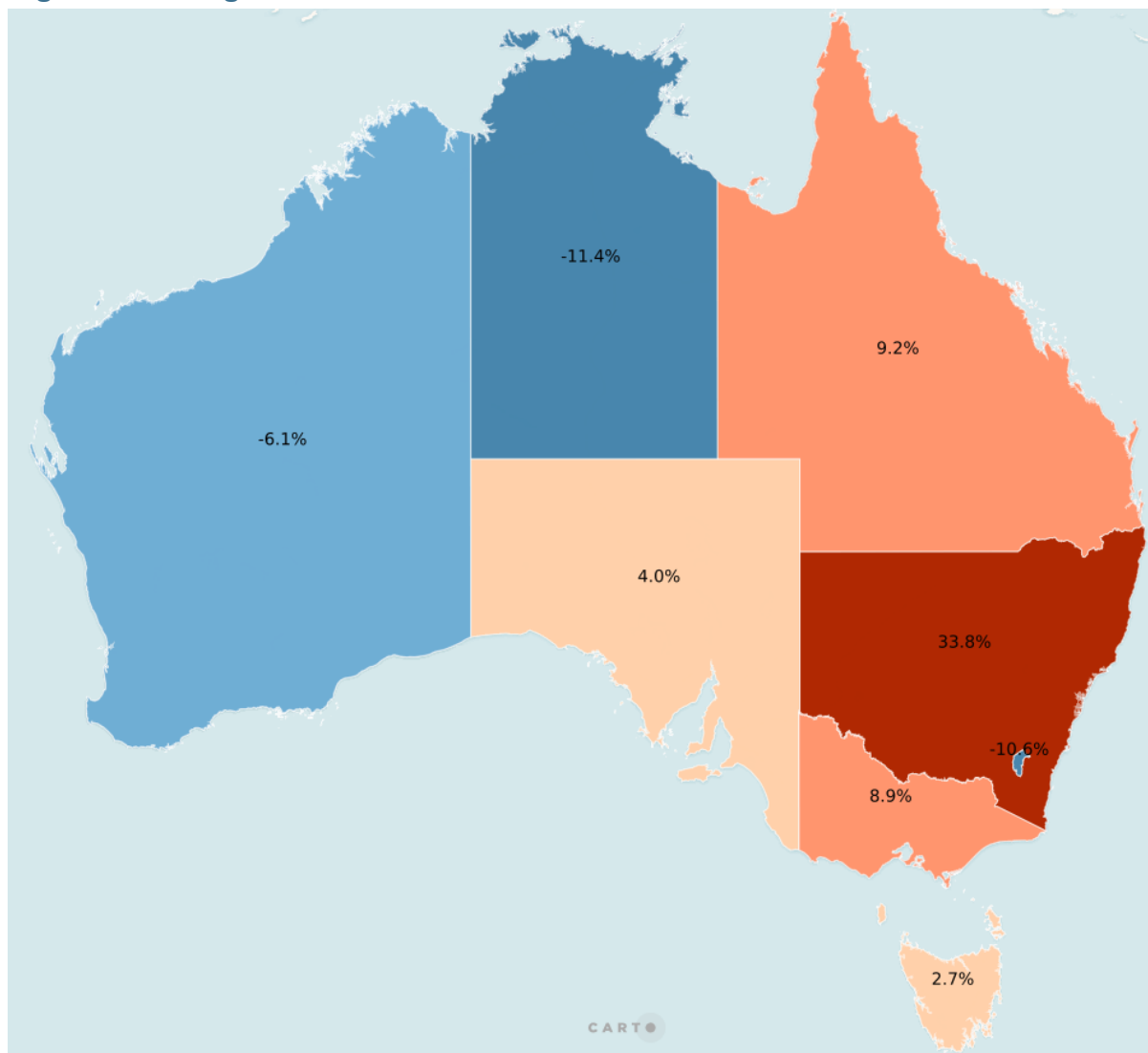# Homelessness in NSW: Electorate Statistics

Contents

Introduction

In the context of a wealthy industrialised society, homelessness is a visible indicator of poverty, community disadvantage, and social exclusion.[1] As access to safe and secure housing is considered a basic human right, increasing rates of homelessness show that this choice is not available to all.[2] According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) Census of Population and Housing, the number of homeless persons in Australia increased by 13.7% between 2011 and 2016, rising from 102,439 persons to 116,427 persons.[3] The homelessness rate also rose, from 47.6 to 49.8 persons per 10,000. Of the States and Territories, NSW recorded the largest increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness (9,525) and the homeless rate (from 40.8 to 50.4 persons per 10,000) (Figure 1).

