

## DROPPING OFF THE EDGE 2021

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Disadvantage is concentrated in a small number of communities within NSW.
- 13% of locations accounted for 55% of the disadvantage (see details below).
- These communities experience a complex web of disadvantage that make it challenging to improve life opportunities.
- Most disadvantage was found outside Sydney (37 of the 40 most disadvantaged areas on the index ranking, particularly in the north and west of the state). Nine of the 10 areas that suffered the most

extreme disadvantage were located outside Sydney.

- A small number of communities have remained depressed for long periods. Many of these communities were experiencing disadvantage on multiple fronts.
- Common problems in multiply-disadvantaged locations in New South Wales included jobless parents, family violence, and young people leaving school early and not engaged in subsequent employment or learning

**NINE OF THE 10  
AREAS THAT  
SUFFERED THE  
MOST EXTREME  
DISADVANTAGE  
WERE LOCATED  
OUTSIDE SYDNEY.**

## LOCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE IS CONCENTRATED

**26 AREAS (5%  
OF THE TOTAL)  
ACCOUNTED  
FOR 29% OF THE  
DISADVANTAGE.**

**A limited number of communities account for a disproportionate number of 'top ranked' (ie most disadvantaged) positions across the various indicators:**

- Seven areas, about 1% of locations, accounted for 11% of the most disadvantaged rank positions across all indicators. This is an eleven-fold overrepresentation, a stark indication of the heavy burden of disadvantage born by a limited section of the community.
- 26 areas (5% of the total) accounted for 29% of the disadvantage. And 73 SA2s (13% of total) yielded more than 55% of the most disadvantaged rank positions.
- The disproportionate distribution of disadvantage within the state is seen most clearly when the incidence of

particular factors among those living in the 3% most disadvantaged areas (16 communities in NSW) is compared with the rest of the state. Those living in the 3% most disadvantaged SA2s in the state are:

- 4.4 times more likely to be living in public housing
- 4 times more likely to be exposed to family violence or have a conviction as a juvenile
- 3.3 times more likely to have high levels of prison admissions
- Almost 3 times as likely to be dealing with heat vulnerability.

Instances of parents without a job, child maltreatment, unemployment and disability were all significantly higher (at least double) in the 3% most disadvantaged areas compared with the rest of the state.

# LOCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE IS PERSISTENT...

The persistent nature of locational disadvantage is demonstrated when we compare findings of this 2021 study with previous studies undertaken in 2015 and 2007.

Most of the communities in the top 10 in 2021 were also in the 2015 and 2007 lists of the 40 most disadvantaged communities. (see table on page 4)

## ...AND OCCURS ON MULTIPLE FRONTS

Disadvantage is difficult to shift when it occurs across multiple areas of life, as these challenges combine to create what can seem to be insurmountable hurdles. In NSW, 26 areas (5% of the total SA2s examined) had at least eight indicators in the top 5% most disadvantaged. Different areas ranked highly on different indicators, highlighting the diversity of disadvantage between communities and the need to explicitly

consider the individual community context when designing programs to address disadvantage and the impacts of disadvantage. Place-based approaches that recognise the multi-faceted nature of disadvantage, and the particular types of disadvantage prevalent in any community, will have better prospects of success. There is immense social and economic cost to the entire community as a result of sustained disadvantage, which perpetuates inequality and constrains life opportunities for significant sections of society.



**THERE IS IMMENSE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC COST TO THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY AS A RESULT OF SUSTAINED DISADVANTAGE.**

## ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS CAN PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN DISADVANTAGE

Environment indicators were included in Dropping off the Edge 2021 for the first time, namely measures of heat vulnerability, green canopy and air quality (particulate matter). The data show that particulate matter is much higher in disadvantaged areas of NSW, possibly due to the use of wood fires, industry and mining. The large disadvantaged areas in western NSW would also be affected by sand blown in from the desert, which is a source of particulate matter. As already noted, areas experiencing disadvantage were significantly more likely to experience very hot temperatures.

## INTERGENERATIONAL DISADVANTAGE

The research also examined indicators of intergenerational disadvantage for the first time. These indicators - teenage pregnancies and families that reported neither parent in employment – frequently coexisted with other forms of disadvantage.

