Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

A Social Profile

Blacktown City Social Profile 2016
For further information regarding issues identified in this profile or if you are seeking information on issues not included please contact the Social Planning Team on 02 9839 6420.
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Executive summary

This profile outlines the major social issues currently facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Blacktown City. It explores the key issues for eleven priority areas being the social gradient, stress, early life, social exclusion, work, unemployment, social support, addiction, food, transportation and service development.

The profile is a resource to support planning and research. It is a tool for strategic planning, reviewing strategic plans and should be used along-side consideration of the policies and activities of organisations, Local, State and Federal governments.

The executive summary provides an overview of findings from research and community engagement. It identifies the following key issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Issues

• In 2011, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was 8,201 making up 2.7% of the population and the largest in New South Wales.
  - Population growth - The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is increasing. From 2006 to 2011 the population increased by 1,146 people (16.2%) - an average annual population change of 3.06% per year.
  - The population varies widely from Bidwill (13.9%) with the highest to Glenwood and The Ponds (0.4%) with the lowest.
  - The population is youthful when compared to the total population of Blacktown City:
    - 46.3% aged 0 to 17 years (28.2% Blacktown City)
    - 3.9% were aged 65 years (8.9 Blacktown City)

• While there is improvement across all social indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Blacktown City since 2006, there is still significant disparity when compared with the general population.

• Housing security is a major issue with higher rates of rented housing and rented social housing when compared to total Blacktown City households.

• Persons from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) backgrounds are over-represented among those using homelessness services and the homeless population in general.
  - Services and participants are concerned about the lack of accommodation in particular issues of housing affordability; rental discrimination and homelessness (couch surfing and rough sleeping).
• There is a higher proportion of households with lower incomes and lower proportion of high-income households.

• There is still significant disparity between educational levels and employment status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities compared to the general population.

• For the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, life expectancy across Australia is estimated to be 10.6 years lower than that of the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population for males (69.1 years compared with 79.7) and 9.5 years for females (73.7 compared with 83.1). Our Aboriginal participants and services are concerned community members are still dying too young too often.

• Obesity, overweight, diabetes, being physically active, access to healthy food and smoking all impact on the health and well-being of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Blacktown City.

• Personal and community safety is a concern with reports of community tensions arising from the cultural diversity of some neighbourhoods.

• Socialising and leisure are valued by community members however there is a lack of safe, suitable venues where they can meet together with fellow community members.

**Strengths**

• Community members like having close access to work, facilities and services (libraries, education, shops, health, community).

• Residents think that the city is a friendly place with community spirit.

• Open space, sports and recreation facilities, community centres and cultural programs (for example the Blacktown Arts Centre) are all important to the community.

• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-managed services in Blacktown are good but more are needed.

**Recommendations**

**Early life**

• A focus on school readiness, social skills, literacy and compulsory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities studies that include Aboriginal language

• Early childhood education and care programs that engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
• Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities children and families are needed to support parents who want to be involved in their child’s development

• Targeted programs for parents, with specific needs, to support the development of healthy parenting practices

**Education**

• Mentoring and opportunities to acknowledge the success stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, for example solicitors, politicians, doctors and scholarships could attend primary and high schools.

• Additional support services needed to help our Aboriginal students stay in school for example - Aboriginal school counsellors.

• Teachers training on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities culture and to share what they learn. Education should allow for participation from parents and other children.

**Employment**

• Increased employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in mainstream positions, increased traineeships/apprenticeships, greater opportunities for young people and an overall focus on improving skills.

• Increase in ‘identified’ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander positions.

• Organisations need to have better cultural sensitivity training, run by members of the community.

**Cultural awareness**

• Develop a positive profile of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in our community through education, events and cultural celebrations.

• More cultural events, the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through Blacktown Festival and events like NAIDOC, Reconciliation Week and Sorry Day are opportunities to showcase culture and share with others.

• Cultural heritage education for all the community, as well as local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, so that culture is not lost, especially for young people and children.

• Promote greater cultural acknowledgement, visibility, to see their flags flying, signage and preservation of their heritage.
Service development

- Promote partnership with between governments Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as equal partners.
- Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-managed services in Blacktown.

