



Catholic Social  
Services **Australia**



# MAPPING THE POTENTIAL

Understanding persistent disadvantage  
to inform community change

A  
*Snapshot*

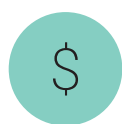
## Community potential

Catholic Social Services Australia believes in the capability and potential of every individual, family and community. We recognise the intrinsic dignity of all Australians and work to improving people's lives with hope and justice.

Persistent disadvantage continues to undermine our national capacity to realise the full social and economic potential of our communities. Mapping the Potential research shows that in nearly every federal electorate across Australia there are people-and indeed whole communities-living in persistent disadvantage. They are all too often hidden by a quest to benchmark the average and ordinary in Australia. Mapping the Potential looks beyond the averages and the ordinary to identify key drivers of disadvantage.

### Persistent Disadvantage

Persistent disadvantage involves more than economic factors. It is a holistic framing of indicators which include economic, education, health and social factors, all of which contribute to a community's experience of persistent disadvantage.



The **Economic** driver relates to relative disadvantage in monetary and economic opportunity terms, this often is experienced as low income or welfare.



The **Education** driver tells us about disadvantage in terms of development for school-aged children; disadvantage that might be experienced through illiteracy, or early school leaving. Often this driver is equated with future unemployment.



The **Health** driver relates to relative disadvantage in terms of physical well-being; often experienced through chronic illness and disease associated with obesity and old age. This driver can be understood in terms of impairment.



The **Social** driver captures disadvantage due to potential for marginalisation. Indigenous, ethnic, single parent or non-English speaking status can be key factors.

*“Mapping the Potential will enable better decision making, investment and innovation to tackle persistent disadvantage so that all Australians, no matter where they live, have the opportunity to reach their full potential.”*



## **Persistent disadvantage is longer term and often inter-generational and systemic**

2.2 million Australians experience short term disadvantage each year; their encounter with poverty is short term. While systemic factors play a part in the experience of this short term disadvantage individual factors are also critical.

Of these 2.2 million people, 700,000 Australians experience persistent (longer-term) disadvantage. Persistent disadvantage is when disadvantage is experienced by people for three years or more, and often inter-generationally. Their experience of disadvantage is pervasive and persistent and suggests that the system highly impacts on their experience.

*“Governments, communities and service providers must take responsibility for impacting change for those experiencing persistent disadvantage. Individual actions cannot address persistent disadvantage alone.”*

## **Mapping the Potential – an applied approach**

Mapping the Potential is a collaboration between Catholic Social Services Australia, the Australian National University's Centre for Social Research Methods and twenty-one Catholic social service providers. This collaboration has developed a uniquely applied approach to research resulting in richer information about persistent disadvantage across Australia. The project has developed a scale of persistent disadvantage and applied this scale to every Australian federal electorate.

## **Indexing persistent disadvantage**

Mapping the Potential set an index of 1000 points in the four categories of persistent disadvantage as well as overall. The higher the number the lower the proportion of people experiencing disadvantage. The index figure doesn't represent a quantity but rather is an indicator of disadvantage. The index has assessed all of Australia's 151 electorates.

## **What we know**

- Mapping the Potential finds that persistent disadvantage is not a problem for someone else, somewhere else, it is everywhere.
- Mapping the Potential tells us of the diversity of disadvantage across our nation; in our regional areas, towns and cities.
- It shows that the gap between those doing well and those not is wide in most suburbs and electorates. Even in electorates near the national average there are many vulnerable people experiencing disadvantage.
- Considerable differences also exist across electorates. While some regions may, for example experience significant economic disadvantage, they may also demonstrate strong social capital or do well in terms of health indicators.
- We also know that disadvantage is concentrated in areas outside our capital cities.

# NATIONAL SNAPSHOT

Around  
**80%**  
OF ALL ELECTORATES  
include suburbs with  
people living below the  
national average

**100%**  
OF REGIONAL ELECTORATES  
have areas where  
people live below the  
national average

## NORTHERN TERRITORY

- The diversity in populations across large NT regions is hidden by the average electorate score.
- NT is very varied in its spread— while is not below the national average — there is extreme diversity with education and social factors scoring poorly across a vast part of the territory, yet economic and health factors have improved.
- The diversity in population across the Northern Territory's large and vast regions is hidden by the average electorate score.

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

- Greater Perth faces the least constraint from disadvantage in all its forms.
- Of the 13 Perth electorates, 31% are below the economic average, 15% below the education average and none are below the health and social averages.
- Regional Western Australia experienced high levels of economic and education disadvantage.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

- Of the 7 Adelaide electorates, all but two are below the national economic and health disadvantage average, while 57% are below social and education averages.
- Adelaide's older population sees health and education as its strongest disadvantage drivers.
- All regional South Australian electorates are below the national disadvantage average.
- In regional South Australia health and education disadvantage are the largest challenge.

## TASMANIA

- No Tasmanian electorate was above the national standard.
- Three of the five Tasmania electorates were in the lowest 10 electorates in Australia.

## QUEENSLAND

- Of the 14 Greater Brisbane electorates, 71% are below the education national average, 42% are below the economic average, 28% below the social average, 21% below the health average.
- In regional Queensland 81% of sixteen electorates were below the national standard.

