

# Dropping off the edge

mapping the  
distribution of  
disadvantage  
in Australia



Commissioned by  
**Jesuit Social  
Services and  
Catholic Social  
Services Australia**



# GENERAL PERSPECTIVE

Where an accumulation of problems makes a serious impact upon the wellbeing of residents of a disadvantaged area, locality-specific measures may be needed to supplement general social policy.

The influence of structural macroeconomic factors in creating concentrations of poverty is fully acknowledged.

# UNITS OF STUDY

**As small as available data permits.**

- **Postcodes:** Victoria (726), NSW (647), ACT (24)
- **Statistical Local Areas (SLAs):**  
Queensland (459), South Australia (114)
- **Local Government Areas (LGAs):**  
Tasmania (29), Western Australia (142)
- **Standard Reporting Regions:**  
Northern Territory (6)

# IDENTIFYING DISADVANTAGED AREAS

## SIMPLE METHOD:

- Number of times localities in the top bracket on indicators
- Profiles of top ranking areas

## STATISTICAL METHOD:

- Position on all of the indicators, weighted for contribution of each indicator to disadvantage.

# THE INDICATORS

## Rationale:

- **Early disadvantages tend to accumulate**
- **Direct manifestation of disadvantage (not speculative connection)**
- **Government departments, services hold valuable data**

# THE INDICATORS

- (1) SOCIAL DISTRESS**: low family income, rental stress, home purchase stress, lone person households.
- (2) HEALTH**: low birth-weight, childhood injuries, immunisation, disability / sickness support, life expectancy, psychiatric patients: hospital / community, suicide.
- (3) COMMUNITY SAFETY**: child maltreatment, criminal convictions, imprisonment, domestic violence.
- (4) ECONOMIC**: unskilled workers, unemployment, long-term unemployment, dependency ratio, low mean taxable income, limited computer use / internet access.
- (5) EDUCATION**: non-attendance at preschool, incomplete education, early school leaving, post-schooling qualifications.
- (6) COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**: a range of Victorian community indicators.

# CUMULATIVE DISADVANTAGE

**Identifying areas of marked disadvantage (simple method – number of times in top 5%).**

**Spatial concentration of disadvantage – general position: 1.5% of localities account for six to seven times their share of top ranking positions (somewhat less in WA).**

**Provide chance to compare two perspectives on most disadvantaged areas (later).**

# CUMULATIVE DISADVANTAGE

## Recurring features of highly disadvantaged areas:

- Limited computer use / internet access.
- Criminal convictions / imprisonment.
- Low family income.
- Unemployment / long-term unemployment.
- Disability / sickness support.
- Early school leaving / Year 12 incomplete / lack qualifications.
- Child mistreatment.

# CONNECTIONS BETWEEN INDICATORS

## Concept of correlation:

*When  $r$  is 0 we say there is 'no correlation' between two variables.*

*Where  $r$  is -1.00 there is a perfect negative correlation; that is, when  $X$  increases,  $Y$  decreases.*

*Where  $r$  is +1.00 there is a perfect positive correlation: when  $X$  increases,  $Y$  increases.*

# CONNECTIONS BETWEEN INDICATORS

MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS	Most correlating indicators*	Most disadvantaged areas
Low family income	✓	✓
Low work skills	✓	
Early school leaving	✓	✓
Post-schooling qualifications	✓	✓
Limited computer use	✓	✓
Limited internet access	✓	✓
Year 12 incomplete	✓	✓
Unemployment		✓
Long-term unemployment	✓	✓

\* Correlated with other indicators across 4 or more jurisdictions.

# **OVERALL LOCATIONAL VULNERABILITY – OUR MAIN APPROACH**

**A single score on disadvantage index: factor scores.**

**Purpose of bands – avoid sensationalising individual areas.**

# CONVERGENCE OF INDICATORS

Dominant features of localities with high overall disadvantage scores	Characteristics of places with high ranked positions on some indicators
Low income families	✓
Limited computer use	✓
Early school leaving	✓
Year 12 incomplete	✓
No internet access	✓
Disability / sickness support	✓
Long-term unemployment	✓
Criminal convictions	✓
Low work skills	--
Average mean taxable income	--
Dependency ratio	--
<i>Attributes identified by other analyses</i>	
Lack of post school qualifications	✓
Unemployment	✓
Prison admissions	✓
Confirmed child maltreatment	✓

# **CONVERGING EVIDENCE ACROSS NATION:**

**A MUNDANE BUT ENDURING STORY.**

**DISADVANTAGING CONSEQUENCES OF:**

- **LIMITED EDUCATION, LACK OF INFORMATION RETRIEVAL AND EXCHANGE SKILLS**
- **DEFICIENT LABOUR MARKET CREDENTIALS**

# **CONVERGING EVIDENCE ACROSS NATION: A MUNDANE BUT ENDURING STORY.**

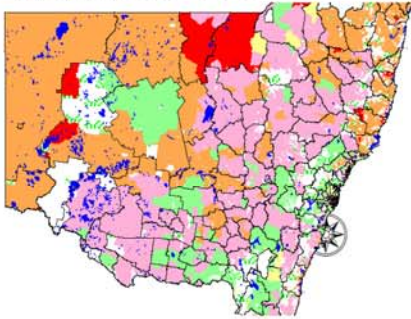
## **DISADVANTAGING CONSEQUENCES OF:**

- INDIFFERENT HEALTH AND DISABILITIES**
- LOW INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY INCOME**
- ENGAGEMENT IN CRIME**
- WHERE CONCENTRATION OF HIGH RANKINGS, CHILD MALTREATMENT**

