



Work and Development Order (WDO) program

ANNUAL REPORT

17/18

Year in Review

4,784

Government, health and community workers attended community legal education sessions

Education

341

Community legal education events delivered by Legal Aid NSW about fines and WDOs. 281 delivered by the WDO service

6,031

Legal advice and minor assistance services on fines or WDO matters provided by Legal Aid NSW, Civil Law Division

Legal

17

WDO sponsor forums held across NSW attended by 264 participants

738

Participants joined 10 webinars

WDOs Approved and Debt Resolved

28,456

WDOs approved (up 23% on previous year)

WDO Sponsors

50%

Non-government organisations supported almost 50% of approved WDOs

44%

44% of WDOs supported by non-government organisations were female (overall average was 35%)

54%

of closed WDOs had a zero balance.

516

New sponsors approved (2,690 approved in total)

Records

- Over \$100m total debt cleared
- 100,000th WDO approved in May
- 2,999 WDOs approved in May

WDO Customers

26%

Applicants who were young people under 25

38%

Applicants who were in acute economic hardship

42

Applicants who were identified with a non-specific gender

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander People

- More likely to apply under acute economic hardship
- Less likely to apply under mental illness
- Less likely to do medical or mental health treatment

Culturally & Linguistically Diverse

Applicants were more likely to complete unpaid work as their WDO activity

65%

Applicants who were male

35%

Applicants who were female

21%

Applicants who were ATSI

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About this report



This Work and Development Order (WDO) annual report provides an overview of the WDO scheme for interested parties.

The WDO scheme was implemented as a trial in 2009 and made permanent in 2011 after a positive evaluation. It is an example of co-design and collaboration between Government, community and private sectors to deliver real community benefit to the people of NSW.

Under the WDO scheme, disadvantaged people who have accumulated fines can clear their debts by undertaking activities which benefit them and the community. The scheme is limited to people who have serious medical, mental health or addiction problems; who have a cognitive impairment or intellectual disability; who are homeless; or who are in serious financial hardship.

WDOs are supervised by sponsors in the community, including government agencies; non-government organisations (such as charities); or health practitioners (doctors, psychologists, nurses).

The activities that can be included are very broad and are intended to benefit both the participant and the community. These include: unpaid work; education, vocational or life skills courses; financial and other types of counselling (including case management); medical or mental health treatment; drug or alcohol treatment; or mentoring (if the person is under 25). A WDO can reduce fines debt by up to \$1,000 per month.

This annual report covers the WDO scheme as at 30 June 2018 with particular focus on the 2017/18 financial year.

Departments and statutory bodies involved with the WDO scheme may be required to submit annual reports under the *Annual Reports (Departments) Act 1985* or *Annual Reports (Statutory Bodies) Act 1984*. Those departments and statutory bodies are defined in the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983*.

This report is provided for information only and does not meet or replace any other requirement to produce or submit an annual report.

The annual reports of the key departments and the statutory body responsible for overseeing governance of the WDO scheme can be viewed at:

Department of Justice

www.justice.nsw.gov.au

Department of Finance, Service and Innovation

www.finance.nsw.gov.au

Legal Aid NSW

www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au

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Message from the WDO Governance Group



Welcome to the second edition of the WDO annual report. We continue to implement improvement measures across the scheme and this resulted in a number of positive outcomes. The report highlights our achievements in the 2017/18 financial year, and I am pleased to share these with you.

WDO sponsor growth

The scheme has seen an increase in the numbers of health practitioners approved as sponsors, growing by 64% compared to the previous financial year. This is a welcomed growth to the scheme and to clients, especially those needing assistance in the psychiatric, drug and alcohol and counselling spaces.

There have been continued efforts to recruit more sponsors from government agencies across NSW. We will continue this work in 2018/2019.

As of May 2017, for-profit organisations were able to be approved as WDO sponsors. A total of 15 for-profit organisations have been approved as at June 2018. This is a boost to sponsors numbers and ensures more participation, access and better outcomes for WDO clients.

Training and education

In terms of training, continued efforts of Legal Aid NSW and Revenue NSW have seen an increase in the number of legal education workshops and webinars. In 2017/18, total of 296 workshops on WDO and fines had been delivered across NSW.

WDO audit

The Department of Justice has led an independent compliance audit of approved organisations and health practitioners (sponsors) participating in the WDO scheme. The purpose of the audit was to assist the WDO Governance Group in maintaining the integrity of the WDO scheme, by confirming that approved sponsors are operating in accordance with their sponsor requirements.

WDO sponsors were advised of the audit and those selected for audit were individually notified in May 2018. I would like to thank the WDO sponsors for their participation in the audit.

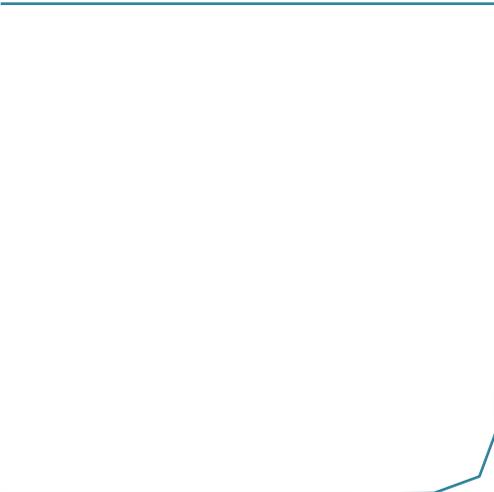
The audit is in the final stages of completion and I expect the final audit report to be issued to the WDO Governance Group sometime this year.

The audit report will also include improvement opportunities on how WDO processes can be improved to better support WDO sponsors in complying with their obligations under the WDO Guidelines.

Self-service portal improvement

The self-service portal is an important tool that supports sponsors to support clients. The portal allows:

- Online applications for WDOs on behalf of clients
- Variation of existing WDOs for clients
- The ability to record the number of hours in which a client participates in a WDO activity.



Further improvements to the WDO self-service portal will be made this financial year to help WDO sponsors comply with their obligations under the WDO Guidelines. We will continue to seek sponsors' feedback in relation to further enhancements.

It has been another year of strong commitment from sponsors, to assist and support disadvantaged members of our community. Sponsors are a crucial part of the WDO scheme, and the Governance Group appreciates their continuous support of the scheme.

Kathrina Lo
Deputy Secretary, Department of Justice
On behalf of the WDO Governance Group

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Corporate governance and support

In this section of the report, we have provided information about how the Work and Development Order (WDO) scheme is governed and the role that the scheme partners play to support it. Scheme partners include the Department of Justice, Revenue NSW and Legal Aid NSW.

About the WDO Governance Group

The WDO Governance Group oversees the WDO scheme to make sure it is administered responsibly and in line with Government and community expectations.

It is made up of representatives from the Department of Justice, Revenue NSW and Legal Aid NSW. The Group meets bi-monthly and the meetings are chaired by the Department of Justice.

