

Demographic Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders

The following summary and maps provide an overview of key demographic data for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland.

Resident population

In 2006, Queensland had the second largest Indigenous population after New South Wales. More than half (61.0%) of Australia's Torres Strait Islander population and a quarter (25.7%) of the Aboriginal population lived in Queensland.

Based on the 2006 Census, it is estimated that the resident Indigenous population in Queensland at 30 June 2006 was 146,400 – or 3.6 per cent of all people in Queensland.

Indigenous status

According to the 2006 Census, the majority of Indigenous Queenslanders identified as Aboriginal (98,700 or 77.4%). A further 18,400 (14.4%) identified as being Torres Strait Islander and 10,500 (8.2%) as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Between the 2001 and 2006 Censuses, the number of people counted as being Indigenous increased by 15,000 or 13.3 per cent. The increase in the non-Indigenous population over the same time was 8.4 per cent. The growth in the Indigenous population over time reflects not only natural population increase, but also other factors including improvement in data collection methods and people newly identifying their Indigenous origin in the Census.

Regional distribution

Indigenous Queenslanders are dispersed across the state with an estimated 21.9 per cent living in major cities, 51.6 per cent living in regional areas and 26.5 per cent living in remote and very remote areas of the state. Around half of those living in remote and very remote areas (14.2% of all Indigenous residents) live in the discrete Indigenous communities (See Map 2).

Age and sex

The Queensland Indigenous population has a very young age structure, reflecting higher birth rates and shorter life

expectancy. In 2006, the median age of Indigenous persons was 20 years, considerably lower than the median age of 36 years for Queensland's non-Indigenous population.

According to the 2006 census, 38.9 per cent of Indigenous persons were aged less than 15 years, compared with 20.0 per cent of the non-Indigenous population. Only 3.0 per cent of the Indigenous population was aged 65 years and over, compared with 12.5 per cent of the non-Indigenous population.

Mobility

Map 1 shows the proportion of the population which is Indigenous by local government areas. There are relatively high proportions of Indigenous people living in the west and north of the state, as well as in the central south region, compared to non-Indigenous people.

Map 2 shows where the greatest numbers of Indigenous people live, irrespective of the non-Indigenous population. Most Indigenous people live in major urban and regional centres.

These maps give an indication of population at one point in time. They are unable to show the patterns of movement of Indigenous people from one area to another. Understanding mobility patterns is important when developing policy and programs. Research tells us that:

- the mobility of Indigenous people is subject to seasonal variations. During the wet season travelling is much more difficult in remote areas, and thus mobility is less frequent than in the dry season¹
- mobility is especially high amongst the Indigenous youth population² in the Cape York Peninsula. Indigenous people often move to and from urban and regional centres which may offer social and medical services that are unavailable in a rural or remote community.³

1 Smith, B. 2002. Decentralisation, population mobility and the CDEP scheme in central Cape York Peninsula, CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 238, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.

