Aboriginal Residents

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**Population**

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders recorded by the Census in Greater Dandenong trebled from 150 in 1981, to 516 by 2016, representing 0.3% of the population. Within this city and its adjoining municipalities[[1]](#footnote-1), the 2016 Census recorded nearly 5,217 Aboriginal residents.

Those people living in Greater Dandenong are relatively young, with nearly one-half (48%) aged less than 24 years, compared with 32% of the general population. Conversely, 8% are aged 65 years or more, compared with 14% of non-Aboriginal residents. Their median age is 26 years, compared with 35 for the general population, reflecting their lower life expectancy and higher birth rates.

Per cent of Population by Age: Aboriginal and

Non-Aboriginal Residents, Greater Dandenong, 2016

**Housing**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Greater Dandenong are half as likely to own or be purchasing their homes (33%) as the general population (61%), and more often rent their accommodation. Twenty-seven per cent of Aboriginal residents rent from government or community agencies, compared with 4% of non-Aboriginal residents.

**Families** Families with Children by Type: Aboriginal and

 Non-Aboriginal Residents, Greater Dandenong, 2016

In 2016, nearly two-thirds (63%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with children in Greater Dandenong were one-parent families – the second highest rate among Aboriginal residents in Victoria and more than twice the level of 27% among the general population. In the same year, 46% of local Aboriginal families with children had no parent in paid employment.

Early birth rates were relatively high among young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, with 7.7% of 15-24 year-old women in Greater Dandenong having borne a child, compared with 3% of non-Aboriginal women of that age.

**Education**

The 2018 Australian Early Development Index found that 65% of Victorian prep. pupils of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent were vulnerable in one or more domains of development[[2]](#footnote-2), compared with 20% of all prep. pupils across the State.

In 2016, 43% of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults aged 20 to 24 years, had left school early – over three times the corresponding level of 13% among non-Aboriginal young adults in Greater Dandenong. Of Aboriginal residents aged 25 to 44 years, 4% held a degree or higher qualification in 2016, compared with 33% of people that age across Greater Dandenong.

**Employment**

The 2016 Census recorded an unemployment rate of 22% among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents of Greater Dandenong, compared with 10% among the general population.

**Disability**

The 2016 Census revealed that the prevalence of severe or profound disability requiring daily assistance with self-care, communication or mobility among people aged 20 to 64 years, was 12.1% among Aboriginal residents – more than the corresponding rate of 7.1% among the general population.

**Geographic Distribution of Aboriginal Residents**



The accompanying map illustrates the distribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders across metropolitan Melbourne, recorded in the 2016 Census.

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**Trends in Social Conditions**

An examination of the findings of the 2006 and 2016 Censuses provides a glimpse of changes in social conditions among Aboriginal and Torre Strait Islanders in Greater Dandenong during that decade.



Per cent of 20-24 year-olds who had left school before completing year 11: Greater Dandenong, 2006 and 2016

The proportion of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who had left school before completing year 11 rose from 34% to 43%, in the decade to 2016.



Per cent of Aboriginal 15-24 year-old women with children: Greater Dandenong, 2006 and 2016

During the same period, the proportion of 15 to 24 year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who had one or more children fell from 32% to 7.7%.



Per cent of Aboriginal families with children that are one-parent families: Greater Dandenong, 2006 and 2016

The proportion of families with children that were headed by one parent rose slightly between 2006 and 2016, from 57% to 63%.

The percentage of homes that were owned or being purchased by their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander occupants declined from 35% to 33% during the decade to 2016.



Per cent of 20-64 year-old Aboriginal residents with a severe or profound disability: Greater Dandenong, 2006 and 2016

The prevalence of severe or profound disability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders rose from 7.1% of 20 to 64 year-olds in 2006, to 12.1% by 2016.

**Victorian and National Health and Social Outcomes**

According to a range of measures, the general health of Aboriginal people across Victoria and Australia is less favorable than for people of non-Aboriginal backgrounds. Aboriginal people have higher rates of hospital admission than members of the general population, and are twice as likely to report their health as 'fair' or 'poor' (32% compared with 16%), according to the findings of the Victorian Population Health Survey. They have a life expectancy of approximately 10 to 12 years less than non-Aboriginal residents[[3]](#footnote-3), mortality rates twice those of non-Aboriginal people in all age groups, an infant mortality rate nearly three (2.9) times higher than other Australians [[4]](#footnote-4) [[5]](#footnote-5), and a 2019 suicide rate over twice the overall national level[[6]](#footnote-6). In ‘Child Protection Australia 2014/15’, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports that Aboriginal children are seven times more likely to be the subject of substantiated reports of child abuse than non-Aboriginal children (43.6 per 1,000 children compared with 6.4 per 1,000 respectively). Nationally, it is reported that Aboriginal women are hospitalized for violent assaults at a rate thirty-five times higher than for non-Aboriginal women[[7]](#footnote-7) In relation to drug-related problems, the Pennington Institute determined that the rate of unintentional drug overdoses among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders was 19.2 per 100,000 population – over three times the corresponding rate among the general population.

Compared with than non-Aboriginal people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15+ were:

* 1.4 times more likely to have experienced family or personal stressors
* 2.7 times more likely to have experienced high/very high levels of psychological distress
* 3.3 times more likely to have diabetes/high sugar levels
* 3.7 times more likely to have kidney disease
* 1.2 times more likely to have heart or circulatory diseases
* 1.3 times more likely to have diseases of the ear or hearing problems
* 1.5 times as likely to be obese
* 2.6 times as likely as to be current daily smokers.
* 1.1 times more likely to have been sedentary or exercising at low intensity
* 0.6 as likely to have been exercising at high intensity
* subject to an infant mortality rate approximately twice the national level (6.2 infant deaths per 1,000 live births compared with 3.3 among the general population, in 2017)
* had a national suicide rate in 2019 of 27.1 per 100,000 persons – more than twice the rate among non-Aboriginal persons, of 12.9 per 100,000.
1. The municipality of Greater Dandenong and the adjoining municipalities of Casey, Frankston, Kingston, Knox and Monash. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. These were physical, emotional, social, language and communication. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Dudgeon, P. (2017). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and Mental Health. Australian Psychology Society. Accessed at psychology.org.au on 29 August 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2012). Australia's Health 2012 - Summary of Findings. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Edith Cowan University (2012). Overview of Australian Indigenous Health Status, 2011. Dept. Health and Ageing, Canberra [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2019). Causes of Death Australia, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Dudgeon, P. (2017). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and Mental Health. Australian Psychology Society. Accessed at psychology.org.au on 29 August 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)