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Regional profile of the public sector

Chapter 11

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34%

of employees were located in regional areas at census date

(**-0.4pp** vs 2022)



40.7%

of employees were located outside Sydney at census date

(**-0.4pp** vs 2022)

Note: 'pp' stands for percentage points.

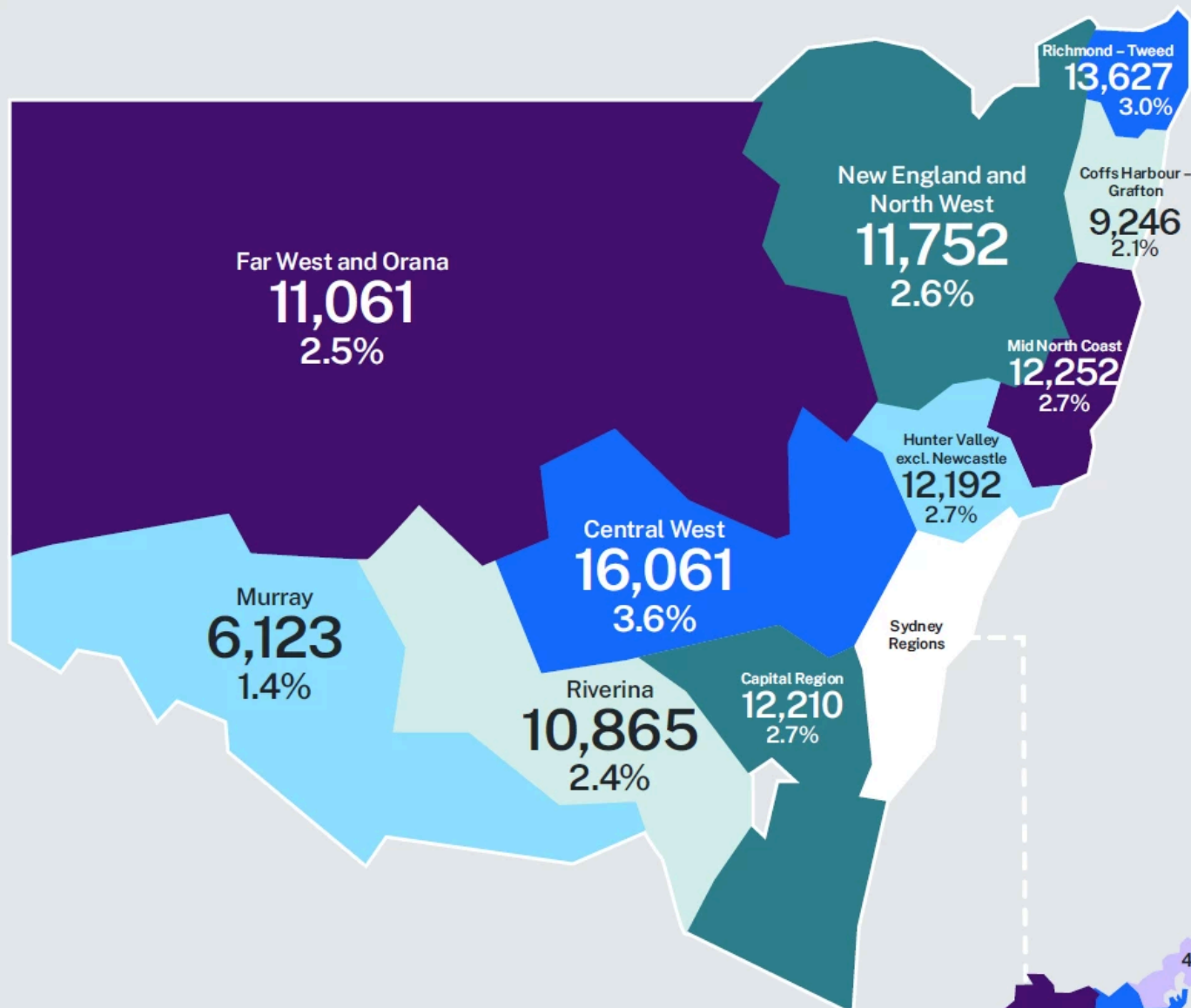
The NSW public sector is the largest employer in Australia, accounting for more than 10% of employment in the state. While a majority of roles are located in metropolitan areas, the NSW public sector provides a significant proportion of all employment in regional NSW.¹