**DROPPING OFF THE EDGE INCLUDED ENVIRONMENT INDICATORS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2021**



**HEAT VULNERABILITY**



**AIR POLLUTION**



**GREEN CANOPY**



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# QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS - WILLMOT AND SEAHAM-WOODVILLE

While quite different communities – Seaham-Woodville is a rural area in the Hunter region while Willmot is a suburb within Blacktown City Council with a young and culturally diverse population – these case study areas highlighted the importance of consulting community and taking a long-term approach to addressing change.

Key themes that emerged in discussions with these communities included the need for good leadership as well as the effective provision of services. High quality and easily accessible shared spaces for locals to come together was identified as being important for building local cohesion. The intergenerational nature of disadvantage, as well as the impact of inadequate technology, was also highlighted. (see report for further details)

## CASE STUDY LOCATION: SEAHAM-WOODVILLE

Seaham-Woodville was selected as a case study location because it was not disadvantaged in 2021 but had a number of indicators move out of the bottom 20% of disadvantage from 2015 to 2021. The importance of community connection was clear both in the positive comments about the local school and in the suggestions about how services could be improved. It was also clear that implementing change is a difficult process.

“ This small rural public school of 55 students is the ticking heart of the community.”

“ I think that we need some sort of family and community service here, a connecting space.”

“ There’s a lot of fatigue...People that have tried to make change or have positivity in the community [but] have been squashed down... it’s disillusioning and takes the heart from the community out.”

## CASE STUDY LOCATION: WILLMOT

Willmot ranks highly on a number of indicators of disadvantage, with early childhood development clearly a critical issue. Focus group discussions touched on crime, drug use and hooliganism and the impacts on the community. But there were also positives. Many Willmot study participants had strong connections with the local Community Hub and saw the hub as being critical for their future as a thriving community.

“When you come [to the Hub], there’s different people every time ...You can meet a lot of people from organisations like to do with kids ... With all the programmes they have here, you wouldn’t have to go anywhere, they’re all here.”

“ There is a preschool run by the council. Children get excited, but parents can’t pay and therefore children are removed from preschool. We need a free, easily accessible, preschool education.”

“ Start with the youth for a better community, something has to be done for the youth. The cycle needs to be broken.”

“ This community has gone from sitting back and watching things happening...[to] now they’re standing up and they’re taking responsibility ... and taking that ownership.”

“We talk to each other. I have good neighbours and good surroundings.”

## PLACE-BASED APPROACHES

Place-based approaches tailored to address particular types of complex and interrelated disadvantage in place will have a better chance of achieving sustained change. The voices from the

two case study communities illustrate and reinforce the importance of solutions based in local experiences of both community disadvantage and community strengths.

# MOST DISADVANTAGED POSTCODES IN NSW

## - COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS YEARS

(Bands illustrate the severity of disadvantage experienced by a location with Band 1 being most severe. Locations listed alphabetically within bands.)