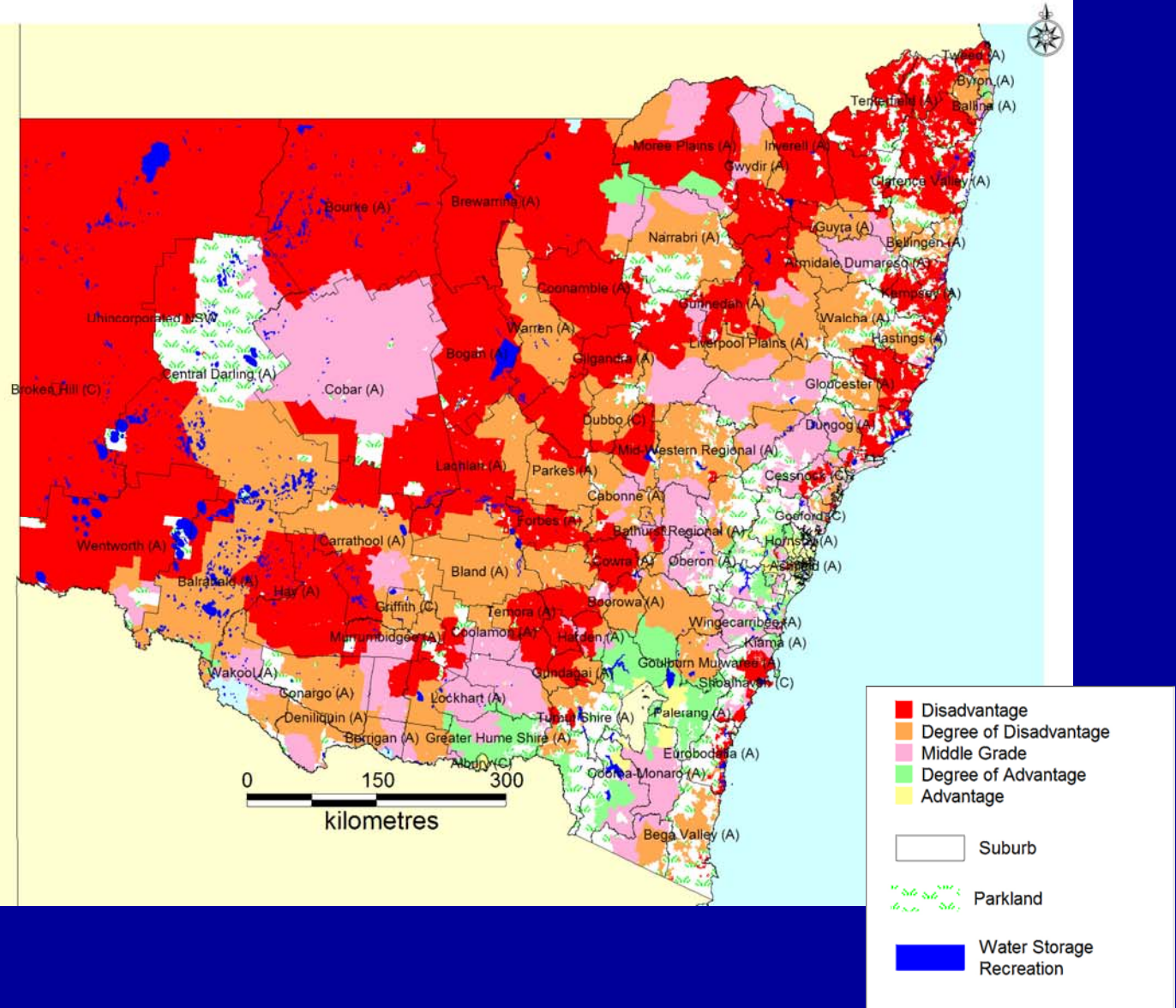
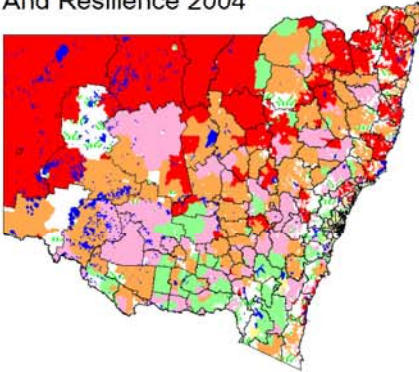
**PATTERNS OF  
DISADVANTAGE  
THROUGHOUT THE NATION**

