



Fact Sheet: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' use of aged care services

How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use aged care services?

On a typical day in 2017, nearly four thousand older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessed Australian Government subsidised residential aged care or home care services. This number is higher than that observed in previous years (Figure 1).

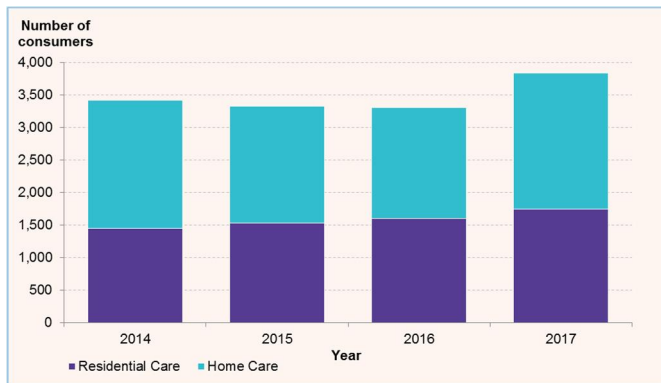


Figure 1: Numbers of aged care consumers identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, by care type, 30 June 2014 to 2017

The representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in aged care varies by care type. At 30 June 2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples represented 3 per cent of Australia's population, yet only 1 per cent of people in residential aged care identified as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are more highly represented in the Home Care Packages program, representing just over 4 per cent of consumers for that program.

In addition to the above programs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians can and do access care through home support services such as those provided through the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP). In 2016-17, 3 per cent of CHSP recipients identified as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian. Care is also available through flexible aged care programs such as the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program. Data development to support detailed reporting for this program is currently underway.

Before accessing aged care, an individual aged care assessment is undertaken to determine what sort of care best suits a person's needs. During 2015-16, 2,400 older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had a completed aged care assessment with an Aged Care Assessment Team. This represents 1.5 per cent of all aged care assessments undertaken for older Australians in that year.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in aged care services are younger than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face multiple health and social disadvantages. They are more likely to develop serious medical conditions earlier in life, and they have a lower life expectancy than their non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander counterparts. In recognition of this, the target population for aged care services encompasses all older people aged 65 years and over and also includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50-64 years.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are more likely to access aged care earlier in life than their non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander counterparts (Figures 2, 3). The average age of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in residential aged care at 30 June 2017 was 73 years, compared with 85 years for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

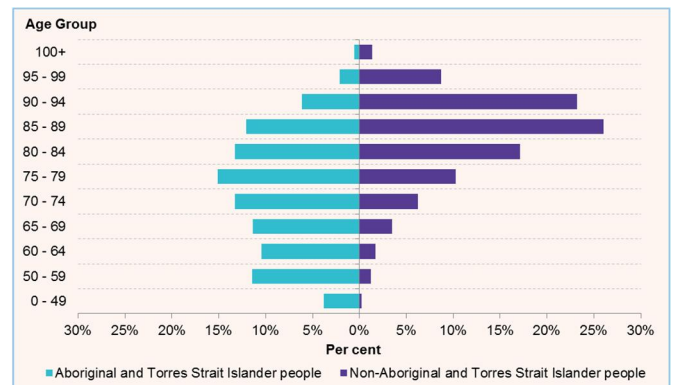


Figure 2: Permanent residents, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification and age group, 30 June 2017

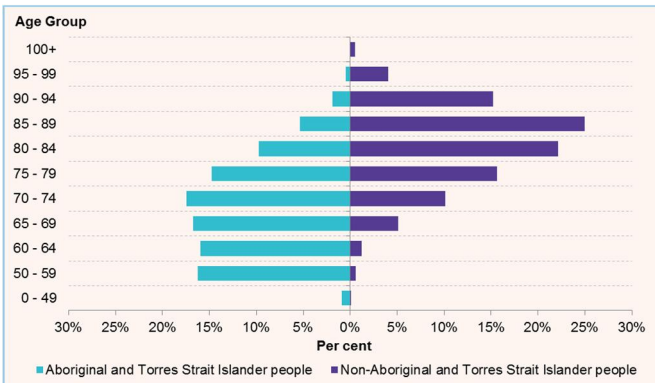


Figure 3: Home Care Package consumers, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification and age group, 30 June 2017

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in aged care are older than and outnumber Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Australia have a longer life expectancy than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, and so are more likely to need aged care and support. Accordingly, at 30 June 2017, six out of every ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people using residential aged care were women. Additionally, those women tended on average to be older than the men (Figure 4).

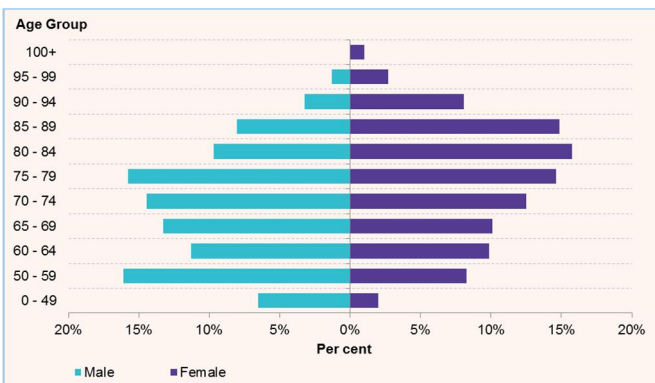


Figure 4: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in permanent residential care, by sex and age group, 30 June 2017

Nearly seven out of every ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a Home Care Package are women. In home care, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women alike tended to be younger than those in residential aged care, with the women in home care being, on average, slightly older than the men (Figure 5).

