

Regional profile of the public sector

Chapter 11

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Introduction

The NSW public sector is the largest employer in Australia, accounting for almost 10% of employment in the state. As such, it has a large impact on the NSW workforce. While most roles are in metropolitan areas, the NSW public sector employs many people in regional areas and handles a significant proportion of all employment in regional NSW.¹

In 2019, 58.2% of NSW public sector employees worked in Sydney (Sydney East and Sydney West combined), with the remaining 41.8% spread across the rest of NSW (see Figure 11.1). The distribution of employees between Sydney and regional areas² marginally favoured the latter when compared to the geographical distribution of the resident population of NSW, with an estimated 38.8% of people in NSW living in regional areas.

Figure 11.1 NSW public sector employees by region, census headcount, 2019

Region	Public sector employees, census headcount	Representation by region (%)
Hunter Valley excl. Newcastle	11,431	2.8
Mid North Coast	11,028	2.7
New England & North West	11,112	2.7
Far West & Orana	10,428	2.6
Coffs Harbour – Grafton	8,229	2.0
Richmond – Tweed	12,506	3.1
Capital Region	11,059	2.7
Riverina	9,757	2.4
Murray	5,836	1.4
Central West	14,341	3.5

Sydney regions

Work Region	Public sector employees, headcount at census	Representation by region (%)
Sydney East	134,675	33.3
Sydney West	101,196	25.0
Central Coast	16,343	4.0
Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	24,600	6.1
Illawarra	16,373	4.0
Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	6,066	1.5

Regional profiles

Key statistics for each region are displayed in Table 11.1, and the distribution of census FTE by region and service is shown in Table 11.2. In 2019, regional NSW accounted for 40.4% of FTE, while Sydney East and Sydney West together accounted for 59.6%. In line with previous years, the distribution of Public Service and other Crown services employees between Sydney and regional NSW mirrored that of the general NSW population. The NSW Health Service and the NSW Teaching Service had higher proportions of employees in regional areas compared to the general population, while the NSW Police Force and the Transport Service had higher proportions of employees in the Sydney region.

Work Region	Estimated resident population	Census period FTE 2018	Census period FTE 2019	Change census period FTE 2018 to 2019 (%)	Median age (years)	Median salary non-casual (\$)	Median tenure non-casual (years in agency)	Part-time non-casual (%)
Capital Region	227,969	8,429	8,892	5.5	47	\$85,066	9.9	34.8
Central Coast	342,095	12,833	13,258	3.3	45	\$86,033	9.6	34.1
Central West	212,648	11,352	11,775	3.7	45	\$83,403	9.3	30.4
Coffs Harbour – Grafton	141,212	6,481	6,687	3.2	47	\$86,567	10.0	36.2
Far West & Orana	117,331	8,476	8,722	2.9	43	\$79,586	8.2	26.1
Hunter Valley excl. Newcastle	277,105	8,584	9,262	7.9	44	\$83,136	9.8	33.4
Illawarra	311,193	12,119	12,440	2.6	45	\$87,926	11.4	31.0
Mid North Coast	220,713	8,730	9,014	3.3	47	\$86,641	10.4	34.5

Work Region	Estimated resident population	Census period FTE 2018	Census period FTE 2019	Change census period FTE 2018 to 2019 (%)	Median age (years)	Median salary non-casual (\$)	Median tenure non-casual (years in agency)	Part-time non-casual (%)
Murray	120,169	4,345	4,545	4.6	46	\$83,918	9.2	39.6
New England & North West	186,864	8,737	9,094	4.1	45	\$83,136	9.1	33.9
Newcastle & Lake Macquarie	375,931	18,667	19,503	4.5	45	\$87,926	10.0	33.9
Richmond – Tweed	250,989	9,526	9,822	3.1	48	\$87,926	10.7	42.6
Riverina	161,100	7,734	7,963	3.0	44	\$83,136	8.4	32.2
Southern Highlands & Shoalhaven	154,687	4,659	4,825	3.6	47	\$83,136	9.8	37.4
Sydney West	2,160,153	81,647	86,112	5.5	42	\$87,926	8.6	22.7
Sydney East	2,728,082	111,564	113,876	2.1	43	\$90,236	7.2	21.8

Table 11.1: Key statistics by region, 2019³

* 4.6% of employee records in the workforce profile were missing the postcode and/or suburb in 2019.

