

We respectfully acknowledge that we work across the traditional lands of many Aboriginal Nations within the Western and Far West NSW region.

We commit to working in collaboration with our region's Aboriginal communities and peoples to improve their health, emotional and social wellbeing in the spirit of partnership.

Aboriginal nations within our region include:

- Wiradjuri • Wiradyuri
- Gamilaraay • Gamilaroi • Kamilaroi
- Wailwun
- Wongaibon
- Ngemba • Nyemba • Ngiyampaa
- Murrawarri
- Barkindji • Barkandj
- Barindji
- Nyirrupa
- Karenggapa
- Wadigali
- Wilyakali • Wiljali
- Wandjiwalgu
- Danggali
- Muthi-Muthi
- Kureinji
- Gunu
- Barranbinya
- Bandjigali
- Malyangaba
- Dadi Dadi

Throughout this document, we use the term 'Aboriginal' to refer to the Traditional Custodians of this land. We recognise the diversity of cultures, identities, and connections to Country and are committed to honouring and respecting this diversity in all aspects of our work.



Note: where PHN level data is not available, national and state level data have been reported.

Our Population



11.4%

of the population in the WNSW PHN region **identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander**, with 35,244 Aboriginal people living in the region according to 2021 census



WNSW PHN has the **third highest national proportion** who identify as Aboriginal, behind Northern Territory and Western Queensland PHN



LGAs with the highest total proportion of Aboriginal people include:

- Brewarrina
- Central Darling
- Coonamble
- Bourke, and
- Walgett

Demographics



The Aboriginal population of our region is **younger** than the non-Indigenous population



Higher proportion of non-Indigenous **ageing population** over 65 years (21.2%) in the WNSW PHN region compared to the Aboriginal population (6.95%)

In Australia, the **life expectancy at birth** in 2020-22 was

71.9 years

for Aboriginal males, and

75.6 years

for Aboriginal females,

with a **gap** between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous Australians of **8.8 years for males and 8.1 years for females**



51.47%

of Aboriginal people are **aged under 25 years** according to the 2021 census, compared to 28.92% of non-Indigenous people

Burden of Disease

In 2018, burden of disease among Aboriginal people was **2.3 times** that of non-Indigenous Australians



32.4%

of the Aboriginal population in the WNSW PHN region reported **one or more long-term conditions** in 2021

In 2021-22, the rate of potentially **preventable hospitalisations** among the Aboriginal population in NSW was **2.5 times higher** than that of the non-Indigenous population



Between 2017-18 to 2019-20, the rate of potentially **preventable hospitalisations** in the WNSW PHN region was **4,490.4 per 100,000** Aboriginal population, **16% higher** than the Aboriginal population in NSW

% of Aboriginal and non-Indigenous population by Age group



Homelessness

In 2023-24 in the WNSW PHN region, the crude rate of Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness (99.3 per 1000 Aboriginal people) was

11 times higher

than the rate of non-Indigenous people experiencing homelessness (8.8 per 1000 non-Indigenous people)



Determinants of Health



More than half of the Aboriginal population in the WNSW PHN region live in LGAs classified among the **50% most disadvantaged** nationally



Disparities in social determinants account for **35% of the total health gap** between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous Australians between 2017-19

In 2021,

57.5%

of Aboriginal households were **low-income households** in the WNSW PHN region, with a high proportion of low-income households in **Brewarrina, Gilgandra, Warrumbungle, Balranald, Walgett** and **Coonamble** LGAs

In 2021, the proportion of Aboriginal residents living in **crowded/severely crowded dwellings** was over **2.5 times** that of all people in the WNSW PHN region, with the highest rates in Central Darling (26%), Walgett (24%), Brewarrina (19%) and Wentworth (19%) LGAs



49%

of the Aboriginal population left school at Year 10 or below or did not attend school in the region in 2021

Contact with Justice System

In NSW in 2021-22, on an average day, Aboriginal young **people aged 10-17** (86.9 per 10,000) were



over 13 times



more likely to be under youth justice supervision as non-Indigenous young people (6.6 per 10,000)

From 2012-13 to 2021-22, there has been a

38% decrease

in the rate of Aboriginal young people aged 10-17 under youth justice supervision in NSW



In NSW in 2022, the rate of Aboriginal adults (1878.3 per 100,000) in prison custody was

12 times higher

than that of non-Indigenous adults (153.5 per 100,000)

Health Risk Factors



In NSW in 2023, the rate of daily smoking among Aboriginal people was

22%

(almost **2.85 times higher** than non-Indigenous people)

