

Regional profile of the public sector

Chapter 11

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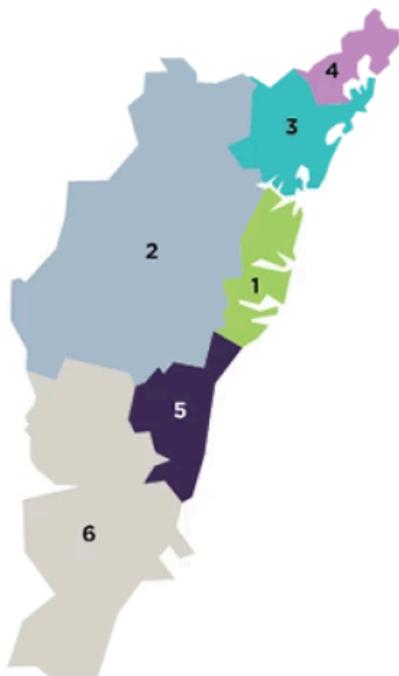
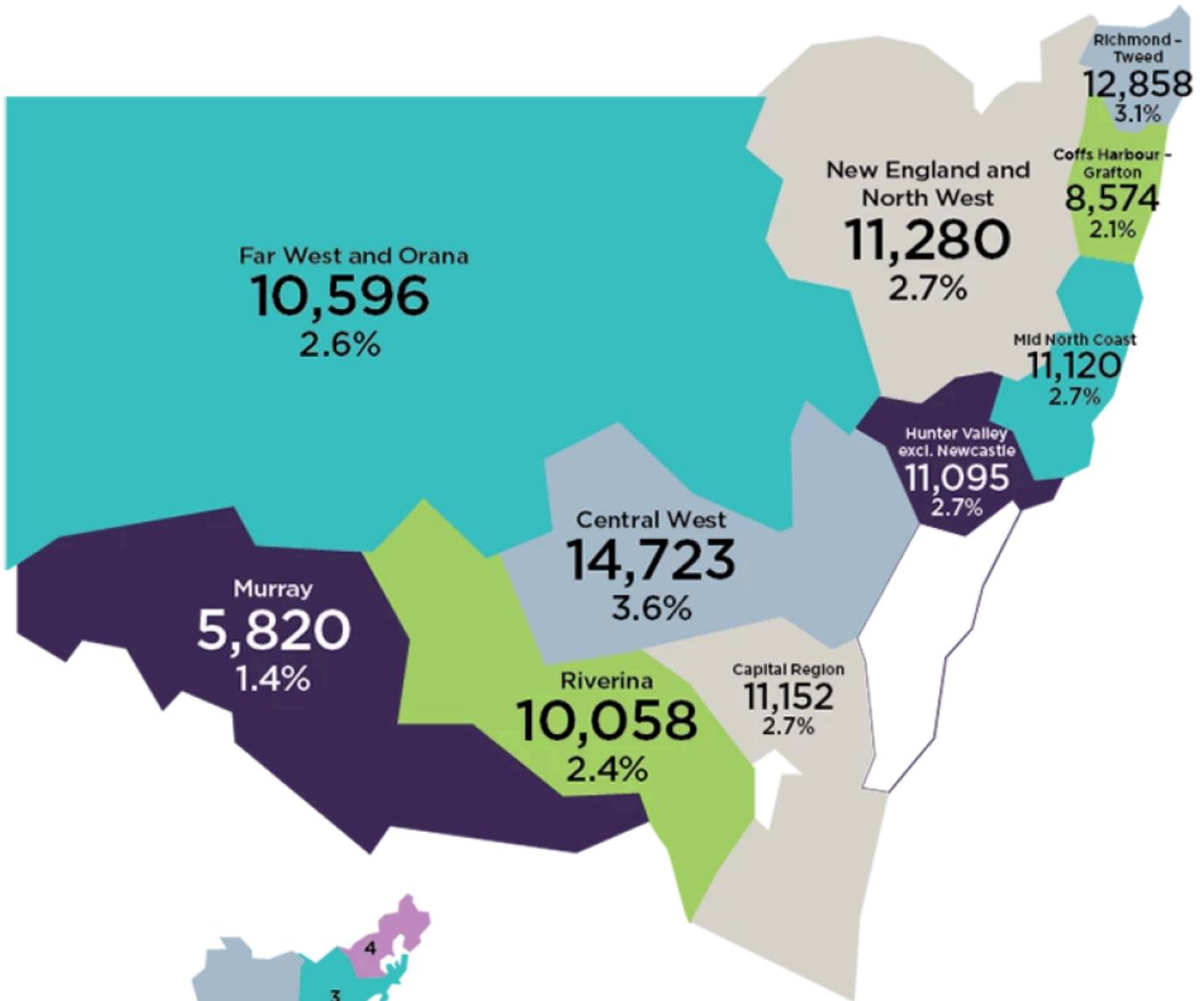
Notes