# NSW

Unequal in Life 1999



Community Adversity  
And Resilience 2004



# DISADVANTAGE FACTOR RANKINGS: NSW

**BAND 1:** Bonalbo (2469), Brewarrina (2839), Kempsey (2440), Lightning Ridge (2834), Tingha (2369), Windale (2306)

**BAND 2:** Bowraville (2449), Casino (2470), Deepwater (2371), Menindee (2879), Urunga (2455), Wellington (2820)

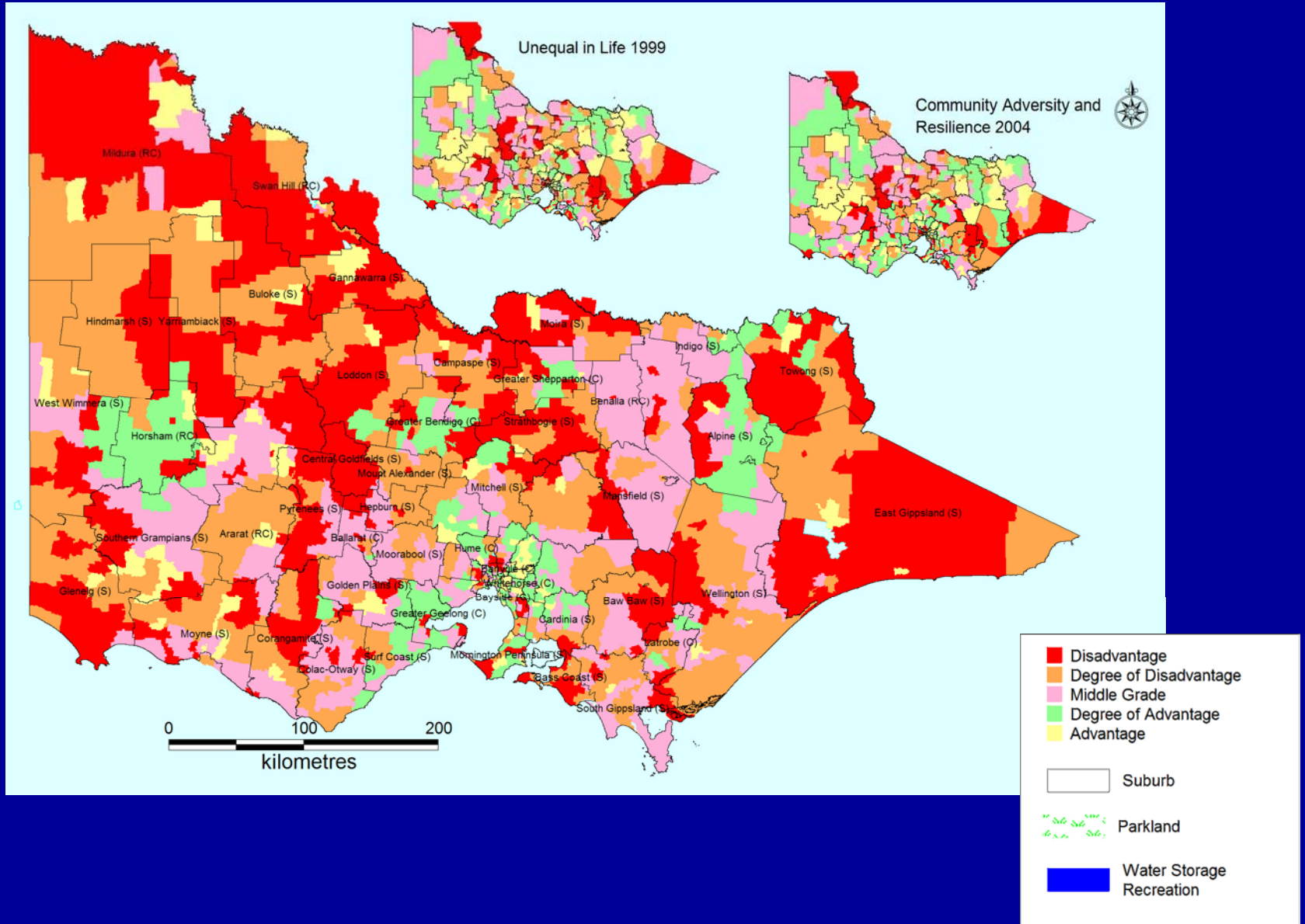
**BAND 3:** Armatree (2831), Coraki (2471), Harrington (2427), Nambucca Heads (2448), Tweed Heads (2485), Walgett (2832)

**BAND 4:** Forster (2428), Kurri Kurri (2327), Toukley (2263), Weston (2326), Woodenbong (2476), Wilcannia (2836)

**BAND 5:** Boggabilla (2409), Claymore (2559), Koorawatha (2807), Lake Cargelligo (2672), South West Rocks (2431), Tenterfield (2372)

**BAND 6:** Ashford (2361), Bourke (2840), Broken Hill (2880), Diamond Head (2443), Iluka (2466), Inverell (2360), Mt. Druitt (2770), Sawtell (2452), Taree (2430), Warrawong (2502)

# VICTORIA



# DISADVANTAGE FACTOR RANKINGS: VICTORIA

**BAND 1:** Broadmeadows (3047), Heathcote (3523), Korong Vale (3520), Maryborough (3465), Nyah West (3595), Rosebud West (3940),