While the concept of 'homelessness' may evoke the image of a person 'sleeping rough' on a city street, the latest ABS data indicates that this does not capture the reality of contemporary homelessness. There is increasing evidence that the experience of homelessness is changing in Australian society.[4,5] While owning your own home remains the preferred housing option for Australians, an era of rising house prices means that this is out of reach for many. Homelessness must now include the idea of shelter-based homelessness. The latest Census shows that from 2011 to 2016, the number of people living in 'severely crowded dwellings' in Australia increased from 41,370 to 51,088. Over this period, NSW also recorded the largest increase in the number of people living in "other marginal housing" (from 26,924 to 37,270) and the rate per 10,000 persons of people in "other marginal housing" (from 32 to 43.5).

This paper adds to the existing literature by examining homelessness by NSW State Electoral District (SED) in 2011 and 2016. By way of background, the paper begins by defining homelessness and then examines statistical trends in the experience of homelessness in NSW from 2001 onwards.

Figure 1: Change in number of homeless between 2011 and 2016

A Statistical Definition of Homelessness

Homelessness is a complex problem that has multiple causes. A shortage of affordable[6] and available rental housing,[7] domestic and family violence,[8] poverty,[9] unemployment, mental illness,[10,11] drug and alcohol abuse,[12] financial crisis, exiting state care and/or prison[13] and economic and social exclusion are all factors that contribute to the level of homelessness in Australia.[14] This complexity ensures that there is no single definition of homelessness.[15]

As a starting point, this paper will use the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) statistical definition of homelessness.[16]

In examining the concept of homelessness, the ABS notes;

> Definitions of homelessness are culturally and historically contingent. They range from limited objective measures which conflate homelessness with rooflessness to more equivocal subjective definitions founded on culturally and historically determined ideas of 'home'. The ABS definition of homelessness is informed by an understanding of homelessness as 'home'lessness, not rooflessness. It emphasises the core elements of 'home' in Anglo American and European interpretations of the meaning of home as identified in research evidence (Mallett, 2004). These elements include: a sense of security, stability, privacy, safety, and the ability to control living space. Homelessness is therefore a lack of one or more of the elements that represent 'home'.

The ABS defines homelessness as:

> When a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:
>
> - is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
> - has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
> - does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

In discussing the concept of homelessness underpinning this definition, the ABS recognises that access to accommodation alternatives 'is contingent on having the financial, physical, psychological and personal means to access these alternatives'.[17] The challenges associated with the statistical measurement of homelessness in contemporary society have been discussed by the ABS in a 2012 information paper. In response, the ABS has developed six homeless operational groups for presenting estimates of people who were likely to have been homeless on Census night. These groups are:

- Persons living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out;
- Persons in supported accommodation for the homeless;
- Persons staying temporarily with other households;
- Persons living in boarding houses;
- Persons in other temporary lodgings; and
- Persons living in 'severely' crowded dwellings.

In addition to these groups, the ABS has defined three marginal housing groups:

- Persons living in other crowded dwellings (which includes those that are not in 'severely' crowded dwellings);
- Persons in other improvised dwellings (which includes those who were living in improvised dwellings but were not considered homeless under the rules for the ABS operational group 'Persons living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out'); and
- Persons who are marginally housed in caravan parks.

