

## 7 COASTAL

### 7.1 OVERVIEW

There are three statistical divisions on the New South Wales Coast, in addition to Sydney, Hunter and Illawarra. They are Richmond-Tweed, Mid-North Coast and South Eastern ('coastal New South Wales') (Map 1). All three are popular tourist destinations. They have a combined population of 702 000 and 11 per cent of the New South Wales population lives in these areas.

Richmond-Tweed (population 219 000) has a border with Queensland. There are two major urban areas and one rural subdivision. The urban subdivisions are Tweed Heads and Tweed Coast (population 59 000) and Lismore (population 30 000). The rural subdivision is Richmond-Tweed SD Balance (population 130 000) which includes Ballina, Casino and Byron Bay.

Mid-North Coast (population 285 000) has two regional centres: Coffs Harbour (population 48 000) and Port Macquarie (population 39 500). There are two rural subdivisions. One is Clarence (population 95 600) which covers the rural hinterland behind Coffs Harbour and includes Grafton. The other is Hastings (population 101 800) which covers the rural area surrounding Port Macquarie and includes Taree and Kempsey.

South Eastern stretches from Illawarra to the Victorian border, and as far inland as the Southern Tablelands. There are four subdivisions. Queanbeyan is the main urban centre with a population of 45 000. The Southern Tablelands (population 67 000) is a predominantly rural subdivision which includes Goulburn. Snowy is an Alpine subdivision with 19 500 people. The Lower South Coast (population 66 000) includes Merimbula, Bega and Batemans Bay.

### 7.1 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, NEW SOUTH WALES

	Sydney	Hunter and Illawarra	Inland	Coastal	Total*
Number	15 956	3319	3667	4428	27 374
Rate	39	34	50	63	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.

There were 4428 homeless people in coastal New South Wales, where the rate of homelessness was 63 per 10 000 (Table 7.1). This was higher than the rate in Hunter and Illawarra (34 per 10 000) and in inland New South Wales (50 per 10 000).

### 7.2 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, COASTAL NEW SOUTH WALES

	Urban subdivisions	Rural subdivisions	Total
Number	1342	3086	4428
Rate	61	64	63

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

Table 7.2 shows that there were 1342 homeless people in the five urban subdivisions, where the rate of homelessness was 61 per 10 000. There were 3086 homeless people in the six rural subdivisions where the rate was 64 per 10 000.

#### 7.2 URBAN

There were some important differences between the urban communities. The rate of homelessness was lower in Port Macquarie (43 per 10 000) and Coffs Harbour (52 per 10 000) (Table 7.3), but higher in Queanbeyan (64 per 10 000), Tweed Heads (67 per 10 000) and Lismore (80 per 10 000). Tweed Heads had 396 homeless people and Queanbeyan had 288.

### 7.3 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, URBAN SUBDIVISIONS, COASTAL NEW SOUTH WALES

	Tweed Heads	Lismore	Coffs Harbour	Port Macquarie	Queanbeyan	Total
Number	396	241	247	170	288	1342
Rate	67	80	52	43	64	61

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

In these subdivisions, there was variation in the proportions of people in different sectors of the homeless population (Table 7.4). Overall, 49 per cent of the homeless were staying with friends and relatives, but in Lismore and Queanbeyan, about 34 per cent were with other households, whereas in Tweed Heads and Port Macquarie it was 61 per cent.

Twenty per cent of the homeless were in SAAP, but this proportion ranged from 10 per cent in Tweed Heads to 32 per cent in Port Macquarie. In all subdivisions except Lismore, the proportion in boarding houses was between five and 10 per cent.

Another 20 per cent of the homeless were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough, but this proportion ranged from zero in Port Macquarie to 24 per cent in Tweed Heads and 34 per cent in Queanbeyan. In Tweed Heads and Queanbeyan, most of these people were in sheds or garages that were owned or being purchased and some people were probably 'blockies' (people building houses). There were few people sleeping rough or renting improvised dwellings. However, this pattern was reversed in Coffs Harbour and Lismore, where most people were sleeping out. In Lismore, a census collector reported 'people sleeping in tents, under bridges, in squats and in cars' and in Coffs Harbour about four-fifths were sleeping rough.

#### 7.4 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, URBAN AREAS, COASTAL NEW SOUTH WALES

<b>Percentage</b>						
	Tweed Heads	Lismore	Coffs Harbour	Port Macquarie	Queanbeyan	Total
Boarding house	5	26	10	7	7	10
SAAP	10	31	16	32	24	21
Friends/relatives	61	33	54	61	35	49
Improvised dwellings	24	10	20	0	34	20
	100	100	100	100	100	100

  

<b>Number</b>						
	Tweed Heads	Lismore	Coffs Harbour	Port Macquarie	Queanbeyan	Total
Boarding house	22	63	23	12	20	140
SAAP	38	74	40	55	68	275
Friends/relatives	240	80	134	103	101	658
Improvised dwellings	96	24	50	0	99	269
	396	241	247	170	288	1342

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

Overall, half (49 per cent) of the homeless in the urban subdivisions were staying with friends and relatives, one-fifth (21 per cent) were in SAAP, and one-fifth (20 per cent) were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough.

### 7.3 RURAL

There were some important differences between rural communities (Table 7.5). The rate of homelessness was between 43 and 49 per 10 000 in three subdivisions: Tablelands, Hastings and Clarence. It was higher in South Coast (78 per 10 000) and Richmond-Tweed SD balance (87 per 10 000). The rate was highest in Snowy (102 per 10 000) where there were 198 homeless people.