**BAND 2:** Braybrook (3019), Corinella (3984), Doveton (3177), Inglewood (3517), Lake Tyers (3887), Wonthaggi (3995).

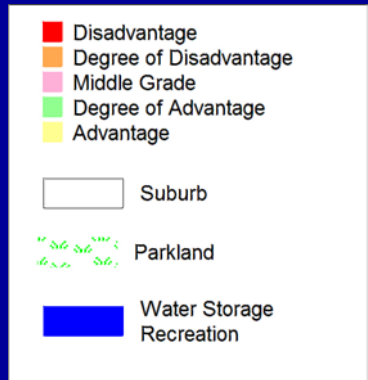
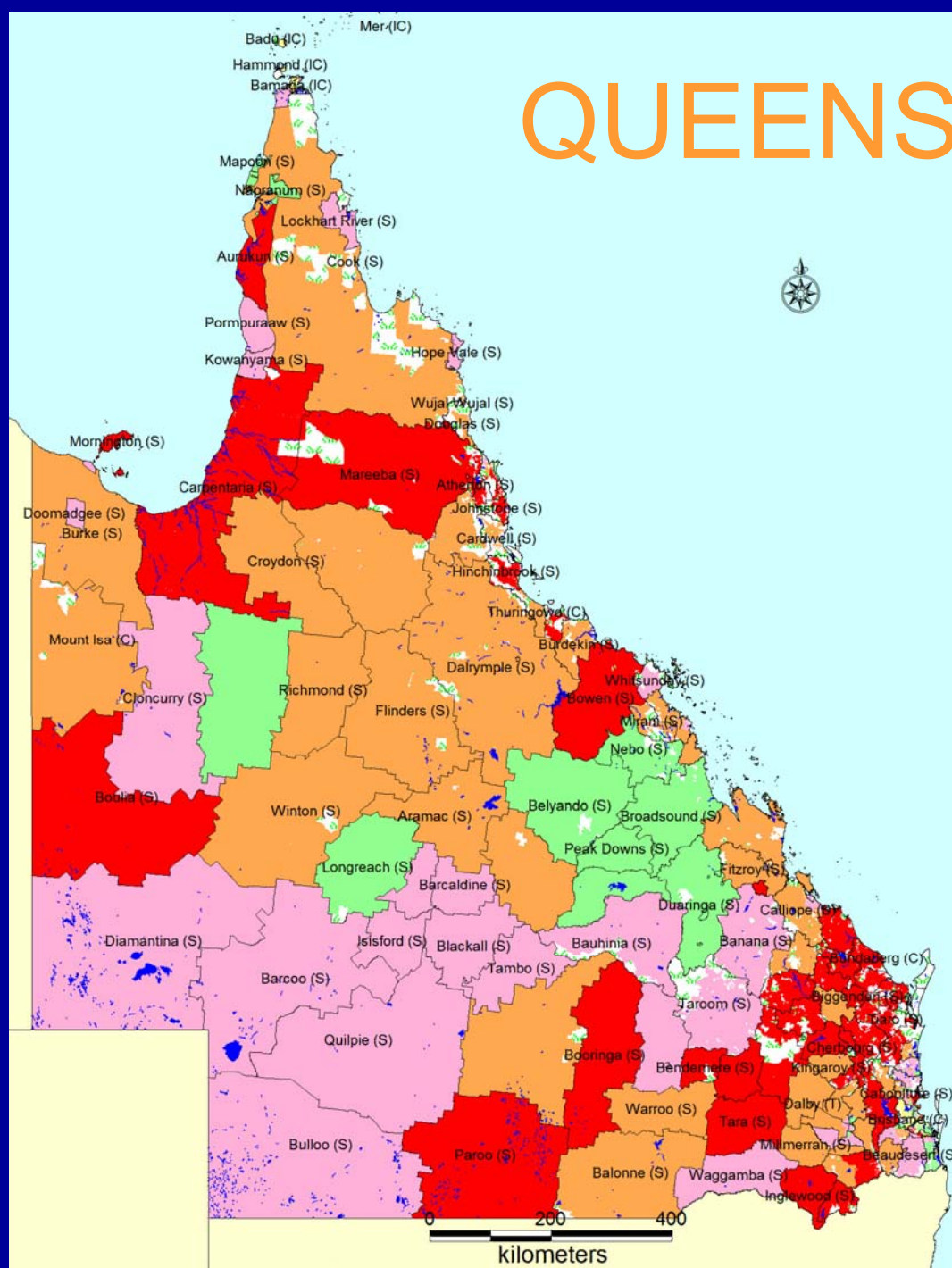
**BAND 3:** Colac (3250), Corio (3214), Dunolly (3472), Eaglehawk (3556), Eildon (3713), Hastings (3915),

**BAND 4:** Campbellfield (3061), Heidleberg West (3081), Korumburra (3950), Minyip (3392), Nyah (3594), Robinvale (3549).

**BAND 5:** Castlemaine (3450), Dimboola (3414), East Geelong (3219), Orbost (3888), Rosebud (3939), Toora (3962).

**BAND 6:** Avoca (3467), Beaufort (3373), Benalla (3672), Delacombe (3356), Fawkner (3060), Lake Boga (3584), Lakes Entrance (3909), Lismore (3324), Nagambie (3608), Stawell (3380).

# QUEENSLAND



# DISADVANTAGE FACTOR RANKINGS: QUEENSLAND

**BAND 1:** Biggenden (S), Hervey Bay (C) - Pt B, Kingston, Mount Morgan (S), Murgon (S), Woodridge.

**BAND 2:** Caboolture (S) - Central, Cooloola (S) - Gympie Only, Inala, Kolan (S), Mornington (S), Tiaro (S).

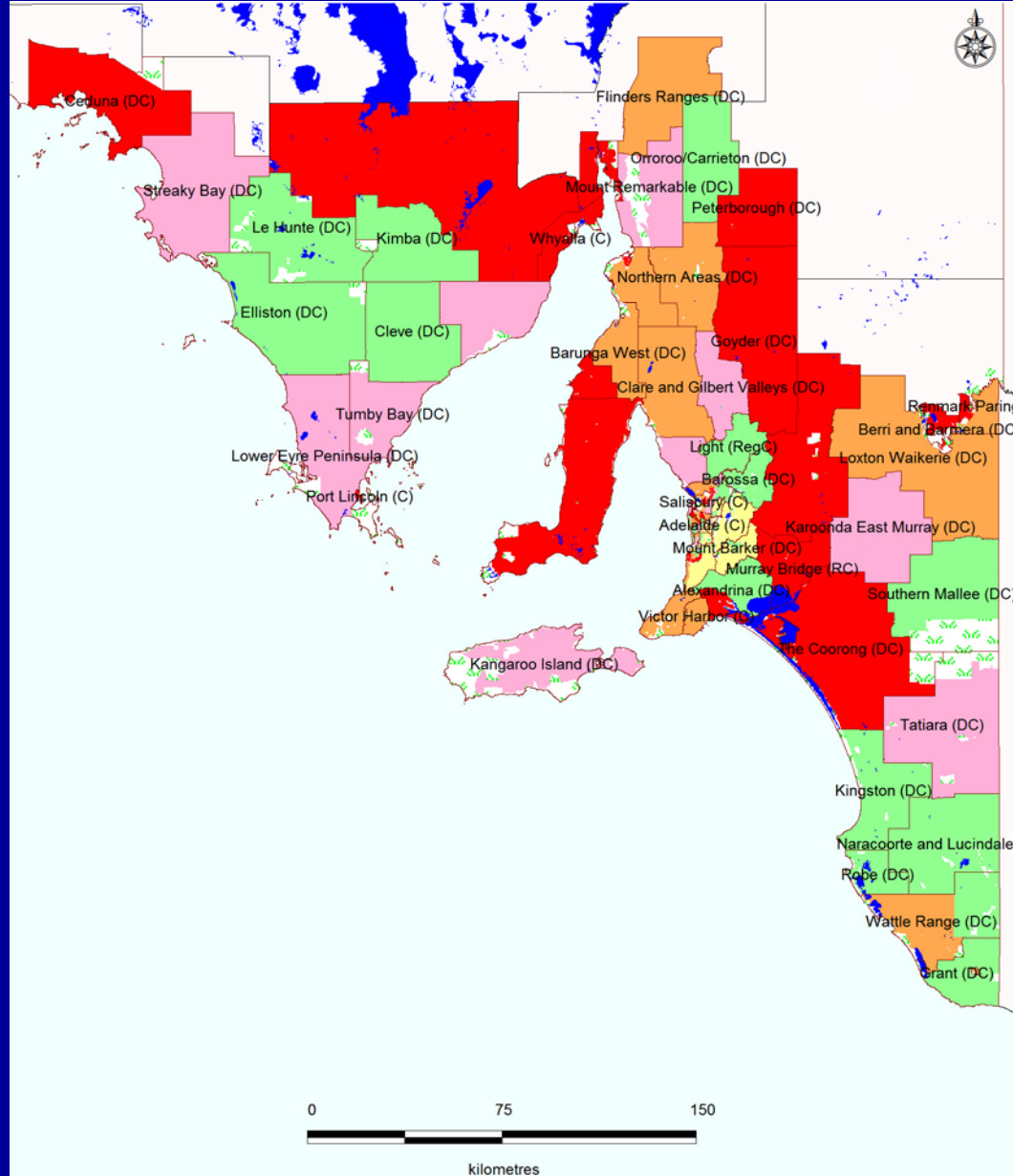
**BAND 3:** Bribie Island, Coolangatta, Hervey Bay (C) - Pt A, Marsden, Paroo (S), Redland (S) Bal.

