

DROPPING OFF THE EDGE 2015

Dropping off the Edge 2015 examines 621 postcodes in New South Wales across 21 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, access to housing, education and employment.

Postcodes were ranked on each indicator, with high rankings indicating the postcode area was significantly affected by the particular limiting factor (eg unemployment or disability). These simple rankings were then used in a more comprehensive analysis (incorporating performance on all indicators, whether positive or negative), to produce an overall ranking of disadvantage.

Dropping off the Edge 2015 builds on similar reports released in 2007, 2004 and 1999.

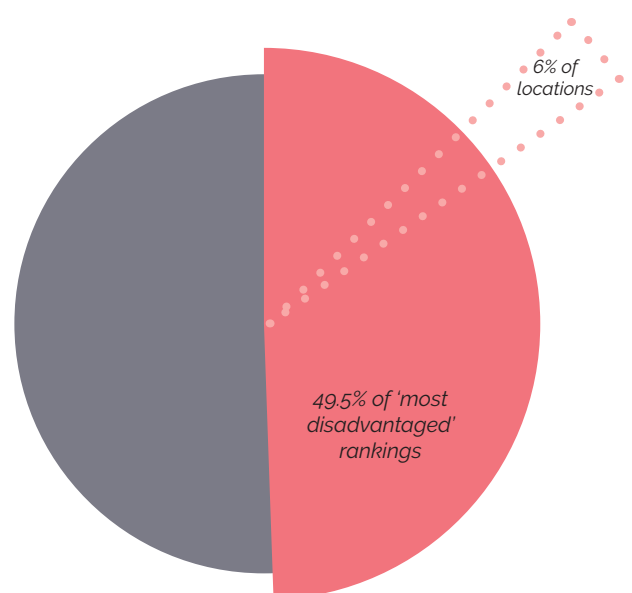
Key findings

- Disadvantage is concentrated in a small number of communities within New South Wales.
- These communities experience a complex web of disadvantage and bear a disproportionately high level of disadvantage within the state.
- A significant number of postcodes have remained depressed for long periods demonstrating the persistent, entrenched nature of the disadvantage experienced by these communities.

Locational disadvantage is concentrated

A limited number of postcodes account for a disproportionate number of 'top ranked' (ie most disadvantaged) positions:

- **11 postcodes (1.8% of total) account for 139 top rankings (21.4%).** This is an eleven-fold overrepresentation.
- **37 postcodes (6% of total) yielded just under half (49.5%) of the most disadvantaged rank positions.** This is an eight-fold overrepresentation.
- **70% of the 621 NSW postcodes were entirely absent from the top ranks.**



The disproportionate distribution of disadvantage within the state is highlighted when the incidence of particular factors such as unemployment and contact with the justice system among those living in the 3% most disadvantaged postcodes is compared with the rest of the state. Those living in the 3% most disadvantaged postcodes in the state are:

- 3.6 times as likely to have spent time in prison
- more than 3 times as likely to be experiencing long term unemployment
- nearly 3 times more likely to have a low level of education or have suffered domestic violence
- twice as likely to have a disability or significant mental health problem.

A complex web of disadvantage

The study examined postcodes which ranked in the 'most disadvantaged' group on more than five indicators, and found that these multiply-disadvantaged postcodes had a number of dominant features:

- **Interaction with the criminal justice system** - more than two-thirds recorded criminal convictions in the highest band. Adult imprisonment and juvenile offending were also at significantly high rates in multiply-disadvantaged locations.
- **Lack of internet access and unemployment** - over 60% of multiply disadvantaged postcodes recorded low levels of internet accessibility and high levels of unemployment.
- **Domestic violence** - family violence was a major issue in around 60% of multiply-disadvantaged localities, a significant jump from 2007 figures.
- **Youth disengagement** - roughly half the multiply-disadvantaged areas had high rankings on 'young adults not fully engaged in work or study'.
- **Low education and training levels** - in half the multiply-disadvantaged areas, lack of qualifications was high and low overall education was nearly as widespread. More than a third occupied the highest (negative) ranks on Year 3 reading, Year 9 numeracy and Year 9 reading in NAPLAN tests.

Dominant characteristics of NSW's multiply-disadvantaged locations

Criminal convictions

Access to internet

Unemployment

Domestic violence

Lack of qualifications

Young adults disengaged

Limited education

Locational disadvantage is entrenched

The persistent nature of locational disadvantage is further demonstrated when we compare findings of this 2015 study with previous studies undertaken in 2007, 2004 and 1999. No fewer than 24 of the state's 40 most disadvantaged postcodes in **Dropping off the Edge 2015** were also found to be 'most disadvantaged' in the 2007 study (see table opposite), and many have been in a depressed state since the early studies were undertaken in 1999 and 2004.