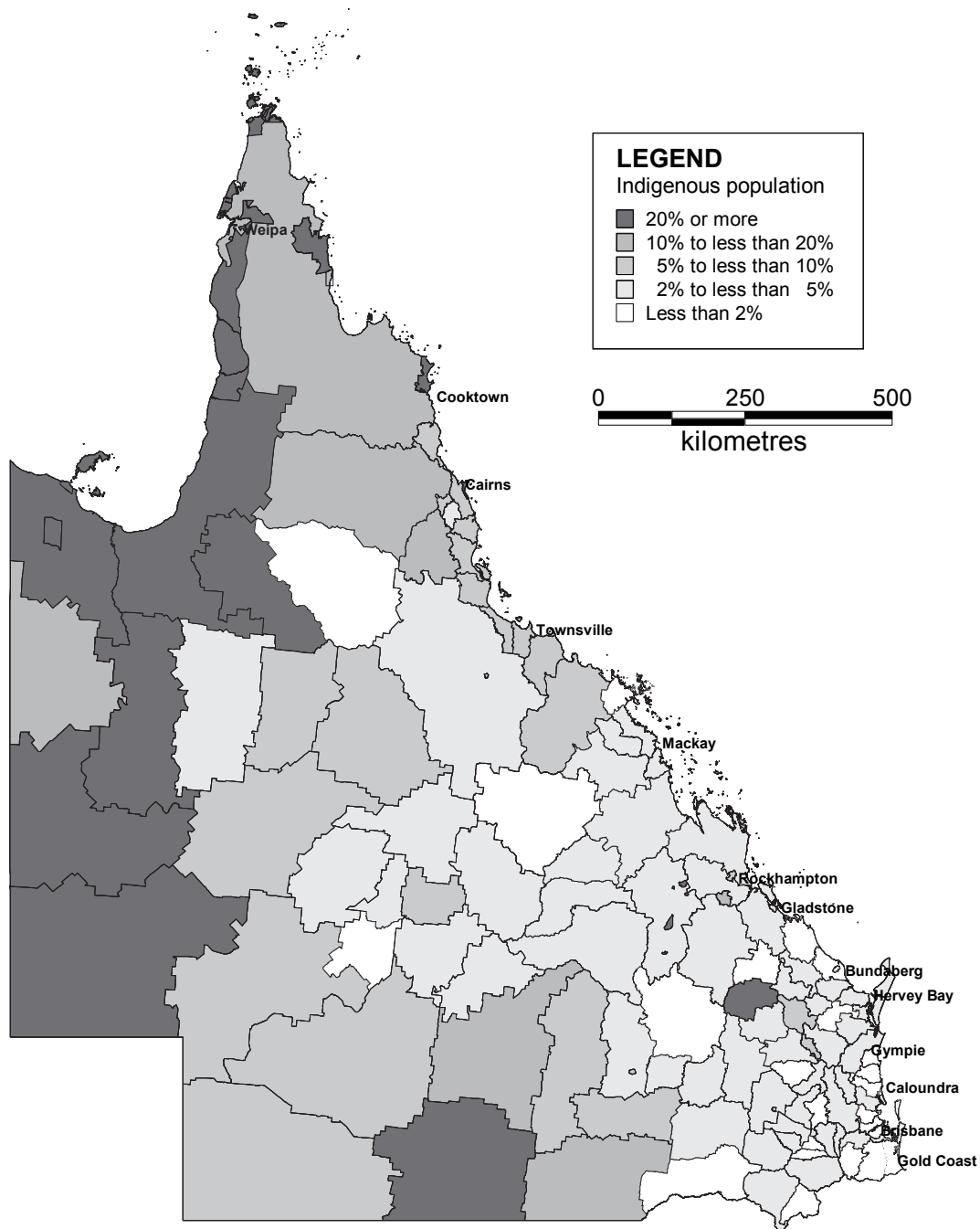
2 Smith, B. 2004. The social underpinnings of an 'outstation movement' in Cape York Peninsula, Australia, in J. Taylor and M. Bell (eds), Population mobility and Indigenous peoples in Australasia and North America, Routledge, London.

3 Taylor, J. 2006. 'Population and diversity: policy implications of emerging Indigenous demographic trends', CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 283, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.



