

4.2 GEOGRAPHICAL CATEGORIES

There are a number of ways of approaching a geographical analysis. The Australian Bureau of Statistics uses the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) for the collection and dissemination of geographically organised statistics (ABS 2006c). The ASGC provides seven interrelated classification structures which are designed for different practical purposes. This report uses the 'Main Structure' which covers the whole of Australia without gaps or overlaps. The Main Structure comprises five hierarchical levels: census districts, statistical local areas, statistical subdivisions, statistical divisions, and states and territories. This analysis uses statistical divisions and statistical subdivisions as the main geographical categories, because patterns can be identified more easily if larger geographical categories are used.

In each state and territory, the capital city is treated as a statistical division which includes the greater metropolitan area and any anticipated growth corridors for the next 20 years. The statistical division 'represents the city in a wider sense' (ABS 2006c, p. 15). Statistical divisions outside of the capital cities are 'relatively homogeneous region(s) characterised by identifiable ... links between the inhabitants and between the economic units within the region, under the unifying influence of one or more major towns or cities' (ABS 2006c, p. 15).

New South Wales is divided into 12 statistical divisions, as shown in Map 1 (excluding off-shore and migratory). They are Sydney, Hunter, Illawarra, Richmond-Tweed, Mid-North Coast, Northern, North Western, Central West, South Eastern, Murrumbidgee, Murray and Far West.

Statistical subdivisions are defined as 'socially and economically homogeneous regions characterised by identifiable links between the inhabitants' (ABS 2006c, p. 14). Sydney is divided into 14 statistical subdivisions. There are also statistical subdivisions which correspond to major regional population centres. There are 44 of these across the country, including 14 in New South Wales. They are Newcastle, Wollongong, Nowra-Bomaderry, Tweed Heads and Tweed Coast, Lismore, Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Tamworth, Dubbo, Bathurst, Orange, Queanbeyan, Wagga Wagga and Albury.

In other cases, statistical subdivisions cover non-urban areas. These are defined as rural areas which do not include cities with populations of 25 000 or above. These non-urban areas are said to have 'identifiable links between economic units within the region' and there may be the 'unifying influence' (ABS 2006c, p.14) of one or more country towns. These rural/remote subdivisions often have small populations, and sometimes they have high rates of homelessness but few homeless people.

4.3 OVERVIEW: NEW SOUTH WALES

Two-thirds (63 per cent) of the population of New South Wales lives in Greater Sydney and this is where we find the largest concentration of homeless people. Table 4.1 shows that the census identified 15 956 homeless people in Sydney where the rate of homelessness was 39 per 10 000. This was similar to the rate of homelessness in Melbourne (41 per 10 000) and Canberra (42 per 10 000), but lower than the rates in the other state capitals.

There were 11 414 homeless people in regional New South Wales where the rate was 47 per 10 000, similar to the rate in regional Victoria (44 per 10 000).

4.1 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, SYDNEY AND REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES

	Sydney	Regional	New South Wales
Number	15 956	11 414	27 374*
Rate	39	47	42

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

* No geographical information on 4 people

This chapter focuses on the distribution of the homeless population in Sydney. Chapter 5 discusses the Hunter and the Illawarra. Chapters 6 and 7 examine 'inland' and 'coastal' New South Wales.

4.4 SYDNEY

The Sydney statistical division comprises 14 subdivisions (Maps 2 & 5). This analysis groups them into four areas which we refer to as the 'City Core', the 'Inner City Ring', the 'Outer City Ring' and the 'Growth Corridors'.

The City Core is the subdivision of Inner Sydney. It has a population of 313 000 and includes the City of Sydney, Leichhardt, Marrickville and South Sydney. It has a boundary with Sydney Harbour.

The Inner City Ring includes the other four subdivisions which adjoin Sydney Harbour. They are Lower Northern Sydney, Eastern Suburbs, Inner Western Sydney and Central Western Sydney. The Inner City Ring has a population of 991 000.

The Outer City Ring includes six subdivisions with a population of 1.98 million. They are: St George-Sutherland in the south, Blacktown in the west, Canterbury-Bankstown and Fairfield-Liverpool in the south-west, Central Northern Sydney and Northern Beaches (Manly, Pittwater and Warringah).

The Growth Corridors comprise: Outer Western Sydney (Penrith and the Blue Mountains); Outer South Western Sydney including Campbelltown; and the Gosford-Wyong Growth Corridor. Their combined population is 838 000.

4.2 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, SYDNEY

	City Core	Inner City Ring	Outer City Ring	Growth Corridors	Total
Number	4163	5221	4277	2295	15 956
Rate	133	53	22	27	39

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

Table 4.2 shows that there were 4163 homeless people in the City Core and the rate of homelessness was 133 per 10 000, down from 164 per 10 000 in 2001. The City Core had eight per cent of Sydney's population, but 26 per cent of its homeless people. It is usual to find a higher rate of homelessness in the inner suburbs of capital cities. This is the case in Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Hobart and Brisbane. People often gravitate to the inner city, where services for homeless people have traditionally been located.

In the Inner City Ring, there were 5221 homeless people and the rate was 53 per 10 000. There were 4277 homeless people in the Outer City Ring where the rate was 22 per 10 000. The rate was 27 per 10 000 in the Growth Corridors where there were 2295 homeless people.