In NSW in 2023

41.6%

of the Aboriginal population was at long-term risk of harm from alcohol consumption, **25% higher** than that of the non-Indigenous population



In NSW in 2023

71.7%

of Aboriginal adults were **obese or overweight** compared to 59% of non-Indigenous adults

Vulnerable Populations

Health of Children and Young People

High rates of immunisation for Aboriginal children up to 5 years in the WNSW PHN region in 2023



Immunisation	Far West LHD		Western NSW LHD		NSW	
	Aboriginal	non-Indigenous	Aboriginal	non-Indigenous	Aboriginal	non-Indigenous
1 year old	94	97.1	93.3	95.6	92.6	93.3
2 years old	90.8	96.4	91.9	94.9	90.9	91.4
5 years old	100	96.3	97.5	95.8	96.4	93.8

Figures are percentages (%)

Maternal and Infant Health

In 2022, there were approximately

814 babies

born to Aboriginal mothers in the WNSW PHN region, which was a **27% increase** since 2018



Aboriginal women in the WNSW PHN region were **more vulnerable to smoking** during pregnancy. In 2022, smoking rates of Aboriginal women during pregnancy was **3.5 times higher** than non-Indigenous women



Between 2017 to 2019 in the WNSW PHN region

51.4%

of Aboriginal women **did not access or did not have access to antenatal care** within the first 10 weeks

Older People's Health

Consultation with stakeholders revealed that older Aboriginal people in the region have **limited options for residential aged care facilities and aged care packages** that are inclusive of and designed to support their cultural needs



In Australia, the age-adjusted incidence rates of **dementia** among Aboriginal people aged 45 and over (27 per 1000) was about

2.5 times higher

than the rate among non-Indigenous Australians (11 per 1000)



In 2021

27.6%

of older Aboriginal adults aged 65 years and over had a **profound or severe disability**

Cancer

In 2018 in Australia, cancer and other neoplasms accounted for

10%



of the total disease burden among Aboriginal people, with **tobacco smoking** accounting for around

two-fifths

of the **cancer burden**



Chronic Disease

Diabetes

In 2018-19, Aboriginal adults were

2.8 times

as likely to **report having diabetes or high sugar levels** as non-Indigenous Australian adults



Between 2017-18 to 2019-20, the rate of **hospital admissions** among Aboriginal people in the WNSW PHN region (397.1 per 100,000) was

15% higher

than among Aboriginal people in NSW (342.8 per 100,000)



Age standardised rate	WNSW PHN Region		NSW	
	Aboriginal population	All population	Aboriginal population	All population
People reported with diabetes (per 100)	5.9	5.1	5.3	4.8
Deaths from diabetes (per 100,000)	19.9	11.5	12.6	7
Hospital admissions due to diabetes	397.1	224.8	342.8	145.8

Cardiovascular disease



Cardiovascular disease is the

second leading cause

of death among Aboriginal people in Australia

5.4%

of Aboriginal adults were reported with heart disease in the WNSW PHN region in 2021

21% increase in age-standardised **hospitalisations** from cardiovascular disease among Aboriginal people from 2009-10 to 2018-19 in Australia



In 2021, the rate of hospitalisations from circulatory system diseases among the Aboriginal population in the WNSW PHN region (1746.2 per 100,000) was

23% higher

than the Aboriginal population in NSW (1412.3 per 100,000)

Respiratory Disease

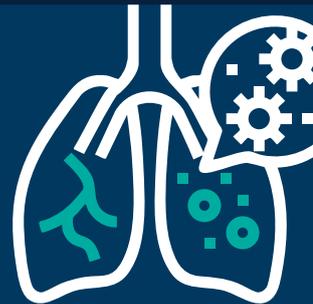
Aboriginal people were

2.2 times

as likely as non-Indigenous Australians to report **COPD** (5% and 2% respectively) and 1.6 times as likely to report **asthma** (18% and 11% respectively)

24% higher

rate of **hospitalisations from respiratory system diseases** among Aboriginal people in the WNSW PHN region (3282.5 per 100,000) than among Aboriginal people in NSW (2649.1 per 100,000) between 2017-18 and 2019-20



Chronic Kidney Disease

The incidence of kidney failure with replacement therapy was

6 times as high

for Aboriginal people as for non-Indigenous Australians (63 compared with 10 per 100,000 population)



10%

higher rate of **hospital admissions** from chronic kidney disease among Aboriginal people in the WNSW PHN region (248.3 per 100,000) than those in NSW (225.7 per 100,000) between 2017-18 and 2019-20

Mental Health

In 2018-19 in Australia, almost

1 in 3



Aboriginal adults (31%) had high to very high levels of psychological distress compared to 13% of non-Indigenous adults. This rate was **higher** among Aboriginal people who had been **removed from families** or had relatives removed from families