Social exclusion

- Promote community measures against racism, build community tolerance and respect.

Environmental

- Affordable recreational opportunities (including pools).
1. **Introduction**

Social and community planning helps us focus on the needs and aspirations of local communities through a whole of community approach. It provides an evidence base that guides our activities over the short-term and long-term.

This profile, focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, presents research from the Blacktown City Social Profile 2016 and provides a more detailed understanding of the social situation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Blacktown City.

The principles of equity, access and social justice underpin this profile. The profile is also strength based, recognising community strengths and resources which can be used to build strong, healthy and sustainable communities.

While we have a lead role in addressing many of the issues identified, we recognise not all issues raised in community engagement are solely the responsibility of local government and require strategic linkages and collaborative partnerships with the community sector and other stakeholders. This document will guide us in focussing resources on key issues and actions in response to community need and mindful of the directions of other stakeholders.

The profile is a resource to support planning and research. It is a tool for strategic planning, reviewing strategic plans and should be used along-side consideration of the policies and activities of organisations, Local, State and Federal governments.

The social profile on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities includes the following sections:

- What does the data say? The key social indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- What do the community and service providers say? A summary of the priority issues Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities identified in our community engagement

**How did we develop the social profile?**

The Blacktown City Social Profile 2016 is a key reference document for developing our community strategic plan. It was developed through community engagement and research. We engaged with over 2,155 people who participated in social profile surveys, focus groups, stakeholder forums and service interviews.

The target groups consulted are in line with the Department of Local Government’s mandatory target groups and included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, children, men, older people, people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse background, women and young people.
The proportion of participants in the community engagement who identified they were from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background was 4%. A higher representation compared to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of 2.7% in Blacktown City.

**Figure 1: Survey participants**

![Survey participants diagram](chart.png)

Source: Blacktown City Social Profile 2016 Community Engagement Report

The survey was provided on-line, used in face to face interviews, at key festivals and events, distributed through Blacktown City Administration, libraries, community organisations, social groups and clubs and was translated into 12 community languages.

A detailed summary of findings is contained in the Community Engagement Report - Blacktown City Social Profile 2016.

We researched key social indicators for the city and were informed, in part, by research from Westir Ltd. A detailed summary of indicator results are contained in the Social Indicator Report - Blacktown City Social Profile 2016.


**Additional resources in this series include:**

- The Blacktown City Social Profile 2016
- Blacktown City Social Profile 2016 Community Engagement Report
- Blacktown City Social Profile 2016 Social Indicator Report
- A social profile - Blacktown Precinct
- A social profile - Mount Druitt Precinct
• A social profile - North West Precinct
• A social profile - Children
• A social profile - Culturally and linguistically diverse people
• A social profile - Older people
• A social profile - People with disability
• A social profile - Young people
• A social profile - Women.
2. What does the data say?

This section includes Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2006 and 2011 data. This data and analysis was compiled and presented by .id, (profile.id.com.au, forecast.id.com.au and atlas.id.com.au). Findings for Blacktown City have been benchmarked with Greater Sydney and/or New South Wales where this data has been available.

The report identifies Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data using Statistical level areas and precincts. Statistical level areas mostly align with the precincts identified in Table 1.

### Table 1: Statistical local areas and precincts in Blacktown City

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blacktown South West</th>
<th>Blacktown South West</th>
<th>Blacktown North</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mount Druitt Precinct</td>
<td>Blacktown Precinct</td>
<td>North-West Precinct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities - population and age structure

In 2011, approximately 301,096 persons lived in Blacktown City, an increase of 10.8% since 2006. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was 8,201 making up 2.7% of the population (1.2% Greater Sydney and 2.5% for New South Wales).

Approximately 46.3% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Blacktown City was aged between 0 and 17, and 3.9% were aged 65 years and over, compared with 42.6% and 4.3% respectively for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in New South Wales. This compares to 29% and 9% for the total population of Blacktown City.