The WDO Governance Group is responsible for:

- monitoring scheme performance against its objectives
- anticipating and responding to issues affecting WDO sponsors and clients
- interpreting the WDO Guidelines and recommending changes to the NSW Attorney General as required
- adjudicating and acting on instances where possible breaches of the Guidelines are brought to its attention, or where special consideration (as defined by the Guidelines) may be appropriate
- adopting planning, probity, due diligence and other practices designed to ensure the longevity and integrity of the WDO scheme by focusing efforts on scalability, risk mitigation and inclusive engagement with all key stakeholders and participants.

In addition to its regular bi-monthly meetings, the WDO Governance Group also engages in a planning day at the start of each financial year.

Focus for 2017/18 and beyond

The WDO Governance Group will meet shortly to plan how it will support the WDO scheme in the next financial year and beyond. Some key focuses will include:

- Implementing recommendations from the recent audit of WDO sponsors and establishing a streamlined and regular system of audit that will be easier for WDO sponsors in the future.
- Reviewing the WDO Guidelines and recommending changes to the Attorney General to address important issues raised by WDO sponsors.
- Expanding on the WDO sponsor forums to provide better opportunities for WDO sponsors to have their say about scheme design.
- Identifying service gaps in the WDO scheme and working towards our goal of making sure every eligible person across NSW who is in need of help can access a WDO.
- Make improvements to the WDO self-service portal to make it easier for sponsors to support the scheme.

Revenue NSW WDO hotline

The WDO Hotline is a service provided by Revenue NSW to support WDO sponsors and customers. Customers call the hotline to find out about WDOs and for help finding a sponsor. WDO sponsors call the hotline to enquire about signing up, to clarify the WDO Guidelines and for help with the WDO self-service portal.

The WDO Hotline is comprised of a small team of specialist staff who are passionate about the scheme. WDO sponsors often give positive feedback about the personalised service provided on the WDO Hotline. However, it may surprise you to know how busy the WDO Hotline is.

In 2017/18, Revenue NSW answered **38,019** calls on the WDO Hotline, an average of **166** calls per day.

The same team also manages the Advocacy Hotline, which is a priority service for advocates, who are assisting customers in hardship to manage their fines. The team also answered **7,405** calls on the Advocacy Hotline in 2017/18.

Revenue NSW also has two Aboriginal Customer Advisory Officers who provide face-to-face outreach services in communities.

In 2017/18, Revenue NSW provided outreach services at 178 community days across NSW. Those services helped:

- 512 customers to go on a low-rate payment plan to manage a combined debt of \$2.18m, and
- 317 customers to restore their licence, registration or access to services with the Roads and Maritime Services.

Legal Aid NSW WDO service

The WDO Service at Legal Aid NSW was established in 2012. Staff in six locations across NSW support the implementation and expansion of the WDO scheme in areas of high fines debt and social disadvantage.

The WDO Service recruits and trains sponsors, delivers an extensive community legal education program and facilitates WDO placements for vulnerable clients.

Lawyers also provide fines advice and assistance services at fines clinics, outreach events and by phone.

Highlights in 2017/18 include:

- Expanded WDO webinar series, including new masterclasses, in response to sponsor growth and demand. Ten webinars were delivered throughout the year reaching 738 participants;
- Sponsor forums delivered in 17 communities across NSW including regional and remote areas;
- WDO training at FACS Leaving and Aftercare Forums;
- In service training for Revenue NSW staff on the role of Legal Aid NSW and referral pathways;
- Sponsor Operations Taskgroup established to streamline and coordinate sponsor support;
- New suite of WDO publications;
- Cross-border initiatives to support the introduction of similar schemes in Victoria and Queensland;
- Targeted engagement with regional and remote Aboriginal communities in partnership with the Legal Aid NSW Civil Law Service for Aboriginal Communities;
- Joint outreach with the new Legal Aid NSW Driver Disqualification Reform team; and
- Ongoing contribution to fines system reform informed by the lived experience of our clients.

Legal Aid NSW WDO service (continued)

Legal Aid’s Civil Law Division’s top category of legal advice and assistance was fines and WDO work. The Division provided more than 9,400 instances of fines and WDO assistance during the year.

This year, the WDO service introduced a survey tool to capture additional outcomes and referral data. The survey ran from 1 October 2017 to 30 June 2018. Snapshot results include:

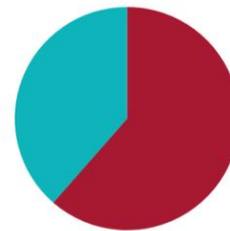
Referrals to the WDO Service



Sponsor Assistance



Clients of the WDO Service



87.84%
of organisations we assisted became approved WDO sponsors

74.07%
of individual clients had fines at the enforcement stage

73.19%
of write off applications resulted in a full waiver

72.09%
of garnishee refund applications resulted in a full refund

35%
of internal review applications were successful*

81.43%
of licence sanctions were lifted

77.78%
of RMS business restrictions were lifted

82.76%
of property seizure orders were lifted

*compared to 4% overall

Department of Justice

The Department of Justice plays a key role in the governance of the WDO scheme by:

- Chairing the WDO Governance Group
- Coordinating updates to the WDO Guidelines
- Auditing WDO sponsors to protect the integrity of the WDO scheme
- Overseeing evaluation of the WDO scheme
- Approving WDO sponsors

The WDO Governance Group will work on sharing information about these important activities with WDO sponsors soon.

Get in touch!

We really want to hear from you. Any ideas, compliments, complaints, good news stories, or other feedback can be shared with the WDO Governance Group by completing a feedback form:

www.revenue.nsw.gov.au/fines/eo/online

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WDO sponsor growth

All data in this section of the report is based on data as at 30 June 2018. Sponsors who were previously approved but have since withdrawn are not included in the reported figures.

WDO sponsors continued to join the scheme in 2017/18 with 516 new sponsors approved. In total, there are 2,690 approved sponsors. Table 4.1 shows the number of approved sponsors by their type.

Table 4.1 – Approved WDO sponsors by type

WDO sponsor type	Sponsors approved in 2017/18	Approved sponsors - total
Health practitioner	330	1,241
Non-government organisation	141	1,108
Government organisation	30	326
For-profit organisation	15	15
Grand Total	516	2,690

Figure 4.1 compares the types of sponsors approved in 2017/18 with the types of sponsors approved since the scheme commenced. A higher percentage of health practitioners were approved in 2017/18 compared with previous years.