Work Region	Public Service	NSW Health Service	NSW Police Force	Teaching Service	Transport Service	Other Crown services	Government sector	State owned corporations
Capital Region	1,656	2,793	657	2,307	200	911	8,525	367

Work Region	Public Service	NSW Health Service	NSW Police Force	Teaching Service	Transport Service	Other Crown services	Government sector	State owned corporations
Central Coast	2,133	5,917	762	2,957	125	1,363	13,258	0
Central West	2,985	3,963	552	2,244	184	1,440	11,368	407
Coffs Harbour – Grafton	1,182	2,434	277	1,370	390	762	6,414	273
Far West & Orana	2,028	2,792	533	1,699	243	1,038	8,333	390
Hunter Valley excl. Newcastle	2,315	2,086	472	2,924	74	1,249	9,120	142
Illawarra	1,503	5,181	628	2,833	420	1,783	12,348	92
Mid North Coast	1,099	3,148	364	2,063	66	1,262	8,002	1,011
Murray	604	1,532	290	1,144	109	638	4,317	228
New England & North West	1,476	3,126	545	2,218	149	1,219	8,732	361
Newcastle & Lake Macquarie	3,126	9,002	768	3,425	512	2,198	19,031	472
Richmond – Tweed	1,026	4,462	537	2,238	94	1,211	9,567	255
Riverina	1,333	2,946	380	1,660	282	973	7,576	386

Work Region	Public Service	NSW Health Service	NSW Police Force	Teaching Service	Transport Service	Other Crown services	Government sector	State owned corporations
Southern Highlands & Shoalhaven	973	1,599	238	1,333	33	632	4,806	18
Sydney West	16,071	30,631	6,198	19,291	1,810	9,861	83,863	2,247
Sydney East	24,466	38,267	6,700	17,875	8,371	16,032	111,712	1,160

Table 11.2: Census period FTE by service and region, 2019

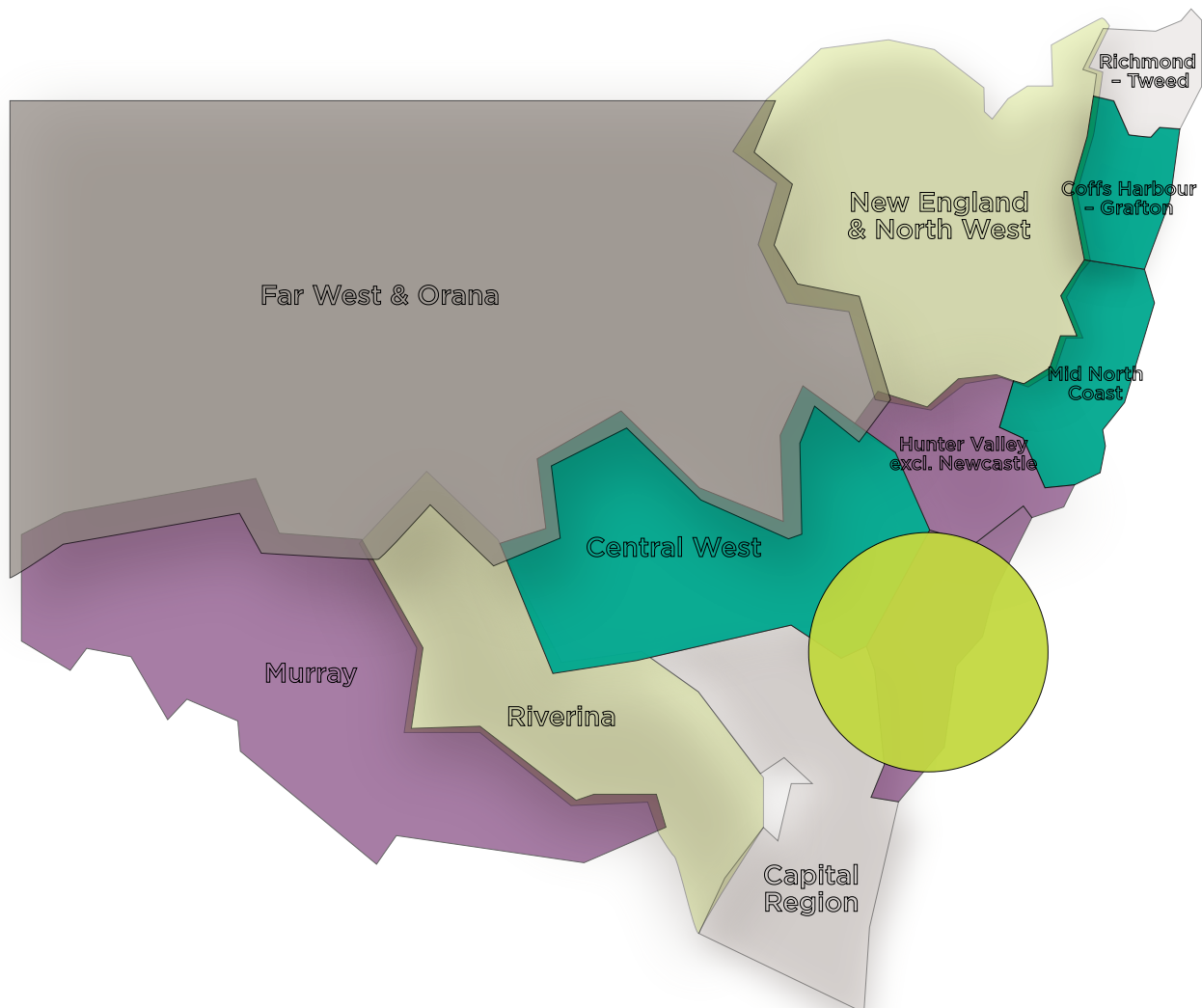
NSW public sector relative to the NSW workforce