The NSW public sector (which is the largest employer in Australia) accounts for more than 10% of employment in the state. As such, it has a big impact on the NSW workforce. While the majority of roles are in metropolitan areas, the public sector employs many people in regional areas and accounts for a significant proportion of all employment in regional NSW.¹

Regional analysis in this report is based on employees' normal stated work locations, as submitted in the Workforce Profile data by departments and agencies. This analysis does not reflect work-from-home arrangements, which were part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, 58.7% of NSW public sector employees worked in Sydney (Sydney East and Sydney West combined), with the remaining 41.3% 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 38.6% of people in NSW living in regional areas.

Figure 11.1: NSW public sector employees by region, census headcount, 2020



Sydney regions

Region	Public sector employees, census headcount	Representation by region (%)
1 Sydney East	135,089	32.8
2 Sydney West	106,200	25.8
3 Central Coast	16,656	4.0
4 Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	23,984	5.8
5 Illawarra	15,831	3.8
6 Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	6,241	1.5

NSW public sector employees by region, census headcount, 2020: Text version of image ▼

Region	Public sector employees, census headcount	Representation by region (%)
Hunter Valley excl. Newcastle	11,095	2.7
Mid North Coast	11,120	2.7
New England and North West	11,280	2.7
Far West and Orana	10,596	2.6
Coffs Harbour - Grafton	8,574	2.1
Richmond - Tweed	12,858	3.1
Capital Region	11,152	2.7
Riverina	10,058	2.4
Murray	5,820	1.4
Central West	14,723	3.6

Sydney regions

Region	Public sector employees, census headcount	Representation by region (%)
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Regional profiles

Key statistics for each region are displayed in Table 11.1, and distribution of the census period FTE by region and service is shown in Table 11.2. Table 11.1 compares 2020 with 2018 (rather than 2019) as the 2019 location data has been confirmed as low quality.³

Table 11.1: Key statistics by region, 2020⁴

Work region	Estimated resident population	Census period FTE 2018	Census period FTE 2020	Change census period FTE 2018 to 2020 (%)	Median age (years)	Median salary non-casual (\$)	Median tenure non-casual (years in agency)	Part-time non-casual (%)
Capital Region	229,910	8,429	9,082	3.7	47	\$86,648	9.4	33.7
Central Coast	344,016	12,833	13,715	3.3	44	\$88,853	9.4	33.0
Central West	213,384	11,352	12,243	3.8	45	\$85,488	9.1	30.1
Coffs Harbour – Grafton	141,986	6,481	6,966	3.6	47	\$89,793	9.6	36.2
Far West and Orana	116,962	8,476	8,968	2.8	43	\$80,795	7.9	26.4
Hunter Valley excl. Newcastle	280,588	8,584	9,140	3.1	44	\$85,214	9.4	32.9
Illawarra	314,618	12,119	12,914	3.2	45	\$90,123	9.8	32.1
Mid North Coast	222,700	8,730	9,285	3.1	47	\$89,824	10.3	34.0
Murray	120,906	4,345	4,581	2.6	46	\$86,564	8.9	38.8