Figure 4.1 – Comparison of sponsor approvals in 2017/18 with total sponsor approvals

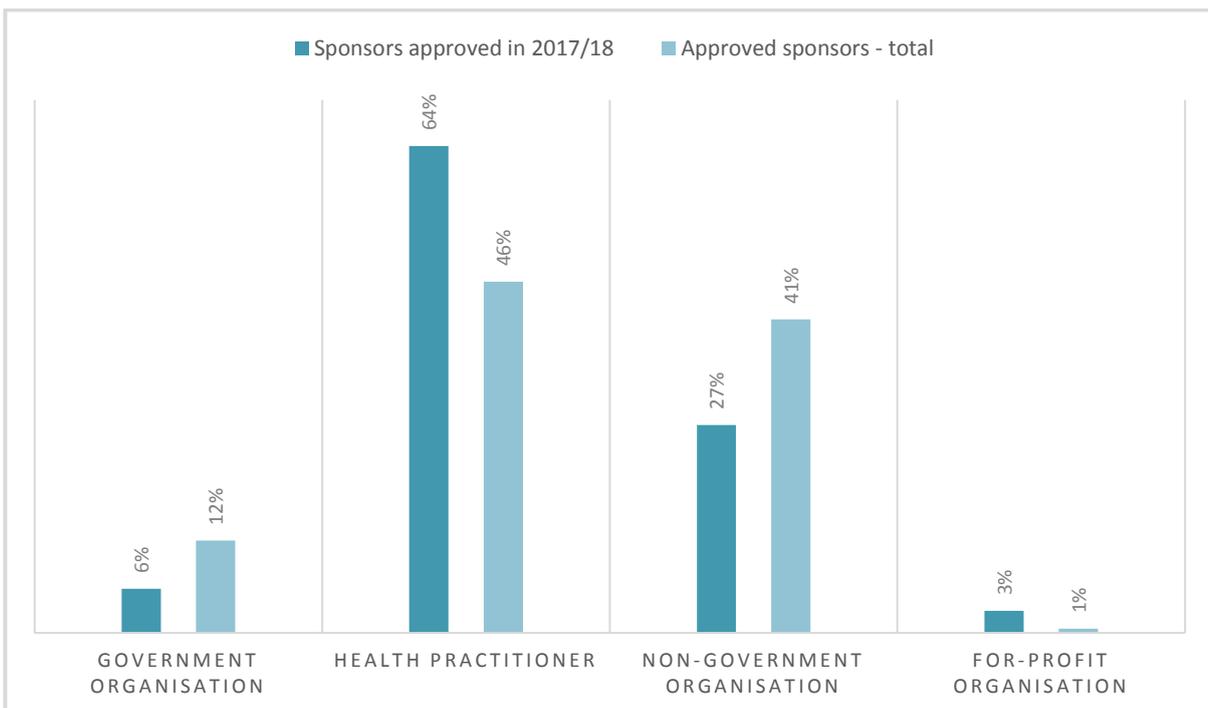


Table 4.2 shows the number of approved WDO sponsors and sponsors approved in 2017/18 by NSW statistical division.

Table 4.2 – Approved WDO sponsors by NSW statistical division

NSW Statistical Division	Sponsors approved in 2017/18	Approved sponsors - total
Capital Region	9	118
Central Coast	19	114
Central West	12	82
Coffs Harbour - Grafton	14	97
Far West and Orana	9	64
Hunter Valley exc Newcastle	7	51
Illawarra	35	197
Mid North Coast	14	92
Murray	4	65
New England and North West	12	92
Newcastle and Lake Macquarie	21	104
Richmond - Tweed	21	135
Riverina	1	22
Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven	8	67
Sydney - Baulkham Hills and Hawkesbury	18	65
Sydney - Blacktown	13	104
Sydney - City and Inner South	63	263
Sydney - Eastern Suburbs	16	72
Sydney - Inner South West	33	141
Sydney - Inner West	24	85
Sydney - North Sydney and Hornsby	26	98
Sydney - Northern Beaches	13	49
Sydney - Outer South West	5	27
Sydney - Outer West and Blue Mountains	12	56
Sydney - Parramatta	39	161
Sydney - Ryde	1	8
Sydney - South West	20	69
Sydney - Sutherland	10	47
Other	1	11
Grand Total	480	2,556

Figure 4.2 shows the geographic dispersion of all approved WDO sponsors in NSW. The percentage of sponsors in the Sydney area has increased from 46% to 49% since the last WDO Annual Report.

Note, statistical division is determined by the WDO sponsor’s location postcode. However, we acknowledge that many sponsors support WDOs for customers outside of their own area.