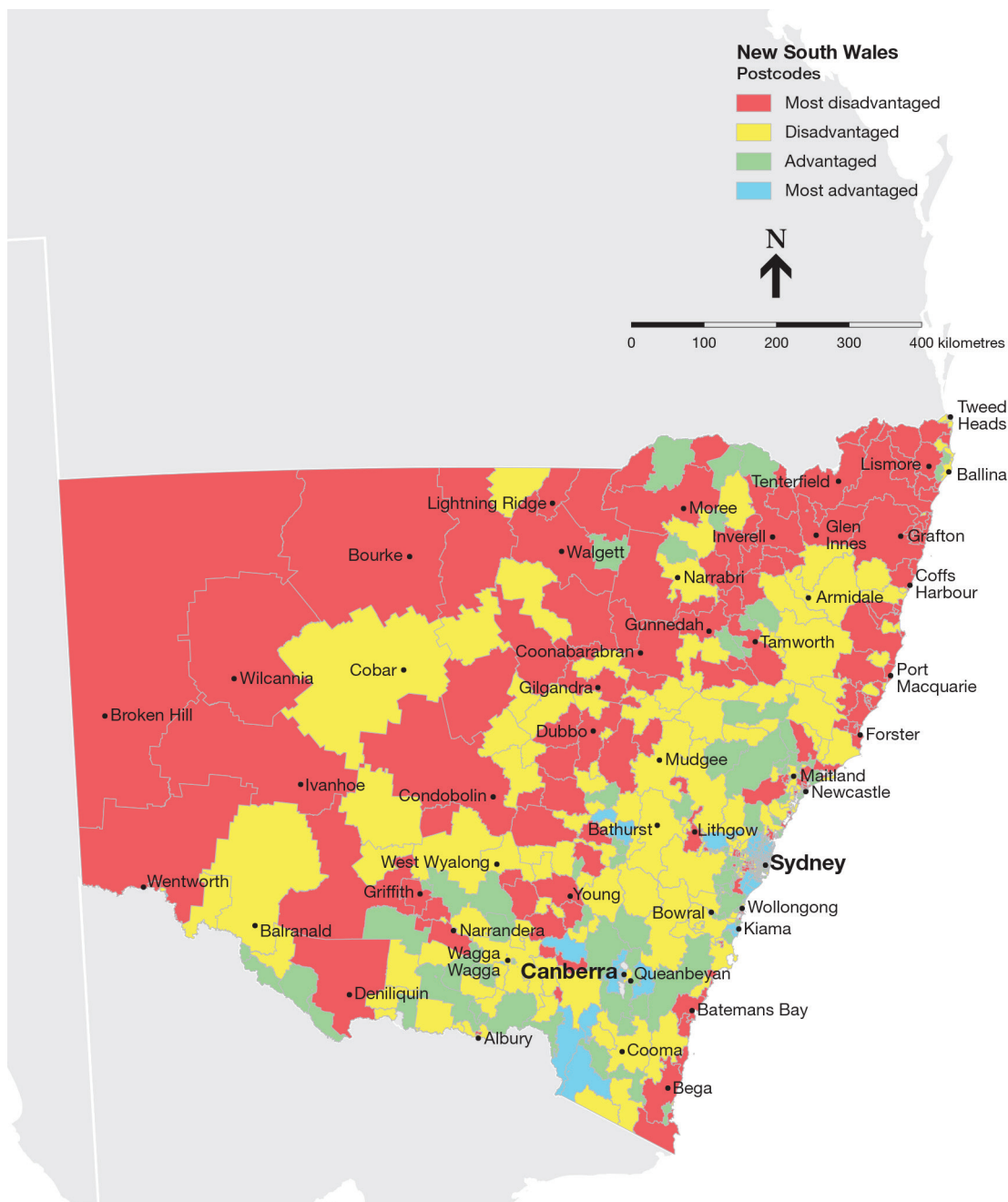
This demonstrates the entrenched nature of disadvantage and the significant challenge faced in increasing the life opportunities of people living in NSW's most disadvantaged communities. There is an immense social and economic cost to society as a result of this sustained social deprivation. From the table, it can be seen that disadvantage is prominent in remote areas of the state but also present in urban areas.

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.)

	2015 (Total= 621)	2007¹ (Total = 647)	2004 (Total = 587)	Estimated Population (2011)
BAND 1	2839 Brewarrina	✓ (B1)	✓ (B1)	1,254
	2559 Claymore	✓ (B5)	✓ (B2)	3,308
	2834 Lightning Ridge	✓ (B1)	✓ (B1)	4,500
	2832 Walgett	✓ (B3)	✓ (B4)	2,300
	2836 Wilcannia	✓ (B4)		604
	2306 Windale	✓ (B1)	✓ (B1)	3,095
BAND 2	2840 Bourke	✓ (B6)		2,047
	2449 Bowraville	✓ (B2)	✓ (B2)	1,208
	2717 Dareton			567
	2466 Iluka	✓ (B6)		1,739
	2469 Northern Rivers	✓ (B1)		n.a
	2163 Villawood			5,304
BAND 3	2166 Cabramatta			20,780
	2829 Coonamble			2,998
	2440 Kempsey	✓ (B1)	✓ (B2)	28,134
	2346 Manilla			2,550
	2502 Warrawong	✓ (B6)	✓ (B2)	4,770
	2341 Werris Creek		✓ (B6)	1,437
BAND 4	2471 Coraki	✓ (B3)		1,478
	2165 Fairfield			17,032
	2443 Laurieton	✓ (B6)		1,931
	2770 Mount Druitt	✓ (B6)	✓ (B3)	15,794
	2448 Nambucca Heads	✓ (B3)	✓ (B5)	6,137
	2462 Ulmarra		✓ (B1)	446
BAND 5	2470 Casino	✓ (B2)	✓ (B5)	11,000
	2551 Eden		✓ (B6)	3,043
	2827 Gilgandra			2,700
	2427 Harrington	✓ (B3)		2,259
	2505 Port Kembla		✓ (B4)	4,400
	2824 Warren			1,523
BAND 6	2506 Berkeley		✓ (B3)	7,427
	2880 Broken Hill	✓ (B6)	✓ (B4)	18,517
	2453 Dorrigo			1,072
	2473 Evans Head			2,722
	2428 Forster	✓ (B4)		13,116
	2360 Inverell	✓ (B6)		9,347
	2400 Moree			9,346
	2430 Taree	✓ (B6)	✓ (B6)	20,000
	2455 Urunga	✓ (B2)	✓ (B5)	3,020
	2829 Wellington	✓ (B2)	✓ (B2)	4,540

¹✓ = included in 40 highest-ranking postcodes on general disadvantage factor. Brackets indicate which band.



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Persistent communal disadvantage in Australia

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