Work region	Estimated resident population	Census period FTE 2018	Census period FTE 2020	Change census period FTE 2018 to 2020 (%)	Median age (years)	Median salary non-casual (\$)	Median tenure non casual (years in agency)	Part-time non-casual (%)
New England and North West	187,071	8,737	9,339	3.3	45	\$85,214	8.8	33.9
Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	378,683	18,667	19,633	2.5	44	\$90,123	9.4	34.9
Richmond - Tweed	252,650	9,526	10,214	3.5	47	\$90,123	10.1	41.6
Riverina	161,595	7,734	8,337	3.8	44	\$85,214	8.4	32.4
Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	156,601	4,659	5,080	4.3	46	\$85,214	9.4	35.6
Sydney East	2,764,545	111,564	116,053	2.0	43	\$93,112	7.1	21.3
Sydney West	2,203,602	81,647	91,549	5.7	42	\$90,123	8.4	22.1

In 2020, regional NSW accounted for 40.2% of FTE, while Sydney East and Sydney West together accounted for 59.8% (see Table 11.2). In line with previous years, the highest proportion of employees in the government sector working in regional areas were in the Teaching Service (44.1%) and the NSW Health Service (42.5%), followed by other Crown services (39.0%), the Public Service (36.5%), the NSW Police Force (35.5%) and the Transport Service (22.1%).

Table 11.2: Census period FTE by service and region, 2020

Work region	Public Service	NSW Health Service	NSW Police Force	Teaching Service	Transport Service	Other Crown services	State owned corporations	External to government sector
Capital region	1,767	3,003	678	2,171	193	922	348	0
Central Coast	2,184	6,102	762	3,071	129	1,467	0	0
Central West	3,107	4,050	575	2,370	203	1,530	407	0
Coffs Harbour - Grafton	1,189	2,526	286	1,435	416	829	285	0
Far West and Orana	2,111	2,825	559	1,737	253	1,099	385	0
Hunter Valley excl. Newcastle	2,442	2,121	495	2,644	54	1,241	144	0
Illawarra	1,576	5,326	647	2,913	437	1,930	85	0
Mid North Coast	1,162	3,172	385	2,123	70	1,325	1,048	1
Murray	614	1,541	291	1,158	107	647	224	0
New England and North West	1,565	3,149	561	2,210	172	1,314	367	1
Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	2,945	9,011	780	3,591	533	2,285	487	0
Richmond - Tweed	1,092	4,614	556	2,324	107	1,268	254	0

