violence (including assault and sexual assault) for Aboriginal people in the Greater Sydney region was just under 2.6 per 1,000. This is more than twice the non-Aboriginal rate (approximately 1.2 per 1,000), but well below the NSW average for Aboriginal young people (4.8 per 1,000).¹²

The number of Aboriginal children and young people involved in child protection reports for reasons of abuse or neglect was 21 per 1,000 – four times the non-Aboriginal rate (5 per 1,000).

¹² *Two Ways Together Report*, June 2005, p. 60.

4.0 CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

4.1 Community Priorities

There are two sets of priorities that impact on the Western and South Western Sydney region. The ATSiC Sydney Regional Council has consulted with Aboriginal communities in the Greater Sydney region to develop priorities for services. The resulting *Sydney Regional Council Plan 2004-2007* identifies seven strategic areas for action. They are:

- effective environmental health systems
- substance use and misuse
- economic participation and development
- early childhood development and growth
- functional and resilient families and communities
- early school engagement and performance; and
- a positive childhood and transition to adulthood.

It should be noted that the Sydney Regional Council Plan is for the whole of the Sydney region, including the Western and South-Western Sydney region, and also includes a number of discrete Aboriginal communities with large populations and specific needs. Their concerns may therefore have taken precedence over other, more dispersed communities that are less well-organised or acknowledged. When this whole-of-Sydney region is referred to below, it is described as the Greater Sydney region.

The Partnership Priorities outlined in the Biala Agreement, mentioned in section 1.2 of this report, are:

- Supporting and strengthening Aboriginal families living in Greater Western Sydney
- Improving the capacity of Aboriginal organizations and Public Sector agencies to deliver quality services to Aboriginal people in Greater Western Sydney by learning, planning and working together
- Coordinating planning and action to improve outcomes to Aboriginal people in Greater Western Sydney.

4.2 Analysis of Need

The statistical information presented in the previous chapters reveals considerable Aboriginal disadvantage compared to non-Aboriginal people in the South-Western and Western Sydney region. Compared to other regions in the State, Aboriginal people in the South-Western and Western Sydney region are suffering less disadvantage than all other regions across a majority of indicators. Nevertheless, some Aboriginal disadvantage is apparent across all the indicators for health, economic development, education, housing, justice and family and community wellbeing, although this disadvantage is more pronounced in some areas.

The Aboriginal population in the Western and South-Western Sydney region has the following characteristics when compared with the non-Aboriginal population of the region:

- a significantly younger overall population, but similar to the demographics of the Aboriginal population in other regions in New South Wales
- very few people older than 60 years of age – with more women than men in this demographic
- high unemployment; and
- lower education achievements.

The socio-economic indicators also identify the Western/South-Western Sydney region’s Aboriginal population as being more disadvantaged or less disadvantaged (relative to Aboriginal people in other regions) in the following areas:

| Less disadvantaged | More disadvantaged |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cardiovascular disease • Diabetes • Infectious diseases • Alcohol use • Environmental health • Domestic violence rates • Years 3 & 5 literacy & numeracy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult incarceration rates • Juvenile diversions from court • First antenatal visit by pregnant mothers • Low birth weight babies • Housing • Levels of tertiary education |

4.2.1 Health

The Western and South-Western Sydney region has a comparatively high proportion of low birth weight babies and low rate of antenatal visits by pregnant Aboriginal mothers.

4.2.2 Education

The Western and South-Western Sydney region has falling retention rates for Aboriginal students to Year 12.

4.2.3 Justice

The Greater Sydney region had the highest rate of Aboriginal adults on remand in the State. It also had the highest rate of imprisonment of Aboriginal adults in 2003, when more than 1% of the adult Aboriginal population in the region was imprisoned. The proportion of persons refused bail by Aboriginal status in the Western and South-Western Sydney region was also greater than the total population, but the difference was smaller than the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal rates of remand and imprisonment.

4.2.4 Families and Young People

Although in 2002 the rate of assault victimisation in the Greater Sydney region was significantly higher for Aboriginal young people than for the total population, the Greater Sydney region had the lowest victimisation rate for domestic violence for Aboriginal people in New South Wales at 2.6 per 1,000 people.

Although the rate of Aboriginal children and young people involved in reports where assessment determined abuse/neglect issues was four times the rate for the total population of children and young people in Sydney in 2001/2002, the Greater Sydney region had the fourth highest rate of substantiated reports by Aboriginal status in New South Wales.

4.2.5 Housing and Infrastructure

The Sydney and Murdi Paaki regions had the highest proportion of households with overcrowding in Aboriginal Housing Office dwellings in New South Wales in 2002/03.

In the Sydney region, the proportion of Aboriginal households who own or are buying their own home was almost half the proportion of non-Aboriginal households in 2001. However, the proportion of Aboriginal households who own or are buying their own home was slightly greater in Sydney than any other region.

4.3 Issues for Consideration

On the basis of the information set out in this report, it is recommended that the Western and South-Western Sydney Regional Engagement Group undertake further investigation of the following issues:

1. The data relating to health suggests that there are a number of areas, such as low birth weight babies, antenatal visits by Aboriginal mothers, and tobacco and other drug misuse, which may require additional allocation of resources.
2. Opportunities should be explored to work with the Attorney General's Department, NSW Police and the Department of Corrective Services to address the issues of low rates of Aboriginal juvenile diversions and high adult incarceration rates in the region.
3. Considering the lack of affordable housing in the region and the need for crisis accommodation, the Aboriginal Housing Office, Department of Housing, Department of Community Services and Department of Ageing, Disability and Homecare representatives could be invited to discuss these issues with the relevant community organisations and representatives.
4. Although there is a considerable amount of money spent on family and community services in the region, it is not clear that all sectors of the region are benefiting equally from this expenditure. It is therefore recommended that the various communities be consulted about gaps in service delivery.
5. Due to the continuing poor performance of Aboriginal people in the region with respect to educational achievement, which the data and the community

consultations indicate should be a higher priority, some discussion needs to occur about priority areas for resource allocation.

In developing appropriate responses to these issues, consideration should be given to advice consistently provided by Aboriginal people in various forums in relation to service delivery.

A general concern expressed by Aboriginal people is the culturally inappropriate manner in which services are delivered. This manifests itself in a range of ways, including:

- the absence of Aboriginal staff in organisations, particularly at the first point of contact such as reception areas;
- an inability by service providers to communicate effectively with Aboriginal people; and
- overt racism expressed by service providers.

“Cultural understanding” is listed as one of the goals under *Two Ways Together*. The Department of Education and Training has developed a cultural competence course called the Aboriginal Cultural Education Program. It is suggested that the relevant CEOs prioritise cultural awareness training for public sector employees in key agencies with high levels of contact with Aboriginal people, including NSW Police, and the Departments of Community Services, Corrective Services, Education and Training, Environment and Conservation, Health, Juvenile Justice and Primary Industries.

Agencies are recommended to give careful consideration to these concerns when developing a response to the issues identified in this report.

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