Maps of Queensland

1. Indigenous People as a Proportion of the Population by Local Government Area – 2006



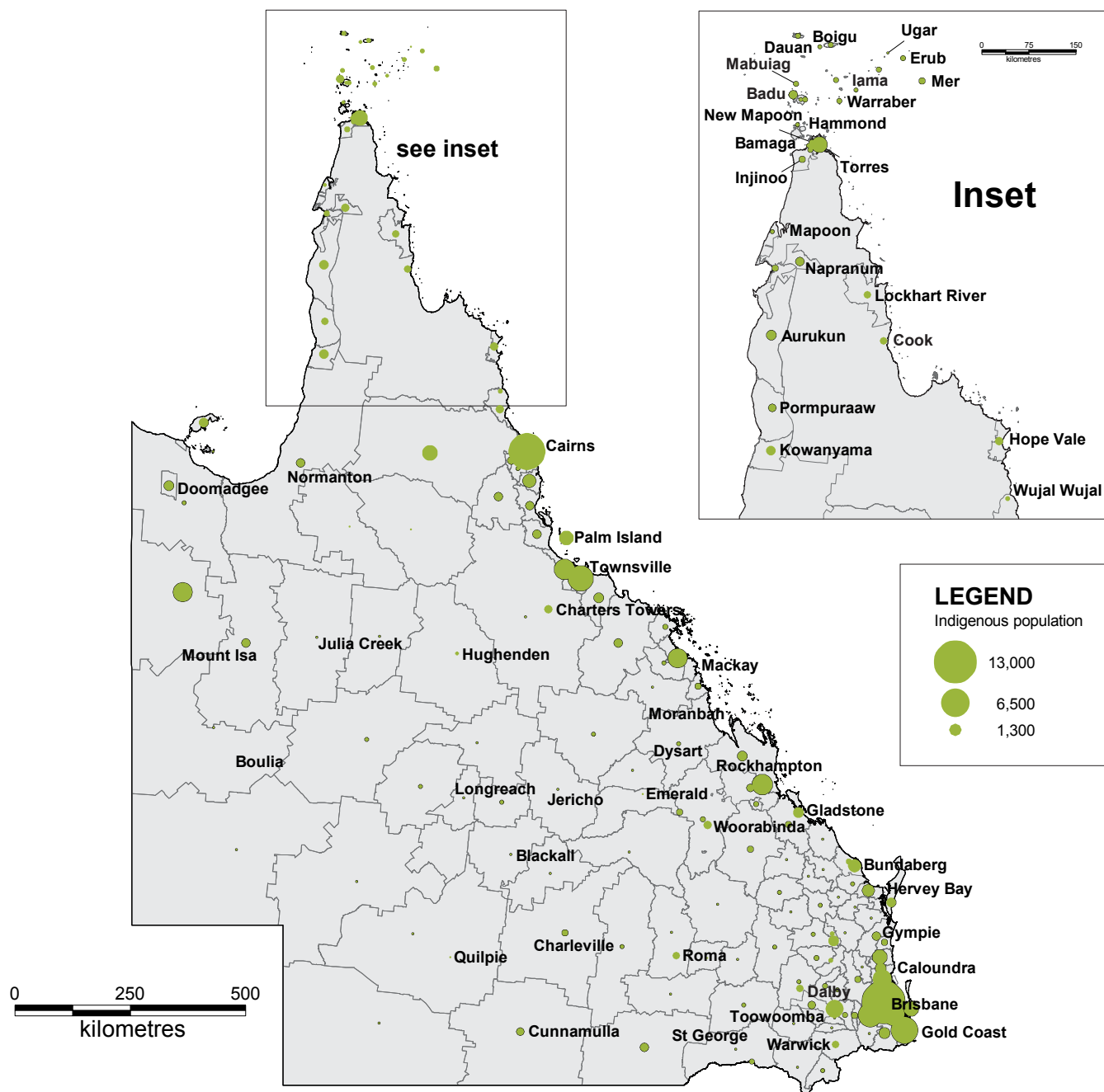
Note: Data are based on local government areas.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2006.