**BAND 4:** Acacia Ridge, Bundaberg (C), Clontarf, Eagleby, Isis (S), Mareeba (S).

**BAND 5:** Burke (S), Carpentaria (S), Durack, Loganlea, Margate-Woody Point, Perry (S).

**BAND 6:** Atherton (S), Bilinga, Bowen (S), Burnett (S) - Pt A, Cairns (C) - Pt B, Cooloola (S) (Excl. Gympie), Deception Bay, Maryborough (C), Townsville (C) - Pt B, Waterford West.

# SOUTH AUSTRALIA



# DISADVANTAGE FACTOR RANKINGS: SOUTH AUSTRALIA

**BAND 1:** Coober Pedy (DC), Murray Bridge (RC), Onkaparinga (C) - North Coast, Peterborough (DC), Playford (C) - Elizabeth, Playford (C) - West Central.

**BAND 2:** Berri & Barmera (DC) - Barmera, Copper Coast (DC ), Mid Murray (DC), Port Adelaide Enfield (C) - Port, Port Augusta (C), Port Pirie C Dists (M) - City.

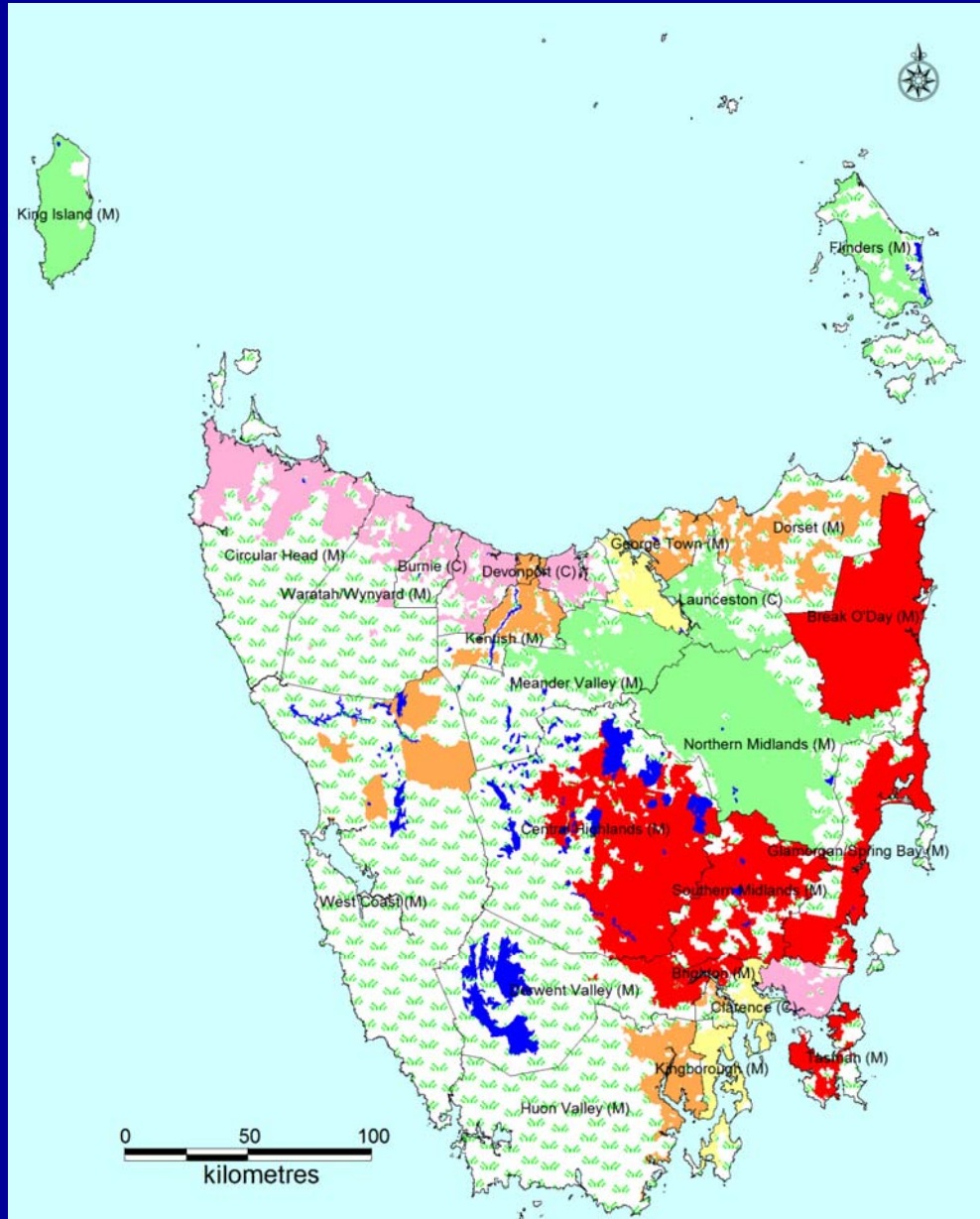
**BAND 3:** Ceduna (DC), Charles Sturt (C) - North-East, Port Adelaide Enfield (C) - Inner, Renmark Paringa (DC) - Renmark, Salisbury (C) - Central, Whyalla (C).