Figure 4.2 – Geographic dispersion of all approved WDO sponsors in NSW

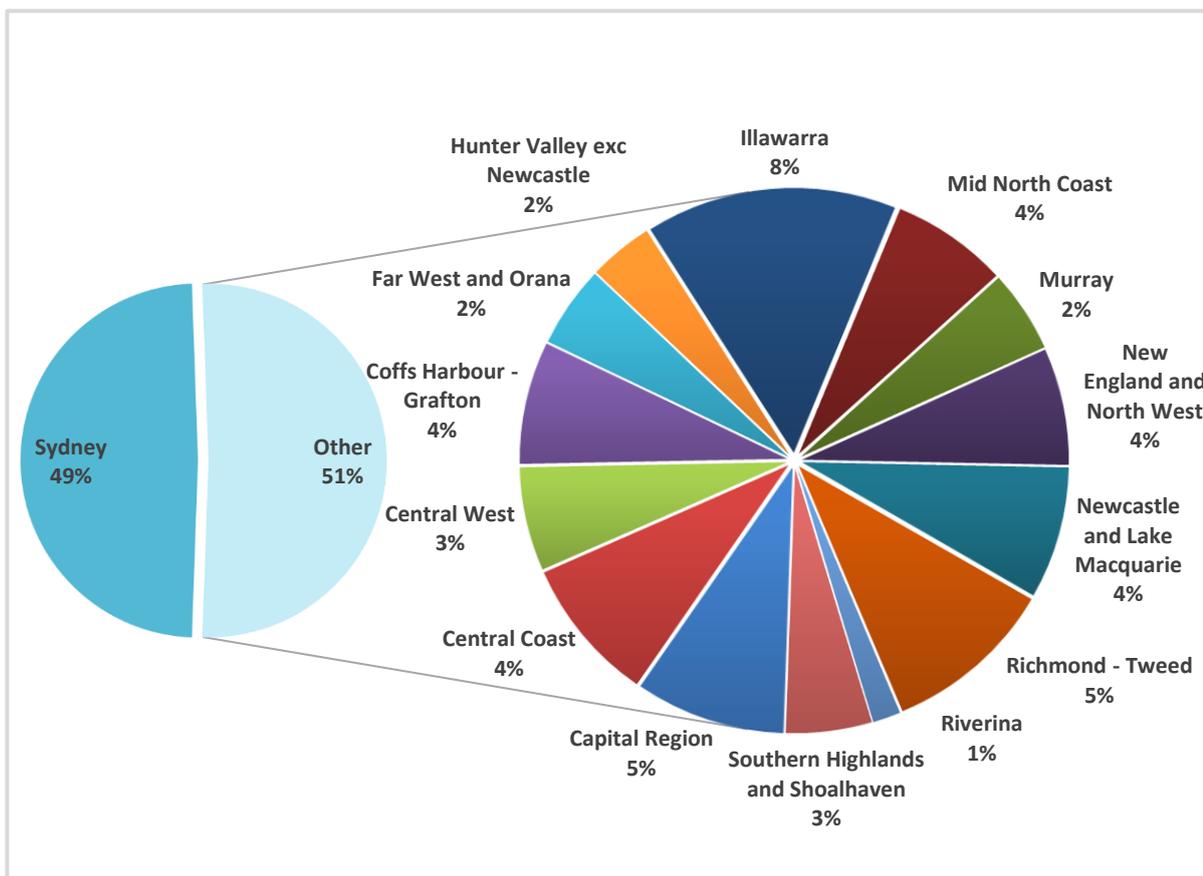
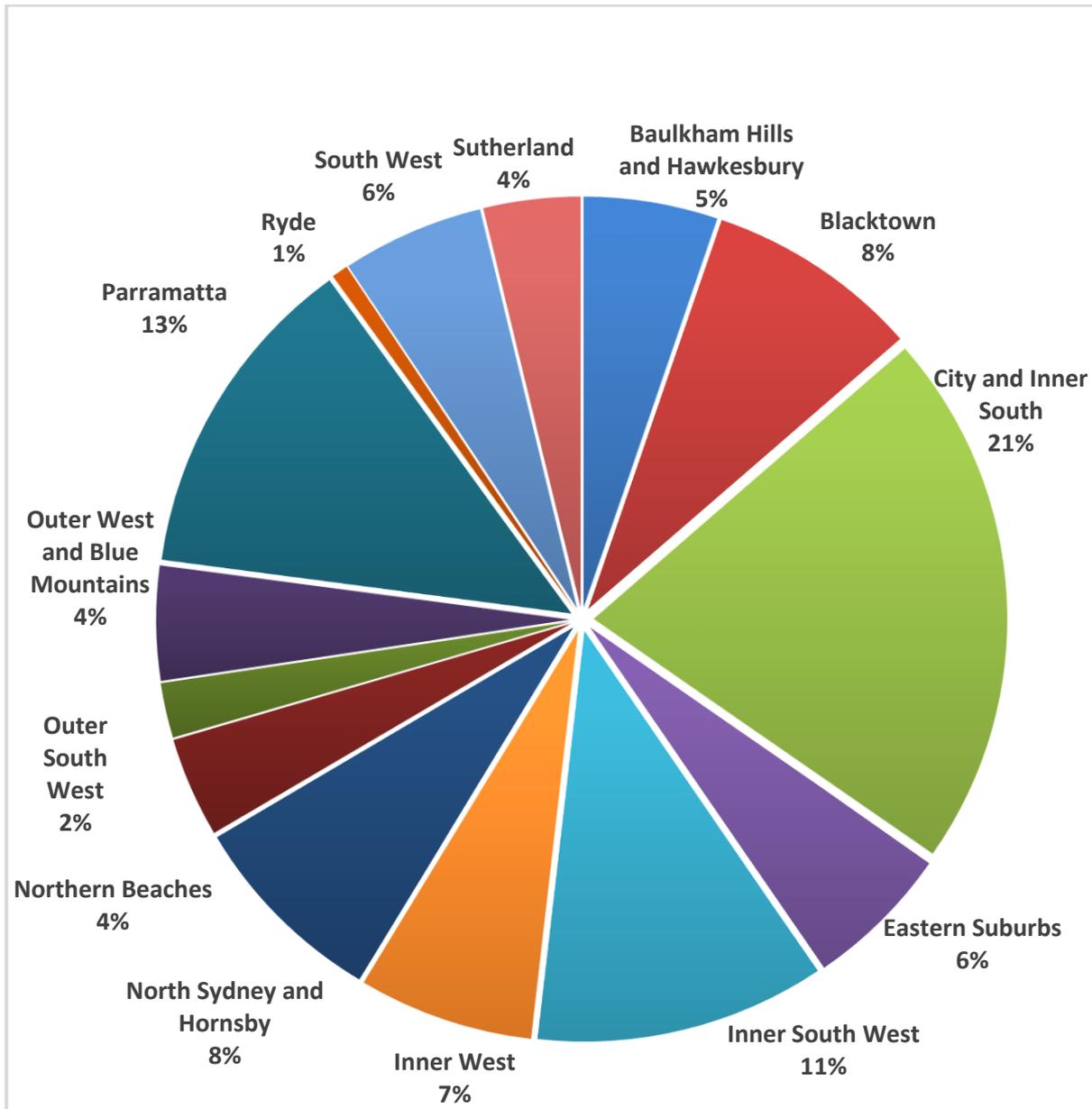


Figure 4.3 shows the geographic dispersion of all approved WDO sponsors in Sydney by statistical area.

Figure 4.3 - Geographic dispersion of all approved WDO sponsors in Sydney NSW

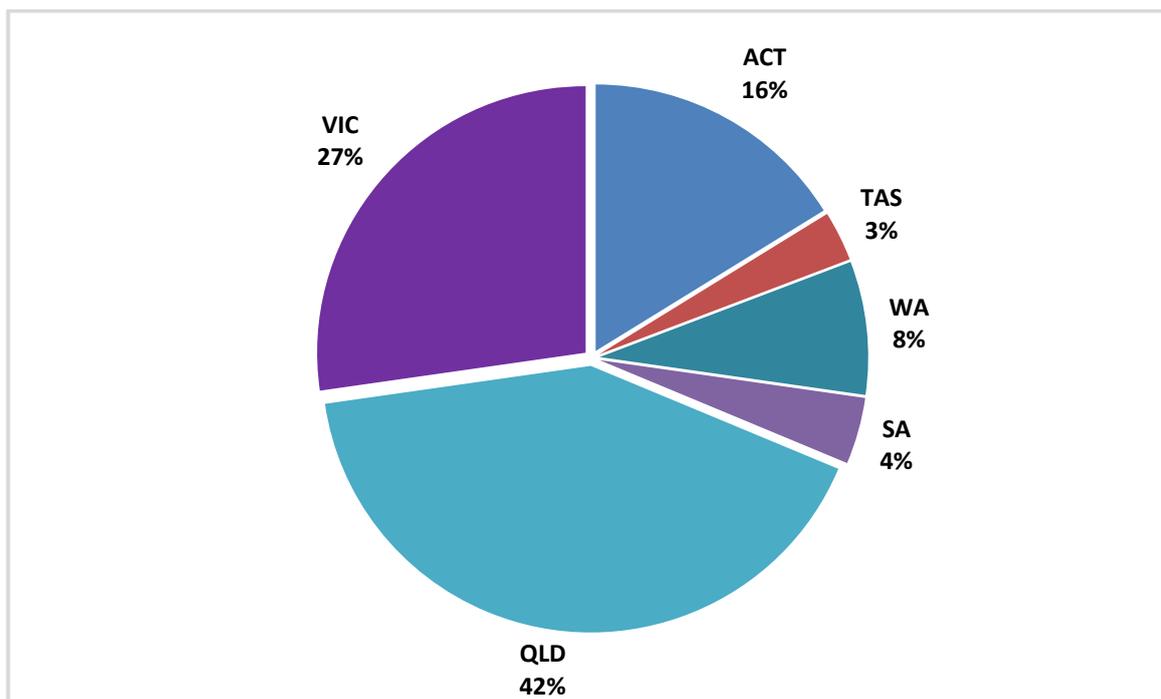


There has also been an increase in WDO sponsors located outside of NSW, who support WDOs for people with fines debt in NSW. Table 4.3 shows the number of sponsors approved outside of NSW in 2017/18 and since the scheme commenced. Figure 4.4 shows the dispersion of all approved sponsors outside of NSW. The number of WDO sponsors in QLD has increased significantly in 2017/18 to a total of 41, representing 42% of WDO sponsors approved outside of NSW.