This analysis is based on employees' work locations in the Workforce Profile data submitted by departments and agencies. It does not reflect any work-from-home arrangements.

In 2023, 34% (+4,968 headcount) of public sector employees worked in regional areas. All Sydney local government areas (LGAs) as well as the Newcastle and Wollongong LGAs are classified as metropolitan.

Comparing Sydney with the rest of the state², 59.3% of NSW public sector employees worked in Sydney (see Figure 11.1, Sydney East and Sydney West combined), an increase of 0.4pp in 2023 (from 59% in 2022). While most of the public sector workforce was located in Sydney, the proportion of public sector employees working outside Sydney was higher than the proportion of the resident population in these areas (40.7% compared to 37.3%) and has decreased since 2022 (-0.4pp from 41% in 2022).³

Figure 11.1: NSW public sector employees by region, census headcount, 2023



Sydney regions

Region		Public sector employees, census headcount	Representation by region (%)
1	Sydney East	143,632	31.9
2	Sydney West	123,694	27.5
3	Central Coast	17,738	3.9
4	Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	26,133	5.8
5	Illawarra	17,277	3.8
6	Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	6,733	1.5

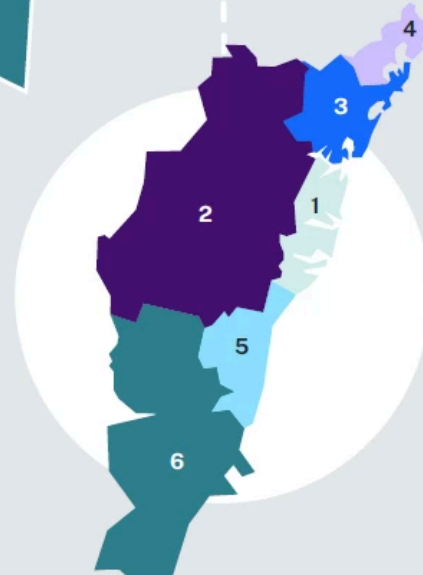


Figure 11.1: NSW public sector employees by region, census headcount, 2023 – text version

NSW regions

Region	Census headcount	Representation by region (%)
Hunter Valley exc Newcastle	12,192	2.7
Mid North Coast	12,252	2.7
New England and North West	11,752	2.6
Far West and Orana	11,061	2.5
Coffs Harbour – Grafton	9,246	2.1
Richmond – Tweed	13,627	3.0
Capital Region	12,210	2.7
Riverina	10,865	2.4
Murray	6,123	1.4
Central West	16,061	3.6

Sydney regions

Region	Public sector employees, census headcount	Representation by region (%)
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Illawarra	17,277	3.8

Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven

6,733

1.5

Regional profiles

The distribution of government sector census period full-time equivalent (FTE) by service and region is shown in Table 11.1. Regions outside Sydney accounted for 39.3%, while Sydney East and Sydney West together accounted for 60.7%. In line with previous years, the highest proportion of employees in the government sector working outside Sydney were in the Teaching Service (44.3%) and the NSW Health Service (42%), followed by other Crown services (39.7%), the NSW Police Force (35.4%), the Public Service (33.9%) and the Transport Service (24.6%).