**BAND 4:** Alexandrina (DC) - Coastal, Berri & Barmera (DC) - Berri, Goyder (DC), Onkaparinga (C) - Hackham, Salisbury (C) - Inner North, Yorke Peninsula (DC) - South.

**BAND 5:** Charles Sturt (C) - Inner East, Flinders Ranges (DC), Port Lincoln (C), The Coorong (DC), Wakefield (DC), Yorke Peninsula (DC) - North.

**BAND 6:** Barunga West (DC), Charles Sturt (C ) - Inner West, Loxton Waikerie (DC) - East, Loxton Waikerie (DC) - West, Mount Gambier (C), Port Pirie C Dists (M) Bal.

# TASMANIA



# **DISADVANTAGE FACTOR RANKINGS: TASMANIA**

**Break O'Day**

**Brighton**

**Central Highlands**

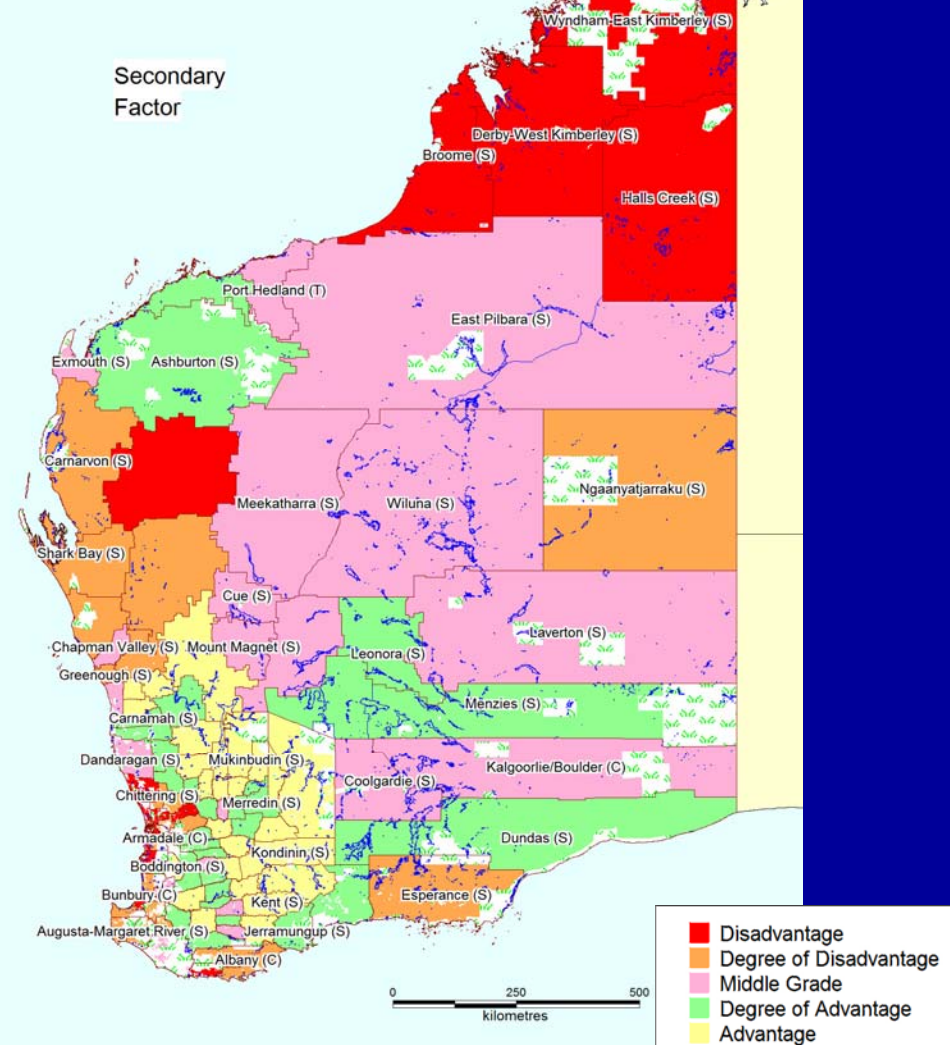
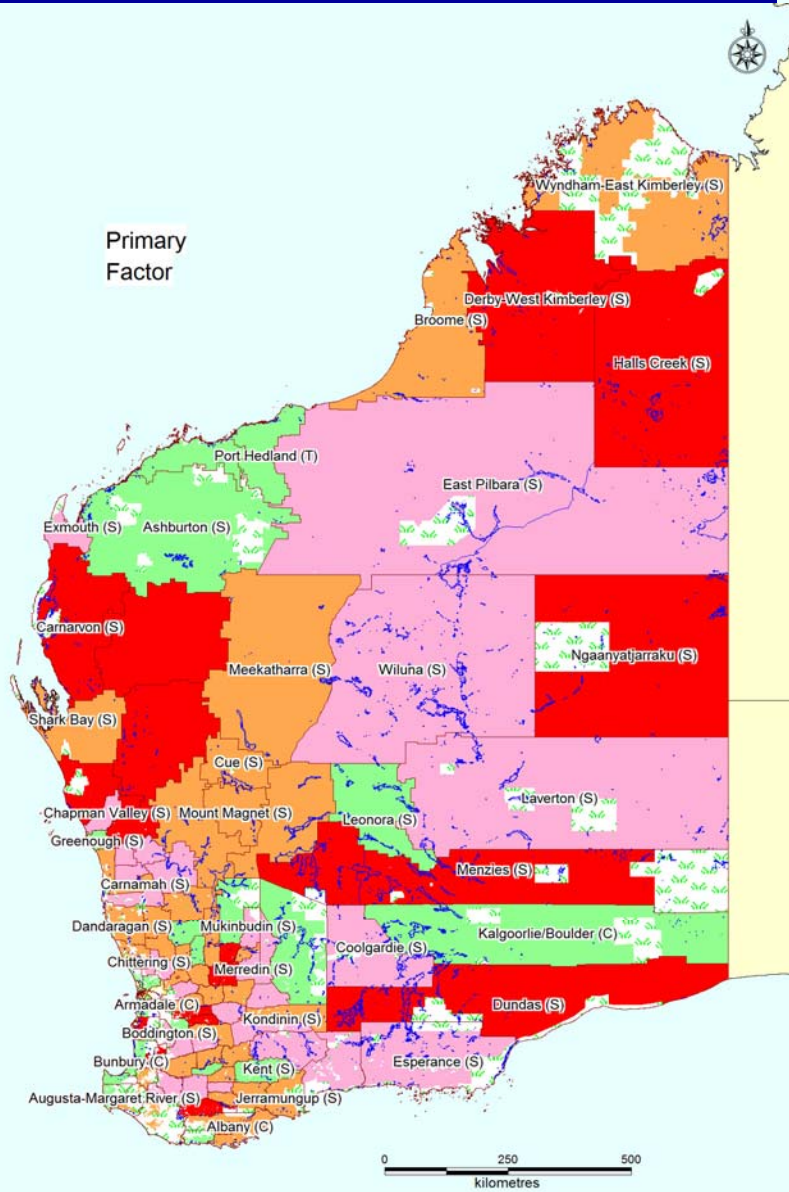
**Derwent Valley**