Table 4.3 –WDO sponsors approved outside of NSW

WDO sponsor type	Sponsors approved in 2017/18	Approved sponsors - total
QLD	16	41
VIC	8	27
ACT	3	16
WA	2	8
TAS	1	3
SA	-	4
Grand Total	30	99

Figure 4.4 – Dispersion of WDO sponsors approved outside of NSW



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Scheme performance – general overview

5.1 Growth since the scheme was made permanent

The WDO scheme continued to grow at a steady rate in 2017/18. As at 30 June 2018, a total of 102,635 WDOs have been approved.

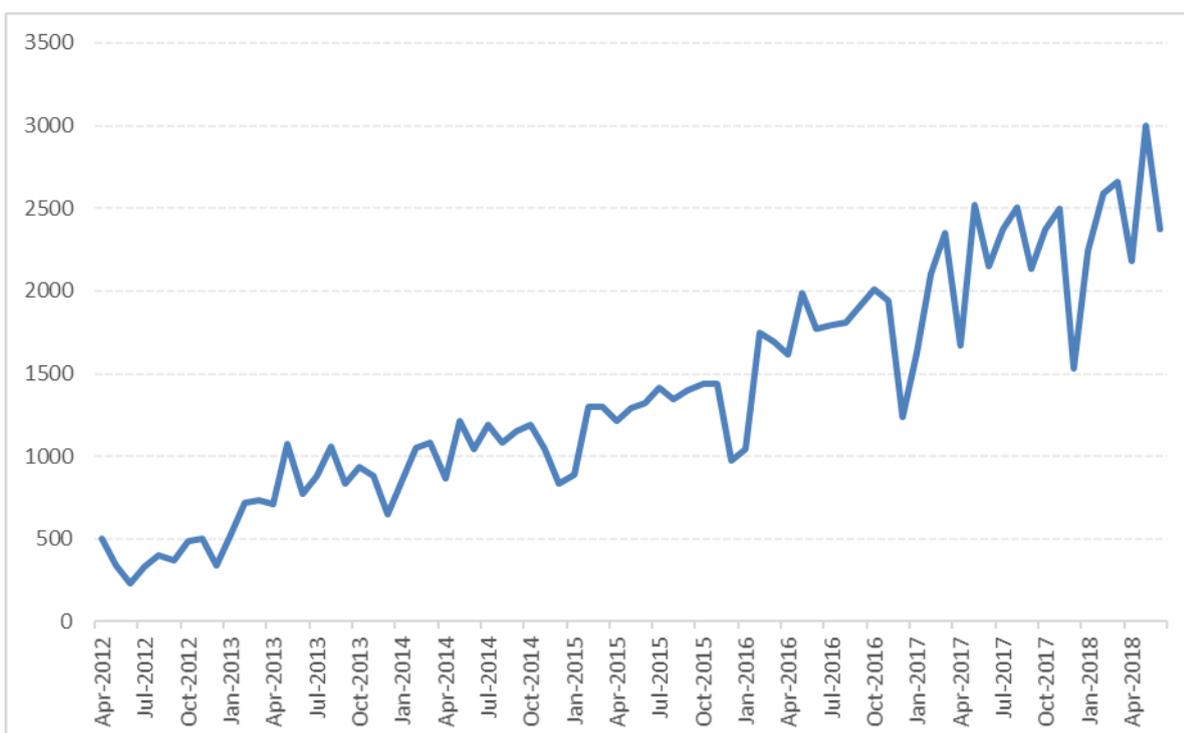
Table 5.1.1 shows the number of WDOs approved each financial year and Figure 5.1.1 provides a visual representation of the growth in the number of WDOs approved.

Table 5.1.1 - WDOs approved by financial year

Financial Year	Number of WDOs approved	Increase on previous year
2017/18	28,456	23%
2016/17	23,122	29%
2015/16	17,857	29%
2014/15	13,820	22%
2013/14	11,354	63%
2012/13	6,960	553%
2011/12	1,066	-
Total	102,635	-

* 2011/12 figures only include WDOs approved from April 2012 when the online WDO self-service portal was introduced.

Figure 5.1.1 - WDOs approved since 2012



5.2 Growth in financial year

The number of WDOs approved each month continued to increase this year. May 2018 was the month that 2999 WDOs were approved – the most applications approved in one month ever.

Table 5.2.1 shows the number of WDOs approved each month in 2017/18, and the value of fines debt attached to those WDOs at the time they were approved. The average debt for the participants in 2017/18 was \$3,383, an increase of approximately 10% on the previous year.

Table 5.2.1 – WDOs approved in 2017/18

Month	Number of WDOs approved	Value of debt attached to WDOs (at time of approval)
Jul	2,371	\$8,293,893
Aug	2,502	\$9,226,741
Sep	2,131	\$7,079,641
Oct	2,372	\$7,481,467
Nov	2,500	\$7,698,906
Dec	1,528	\$4,769,293
Jan	2,245	\$8,135,297
Feb	2,587	\$8,330,100
Mar	2,664	\$9,438,801
Apr	2,181	\$7,644,039
May	2,999	\$10,281,137
Jun	2,376	\$7,898,209
Grand Total	28,456	\$96,277,525

5.3 Debt cleared through WDOs since the scheme was made permanent

As WDO volumes have increased, so too has the value of debt cleared through WDOs. In total, over \$124m of fines debt has been cleared through WDOs.

Table 5.3.1 shows the amount of debt cleared through WDOs each year.

Table 5.3.1 - Fines debt cleared through WDOs

Financial Year	Value of debt cleared
2017/18	\$34,797,351
2016/17	\$27,630,065
2015/16	\$22,036,835
2014/15	\$17,307,525
2013/14	\$14,665,425
2012/13	\$7,641,792
2011/12	\$676,931
Total	\$124,755,923

* 2011/12 figures only include WDOs approved from April 2012 when the online WDO self-service portal was introduced.

5.4 Debt cleared through WDOs in financial year

The WDO scheme met another milestone in June 2018, when \$3.4m in debt was cleared through WDOs. This is the highest amount of debt cleared in a single month since the scheme commenced.

Table 5.4.1 shows the amount of debt cleared each month in 2017/18.