#### 7.5 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, RURAL SUBDIVISIONS, COASTAL NEW SOUTH WALES

	<b>Richmond-Tweed</b>	<b>Mid-North Coast</b>		<b>South Eastern</b>			<b>Total</b>
	SD Balance	Clarence	Hastings	Tablelands	South Coast	Snowy	
Number	1129	466	488	290	515	198	3086
Rate	87	49	48	43	78	102	64

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

About half (46 per cent) of the homeless were staying with friends or relatives, but this proportion ranged from 27 per cent in South Coast to 65 per cent in Snowy (Table 7.6). Another 12 per cent were in SAAP, but this varied from six per cent in Richmond-Tweed SD Balance to 24 per cent in South Coast. The number of people in boarding houses was modest, with an overall figure of nine per cent. One-third of the homeless were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough, including 396 people in Richmond-Tweed SD Balance and 201 in South Coast (Table 7.6).

## 7.6 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, RURAL SUBDIVISIONS, COASTAL NEW SOUTH WALES

### Percentage

	Richmond-Tweed	Mid-North Coast		South Eastern			Total
	SD Balance	Clarence	Hastings	Tablelands	South Coast	Snowy	
Boarding house	9	7	5	17	10	17	9
SAAP	6	10	12	18	24	8	12
Friends/relatives	50	52	47	41	27	65	46
Improvised dwellings	35	31	36	24	39	10	33
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

### Number

	Richmond-Tweed	Mid-North Coast		South Eastern			Total
	SD Balance	Clarence	Hastings	Tablelands	South Coast	Snowy	
Boarding house	101	30	26	51	50	33	291
SAAP	73	47	56	52	124	17	369
Friends/relatives	559	243	230	118	140	128	1418
Improvised dwellings	396	146	176	69	201	20	1008
	1129	466	488	290	515	198	3086

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

In South Coast, local service providers reported that people sleep rough but the numbers were modest. One service provider said, 'yes, we have people sleeping rough. Sometimes they have mental health issues'. Another service provider said that, 'Some homeless people are transient and move up and down the coast'. The census data indicated that about 85 per cent of people in the 'improvised dwellings' category were in dwellings that were either owned or being purchased. Local informants talked about 'makeshift cabins and metal sheds' and people buying blocks of land, but being 'unable to build a house because they could not find work'. There were few households with someone in full-time work and a household income of \$1000 or more. The number of blockies was low.

There were 396 people in the primary population in Richmond-Tweed SD Balance. Just over one-third were in dwellings that were either owned or being purchased and another 15 per cent were in dwellings that were rented. A minority may have been building conventional houses, but many were in poor quality dwellings. One informant talked about 'unapproved sheds out in the backblocks'. Another talked about 'dongas (shipping containers), tepees

and shacks' and another talked about 'people in substandard dwellings, such as a caravan with a lean-to and a decrepit old shed'.

In Richmond-Tweed SD Balance, about half of the primary population were rough sleepers. A census collector recorded 'people in tents at the football ground, a man living in a car, and another living in a shed'. A local informant described 'people with drug and alcohol issues ... who float around the community'. A third described 'people camping in the sand dunes ... and sheltering under awnings'. Sleeping rough was a significant issue in this community.

#### 7.4 MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS

There were 140 boarding house residents in the five urban subdivisions (Table 7.4) but 828 marginal residents of caravan parks (Table 7.7). In the six rural subdivisions, there were 291 boarding house residents (Table 7.6), but 1290 marginal residents of caravan parks (Table 7.8). In these communities, caravans are used as an alternative to boarding houses.

#### 7.7 HOMELESS PEOPLE AND MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, URBAN SUBDIVISIONS, COASTAL NEW SOUTH WALES

	Tweed Heads	Lismore	Coffs Harbour	Port Macquarie	Queanbeyan	Total
Homeless	396	241	247	170	288	1342
Rate per 10 000	67	80	52	43	64	61
Caravan	343	136	179	142	28	828
Total	739	377	426	312	316	2170
Rate per 10 000	125	125	89	79	70	98

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

Table 7.7 shows that if marginal residents of caravan parks are included in the tertiary population, then the rate of homelessness in the five urban subdivisions increases from 61 to 98 per 10 000. In Tweed Heads, the rate increases from 67 to 125 per 10 000 and in Lismore, it increases from 80 to 125 per 10 000.

### 7.8 HOMELESS PEOPLE AND MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, RURAL SUBDIVISIONS, COASTAL NEW SOUTH WALES

	<b>Richmond-Tweed</b>	<b>Mid-North Coast</b>		<b>South Eastern</b>			<b>Total</b>
	SD Balance	Clarence	Hastings	Tablelands	South Coast	Snowy	
Homeless	1129	466	488	290	515	198	3086
Rate per 10 000	87	49	48	43	78	102	64
Caravan	469	328	315	49	112	17	1290
Total	1598	794	803	339	627	215	4376
Rate per 10 000	123	83	79	50	95	111	91

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

There were 1290 marginal caravan park dwellers in the six rural subdivisions (Table 7.8), and 86 per cent were in three subdivisions: Richmond-Tweed SD Balance (469), Clarence (328) and Hastings (315). Table 7.8 shows that if marginal residents of caravan parks are included in the tertiary population, then the rate of homelessness in the rural subdivisions increases from 64 to 91 per 10 000. In Clarence, the rate increases from 49 to 83 per 10 000 and in Richmond-Tweed SD Balance, it increases from 87 to 123.

Coastal New South Wales is one of a number of areas across the country where the inclusion of marginal residents of caravan parks makes a significant difference to the count of homeless people.