### List of 40 most disadvantaged locations in NSW

BAND	SA2 NAME	POPULATION	LOCATION	IN LIST IN 2007	IN LIST IN 2015
<b>MOST DISADVANTAGED LOCATIONS</b>					
1	Bidwill - Hebersham - Emerton <sup>1</sup>	18,781	Greater Sydney	Y	Y
	Bourke - Brewarrina	3,968	Rest of NSW	Y	Y
	Coonamble	4,069	Rest of NSW		Y
	Far West <sup>2</sup>	2,387	Rest of NSW	Y	Y
	Kempsey	15,373	Rest of NSW	Y	Y
	Nambucca Heads	6,841	Rest of NSW	Y	Y
	Port Kembla - Warrawong	10,068	Rest of NSW	Y	Y
	Tamworth - West	5,865	Rest of NSW		
	Tuncurry <sup>3</sup>	6,352	Rest of NSW	Y	Y
	Walgett - Lightning Ridge	6,145	Rest of NSW	Y	Y
2	Beresfield - Hexham	8,416	Rest of NSW		
	Broken Hill	17,269	Rest of NSW	Y	Y
	Casino	12,528	Rest of NSW	Y	
	Condobolin	6,455	Rest of NSW		
	Lethbridge Park - Tregear <sup>4</sup>	22,665	Greater Sydney	Y	Y
	Moree	8,176	Rest of NSW		Y
	Moree Region <sup>5</sup>	5,435	Rest of NSW		Y
	Mount Hutton - Windale <sup>6</sup>	9,192	Rest of NSW	Y	Y
Taree	20,909	Rest of NSW	Y	Y	
3	Berkeley - Lake Heights - Cringila <sup>7</sup>	14,803	Rest of NSW	Y	Y
	Cessnock	23,875	Rest of NSW		
	Gilgandra	4,390	Rest of NSW		Y
	Grafton	19,019	Rest of NSW		
	Inverell	11,865	Rest of NSW	Y	Y
	Inverell Region - East <sup>8</sup>	5,208	Rest of NSW	Y	Y
	Mount Druitt - Whalan	23,748	Greater Sydney	Y	Y
	Tweed Heads South	8,444	Rest of NSW	Y	
	Wellington	9,413	Rest of NSW	Y	
	Wingham	5,471	Rest of NSW		
	Cowra	9,280	Rest of NSW		
	Glen Innes	8,873	Rest of NSW		
	Lavington	15,208	Rest of NSW		
	Muswellbrook	12,364	Rest of NSW		
	Narrabri	7,340	Rest of NSW		
	Narrandera	6,048	Rest of NSW		
	Narromine	6,533	Rest of NSW		
	Raymond Terrace	13,995	Rest of NSW		
	Tenterfield <sup>9</sup>	6,470	Rest of NSW	Y	Y
	Windang - Primbee <sup>10</sup>	4,346	Rest of NSW	Y	Y

<sup>1</sup> Part of Postcode 2770 – Mt Druitt in 2015 report

<sup>2</sup> Part of the 2836 and 2840 postcodes in 2015 and the 2879 postcode in 2007

<sup>3</sup> Part of postcode 2428 – Forster postcode in 2015 report

<sup>4</sup> Part of postcode 2770 – Mt Druitt in 2015 report

<sup>5</sup> Part of postcode 2400 – Moree in 2015 report

<sup>6</sup> Part of postcode 2306 – Windale in 2007 and 2015 reports

<sup>7</sup> Part of postcode 2502 – Warrawong in 2007 and 2015

<sup>8</sup> Part of postcode 2360 - Inverell

<sup>9</sup> Part of postcode 2469 – Northern Rivers MSC in 2015 report


<sup>10</sup> Part of postcode 2502 – Warrawong in 2007 and 2015 reports

<sup>11</sup> Note that as outlined in Chapter 2, this is an index of disadvantage. None of our indicators measure advantage, like high income or high occupation. Therefore it cannot be said that an area of low disadvantage is high advantage.