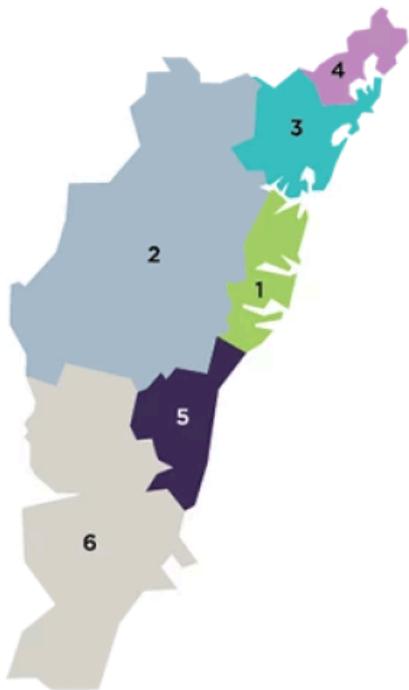
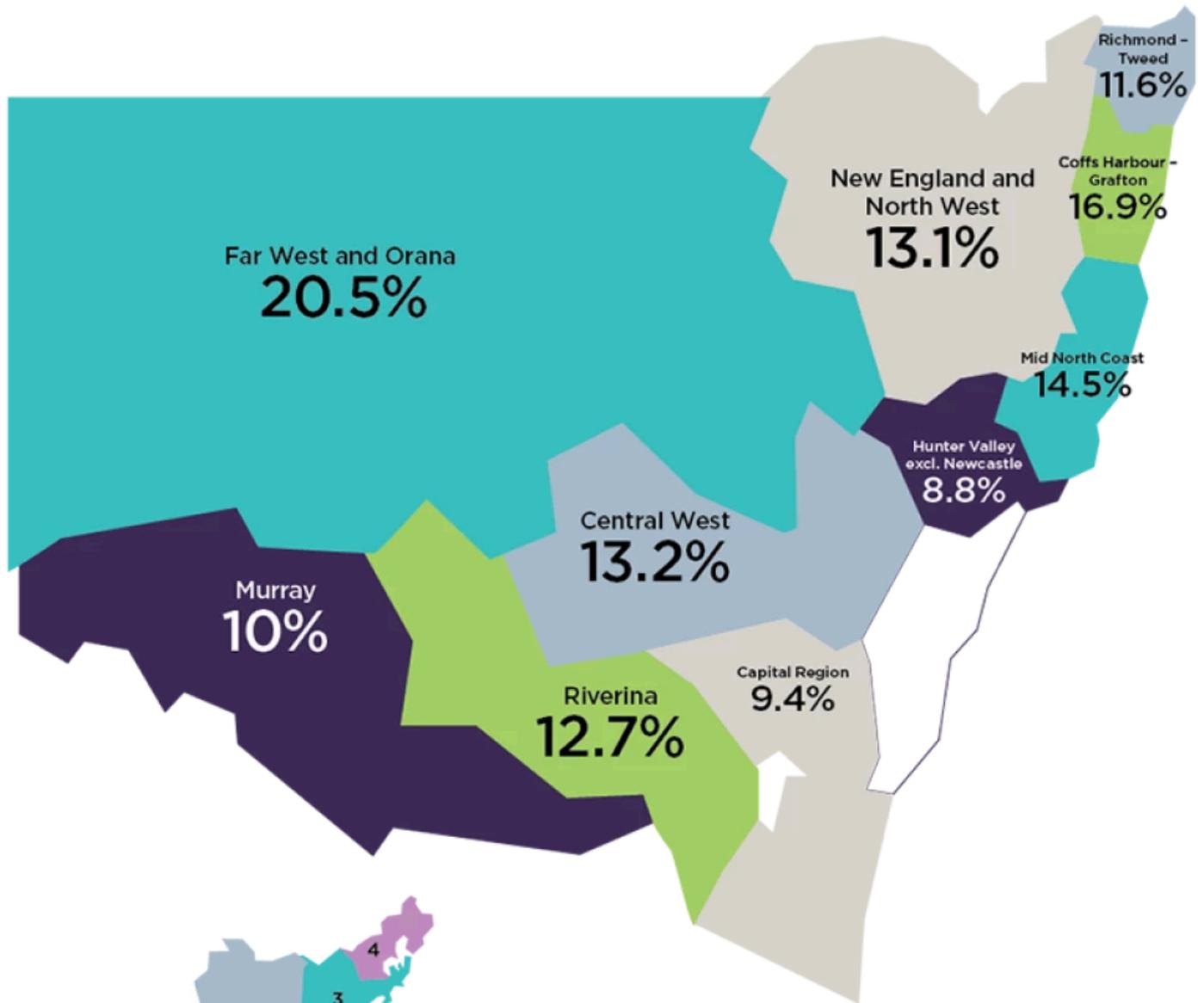
Work region	Public Service	NSW Health Service	NSW Police Force	Teaching Service	Transport Service	Other Crown services	State owned corporations	External to government sector
Riverina	1,350	3,056	387	1,779	302	1,085	377	0
Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	969	1,707	245	1,437	40	664	18	0
Sydney East	24,529	39,014	6,632	18,369	8,677	16,577	1,261	992
Sydney West	17,285	31,658	6,458	20,878	1,945	10,959	2,364	2

NSW public sector relative to the NSW workforce

The NSW public sector accounted for 10.4% of the 3,947,132 people employed in NSW at June 2020.⁵ This is a notable increase from 9.8% last year, and is likely a result of a reduction in the number of employed persons in NSW due to the pandemic (204,830 fewer employed persons).