Altogether, there were 11 793 homeless people in suburban Sydney, compared with 4163 in the City Core. The provision of services in suburban areas assists people in the early stages of homelessness, including those at risk, and reduces the move to the inner city.

Table 4.3 shows the distribution of people in different sectors of the homeless population. In the City Core, 52 per cent of homeless people were in boarding houses, 23 per cent were in SAAP accommodation, and 16 per cent were staying temporarily with other households. Another nine per cent (388 people) were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough.

A census collector in the inner city counted homeless people under a bridge: 'They had blankets and bags with them and had found their spot for the night'. Another collector counted homeless people 'outside Paddington Town Hall'. A third collector counted people in a park and a fourth found people 'huddled in doorways and sleeping under awnings'.

4.3 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, SYDNEY

Percentage

	City Core	Inner City Ring	Outer City Ring	Growth Corridor	Total
Boarding house	52	53	21	11	38
SAAP	23	12	16	24	18
Friends and relatives	16	31	56	52	37
Improvised dwellings	9	4	7	13	7
	100	100	100	100	100

Number

	City Core	Inner City Ring	Outer City Ring	Growth Corridor	Total
Boarding house	2164	2765	882	259	6070
SAAP	944	643	676	558	2821
Friends and relatives	667	1604	2417	1195	5883
Improvised dwellings	388	209	302	283	1182
	4163	5221	4277	2295	15 956

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

In the Inner City Ring, 53 per cent of homeless people were staying in boarding houses, 31 per cent were with other households and 12 per cent were in SAAP. There were 209 people sleeping rough, including 103 in Central Western Sydney. A census collector in Parramatta reported, 'Some people were squatting ... others were sleeping in doorways'.

In the Outer City Ring, 56 per cent of the homeless were staying with friends or relatives, 21 per cent were in boarding houses and 16 per cent were in SAAP.

In the Growth Corridors, 52 per cent of the homeless were with other households and service providers reported 'lots of couch surfing'. Another 24 per cent were in SAAP and 13 per cent (283 people) were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough. In Outer Western Sydney, the figure for 'improvised dwellings and sleeping rough' was 182, but 53 young people were mistakenly included in the count, leaving 129 in the primary population.

Local service providers talked about 'young people sleeping rough ... near the train station ... along the river bank and sleeping in cars'. Another referred to 'kids bedding down in garages ... squatting also happens'. A third talked of 'young Aboriginal kids living under a bridge'. Another knew of people 'living in garages and sheds further out of town'.

Overall, 38 per cent of the homeless in Sydney were staying in boarding houses (6070 people), mainly in the inner suburbs and central city. Thirty-seven per cent of the homeless (5883 people) were staying with other households, mainly in suburban Sydney. There were 2821 people in SAAP and 1182 people sleeping rough or living in improvised dwellings, of whom one-third were in the City Core.

4.5 MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS

The national report pointed out that boarding houses are more common in capital cities and less common in regional centres and country towns. In these communities, SAAP workers sometimes refer homeless people to local caravan parks if there is no emergency accommodation available. Marginal residents of caravan parks were defined as people who were renting caravans or cabins, living at their usual address, and with no one in the dwelling having full-time employment.

4.4 SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONS IN BOARDING HOUSES AND MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, NEW SOUTH WALES

	Boarding house (N=7626)	Caravan (N=5104)
	%	%
Sydney	80	23
Remainder of NSW	20	77
	100	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

Seventy per cent of boarding house residents across the country were in capital cities, and in New South Wales 80 per cent of boarding house residents were in Sydney (Table 4.4). Most regional centres had a small number of boarding house residents.

Nationally, 71 per cent of marginal caravan park residents were outside of the capital cities and in New South Wales this figure was 77 per (Table 4.4). In some communities, local SAAP workers send homeless people to the local caravan park if there is no alternative accommodation available. Caravan parks may also house some people on a longer-term basis who are unable to re-enter the private rental market.

4.5 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND NUMBER OF MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, SYDNEY

	City Core	Inner City Ring	Outer City Ring	Growth Corridors	Total
Homeless	4163	5221	4277	2295	15 956
Rate per 10 000	133	53	22	27	39
Caravan	0	15	524	634	1173
Total	4163	5236	4801	2929	17 129
Rate per 10 000	133	53	24	35	42

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

Table 4.5 shows that there were 1173 marginal residents of caravan parks in Sydney, and 99 per cent were in the Outer Ring or Growth Corridors. There were 383 people in Gosford-Wyong, 184 in Blacktown and 137 in Outer Western Sydney.

In general, caravan parks in Sydney fall into two groups. First, there are caravan parks which are used by tourists in the summer, as well as people who own their caravans. In the winter, permanent residents remain, but the number of tourists declines. Some of these parks attempt to exclude homeless people, but others accept all prospective tenants. Before summer, however, rents are increased and marginal tenants are forced to move on.

Second, there are a small number of caravan parks which are used as permanent accommodation for poor people and as emergency accommodation. Local informants in Gosford-Wyong described one park as a 'dumping ground for Department of Housing clients'. Another referred to a park where 'the vans are in really poor condition'.

For some policy purposes, marginal residents of caravan parks might be thought of as part of the tertiary population. If this is the case, then the rate of homelessness was 42 per 10 000 in Sydney, compared with 39 per 10 000 using the ABS definition (Table 4.5). In the Growth Corridors the rate of homelessness increased from 27 to 35 per 10 000.