These marginal housing groups provide a measure of the number of people living in housing situations that are approaching the edge of homelessness. As the ABS notes, these groups can also provide a possible indication of people who may be at risk of homelessness.[18]

New South Wales

Table 1 presents the number of homeless people in NSW who were classified as falling into the six homeless operational groups over the last 4 censuses from 2001 to 2016. It shows that the total number of homeless persons in NSW increased from an estimated 23,041 in 2001 to an estimated 37,715 in 2016. By 2016, NSW was home to 32% of Australia's homeless population, up from 27% in 2011.[19] NSW also recorded the largest percentage increase in the number of homeless (37.3%) of any State or Territory between 2011 and 2016. The rate of homelessness also increased, from 40.8 per 10,000 persons in 2011 to 50.4 in 2016.[20] Table 2 shows estimates of the number of persons living in other marginal housing, with the number in other crowded dwellings increasing substantially over the four censuses.

Table 1: Homelessness in NSW, Persons by operational groups, 2001 to 2016

ABS Homeless operational groups	2001	2006	2011	2016
Persons living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out	1,698	1,596	1,924	2,588
Persons in supported accommodation for the homeless	3,339	3,867	4,924	5,861
Persons staying temporarily with other households	5,194	4,761	4,937	5,350
Persons living in boarding houses	7,574	5,941	5,793	6,869
Persons in other temporary lodgings	116	152	244	222
Persons living in 'severely' crowded dwellings	5,120	5,902	9,655	16,821
TOTAL Homeless persons*	**23,041**	**22,219**	**27,479**	**37,715**

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, _Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016_, March 2018.
*The ABS must ensure that any statistical information about individuals cannot be derived from published data. To minimise the risk of identifying individuals in aggregate statistics, the ABS uses a technique (known as perturbation) to randomly adjust cell values. As a result of this, adding up cell values to derive a total will not necessarily give the same result as published totals. For further information, refer to the following ABS explanatory notes on estimating homelessness.

Table 2: Homelessness in NSW, Persons in other marginal housing, 2001 to 2016

ABS Other marginal housing	2001	2006	2011	2016
Persons living in other crowded dwellings	16,190	14,764	22,138	32,512
Persons in other improvised dwellings	1,072	1,832	996	1,758
Persons who are marginally housed in caravan parks	5,771	3,932	3,787	3,000

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, _Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016_, March 2018.

Rates of homelessness (Table 3) and persons in other marginal housing (Table 4) have generally increased over the last four censuses.

Table 3: Homelessness in NSW, Rate[21] per 10,000 of the population, 2001 to 2016

ABS Homeless operational groups	2001	2006	2011	2016
Persons living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out	2.7	2.4	2.8	3.5
Persons in supported accommodation for the homeless	na	5.9	7.1	7.8
Persons staying temporarily with other households	8.2	7.3	7.1	7.2
Persons living in boarding houses	12.0	9.1	9.4	9.2
Persons in other temporary lodgings	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.3
Persons living in 'severely' crowded dwellings	8.1	9.0	14.0	22.5
All Homeless persons	**na**	**33.9**	**40.8**	**50.4**

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, _Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016_, March 2018. na=not available

Table 4: Homelessness in NSW, Persons in other marginal housing, Rate[20] per 10,000 of the population, 2001 to 2016

ABS Other marginal housing	2001	2006	2011	2016
Persons living in other crowded dwellings	25.6	22.5	32.0	43.5
Persons in other improvised dwellings	1.7	2.8	1.4	2.4
Persons who are marginally housed in caravan parks	9.1	6.0	5.0	4.0

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, _Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016_, March 2018. na=not available

Tables 5 and 6 present the number of homeless people in NSW by the selected characteristics of age, gender and Indigenous status. This data was not available for the 2001 Census

Table 5: Homelessness in NSW by age groups, 2006 to 2016

Age groups	2006	2011	2016	% Change 2006-2016	2016 Rate
Under 12	2,775	3,609	3,963	42.8%	35.2
12–18	2,027	2,587	2,677	32.1%	43.3
19–24	2,938	4,043	6,365	116.6%	109.4
25–34	4,068	5,153	8,715	114.2%	81.6
35–44	3,539	3,825	5,041	42.4%	50.3
45–54	3,143	3,794	4,537	44.4%	46.4

Age groups	2006	2011	2016	% Change 2006-2016	2016 Rate
55–64	1,986	2,513	3,626	82.6%	40.8
65–74	1,106	1,273	1,939	75.3%	28.6
75 and over	637	688	846	32.8%	15.6
TOTAL*					

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, _Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016_, March 2018.
*The ABS reports that 'cells in this table have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data. As a result cells may not add to the totals.' For further information, refer to the following ABS explanatory notes on estimating homelessness.