Table 5.4.1 – Fines debt cleared through WDOs in 2017/18

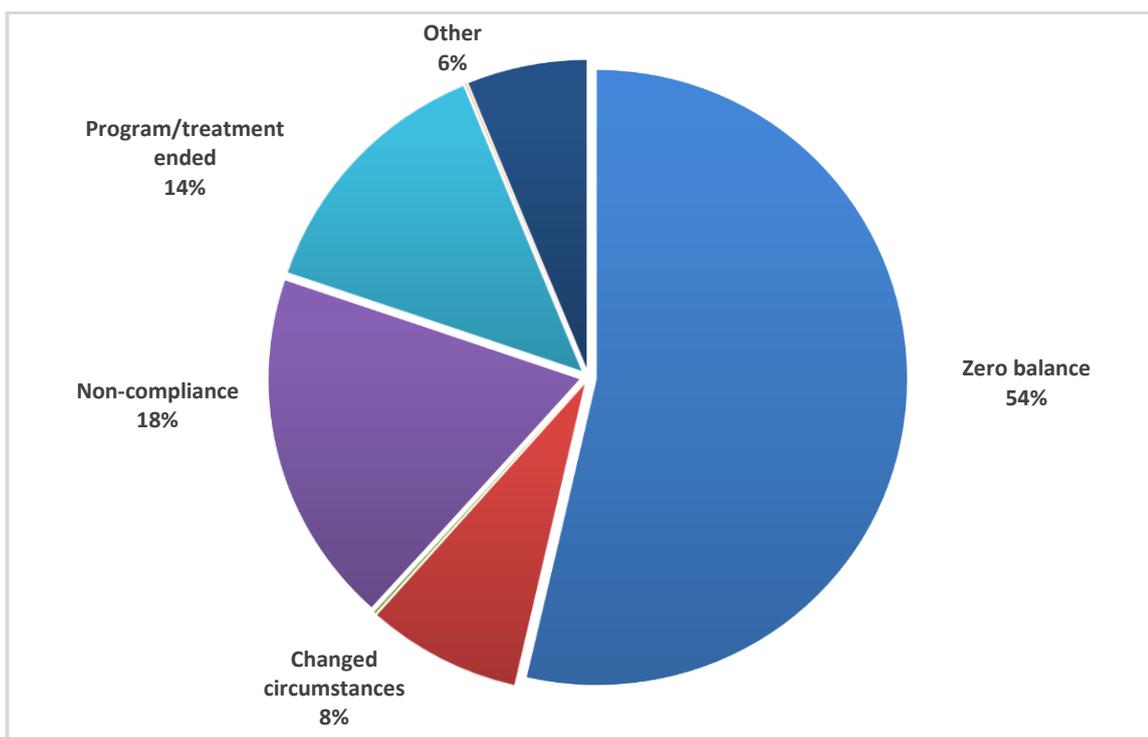
Month	Value of debt cleared
Jul	\$2,553,311
Aug	\$3,049,852
Sep	\$2,805,333
Oct	\$2,827,559
Nov	\$2,864,514
Dec	\$2,703,218
Jan	\$2,328,070
Feb	\$2,792,822
Mar	\$3,222,100
Apr	\$2,945,784
May	\$3,289,652
Jun	\$3,415,138
Total	\$34,797,351

5.5 Closed WDOs

WDOs can be closed for a number of reasons. In 2017/18, 13,307 WDOs were closed with a zero balance, meaning all debt attached to the WDO was cleared. This represents 54% of all closed WDOs this year.

Figure 5.5.1 shows the reasons WDOs were closed in 2017/18.

Figure 5.5.1 – WDOs closed in 2017/18 – by reason



6

WDO participants – who are they?



In this section of the report, we explore who is participating in WDOs. Sections 8, 9 and 10 of the report provide extra information about specific groups. This section is a high-level overview of all participants.

Case study

Gabby* incurred \$25,000 in fines, mostly from travelling on trains without a ticket. Gabby has chronic schizophrenia and won't use an Opal card as she thinks that the government will track her movements.

Gabby was hospitalised for many months receiving mental health treatment and during this time her bank account was garnished for \$1450. On discharge, Gabby was to engage with the community mental health team. As medication compliance is always an issue for Gabby in the community, doing a WDO has been a great incentive for her to engage with the team to continue her mental health treatment. Gabby is clearing \$1000 a month from her fines, while receiving the help and support she needs from the community mental health team.

* Not her real name

6.1 Age

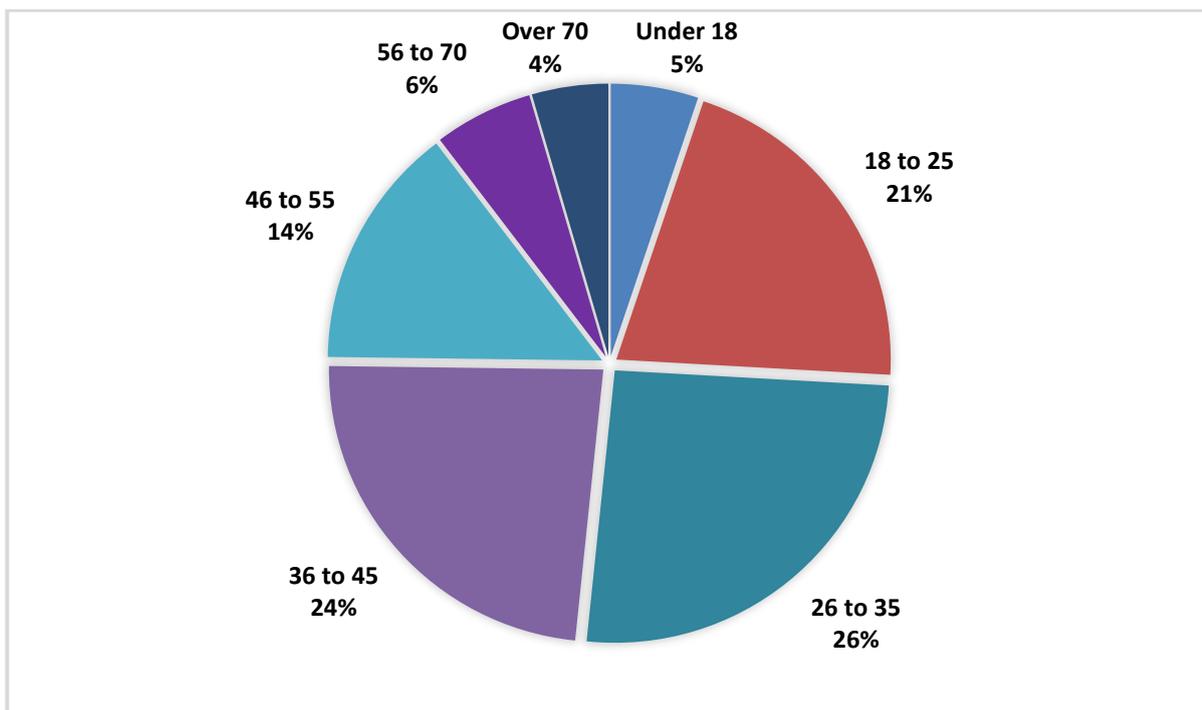
In 2017/18, people aged between 18 and 45 accounted for 75% of WDOs. Table 6.1.1 shows the number of WDOs approved in 2017/18 by participant age.