**Glamorgan / Spring Bay**

**Southern Midlands**

**Tasman**

# WESTERN AUSTRALIA



- Disadvantage
- Degree of Disadvantage
- Middle Grade
- Degree of Advantage
- Advantage
- Suburb
- Parkland
- Water Storage Recreation

# DISADVANTAGE FACTOR RANKINGS: WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## 1<sup>ST</sup> OR 2<sup>ND</sup> COMPONENT AND "TOP 14"

**Carnarvon (S)**  
**Denmark (S)**  
**Dundas (S)**  
**Halls Creek (S)**  
**Menzies (S)**  
**Murchison (S)**  
**Ngaanyatjarraku (S)**  
**Perth (C)**  
**Upper Gascoyne (S)**

## 1<sup>ST</sup> COMPONENT ONLY

**Cranbrook (S)**  
**Derby-West Kimberley(S)**  
**Kellerberrin(S)**  
**Mullewa (S)**  
**Tammin (S)**

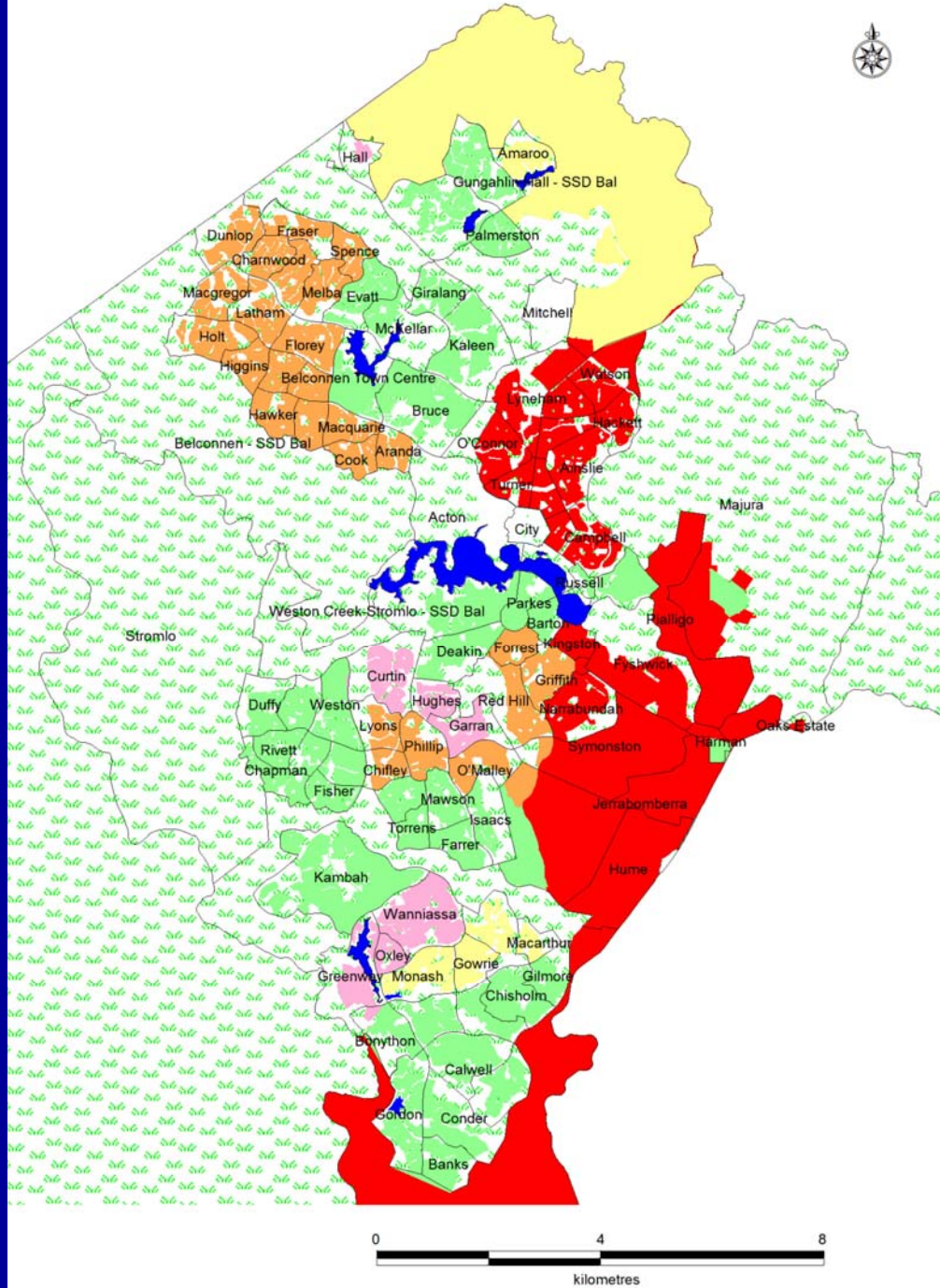
## 2<sup>ND</sup> COMPONENT ONLY

**Gingin (S)**  
**Kwinana (T)**  
**Mandurah (C)**  
**Northam (S)**  
**Wanneroo (C)**

## "TOP 14" ONLY

**Sandstone (S)**

# ACT



# DISADVANTAGE FACTOR RANKINGS: ACT

Dickson (2602)  
Fyshwick (2609)  
Kingston (2604)  
Oaks Estate (2620)  
Turner (2612)

Charnwood (2615)  
Hall (2618)  
Jamison (2614)  
Manuka (2603)  
Woden (2606)

Gungahlin (2912)  
Belconnen (2617)

# CONSISTENCY OF RATINGS

## THREE MAJOR PIECES OF EVIDENCE:

- 1) TOP 40 RANKINGS IN 2006 AND COMPARABLE LISTS IN 2004 AND 1999 VERY SIMILAR FOR NSW AND VICTORIA.
- 2) CORRELATIONS OF VICTORIAN AND NSW DISADVANTAGE FACTOR RANKINGS 2004 AND 2006 APPROXIMATELY 0.91.
- 3) CORRELATIONS OF FACTOR SCORES IN 1999 AND 2006 ALSO HIGH (0.75 FOR VICTORIA AND 0.80 FOR NSW).

# IMPACT OF SOCIAL COHESION

- **DOES LOCAL SOCIAL CLIMATE AFFECT COMMUNITY RESILIENCE?**
- **CAN THE STRENGTH OF LOCAL SOCIAL BONDS LESSEN THE IMPACT OF DAMAGING SOCIAL, HEALTH AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS ON COMMUNITY WELLBEING?**
- **KEY CONCEPT: SOCIAL COHESION (CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PEOPLE AND BETWEEN THEM AND THEIR COMMUNITY)**

# **SOCIAL COHESION**

## **DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:**

- **VOLUNTEERISM**
- **MEMBERSHIP OF LOCAL GROUPS**
- **GROUP ACTION TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY**
- **NEIGHBOURS HELP IN DIFFICULT TIMES**
- **FEEL SAFE WALKING IN NEIGHBOURHOOD**
- **AGREE PEOPLE CAN BE TRUSTED**
- **ATTENDANCE AT LOCAL COMMUNITY EVENT**
- **FEEL VALUED BY SOCIETY**

# SOCIAL COHESION

## SCORES FOR 495 VICTORIAN POSTCODES:

- **155** SHOWED **HIGH** SOCIAL COHESION
- **176** SHOWED **MEDIUM** SOCIAL COHESION
- **164** SHOWED **LOW** SOCIAL COHESION