The major differences between the age groups of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Blacktown City and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in New South Wales were:

- a larger percentage of people aged 5 to 11 years (17.8% compared to 16.3%)
- a larger percentage of people aged 0 to 4 years (13.4% compared to 12.2%)
• a smaller percentage of people aged 35 to 49 years (15.7% compared to 17.6%)

• a smaller percentage of people aged 50 to 59 years (6.7% compared to 8.7%).

The largest changes in age groups of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in this area between 2006 and 2011 were in the age groups:

• 18 to 24 (+193 people)

• 35 to 49 (+172 people)

• 65 and over (+156 people)

• 25 to 34 (+139 people).

From 2006 to 2011, Blacktown City’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population increased by 1,146 people (16.2%). This represents an average annual population change of 3.06% per year over the period.

Figure 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population by service age groups

2.2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population by suburb

In 2011, 2.7% of Blacktown City’s population was of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent compared to 1.3% in Greater Sydney.
While Blacktown City had a higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, it is important to note that this varied across the City. Proportions ranged from a low of 0.4% in The Ponds to a high of 13.9% in Bidwill. The five areas with the highest percentages were:

- Bidwill (13.9%)
- Tregear (10.4%)
- Willmot (10.4%)
- Blackett (8.5%)
- Shalvey (8.5%).

Table 2: People of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin by area, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blacktown City - Enumerated - Area</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Percent %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acacia Gardens - Parklea</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>6,598</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bidwill</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>4,568</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackett</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>3,381</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacktown</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>43,578</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean Park</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>3,062</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharruk</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>2,728</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doonside</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>12,979</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerton</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>2,379</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenbrook</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>5,046</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenwood</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>15,214</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hassall Grove</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>4,411</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebersham</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>5,405</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kellyville Ridge</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8,201</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings Langley</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>9,182</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings Park</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3,327</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lalor Park</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>7,066</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lethbridge Park</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>4,657</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marayong</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>7,261</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marsden Park - Shanes Park - Colebee - Ropes Crossing</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>2,903</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minchinbury</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5,411</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Druitt</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>15,809</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakhurst</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>6,918</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plumpton</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>8,222</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospect - Huntingwood - Arndell Park</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4,569</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quakers Hill</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>26,024</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverstone - Vineyard</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>6,319</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rooty Hill - Eastern Creek</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>14,265</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schofields - Rouse Hill</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>4,331</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven Hills</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>18,357</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shalvey</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>3,489</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities – A social profile
## Blacktown City - Enumerated - Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Percent %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stanhope Gardens</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>8,129</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ponds</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2,978</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toongabbie</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>4,432</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tregear</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>3,899</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whalan</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>5,883</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willmot</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>2,486</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodcroft</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>6,396</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Sydney</td>
<td>55,219</td>
<td>4,378,473</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSROC</td>
<td>24,636</td>
<td>1,504,718</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Western Sydney</td>
<td>32,198</td>
<td>1,917,425</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>172,321</td>
<td>6,896,776</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>548,128</td>
<td>21,504,278</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing [Parameter] [StartYear] Compiled and presented in atlas.id by .id, the population experts.
Figure 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population by suburb
2.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population by precinct

In 2011, the Mount Druitt Precinct had the largest number of residents who identified as being from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background with a total population of 4,625 residents or 4.5% of the precinct's population. Blacktown Precinct had a population of 2,497 (2%) and the North West Precinct had a population of 997 (1.3%)

Figure 4: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population by precinct
2.4 Housing tenure

In 2011, compared to the total population in Blacktown City there was a smaller proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households who owned their dwelling; a smaller proportion purchasing their dwelling; and a larger proportion who were renters.

Overall, 10.0% of the population owned their dwelling; 21.8% were purchasing, and 64.1% were renting, compared with 22.7%, 42.5% and 29.4% respectively for their total population in Blacktown City. The total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households in Blacktown City increased by 456 between 2006 and 2011.

Differences between housing tenure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households of Blacktown City and total households of Blacktown City include:

- a larger percentage of households who were renting (64.1% compared to 29.4%)
- a larger percentage of households who were renting social housing (37.6% compared to 8.5%)
- a smaller percentage of households who were purchasing their dwelling (21.8% compared to 42.5%)
- a smaller percentage of households who owned their own dwelling (10.0% compared to 22.7%).