Between 2017-18 to 2019-20, the rate of **hospitalisations for mental health related conditions** among Aboriginal people in the WNSW PHN region (1979.6 per 100,000) was **18% lower than the rate in NSW**

In 2019-20, **high rate of Emergency Department presentation** was recorded among Aboriginal people in the WNSW PHN region for **mental and behavioral disorders** (4,209 per 100,000)

9% higher

than the rate in Aboriginal people in NSW



In 2021 in the WNSW PHN region, the age-standardised rate of Aboriginal adults who had a **mental health condition** (including depression or anxiety) was

17.9 per 100

Aboriginal people, almost 53% higher than the rate of all adults with mental health condition (11.7 per 100 adults)



High rates of **mental health Emergency Department (ED) presentations** but comparatively lower rates of hospitalisation highlight significant **gap in accessible alternative services**, particularly lower acuity services, resulting in higher proportion of people presenting to ED

Suicide/ Self Harm

Between 2015-19, the age-standardised rate of **suicide** for Aboriginal people was

twice the rate

for non-Indigenous Australians



Between 2017-18 to 2019-20, the rate of **hospital admissions for intentional self-harm** for Aboriginal people in the WNSW PHN region was 207.2 per 100,000,

19% lower

than that for Aboriginal people in NSW

In Australia, between 2010 to 2019 there was a:

- **30% increase in suicide rates** for Aboriginal people (from 20 to 27 per 100,000 population)
- **63% increase in hospitalisation rate** for intentional self-harm for Aboriginal people

Stakeholder consultation highlighted **higher wait times for services, lack of escalation options** within community for higher need patients and **limited bed and workforce capacity** affecting mostly people with suicidal ideation but who have not attempted or do not express a clear plan for suicide



Alcohol and Other Drugs

In NSW in 2022-23, the rate of alcohol and other drug related **hospitalisations** for Aboriginal people was

four times higher

than that for non-Indigenous people

In 2023, episodes of care recorded in Alcohol and Other Drug National Minimum Data Set (AODT N/MDS) were **highest for alcohol** as the principal drug of concern, followed by **amphetamines, cannabis** and **heroin**



In 2023, episodes of care recorded in AODT N/MDS indicated Aboriginal people received **45.9% of episodes of care** compared to 51% for non-Indigenous people

In 2023

32.7%

of Aboriginal people in the WNSW PHN region had a health check within the previous 12 months, **the highest rate of Aboriginal health checks in NSW**



Health Checks

16% decrease



in 715 health check uptake from 2018 to 2023 in the WNSW PHN region

Of all the Aboriginal people who had a health check within the previous 12 months, the **highest proportion of people (47.3%) were aged 50 and over**

Recommendations from our Health Needs Assessment

Greater focus on Aboriginal **involvement in service design and delivery**



Improvements in **culturally safe and inclusive care** for Aboriginal people



Continue to address health **workforce shortages** across the region



Increased **alcohol and other drug services** that are locally delivered



Greater access to **preventative and early intervention services** for chronic disease, including cancer



Greater access to diagnosis and intervention for **early childhood development**



Increased access to **mental health and wellbeing service** for mild-moderate illness



Greater **support for suicide prevention**, particularly in young men



Support people to **address health risk behaviours** such as excessive alcohol consumption, smoking, including smoking during pregnancy, and improve healthy eating and exercise



Provision of **local, place-based design of services**, including involvement of local services in codesign activities

Data Sources

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework- Summary Report, August 2024 Available at: <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/report-overview/overview/summary-report>
2. Aboriginal Population data compiled by PHIDU based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing February 2021 Available at: <http://www.phidu.torrens.edu.au/social-health-atlases/data>
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4. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Estimated resident populations (ABS 2021)
5. Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence, NSW Ministry of Health Available at: www.healthstats.nsw.gov.au
6. Contact with the criminal justice system, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Available at: <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-11-contact-with-the-criminal-justice-system/data#DataSource>
7. Dementia in Australia, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/dementia/dementia-in-aus/contents/understanding-dementia-among-first-nations>
8. Health checks and follow-ups for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, AIHW analysis of Medicare Benefits Schedule data, Available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/indigenous-health-checks-follow-ups/contents/summary>
9. Health status and outcomes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Available at: <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures#tier1>
10. Homelessness Services, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-welfare-services/homelessness-services/overview>
11. WNSW PHN Health Needs Assessment 2024-25 to 2026-27 Available at <https://wnswphn.org.au/about-us/publications-achievements/#needsAssessment>