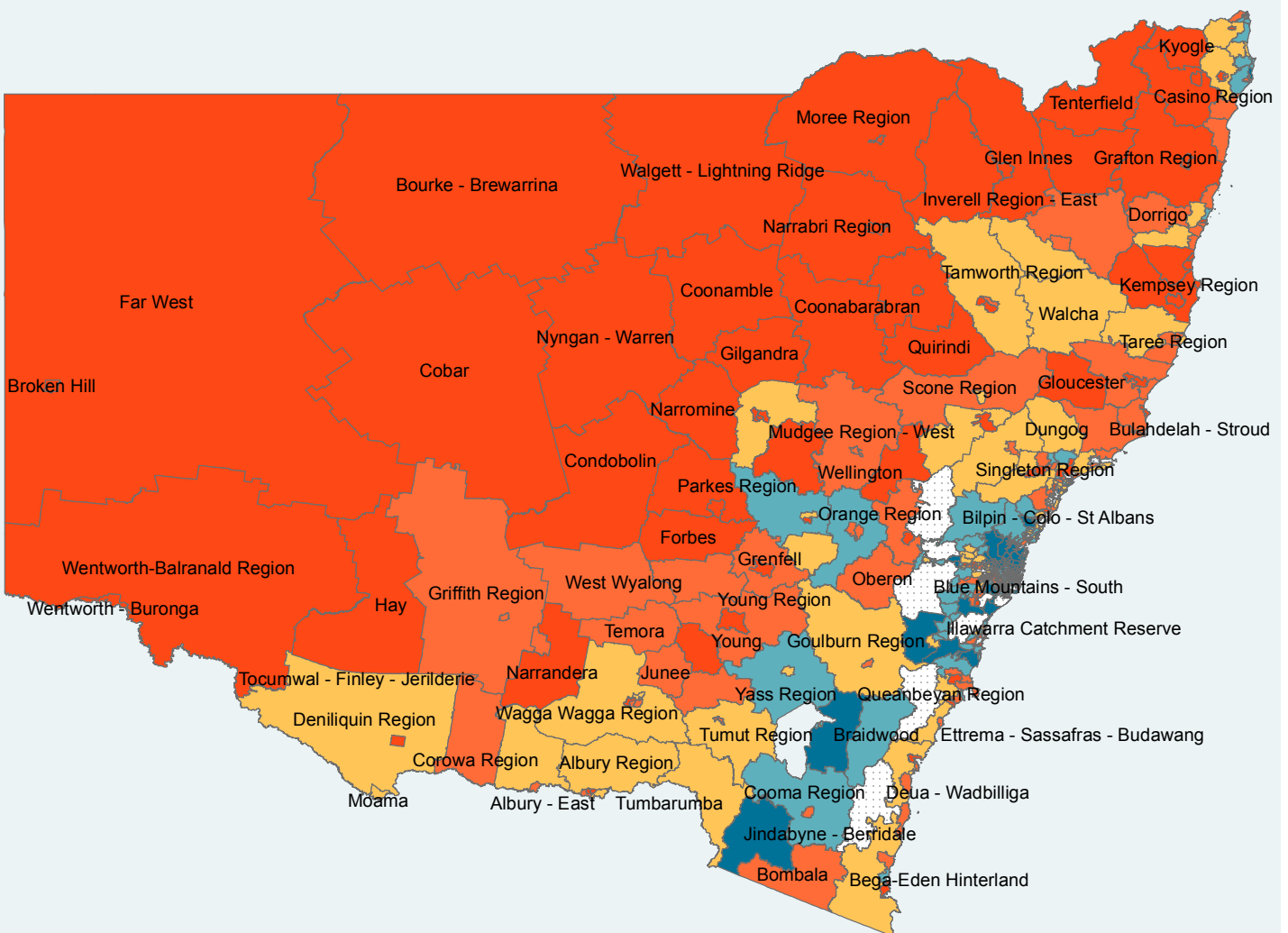
# MAP OF INDEX FOR NSW

## LEGEND

 Inadequate data

### Index Value 2021

-  Q1 ( the most disadvantage)
-  Q2
-  Q3
-  Q4
-  Q5 ( the least disadvantage)