**24** four pairs of harmful communal conditions and associated unwanted outcomes were studied across the **495** postcodes with social cohesion scores.

In every instance the degree of association (correlation) between the adverse conditions and unwanted outcomes was lower in the high cohesion localities than in the low cohesion ones.

In **19/24** instances the size of  $r$  in the middle category was between that of the low and high cohesion groups.

# EXAMPLES OF IMPACT OF SOCIAL COHESION

	495 postcode areas	LOW social cohesion N=164	HIGH social cohesion N=155
<b>CRIME</b>			
Unemployment/imprisonment	.44	.67	.17
<b>CHILD MALTREATMENT</b>			
Low family income/child mistreatment	.36	.59	.27
<b>NON-ATTENDANCE AT PRESCHOOL</b>			
Low family income/no preschool	.39	.56	.17
<b>UNEMPLOYMENT</b>			
Early school leaving/unemployment	.42	.67	.14
<b>PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS</b>			
Unemployment/psych. hosp. admissions	.30	.50	.12
<b>DOMESTIC VIOLENCE</b>			
Unemployment/domestic violence	.41	.44	.30
<b>LOW BIRTH-WEIGHT</b>			
Early school leaving/low birth-weight	.19	.46	.11

# RESOURCING DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

**Evidence supports the role of social cohesion in dampening the effects of harmful communal conditions.**

**But building cohesion needs to be accompanied by creation of other tangible opportunities in areas such as:**

- **Education and training/re-training**
- **Work and income generation**
- **Improving health**
- **Parenting skills**
- **Problem solving law enforcement**
- **Developing local leadership capacities.**

# RESOURCING DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

The results of a limited number of government supported studies that have been followed up show promising progress during the period of that support.

However, in highly disadvantaged areas programs must be sustained for a substantial period – say, 8 years or longer. Otherwise there is a demonstrated risk of a ‘boomerang effect’; that is: the reassertion of previous problems.

# NATIONAL PRIORITY AREAS

**Australia needs some good examples of sustained, effective intervention to strengthen highly disadvantaged communities.**

**The project recommends that the commonwealth undertake demonstration projects and nominates possible sites:**

**NSW:**

**Bowraville – Kempsey  
Windale**

**VICTORIA:**

**Braybrook  
Rosebud**

**QUEENSLAND:**

**Mt Morgan  
Woodridge**

**TASMANIA:**

**Break O'Day  
Southern Midlands**

**ACT:**

**Kingston (Narrabundah, Causeway)**