

In Western NSW, with an Aboriginal population of 9.2% - four times the state average, it is crucial that Aboriginal people can take ownership, and involve their community in the provision of supports and services for their community. The key issues in Western NSW were health, mental health, housing and young people.

Access and equity in health care is key in this region. Health funding and the health workforce – ensuring we develop the existing workforce, but also build it so that services can meet the needs of the region. Mental health units need to be expanded, but we also need to see other services in the community, and a plan to tackle the stigma around mental health. Mental health is a concern for young people and we need to see more social spaces and supports available so young people have somewhere to go.

“Transport impacts on people being able to work. People might have a car but cannot afford the registration and the upkeep costs to run the car legally.”

We also need to see more accessible transport and to remove the barriers to joining resources together that are already out there. Finally, we need affordable housing not just social housing. There are not enough affordable housing units in this region. We need to invest in affordable housing and have more people transition along the housing continuum.

Cost of living

- Latest figure show the average annual personal income in the region was \$42,911, which was nearly \$8,000 less than the state average
- In the year to July 2015 an average yearly electricity bill cost \$2,600, which is \$500 more than the equivalent in Sydney and Newcastle
- Latest median weekly rental figures for 2 bedroom dwellings range from \$200 in Bourke/Cobar, \$240 in Dubbo, to \$250 in Orange and Bathurst



- Latest figures show Local Government rate assessments in the region ranged from \$227 in Bourke, to \$731 in Mid-Western, \$783 in Bathurst, \$866 in Dubbo and \$1,057 in Orange, against a regional average of \$531

Children and young people

- More than half of the children in Brewarrina are developmentally vulnerable according to the Australian Early Development Census. This is the highest proportion of children in any LGA in NSW

“Early childhood education is just not affordable. We need our children to get the best start in life and currently that is flat out of reach for a lot of families.”

- Recent figures show 86 in every 1000 children were involved in risk of significant harm reports and 22 in 1000 were in out-of-home care
- Despite having some of the highest rates of vulnerable children, there are no Sustaining NSW Families nurse home-visiting sites in the Western NSW
- 10,141 children in the region living below the poverty line, with an average child poverty rate of over 17%. Further, Coonamble (26.2%), Warrumbungle (26.9%), Gilgandra (27.8%), Walgett (27.93%) and Brewarrina (31.15%) are among the regions with the 10 highest rates of child poverty in the state

- In 2014-15, 101 young people aged 15-24 were hospitalised due to intentional self-harm

Dental wait list

- 1578 children and 2971 adults are on the NSW public dental waiting list
- Only 47.7% of children age 5-6 years are free of dental caries
- On average, children age 5-6 years have 2.4 decayed, missing or filled teeth

Social Housing wait list

- The latest figures show there are 5,313 social housing units across the region, with 1,773 applicants still waiting for housing

“Affordable housing is a big concern, even in the private market. Dubbo has a 6 year waiting list for a general client.”

- In the 12 months to 30 June 2015 730 people were housed, with expected waiting times ranging from 2 years or more in Bourke, Orange, Parkes and Forbes, to over 5 years in Bathurst and many other areas of the region

“We are on the cusp of a crisis with the number of people on dialysis, and there is not the local health care to treat people or the transport options to get them there.”