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2. Distribution of Indigenous Population – 2006

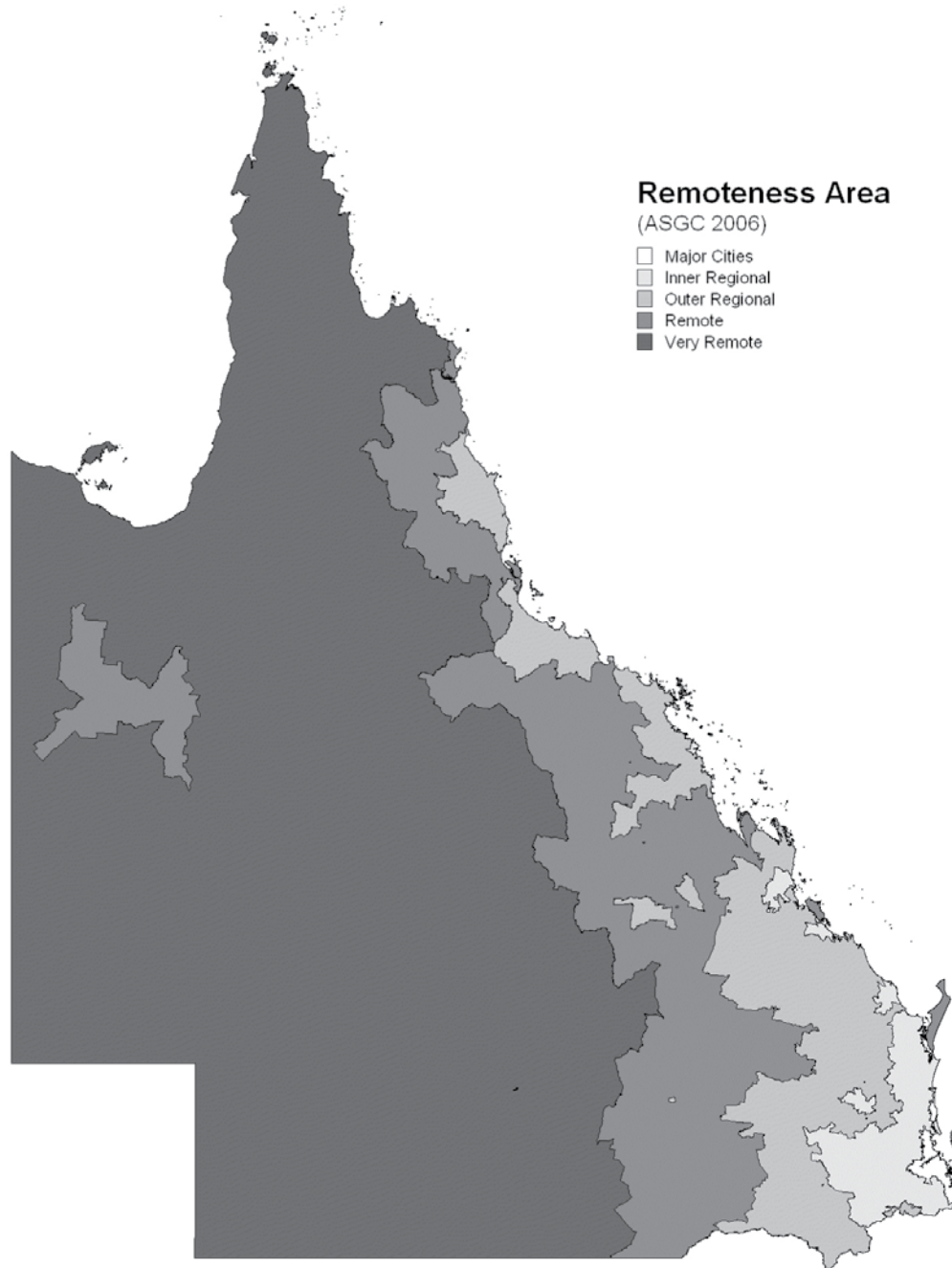


Note: Data are based on 2006 local government areas.
Graduated symbols are sized in direct proportion to the magnitude of the Indigenous population in each local government area.
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2006.



Maps of Queensland

3. Queensland by Remoteness of Area – 2006



Categories are based on the ABS Australian Standard Geographical Classification Remoteness Structure which uses the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA). ARIA measures the remoteness of a point based on the physical road distance to the nearest Urban Centre.

Source: Office of Economic and Statistical Research.