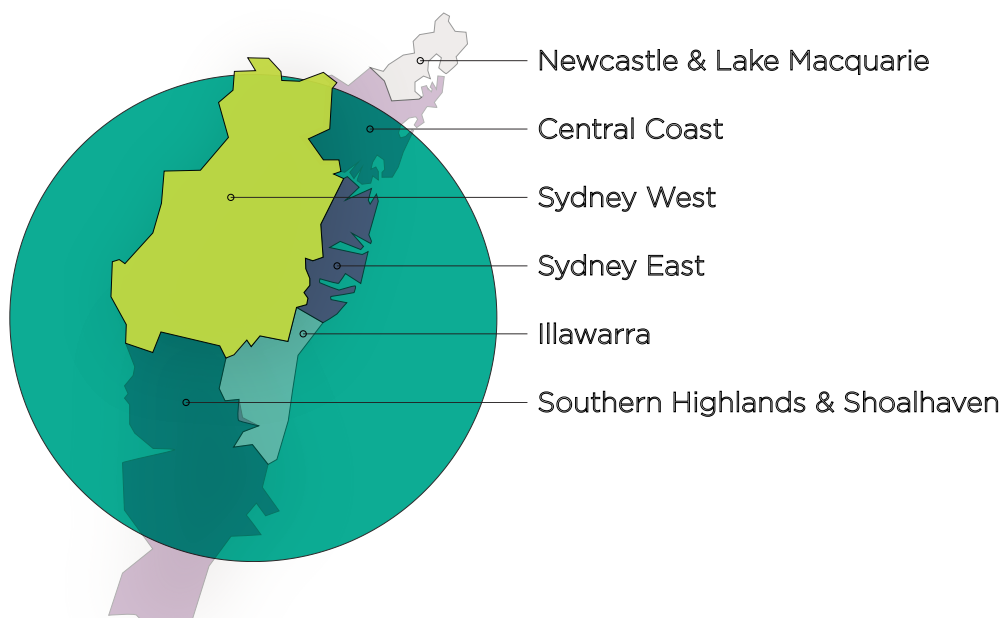
The NSW public sector accounted for 9.8% of the approximately 4,151,962 people employed in NSW at June 2019.⁴ As in previous years, the NSW public sector's contribution to employment varied from region to region. Analysis of the geographic distribution of NSW public sector employees relative to the overall workforce⁵ shows where government employment contributed the most to local and regional economies. Figure 11.2 shows the percentage of employed persons who were NSW public sector employees in each region in 2019.