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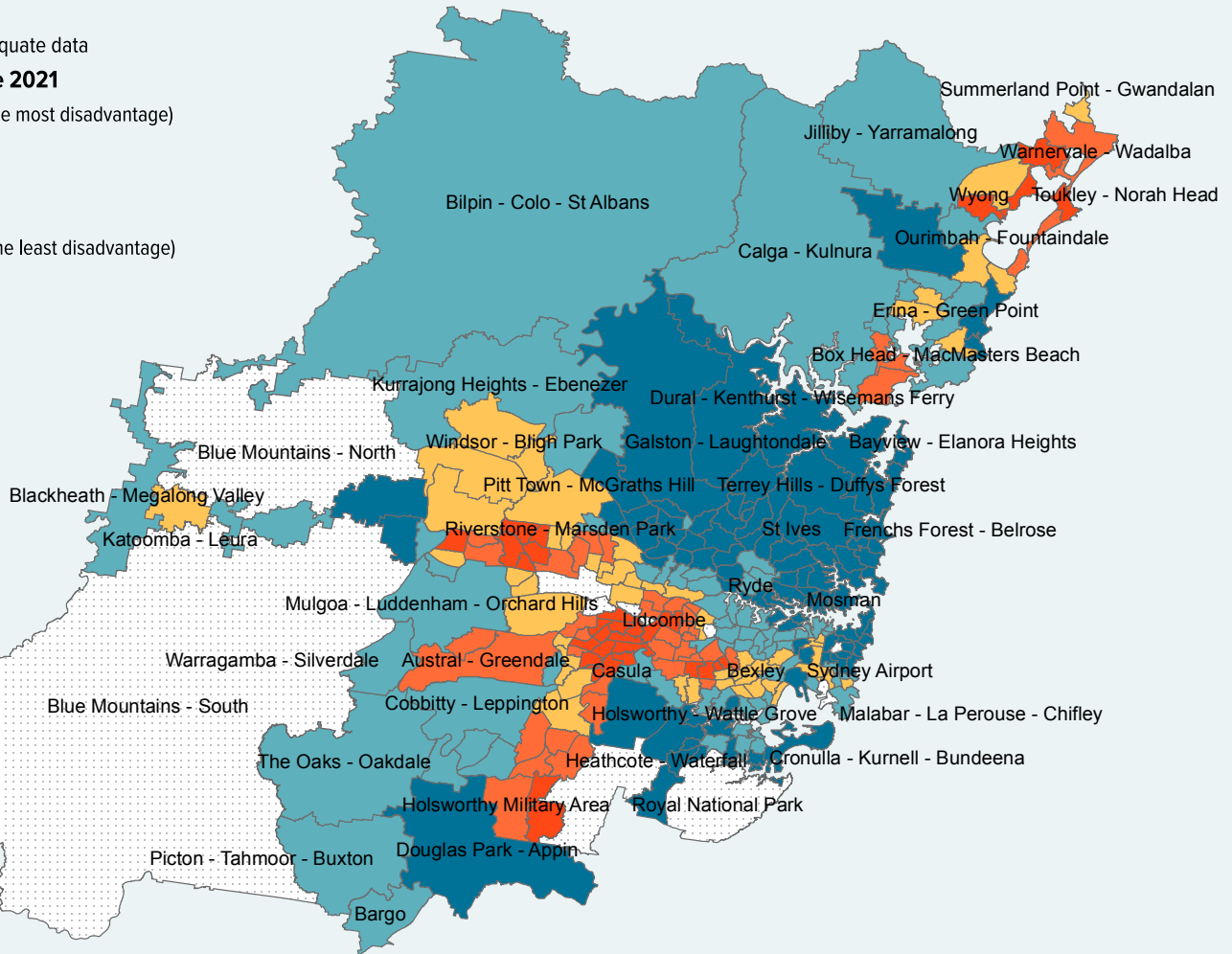
# MAP OF INDEX FOR GREATER SYDNEY

## LEGEND

 Inadequate data

### Index Value 2021

-  Q1 ( the most disadvantage)
-  Q2
-  Q3
-  Q4
-  Q5 ( the least disadvantage)



**DROPPING OFF THE EDGE 2021** examines 561 locations (SA2s or “statistical areas”) in New South Wales across 37 different *indicators of disadvantage*. The indicators, based on statistics collected from a number of government agencies, reflect factors that may limit life opportunities in the broad areas of social wellbeing, health, community safety, economic factors and education. In addition, for the first time, the 2021 report also includes environment indicators and indicators of intergenerational disadvantage.

An index was created that lists areas in bands according to their level of disadvantage. For each area we are able to identify the key drivers of disadvantage.

The report also considers every indicator separately, paying special attention in New South Wales to locations with eight or more single indicators where the area ranked in the top 5% of disadvantage. These areas are grappling with disadvantage on **multiple fronts**, and we can identify what they are.

Comparing the index ranking over the years of the report series, as well as performance against a particular indicator over time,

provides insights into where and what type of disadvantage is **persistent**.

**Qualitative analysis** of disadvantaged communities – Willmot and Seaham-Woodville in NSW – has been incorporated in the latest report to add to the quantitative analysis.

**DROPPING OFF THE EDGE 2021** builds on similar reports released in 2015, 2007, 2004 and 1999.



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