As Table 5 shows, from 2006 onwards, there has been a steady increase in NSW in the number of homeless children aged under 12. Similarly, NSW has also witnessed an increase in the number of homeless children and youth (aged 12 to 24 years) over the same period from 4,965 in 2006, to 6,631 in 2011 and 9,041 in 2016.

The number of homeless persons in NSW aged 55 years and above has increased over the past three Censuses, from 3,729 in 2006, to 4,475 in 2011 and 6,407 in 2016 (The data for this age group is not available from the 2001 Census). The rate of people aged 55 years and over experiencing homelessness has also increased, from 24.5 per 10,000 in 2011 up to 30.4 in 2016.

Table 6 provides a breakdown of homelessness in NSW by gender and Indigenous status. In NSW, the male homelessness rate increased to 61.6 per 10,000 in the 2016 Census, up from 48.0 in 2011 and 42.3 in 2006. The 2016 rate for females was 39.6 per 10,000, up from 31.7 in 2011 and 25.8 in 2006.

Table 6: Homelessness in NSW by gender and Indigenous status, 2006 to 2016

Characteristic:	2006	2011	2016	% Change 2006-2016	2016 Rate
Gender					
Male	13,658	16,352	22,698	66.2%	61.6
Female	8,565	11,125	15,010	75.2%	39.6
Indigenous status					
Indigenous	1,881	2,205	2,278	21.1%	105.4
Non-Indigenous	18,567	23,012	31,327	68.7%	45.9
Not stated	1,770	2,265	4,102	131.8%	93.7

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, _Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016_, March 2018.
*The ABS reports that 'cells in this table have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data. As a result cells may not add to the total NSW homeless figures provided earlier in Table 1. For further information, refer to the following ABS explanatory notes on estimating homelessness.

In NSW, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were homeless was 105.4 persons for every 10,000 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, a decrease from 127.7 in 2011 and 135.8 in 2006. This decline in the NSW

rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness is consistent with the national trend over the same timeframe. In Australia, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were homeless was 361 per 10,000 in 2016, a decrease from 487.4 in 2011 and 570.6 in 2006.
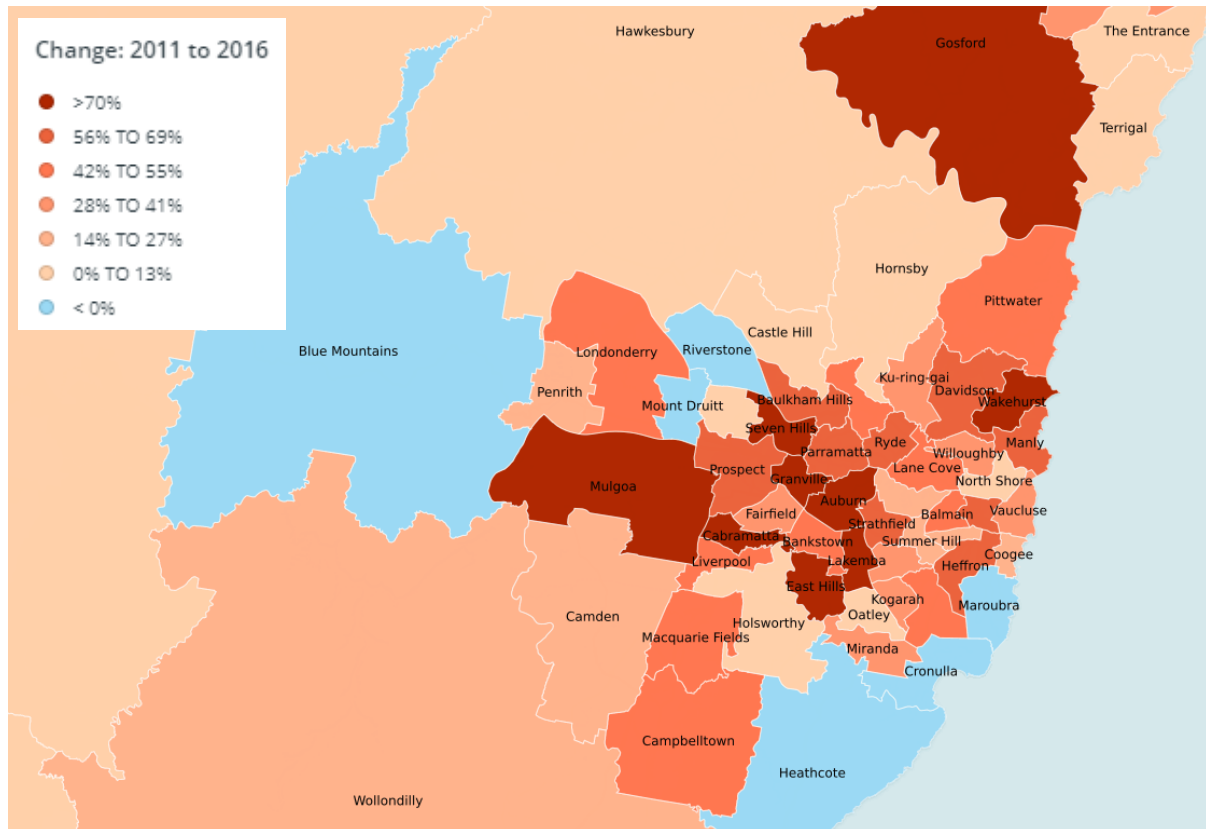
Living in overcrowded accommodation appears to be highly prevalent among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.[22] Based on the latest Census data, 252.6 persons for every 10,000 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Australia live in 'severely' overcrowded dwellings, with 164.8 persons for every 10,000 living in 'other' crowded dwellings (part of the "other marginal housing" group).

State Electoral Districts

This section uses ABS Statistical Areas Level 2 (SA2) homelessness data to generate an estimate of the total number of homeless persons in each SED. This data is a count of persons by place of enumeration, rather than place of usual residence. Place of enumeration is the place where a person is counted on Census night. A methodology note describes how these estimates were generated.

Figure 2 shows the percentage change in homelessness for each NSW SED from 2011 to 2016. An interactive map shows the 2011 and 2016 figures for all NSW electorates.

Figure 2: Change in homelessness in NSW electorates, 2011 to 2016

Tables 7 to 8 present a summary of SED homelessness statistics by the homelessness rate using the 2016 Census data. Tables 9 and 10 present statistics for those SEDs that experienced the largest change in the number of homeless persons

between 2011 and 2016. Each electorate's rank in relation to all electorates was determined on the basis of their homeless rate.

Table 7 shows that the Sydney and Auburn electorates had the highest number of homeless people in 2016 (respectively, 3,308 and 1,967). These figures represent significant percentage increases in the size of the homeless population since the 2011 Census, with the Auburn electorate recording a 163.0% increase in homelessness in this period. This was the highest percentage increase in the State (Table 9) followed by the electorates of East Hills (108.4%) and Lakemba (104.5%).

Table 7: Highest ranked NSW electorates by homeless in 2016

2016 Rank	2016 Rate	Electorate	Number 2016	Change 2011-16	% change 2011-16
1	247.9	Sydney	3,308	1,279	63.0%
2	186.1	Auburn	1,967	1,219	163.0%
3	169.8	Newtown	1,490	309	26.2%
4	146.1	Summer Hill	1,185	171	16.9%
5	132.7	Strathfield	1,263	512	68.2%

Of all NSW electorates, the Ku-ring-gai electorate recorded the lowest rate of homelessness at 9.3 per 10,000 (Table 8). This low rate was closely followed by the Heathcote and Castle Hill electorates (respectively, 9.7 and 11.7). Heathcote also recorded a significant percentage decrease (-41.1%) in the number of homeless living within the electorate from 2011 to 2016 (Table 10).