Between 2006 and 2011, increases to the housing tenure of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Blacktown City included households being purchased (+196 ), total rented households (+188 households), public housing, (+99 households) and private and other housing (+76 households).

Table 3: Housing tenure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households - Blacktown City</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of bedrooms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully owned</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being purchased</td>
<td>717</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renting (total)</td>
<td>2,109</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>1,921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing co-operative, community or church group</td>
<td>1,237</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>1,138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private and other</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total households</td>
<td>3,291</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>2,835</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.5 Household income

When looking at household income levels for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Blacktown City in 2011 compared to the total population of Blacktown City, there was a smaller proportion of high income households (those earning $2,500 per week or more) and a higher proportion of low income households (those earning less than $600 per week).

Overall, 46.2% of the households earned a high income, and 27.2% were low-income households, compared with 59.4% and 17.9% respectively for total households in Blacktown City.

The main differences between incomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households Blacktown City and total households of Blacktown City were:

- a larger percentage of households who earned $400-$599 (11.6% compared to 7.7%)
- a smaller percentage of households who earned $1500-$1999 (9.6% compared to 13.1%)
- a smaller percentage of households who earned $2000-$2499 (7.3% compared to 10.6%)
- a smaller percentage of households who earned $2500-$2999 (4.1% compared to 7.7%).

Figure 5: Weekly household income
2.6 Employment

The size of Blacktown City’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander labour force in 2011 was 2,390 people, of which 752 were employed part-time and 1,161 were full-time workers.

Analysis of the employment status (as a percentage of the labour force) of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Blacktown City in 2011 compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of New South Wales shows that there was a lower proportion in employment, and a higher proportion unemployed.

The unemployed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander labour force was 20.0%, compared with 17.0% or the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in New South Wales.

The labour force participation rate refers to the proportion of the population over 15 years of age that was employed or actively looking for work.

Analysis of the labour force participation rate of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Blacktown City in 2011 shows that there was a lower proportion in the labour force (48.2%) compared with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in New South Wales (51.3%).

Between 2006 and 2011, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities employed in Blacktown City showed an increase of 413 people and the number unemployed showed an increase of 58 people. In the same period, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the labour force showed an increase of 471 people, or 24.5%.

2.7 Educational qualifications

Results from the 2011 Census show that there was a lower proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Blacktown City holding formal qualifications (Bachelor or higher degree; Advanced Diploma or Diploma; or Vocational qualifications) compared to the total population in Blacktown City and a similar proportion of people with no formal qualifications.

Overall, 19.3% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 and over held educational qualifications, and 0.5% had no qualifications, compared with 39.0% and 1.0% respectively for the total population in Blacktown City.

Between 2006 and 2011, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Blacktown City with formal qualifications increased by 936. The largest changes in highest educational attainment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Blacktown City between 2006 and 2011 were in:

- completed year 10 or below (+341 people)
- completed vocational qualification (+242 people)
- completed year 11 or 12 (+242 people)
- completed an advanced diploma or diploma (+53 people)
### Table 4: Educational qualifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - Blacktown City</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Qualification level</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Total population %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor degree level or higher</td>
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<td>3.1</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced diploma or diploma</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational (certificate)</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 11 or 12</td>
<td>903</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 10 or below</td>
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<td>46.0</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No educational attainment</td>
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<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated/ inadequately described</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
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<td>Total people aged 15+</td>
<td>4966</td>
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### 2.8 Health and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

The gap in health status between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians remains unacceptably wide.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities do not have an equal opportunity to be as healthy as non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. It is well recognised that the inequality in health status experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is linked to systemic discrimination. The health status of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is poor in comparison to the rest of the Australian population.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have not had the same opportunities to achieve good health when compared to non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities also do not enjoy equal access to primary health care. (‘Social determinants and the health of Indigenous peoples in Australia, a human rights based approach’, T Calma, 2007)

### 2.9 Life expectancy

For the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population born in 2010–2012, life expectancy across Australia is estimated to be 10.6 years lower than that of the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population for males (69.1 years compared with 79.7) and 9.5 years for females (73.7 compared with 83.1).