Table 6.1.1 – WDOs approved in 2017/18 by participant age

Age	WDOs approved in 17/18
Under 18	1,476
18 to 25	5,953
26 to 35	7,371
36 to 45	6,768
46 to 55	4,159
56 to 70	1,675
Over 70	1,054
Total	28,456

Figure 6.1.1 shows the distribution of WDO participants in 2017/18 by age. There was an increase in participants over 70, who accounted for 4% of WDOs in 2017/18, compared with 1% in 2016/17.

Figure 6.1.1 – Distribution of approved WDOs in 2017/18 by age



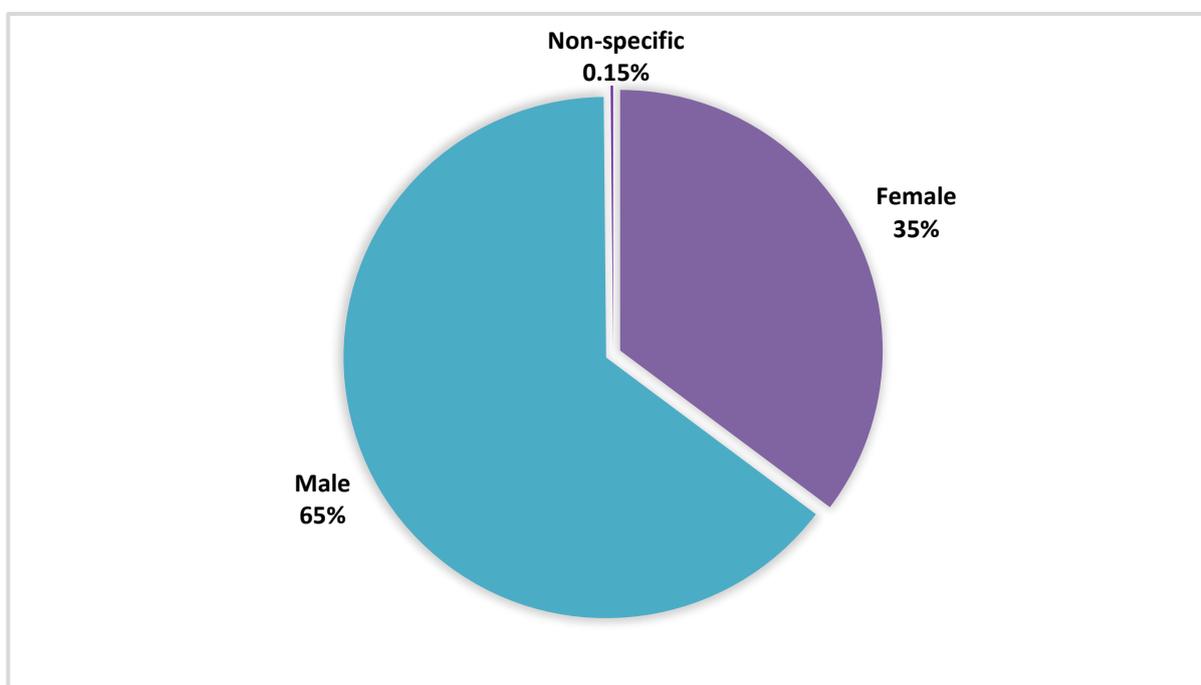
6.2 Gender

In 2017/18, over 65% of WDOs were for male participants. There were 42 participants who identified with non-specific gender. This was a gender option added to the self-service portal in 2016 in response to feedback from WDO sponsors and customers. Table 6.2.1 shows the number of WDOs approved in 2017/18 by each gender. Figure 6.2.1 show this distribution in a chart.

Table 6.2.1 – Gender of WDO participants in 2017/18

Gender	WDOs approved in 2017/18 by gender
Male	18,379
Female	10,035
Non-specific	42
Total	28,456

Figure 6.2.1 – Gender of WDO applicants in 2017/18



6.3 Centrelink status

In 2017/18, 62% of WDO participants were receiving a Centrelink benefit. This is slightly less than 2016/17, when 65% of applications received a Centrelink benefit.

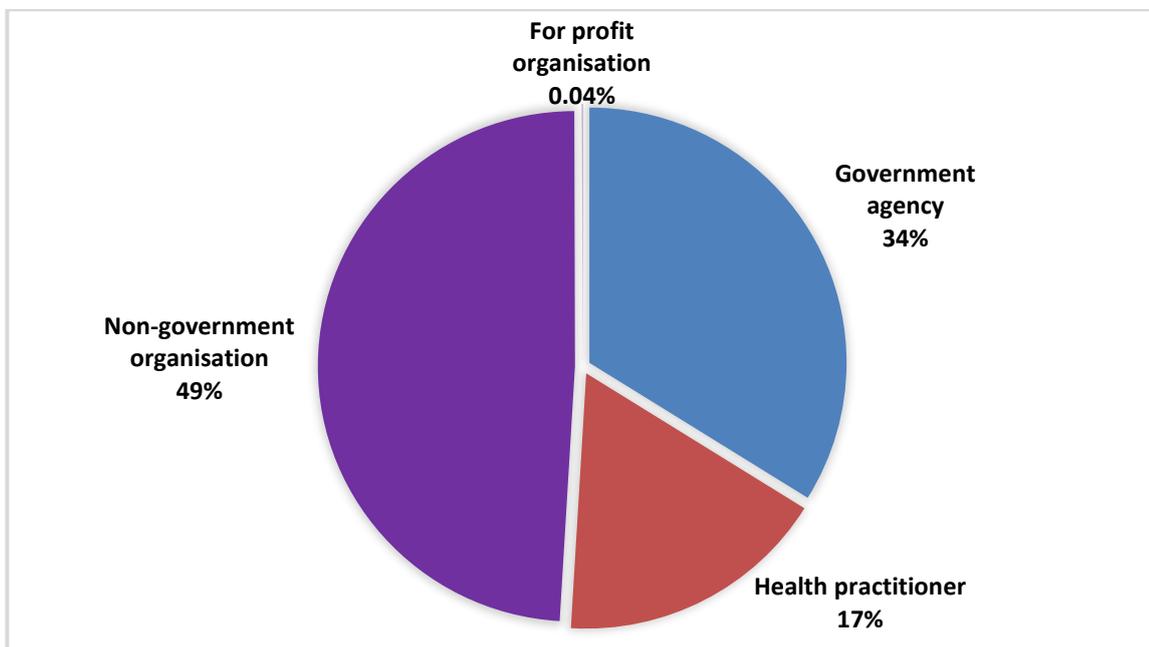
6.4 Sponsor types

In 2017, we introduced changes to the WDO Guidelines which allowed for-profit organisations to participate in the scheme. WDO sponsors can now include government agencies, health practitioners, non-government agencies and for-profit organisations who demonstrate that their objectives are aligned with the scheme.