Table 8: Lowest ranked NSW electorates by homeless in 2016

2016 Rank	2016 Rate	Electorate	Number 2016	Change 2011-16	% change 2011-16
93	9.3	Ku-ring-gai	76	22	40.7%
92	9.7	Heathcote	73	-52	-41.1%
91	11.7	Castle Hill	93	10	12.0%
90	12.1	Davidson	94	37	64.9%
89	13.5	Miranda	100	26	35.1%

Table 9: NSW electorates experiencing highest percentage increase in homeless in 2016

2016 Rank	2016 Rate	Electorate	Number 2016	Change 2011-16	% change 2011-16
2	186.1	Auburn	1,967	1,219	163.0%
38	38.5	East Hills	298	155	108.4%
10	94.3	Lakemba	869	444	104.5%
7	111.6	Cabramatta	915	450	96.8%
63	25	Wakehurst	197	96	95.0%

Table 10: NSW electorates experiencing highest percentage decrease in homeless in 2016

2016 Rank	2016 Rate	Electorate	Number 2016	Change 2011-16	% change 2011-16
92	9.7	Heathcote	73	-51	-41.1%
69	23.3	Blue Mountains	167	-62	-27.1%
65	23.8	Myall Lakes	169	-61	-26.5%
36	41.1	Oxley	301	-69	-18.6%
73	19.4	Wagga Wagga	151	-34	-18.4%

Table 11 provides a complete listing of key data on the homeless population for all 93 NSW electorates. The Parliamentary Research Service has also developed an interactive version of this Table which will enable users to search for a specific electorate.

Table 11: Homelessness in NSW electorates, 2016

Electorate	2016 Rank	2016 Rate	Number 2016	Change 2011-16	% change 2011-16
Albury	74	19.4	152	-33	-17.8%
Auburn	2	186.1	1967	1,219	163.0%
Ballina	29	53.7	406	-25	-5.8%
Balmain	9	97.2	814	254	45.4%
Bankstown	11	89.8	778	279	55.9%
Barwon	35	44.2	351	50	16.6%
Bathurst	50	30.7	238	27	12.8%
Baulkham Hills	79	17.4	139	56	67.5%
Bega	43	33.7	235	45	23.7%
Blacktown	25	57.8	510	59	13.1%
Blue Mountains	69	23.3	167	-62	-27.1%
Cabramatta	7	111.6	915	450	96.8%
Camden	87	14.5	127	16	14.4%
Campbelltown	22	58.8	467	140	42.8%
Canterbury	17	67.9	602	163	37.1%
Castle Hill	91	11.7	93	10	12.0%
Cessnock	77	18.1	138	-23	-14.3%
Charlestown	66	23.6	168	8	5.0%
Clarence	37	40.5	305	36	13.4%
Coffs Harbour	34	44.4	335	61	22.3%
Coogee	16	69.4	596	82	16.0%
Cootamundra	76	18.6	132	46	53.5%
Cronulla	88	14.1	103	-10	-8.8%
Davidson	90	12.1	94	37	64.9%
Drummoyne	68	23.3	189	39	26.0%
Dubbo	51	29.5	228	32	16.3%
East Hills	38	38.5	298	155	108.4%
Epping	82	16.2	130	45	52.9%
Fairfield	6	119.8	1045	293	39.0%
Gosford	31	46.3	342	147	75.4%
Goulburn	64	24.7	186	10	5.7%
Granville	8	102.5	941	417	79.6%
Hawkesbury	44	33.6	248	25	11.2%
Heathcote	92	9.7	73	-51	-41.1%
Heffron	12	75.9	827	329	66.1%
Holsworthy	47	32.6	277	7	2.6%
Hornsby	71	22.4	177	17	10.6%
Keira	58	27.5	213	-19	-8.2%
Kiama	72	19.8	139	-17	-10.9%
Kogarah	26	56.2	529	148	38.8%
Ku-ring-gai	93	9.3	76	22	40.7%
Lake Macquarie	49	30.7	214	63	41.7%
Lakemba	10	94.3	869	444	104.5%
Lane Cove	78	17.8	149	45	43.3%