Table 11.1: Census period FTE by service and region (government sector), 2023⁴

Work region	Public Service	NSW Health Service	NSW Police Force	Teaching Service	Transport Service	Other Crown services	Total government sector
Capital Region	2,149	3,134	647	2,260	209	1,093	9,491
Central Coast	2,503	6,401	743	3,192	130	1,653	14,624
Central West	3,639	4,288	547	2,357	333	1,712	12,875
Coffs Harbour – Grafton	1,334	2,772	279	1,455	511	906	7,258
Far West and Orana	2,292	2,974	550	1,740	281	1,249	9,085
Hunter Valley exc Newcastle	2,693	2,488	472	2,651	85	1,403	9,791
Illawarra	1,846	5,713	640	3,110	546	2,138	13,993

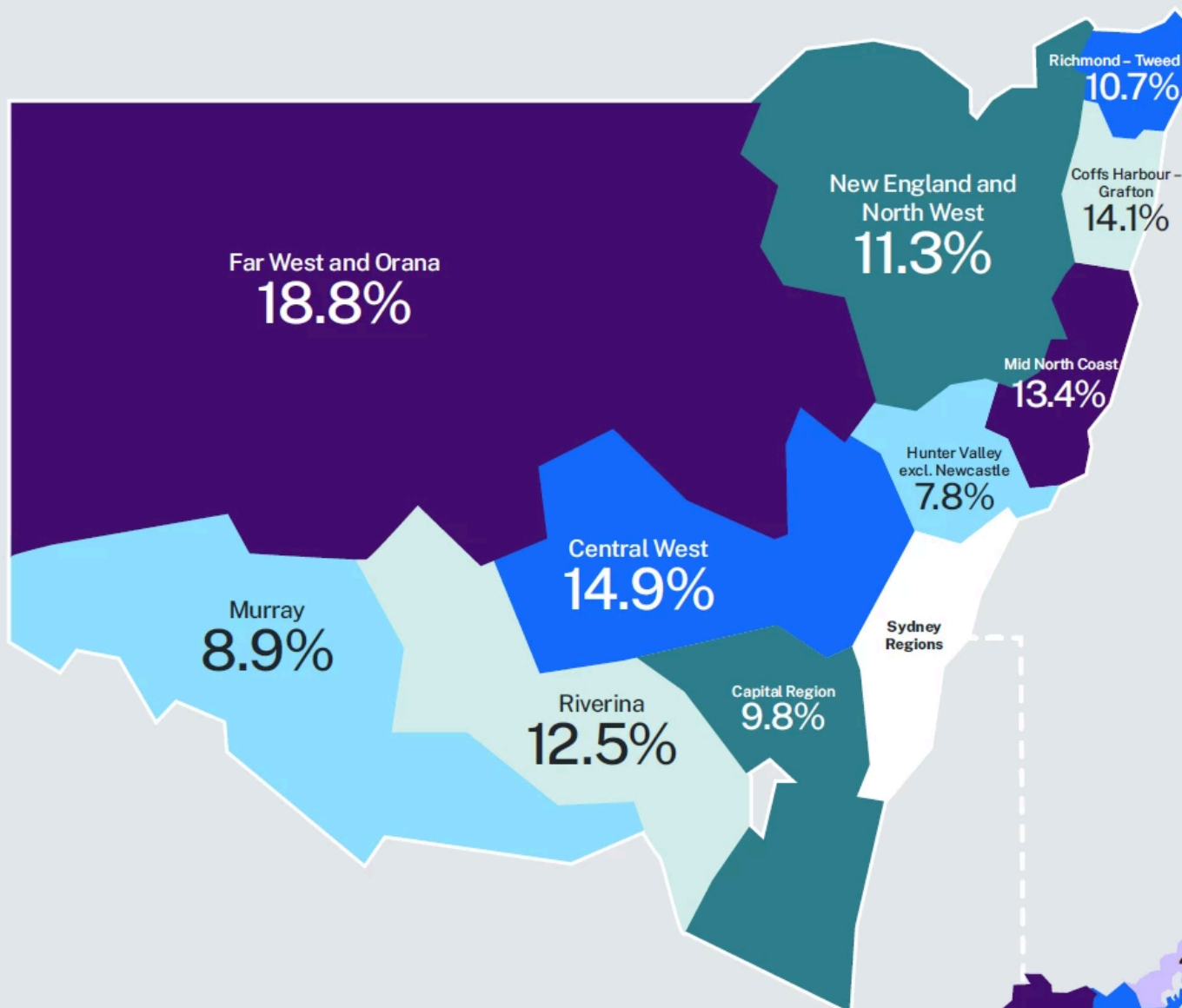
Mid North Coast	1,391	3,576	400	2,200	85	1,431	9,082
Murray	753	1,546	290	1,168	110	759	4,627
New England and North West	1,757	3,205	546	2,164	177	1,470	9,319
Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	3,002	9,900	784	3,857	748	2,492	20,782
Richmond – Tweed	1,264	4,923	556	2,376	149	1,357	10,625
Riverina	1,506	3,314	398	1,739	334	1,214	8,506
Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	1,005	1,816	236	1,439	53	783	5,332