Analysis of the geographic distribution of NSW public sector employees (including casuals) relative to the overall workforce⁶ 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 2020. Most regions had between 10% and 15% of their employed persons working for the NSW public sector, with notable exceptions being Far West and Orana (20.5%) and Coffs Harbour – Grafton (16.9%).

Figure 11.3: Public sector employees as a proportion of NSW employed persons by region, 2020



Sydney regions

Region	Representation by region (%)
1 Sydney East	9.0
2 Sydney West	10.2
3 Central Coast	10.7
4 Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	13.9
5 Illawarra	10.5
6 Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	10.7

Public sector employees as a proportion of NSW employed persons by region, 2020: Text version of image

Work region	%
Hunter Valley excl. Newcastle	8.8
Sydney East	9.0
Capital Region	9.4
Murray	10.0
Sydney West	10.2
Illawarra	10.5
Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	10.7
Central Coast	10.7
Richmond - Tweed	11.6
Riverina	12.7
New England and North West	13.1
Central West	13.2
Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	13.9
Mid North Coast	14.5
Coffs Harbour - Grafton	16.9
Far West and Orana	20.5

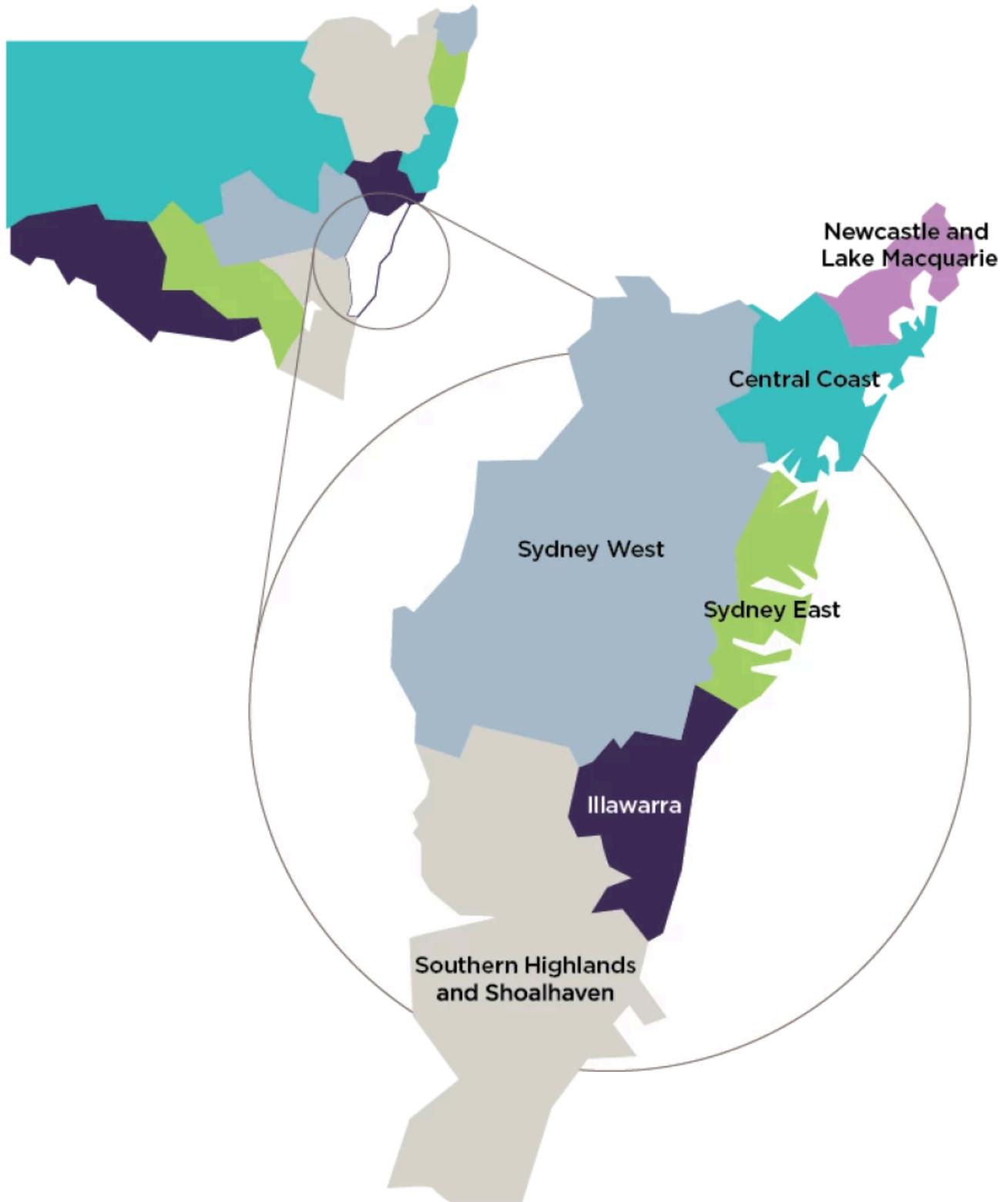
Employees

The percentage of NSW public sector employees whose normal work location is in a different region to their home location varies 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 generally work in a different region to their home location. In most of these cases, the normal work location is Sydney West or Sydney East, which reflects these regions' proximity to Sydney. In contrast, less than 10% of NSW public sector employees living in the Riverina and Richmond – Tweed regions had a normal work location outside their home region, likely due to the size of these regions.

Normal commuting profile of Sydney and surrounding regions

The employment catchment area of Greater Sydney shown in Figure 11.5 has expanded over recent decades, with large numbers of employees normally commuting to and from the surrounding regions. Understanding the normal commuting patterns can provide insight into the impact of work-from-home arrangements on regions and transport services.

Figure 11.5: Greater Sydney area



Greater Sydney area: Text version of image



- Sydney West
- Sydney East
- Central Coast
- Newcastle and Lake Macquarie
- Illawarra
- Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven

Table 11.3: Usual commuting profile of Sydney and surrounding regions, 2020

	Home region	Home region	Home region	Home region	Home region	Home region
Work region	Sydney West	Sydney East	Central Coast	Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	Illawarra	Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven
Sydney West	77,773	20,810	1,036	512	1,760	650
Sydney East	27,814	95,334	3,747	986	3,432	444
Central Coast	262	555	13,891	1,337	*	*
Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	321	353	1,004	18,384	29	*
Illawarra	408	589	*	40	13,849	604
Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	302	131	*	*	862	4,694

* Asterisks indicate redacted data where there are fewer than 20 records.

Table 11.3 illustrates the number of NSW public sector employees (including casuals⁶) who generally travel between regions in and around Sydney for work. The largest proportion of commuting occurs between Sydney West and Sydney East. Around 21.1% of NSW public sector employees in Sydney East normally

travel in from Sydney West, and 20.3% of NSW public sector employees in Sydney West live in Sydney East. In total, just over 48,000 NSW public sector employees generally travel between these two regions for work.

Nearly 10,000 employees normally commute from the Central Coast and Illawarra regions to Sydney East or Sydney West. This constitutes around 25.2% of employees living in these regions. Far fewer employees travel out of Sydney East and Sydney West to work in the surrounding regions (1,628 and 1,293, 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 ABS. The work locations of 2,290 NSW public sector employees were unknown due to Workforce Profile data collection records missing a postcode and/or suburb name, or employees working outside NSW. These employees are excluded from all analysis presented in this chapter.

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

³ Education identified issues with the quality of location data submitted for the 2019 Workforce Profile.

⁴ ABS, *Population Estimates by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia (ASGS 2016), 2018*,
<http://stat.data.abs.gov.au/>

⁵ ABS, *Labour force status by Age, Labour market region (ASGS) and Sex, October 1998 onwards*,
<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed/sep-2020>

⁶ Including casual employees gives a better sense of the number of people contributing to the NSW economy and travelling between regions for work.

Next chapter

Regional profile of the Public Service