Lismore	21	58.9	440	13	3.0%
Liverpool	14	71.8	662	219	49.4%
Londonderry	24	58.3	535	161	43.0%
Macquarie Fields	27	54.9	476	142	42.5%
Maitland	83	16.2	124	15	13.8%
Manly	46	33.3	267	97	57.1%
Maroubra	52	29.4	241	-40	-14.2%
Miranda	89	13.5	100	26	35.1%
Monaro	70	23.1	207	4	2.0%
Mount Druitt	28	54.5	488	-59	-10.8%
Mulgoa	56	28.4	231	100	76.3%
Murray	48	31.2	262	72	37.9%
Myall Lakes	65	23.8	169	-61	-26.5%
Newcastle	15	70.3	500	56	12.6%
Newtown	3	169.8	1490	309	26.2%
North Shore	30	47.8	374	43	13.0%
Northern Tablelands	19	61	488	102	26.4%
Oatley	60	27	206	19	10.2%
Orange	81	16.5	128	-10	-7.2%
Oxley	36	41.1	301	-69	-18.6%
Parramatta	23	58.7	623	252	67.9%
Penrith	33	45	357	75	26.6%
Pittwater	85	15.6	111	34	44.2%
Port Macquarie	45	33.5	248	67	37.0%
Port Stephens	75	19.1	136	25	22.5%
Prospect	13	73	601	246	69.3%
Riverstone	86	14.8	134	-2	-1.5%
Rockdale	18	64.4	565	196	53.1%
Ryde	41	36.4	348	138	65.7%
Seven Hills	42	36.2	313	146	87.4%
Shellharbour	59	27.5	221	91	70.0%
South Coast	54	29	200	48	31.6%
Strathfield	5	132.7	1263	512	68.2%
Summer Hill	4	146.1	1185	171	16.9%
Swansea	84	16.1	113	-22	-16.3%
Sydney	1	247.9	3308	1,279	63.0%
Tamworth	53	29	224	88	64.7%
Terrigal	67	23.6	170	20	13.3%
The Entrance	62	25.2	182	5	2.8%
Tweed	32	45.7	359	154	75.1%
Upper Hunter	61	26.9	203	48	31.0%
Vaucluse	40	37.1	300	77	34.5%
Wagga Wagga	73	19.4	151	-34	-18.4%
Wakehurst	63	25	197	96	95.0%
Wallsend	57	27.7	226	39	20.9%
Willoughby	55	28.8	249	73	41.5%
Wollondilly	80	16.6	122	17	16.2%
Wollongong	20	59	496	-7	-1.4%
Wyong	39	37.4	287	74	34.7%

Methodology note

The ABS defines Statistical Areas Level 2 (SA2) as medium-sized general purpose areas designed to represent a community that interacts together socially and economically. SA2s generally have an average population of about 10,000, with a range of 3,000 to 25,000 persons. Remote and regional SA2s areas generally have smaller populations than those in urban areas.

The ABS provides a range of correspondences to assist users convert statistical data to and from geographic regions included in the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). As the ABS explains:

> Correspondences mathematically reassign data from one geographic region to another. As most ABS data relates to population, standard correspondences have a weighting calculated based on the location of the population, and uses population data modelled to residential address locations.

An SA2 to SED population-weighted correspondence was derived using data from an ABS Customised report provided to the Queensland Government Statistician's Office.

In this paper, ABS data estimating the number of homeless at the SA2 level was reassigned using the SA2 to SED correspondence to match the geographic regions of the 93 NSW SEDs as determined in the 2013 redistribution.

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For further information please contact the Research Service on 9230 2356

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[20] ABC Online, _Without a home: Homeless Australia_

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