It is important to note, for all residents of Blacktown City life expectancy is 76 years, for males it is 72 years and for females it is 80 years.
For all age groups below 65 years, the age-specific death rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia are at least twice those experienced by the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. (AIHW - Australia’s Health 2014)

### 2.10 Overweight, obesity and diabetes

While there have been improvements on some measures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status, they have not matched the rapid health gains made in the wider population in Australia. While death rates from cardiovascular disease in the general population have fallen 30% since 1991, and 70% in the last 35-years, no reduction in death rates have occurred in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities over this period.

Obesity is classified as having a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or greater. BMI is calculated by dividing a person’s weight, in kilograms, by the square of height in metres. Obesity in Australia is particularly prevalent among men and women in the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups, people without post-school qualifications, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and people born overseas.

Health problems and other consequences of obesity include musculoskeletal problems, cardiovascular disease, cancer, sleep apnoea, type 2 diabetes and hypertension. Australian Department of Health 2006.

Social determinants of health are the conditions in which individuals are born, grow, live, work, and age and they have been proven to be linked to the rising incidence of Type 2 diabetes in Australia.

In Australia, Type 2 diabetes is highest amongst individuals who are overweight or obese, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and some immigrant groups.

Diabetes is also an important maternal health issue. Uncontrolled diabetes during pregnancy threatens the health of both mother and child and can result in life-threatening and costly complications for the mother that may also threaten the life and health of their newborn child. (International Diabetes Federation 2015)

### 2.11 Homelessness

Persons from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds are over-represented among those using homelessness services and the homeless population in general. The homeless estimates based on the census showed that 25 per cent of all people experiencing homelessness on census night identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait islander.

In the financial year 2011–12, 22 % of clients receiving specialist homelessness services identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, yet they made up only 2.5% of the national population. (AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services 2013–14)
### 2.12 Social capital for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Social capital is a term used to describe particular social relationships within a group or community. This includes levels of trust between people; whether they have a shared understanding of how they should behave towards, and care for one another and participation in civic organisations, such as sporting clubs and school councils. It is also used to describe the resources available within communities that are built from networks of mutual support, reciprocity, trust and obligation. It can be accumulated when people interact with each other in families, workplaces, neighbourhoods, local associations and a range of informal and formal meeting places. (ABS, 2000) It can be measured by surveying residents about levels of community belonging, trust, safety, participation and harmony.

Regular community surveys across the city provide a snapshot of community belonging and see how community perceptions vary for each community and target group over time. In previous surveys (2006, 2011), residents from across the city have reported positive levels of ‘feeling that they belong to their community’.

During March-May 2015, Blacktown City engaged 2155 residents from across the city in a Social Plan 2016 “Have Your Say” survey. The survey included the following social capital questions:

- I feel like I belong in this neighbourhood
- If you had a problem, could you rely on one of your neighbours to help you?
- I feel safe walking down my street
- I speak with my neighbours – frequently, sometimes, never
- How satisfied are you with your local area as a place to live, work and spend time?

The following results are from respondents to the survey, from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background.

**I feel like I belong in this neighbourhood**

The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants reported feeling “they belonged in their neighbourhood” (73%), compared to 79% for all participants. This is response was lower than in 2011, when 77.6% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people surveyed reported feeling “they belonged in their neighbourhood.”
Speaking with neighbours

This was the first time this question was included in the survey and it provides a baseline for comparison for future surveys. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were just as likely to speak to a neighbour at least once a week (43%) when compared to all participants (43.1%).

Satisfaction with neighbourhood

The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live work and spend their time (42%) compared to 49.2% for all participants. 9% were very satisfied compared with 18.4% of all participants. In 2011, 40.8% were satisfied and 10.2% were very satisfied.
If you had a problem, could you rely on a neighbour for help?

The majority (66%) reported being able to “rely on a neighbour for help with a problem”. This compared to 64.1% for all participants. In 2011, only 57.1% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants reported being able to rely on a neighbour.