The proportion of public sector employees relative to total employed people increased in several regions in 2019. This was largely due to an increase in the number of public sector employees in all regions coupled with a decrease in the number of employed persons in six regions: Hunter Valley (excluding Newcastle), Central Coast, Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven, Mid North Coast, Coffs Harbour – Grafton, and Far West and Orana.⁴ The largest proportional increase was in Far West and Orana, where public sector employees made up 20.3% of all employed persons in 2019 (up from 17.4% in 2018). In contrast, less than 10% of the workforce in Sydney East and Sydney West was employed in the NSW public sector.

Figure 11.3 Public sector employees as a proportion of NSW

employed persons by region, 2019





Importers and exporters of talent

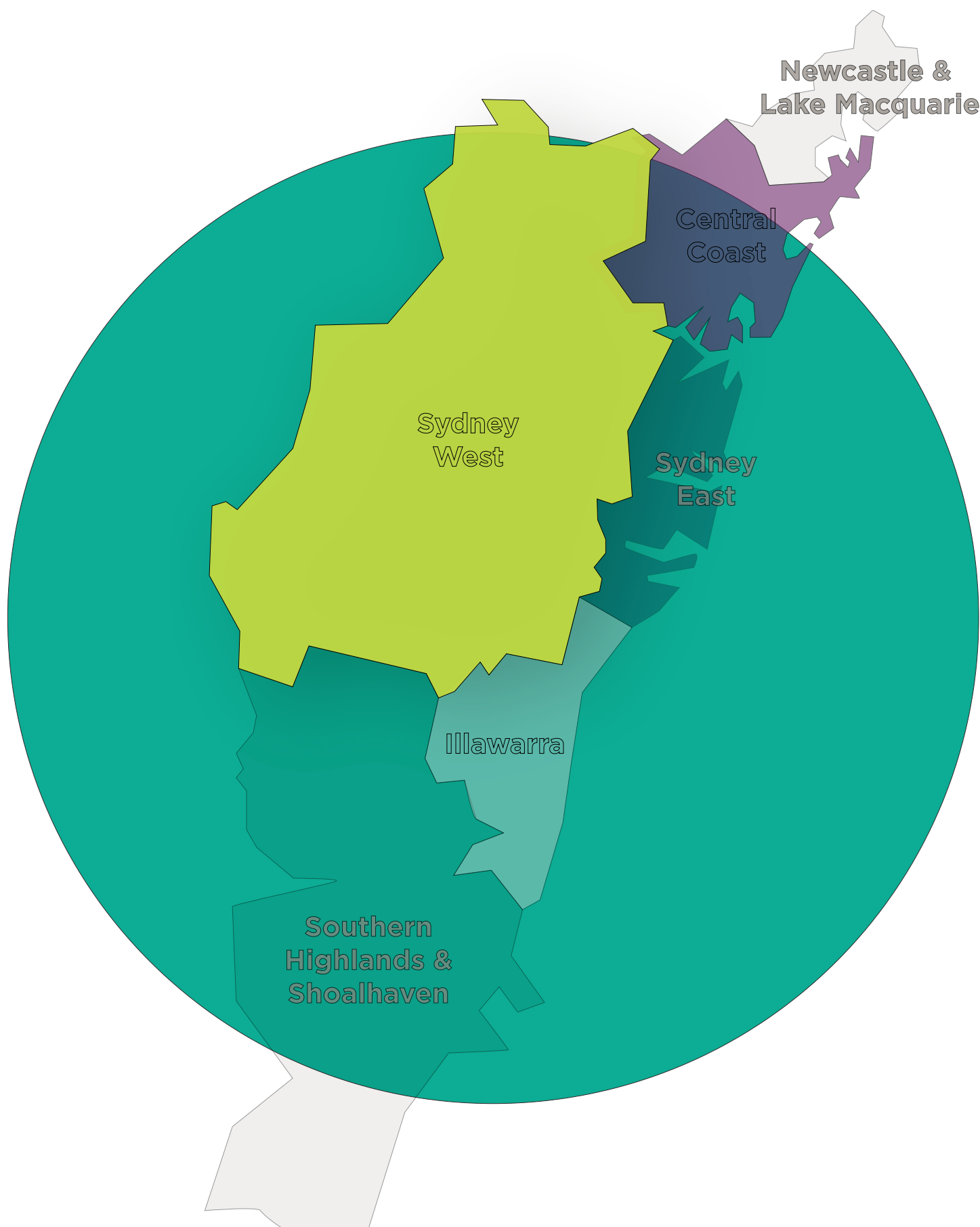
The percentage of NSW public sector workers commuting out of their home regions for work differed across regions (see Figure 11.4). In the Hunter Valley (excluding Newcastle), Central Coast, Illawarra, and Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven regions, between 30% and 40% of public sector employees travelled to another region for work. Most of them worked in Sydney West or Sydney East. This may reflect these regions' proximity to Sydney, where 58.2% of NSW public sector employees were located on the census date. In contrast, less than 10% of NSW public sector employees living in the Riverina and Richmond – Tweed regions travelled to another region for work, likely due to the size of these regions.