NSW public sector relative to the NSW workforce

The NSW public sector accounted for 10.3% of the approximately 4.4 million people employed in NSW at June 2023⁵.

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 that the percentage of employed persons who were NSW public sector employees ranged from 7.8% to 18.8% across the regions in 2023.

Figure 11.2: Public sector employees as a proportion of NSW employed persons by region, 2023



Sydney regions

Region		Representation by region (%)
1	Sydney East	9.5
2	Sydney West	9.9
3	Central Coast	10.2
4	Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	11.4
5	Illawarra	10.6
6	Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	8.7

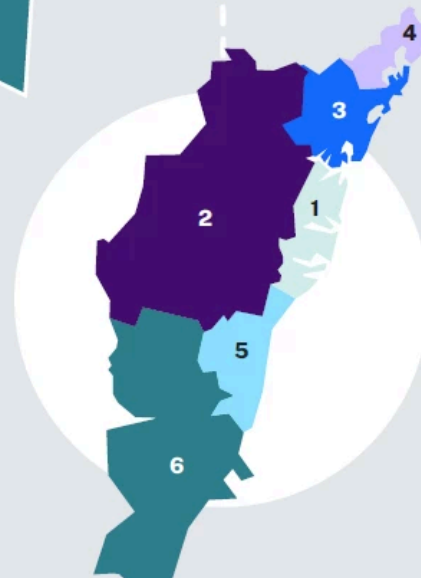


Figure 11.2: Public sector employees as a proportion of NSW employed persons by region, 2023 – text version 

NSW regions

Region	Percentage
Hunter Valley exc Newcastle	7.8
Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	8.7
Murray	8.9
Sydney East	9.5
Capital Region	9.8
Sydney West	9.9
Central Coast	10.2
Illawarra	10.6
Richmond – Tweed	10.7
New England and North West	11.3
Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	11.4
Riverina	12.5
Mid North Coast	13.4
Coffs Harbour – Grafton	14.1
Central West	14.9
Far West and Orana	18.8

Sydney regions

Region	Representation by region (%)
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Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	11.4
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Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	8.7

Notes

¹ Regional boundaries are based on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The work locations of 2,614 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 have not been included in denominators when calculating percentages.

² Statistical Area Level 4, Sydney SA4s grouped, excludes 'Unknowns' and 'Outside NSW'. See **Regional reference table in Chapter 12** for more detail.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022) '2022 Locality to 2021 SA2 Coding Index' Data by Statistical Area 4, ABS, accessed 4 October 2022.

⁴ 0.3% of census period FTE is not mapped to any Australian Bureau of Statistics' Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) for NSW because of postcode and/or suburb data that is missing or outside NSW.

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (June 2023), 'Table 1: RM1 - Labour force status by age, labour market region (ASGS) and sex, October 1998 onwards, [time series spreadsheet], *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed*, accessed 17 September 2023.

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

Next chapter

Data sources, conventions and limitations