Feeling safe walking down their street

This was the first time this question was included in the survey and it provides a baseline for comparison for future surveys. The majority (47%) reported always feeling safe walking down their
street compared to 48.8% for all participants. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had a higher rate of “never” feeling safe (11%) when compared to all participants (6%)

**Figure 10: Perceptions of safety**

![Pie chart showing the percentage of people who feel safe in their community]

- Always: 45%
- Never: 43%
- Sometimes: 11%
3. **What do the community and service providers say?**

The results of our community engagement (with residents, workers and service providers) are presented using the World Health Organisation Social Determinants of Health (Wilkinson & Marmot 2003). The social determinants of health are mostly responsible for health inequities - the unfair and avoidable differences in health status seen within and between communities.

The key aspects of social and economic circumstances affecting social wellbeing and health: The social gradient, stress, early life, social exclusion, work, unemployment, social support, addiction food and transport. As a result of the community engagement, we have included an eleventh priority area focussing on how services can be enhanced or supported to improve outcomes for the community: service development.

### 3.1 Social gradient

- The cost of living, including housing, utilities and food is high and beyond the budgets of many residents, in particular those on government benefits.

- Residents and services say we need more Aboriginal school counsellors to help our Aboriginal students stay in school.

- Services say education is highly valued within the community by some but not by all and attainment rates for young people reflect this.

- There is ongoing inter-generational social disadvantage in areas of the city that has remained unchanged for decades.

- Services say education needs to focus on school readiness, social skills, literacy and compulsory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ studies that include Aboriginal language.

- Residents say it is important to provide more mentoring and opportunities to acknowledge the success stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, for example solicitors, politicians, doctors and scholarships could attend primary and high schools.

- Services and participants are concerned about the lack of accommodation in particular issues of housing affordability; rental discrimination and homelessness (couch surfing and rough sleeping).

### 3.2 Stress

- Community members like having close access to work, facilities and services (libraries, education, shops, health, community).

- Residents think that the city is a friendly place with community spirit.
• Some people report community tensions arising from the cultural diversity of some neighbourhoods.

• Socialising and leisure are valued by community members however there is a lack of safe, suitable venues where they can meet together with fellow community members.

• The community would like to see more cultural events.

• People are concerned about the maintenance of our parks, equipment, roads, footpaths, trees and waterways.

• Residents are concerned about antisocial behaviour, in their neighbourhoods, around shopping centres, parks and transport interchanges (including drinking alcohol, drug-taking, abusive language and swearing).

• There is a need for affordable recreational opportunities (including pools).

• There is wide spread concern that many of our streets are untidy and dirty with rubbish and litter.

• Open space, sports and recreation facilities, community centres and cultural programs (for example the Blacktown Arts Centre) are all important to the community.

• There are community perceptions of high crime levels which makes community safety a real concern.

• Residents are concerned about closing services (Aboriginal Medical Service).

• Elders, people with mental illness, people with a disability (e.g. residential care) are all vulnerable.

• Our Aboriginal participants and services are concerned there are too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are in prison.

• Our Aboriginal participants and services are concerned community members are still dying too young too often.

3.3 Early life

• Services note the current measures of early childhood development do not always work with Aboriginal communities.

• Our Aboriginal participants and services see the need for early childhood education and care programs that engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
• Our Aboriginal participants and services see the need for targeted programs for parents, with specific needs, to support the development of healthy parenting practices.

• Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ children and families are needed to support parents who want to be involved in their child’s development.

• Elders say cultural heritage education for all the community, as well as local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, would be valuable, so that culture is not lost, especially for young people and children.

• Residents and services say teachers need to be trained about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ culture and to share what they learn. Education should allow for participation from parents and other children.

3.4 Social exclusion

• Services say family is a key reference point for community strength and policies targeting Aboriginal communities need to include strategies to resource families and existing support networks.

• Aboriginal workers believe “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ self-determination is based in acknowledgement and learning from Elders, people’s experience of family and community, people telling their stories, sharing knowledge and from listening to each other”.