The commuting ratios in Figure 11.5 show the number of public sector employees commuting out of their home region to work, for every employee working within the home region. The highest net exporters were the Illawarra and Central Coast regions, where more than two public sector employees commuted out of the region to work for every one that commuted in. The Illawarra ratio represents a decrease from 2018 (from 3.4 to 2.4), largely due to an increase in the number of employees commuting to the region. Sydney East was once again the most substantial net importer of NSW public sector employees, with only 0.5 people commuting out of the region for every person commuting to the region for work.

Commuting profile of Sydney and surrounding regions

The employment catchment area of Greater Sydney shown in Figure 11.6 has expanded over recent decades, with large numbers of employees commuting to and from the surrounding regions. Understanding where employees are commuting to and from is important for planning recruitment and managing retention.

Figure 11.6 Greater Sydney area



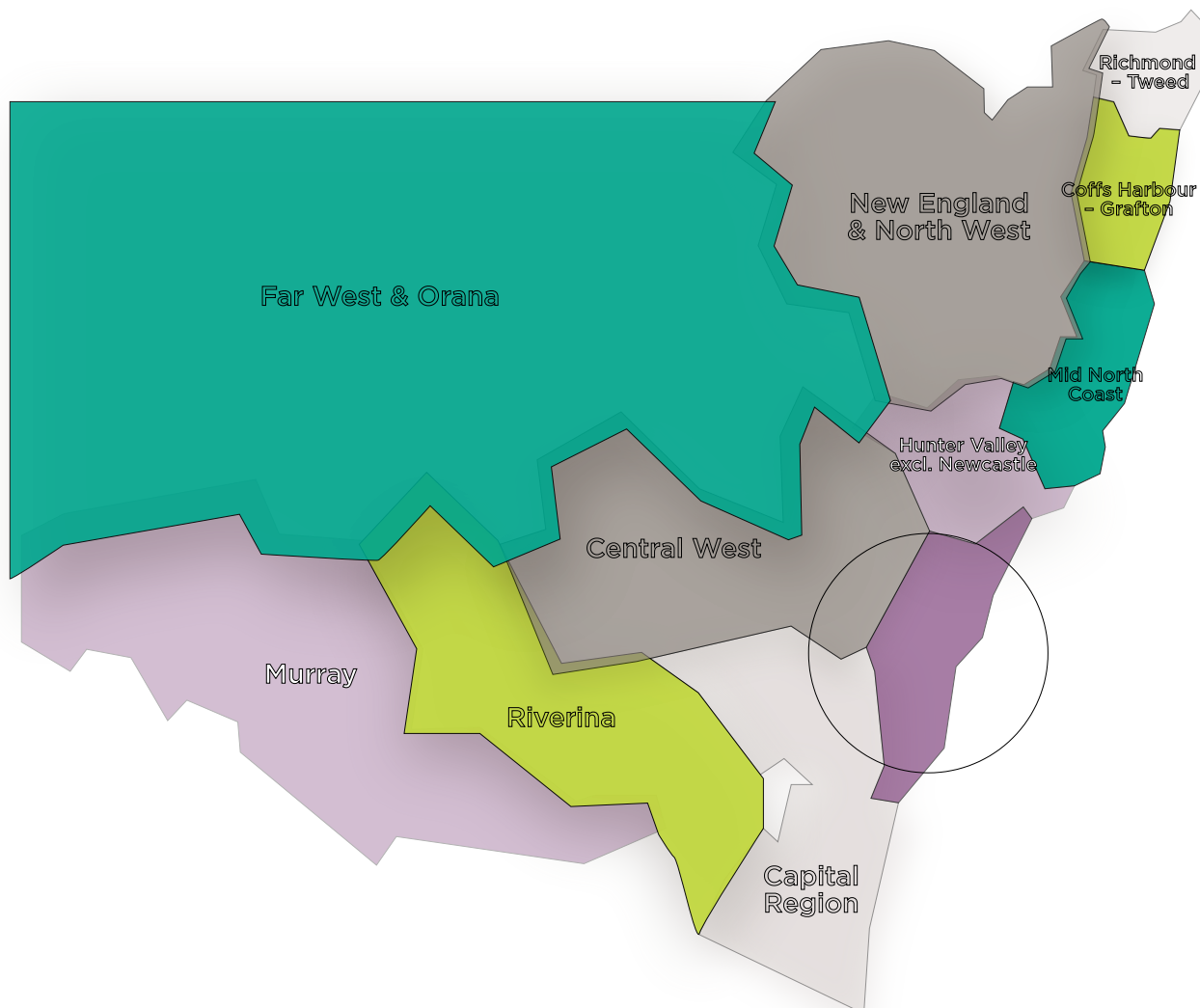


Table 11.3 illustrates the number of NSW public sector employees (including casuals⁵) on the census date who travelled between regions in and around Sydney for work. The largest proportion of commuting occurred between Sydney West and Sydney East. Around 20.3% of NSW public sector employees in Sydney East travelled in from Sydney West, and 17.2% of NSW public sector employees in Sydney West resided in Sydney East. In total, close to 45,000 NSW public sector employees travelled between these two regions for work.

Work region	Sydney East	Sydney West	Central Coast	Newcastle & Lake Macquarie	Illawarra	Southern Highlands & Shoalhaven