## NEW SOUTH WALES

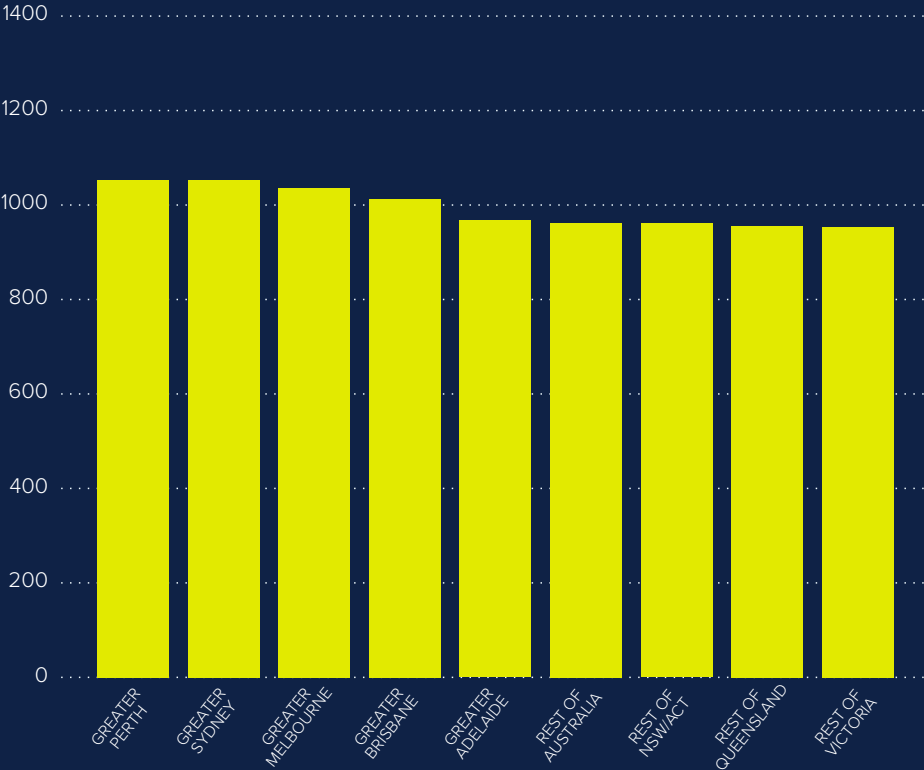
While Greater Sydney outperforms the rest of Australia economically, it also has the widest spread above and below this average:

- In Greater Sydney's 29 electorates 70% of electorates are above the national standard.
- 31% are below the economic and social average, 17% below the education average and 14% below the health average.
- The strongest driver of disadvantage in regional NSW is health.
- In regional NSW 94.8% of the nineteen electorates are below the national standard - 95% are below the health national average, 89% are below the economic and social average, 76% are below social average, and 16% below education average.

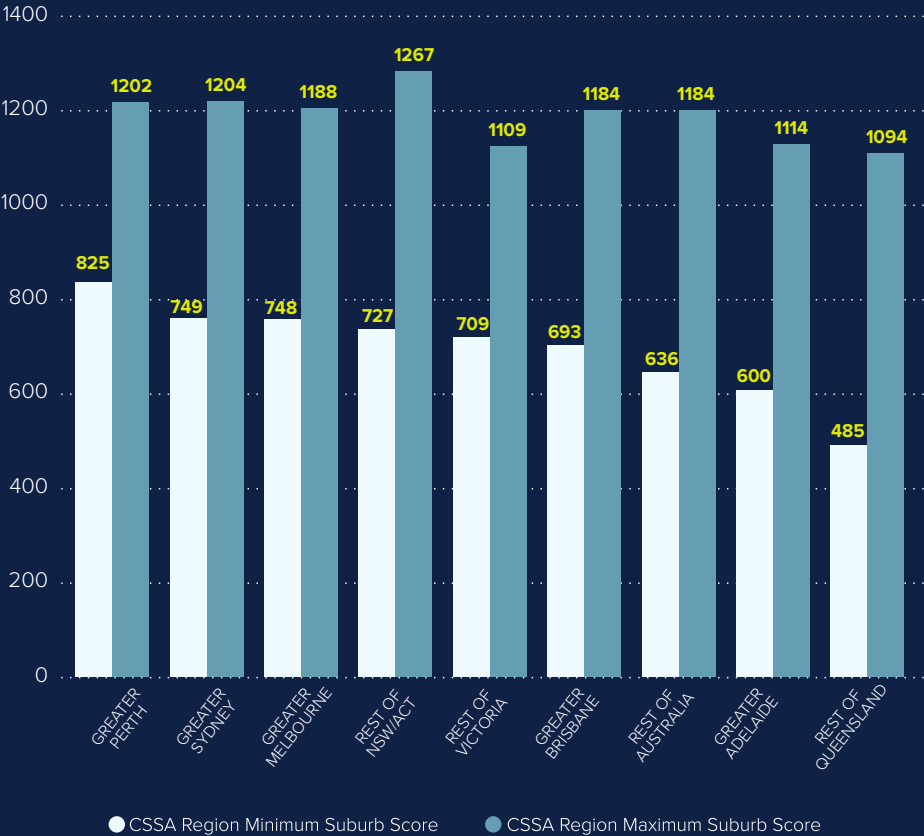
## VICTORIA

- In Melbourne, 70% of electorates are above the national disadvantage standard.
- Of the 28 Melbourne electorates, 42% are below the national economic average, 28.5% below the education average, 17% below the health average and 7% below social.
- In Melbourne, some of its least advantaged parts are clustered next to its most advantaged.

## Average Electorate Score by CSSA Region



## Minimum vs Maximum Suburb Disadvantage Score



# Project Partners



[mappingthepotential.cssa.org.au](http://mappingthepotential.cssa.org.au)

Contact us today  
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