• Services say they need to build relationships with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

• Aboriginal participants think Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-managed services in Blacktown are good but more are needed.

• Many participants say we need to develop a positive profile of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the community through education, events and cultural celebrations. “The recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through Blacktown Festival and events like NAIDOC, Reconciliation Week and Sorry Day are opportunities to showcase ATSI culture and share with others”.

3.5 Work

• Services and participants have concerns about access to employment and education.

• Employment services say there is a need for greater employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in mainstream positions, increased traineeships/apprenticeships, greater opportunities for young people and an overall focus on improving skills.
• Services note we still need an increase in 'identified' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander positions.

• The implementation of MyGov services, with federal government agencies, is challenging for many in our community who lack skills in using computers.

• Cultural diversity makes some residents uncomfortable but many residents value Blacktown’s cultural diversity.

• Aboriginal workers say organisations need to have better cultural sensitivity training that is run by members of the community who really know what it is like to be from an ATSI background and not by non-indigenous trainers.

• Elders say cultural heritage education is needed for the whole community as well as local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and would be valuable and would ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is not lost.

• There is increased reporting of residents being publicly abused due to their Aboriginality.

• Aboriginal residents think there is a need to promote community measures against racism, build community tolerance and respect.

• Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are concerned that partnerships with government are not meaningful.

• Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel there has been no true partnership with them by governments and others “only time will tell if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are ever considered equal partners”.

• Aboriginal participants want acknowledgement, visibility, to see their flags flying, signage and preservation of their heritage.

• Services note people need incentives to break the cycle of welfare dependency which is entering the second and third generations in some families.

• There is conflict within the community about issues of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ identity particularly in relation to recognition of Darug peoples. There are barriers in the community – negative criticism of others, “people forgetting that everyone has a role in the community and that what happens in the community is everyone’s business”.

3.6 Unemployment

• Many people say that the data tells us Aboriginal people are still highly represented amongst the unemployed.
• Residents think there are fewer opportunities for disadvantaged groups (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, young people, long term unemployed).

• Participants say training and education are not leading to jobs.

3.7 Social support

• Services say family is a key reference point for community strength and policies targeting Aboriginal communities need to include strategies to resource families and existing support networks.

• Aboriginal workers believe “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ self-determination is based in acknowledgement and learning from Elders, people’s experience of family and community, people telling their stories, sharing knowledge and from listening to each other”.

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3.8 Addiction

• The impact of alcohol and drugs in the community in particular the antisocial behaviour associated with alcohol and drug use.

• Services report an increase in the number of people with ICE addiction.

• Services think the Australian culture of drinking hides addictive behaviours like binge drinking behind a facade of acceptability.

• There are health issues evident in the community as a result of drugs and alcohol dependence.

3.9 Food

• Access to appropriate nutrition and issues around diabetes are a concern for many services.
3.10 Transport

- There is concern about the increase in vehicles and traffic on roads throughout the city.
- There is widespread concern about speeding vehicles on local roads and what is perceived as a ‘hoon’ culture amongst some drivers in our community.
- There is concern about access and affordability of transport especially for accessing isolated communities within the city e.g. Willmot and Riverstone.
- Respondents say Blacktown’s location is a positive. It is close/central to both town and the mountains.

3.11 Service development

- Many services report they face uncertainty in regards of funding. This is impacting on service provision, clients and staff.
- Residents say that they would like to see cultural competency and awareness training for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working with Aboriginal communities.
- Services note there continue to be challenges on sharing information with the community about the services available to them. This particularly impacts those who are disengaged and isolated.
- Aboriginal workers and residents say individual agencies are good but overall there is a lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific services and those that do exist struggle with on-going capacity problems and worker burnout. "The most efficient and effective services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but funding appears to be transferred to non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies".
- Aboriginal workers note a strength is the local interagencies and networks that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers.
- Aboriginal workers say "consulting to get the right information about community is important but there has been too much research and not enough action”.
- Overwhelmingly Aboriginal workers say “make ATSI issues everybody’s job. Don’t hide them away in the duty statement of one position, make it everyone’s business”.