Sydney East	95,103	27,386	3,746	951	3,402	427
Sydney West	17,399	76,761	884	409	1,613	617
Central Coast	556	251	13,633	1,315	*	*
Newcastle & Lake Macquarie	454	372	1,034	18,629	42	*
Illawarra	855	555	*	47	13,572	619
Southern Highlands & Shoalhaven	103	290	*	*	802	4,612

Table 11.3: Commuting profile of Sydney and surrounding regions, 2019 - Home region

* Asterisks indicate redacted data which is considered to be a data quality issue.

Approximately 9,500 employees commuted from the Central Coast and Illawarra regions to Sydney East or Sydney West. This constituted around 29.5% of employees residing in these regions. Far fewer employees travelled out of Sydney East and Sydney West to work in the surrounding regions (1,968 and 1,468, respectively). This is consistent with the high concentration of NSW public sector employment in Sydney.

Notes

¹ Regional boundaries are based on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The work locations of 3,019 NSW public sector employees were unknown due to Workforce Profile data collection records missing a postcode or a suburb name, or both data items. These employees have not been included in denominators when calculating percentages.

² Statistical Areas Level 4, Sydney Collapsed, excludes 'Unknowns' and 'Outside NSW'.

³ ABS, Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, 2016, cat. no. 3235.0, released 28 August 2017, <http://stat.abs.gov.au/itt/r.jsp?databyregion#/>

⁴ ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed – Electronic Delivery, June 2019, cat. no. 6291.0.55.001, released 25 September 2019, <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/allprimarymainfeatures/25FF008...>

⁵ Including casual employees gives a better sense of the number of people travelling between regions for work.