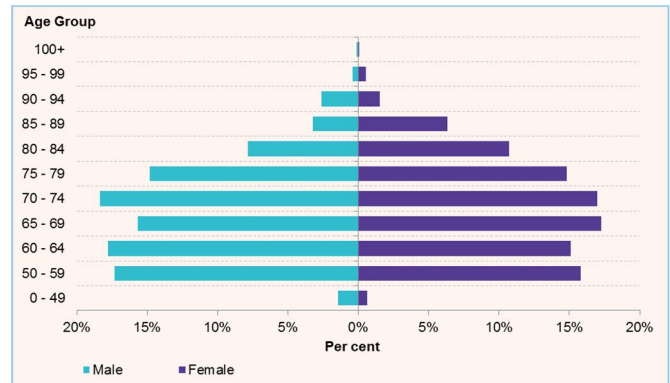


Figure 5: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in home care, by sex and age group, 30 June 2017

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to use aged care services in rural and remote areas of Australia

The majority of aged care services are located in metropolitan areas of Australia. Accordingly, the greatest numbers of consumers of residential aged care and home care packages are located in these areas. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are much more highly represented as consumers of care in the more remote areas of Australia (Figure 6), both for residential aged care but particularly in home care.

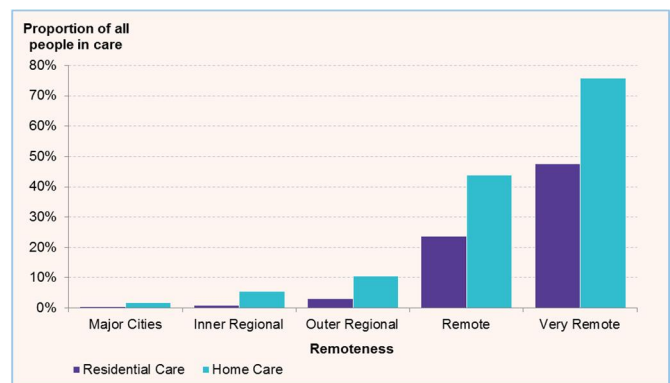


Figure 6: Representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in aged care, by care type and remoteness areas of Australia, 30 June 2017

This pattern is reflective of the distribution of the wider population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia. Accordingly, flexible models of care that are provided under the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program are located mainly in remote areas, in order to provide culturally appropriate aged care to older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people close to home.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in home care are more likely to have a Level 2 package than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander counterparts

As at 30 June 2017, the majority of Home Care Packages assigned to consumers are Level 2 packages¹. However, whereas slightly under two thirds (64 per cent) of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a Home Care Package have a Level 2 package, more than three quarters (77 per cent) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a Home Care Package have a Level 2 package (Figure 7).

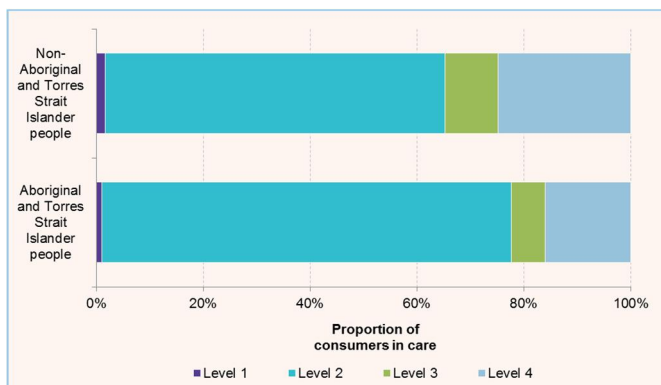


Figure 7: Consumers of Home Care Packages, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification and package level, 30 June 2017

As a result of this, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers of home care are comparatively less likely to hold either a Level 1 or, in particular, a Level 3 or 4 package than their non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander counterparts. This outcome is likely to be influenced to a degree by the tendency for higher representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in the client base in more remote areas of Australia: locations where there may be more barriers to the delivery of higher-level home care packages to consumers.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-focused aged care services

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can, and do, access care through all Australian Government funded aged care programs. However, certain aged

care service providers specialise in the provision of culturally appropriate and flexible models of care targeted at older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Here, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-focused aged care service is defined as a service for which 50 per cent or more of their clients identified as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australian. At 30 June 2017 there were 2,672 operational residential care facilities and 2,367 operational home care services across Australia. Of these, 24 residential facilities (1 per cent of all facilities) and 124 home care services (5 per cent of all services) had 50 per cent or more of their clients identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australians. These services are in addition to the 32 services funded by the Australian Government to deliver a flexible model of care under the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program. At 30 June 2017 these services had, between them, 820 operational flexible care places.

¹ For more information about the Home Care Packages program and the levels and distribution of packages available as at 30 June 2017, refer to the Home Care Packages Program Data Report 27 February – 30 June 2017, available on GEN at <https://gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/Resources/Home-care-packages-program-data-report-2017>.