In 2017/18, non-government organisations were the biggest supporters of the scheme with a massive 13,946 WDOs, accounting for 49% of all approved WDOs. Government agencies supported 9,637 WDOs (34%), health practitioners supported 4,861 WDOs (17%) and for-profit organisations supported 12 WDOs.

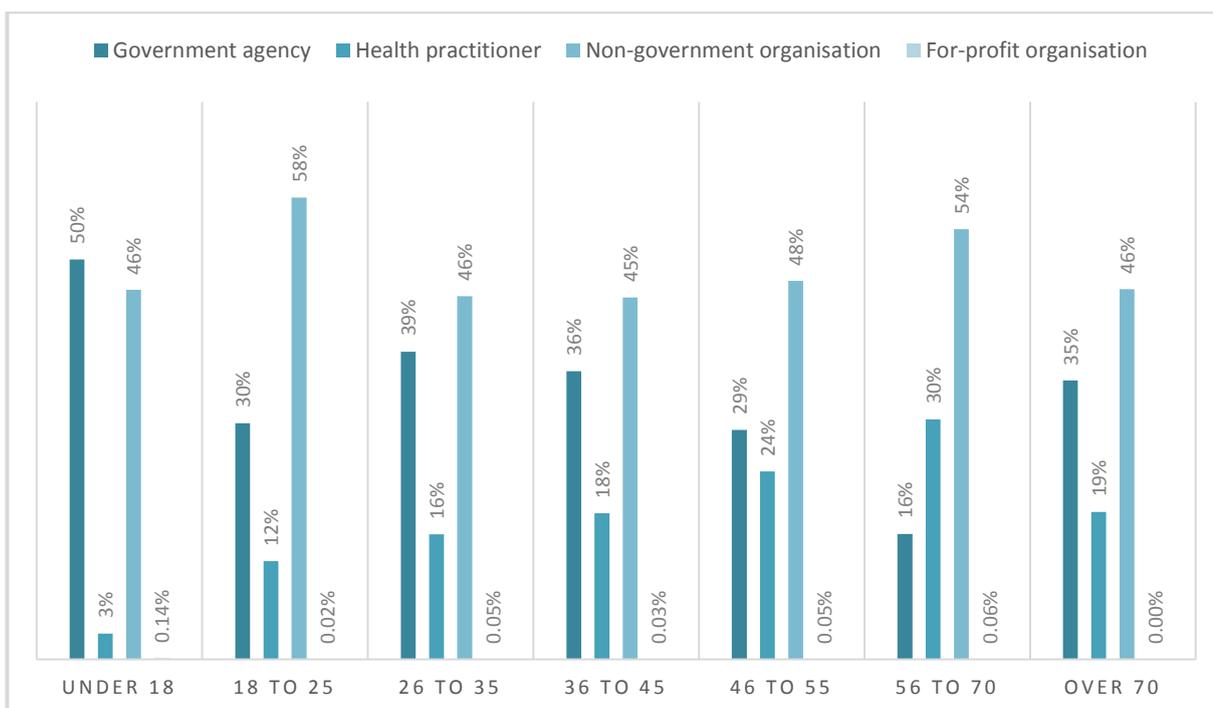
Figure 6.4.1 shows the distribution of approved WDOs in 2017/18 by the WDO sponsor type.

Figure 6.4.1 – WDOs approved in 2017/18 by sponsor type



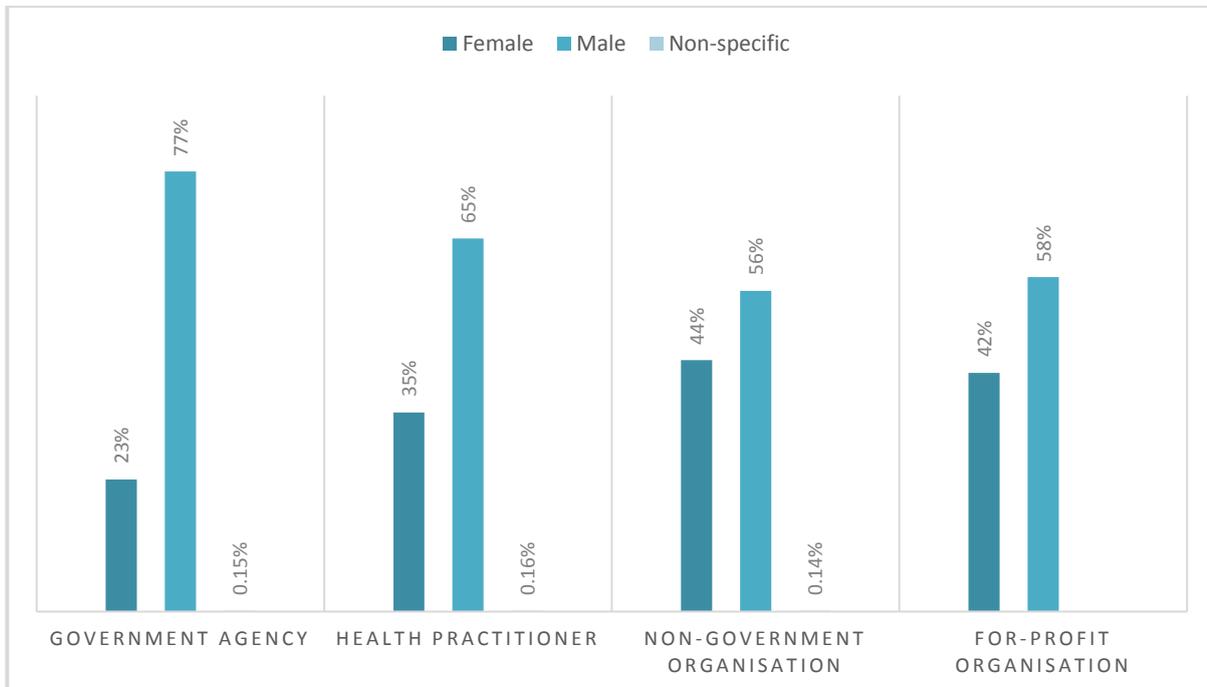
In 2017/18, we again compared the type of sponsor engagement with customer type. Figure 6.4.2 compares the sponsor type by age group, which shows a similar trend to 2016/17. Sponsorship by a government agency had a negative relationship with age - the likelihood of having a government sponsor decreased as age increased. Conversely, age had a positive relationship with the likelihood of being sponsored by a health practitioner – as age increased, so too did the likelihood of having a health practitioner as a WDO sponsor.

Figure 6.4.2 – Sponsor type by age range



In Figure 6.4.3, we compare the gender distribution across sponsor types for WDOs approved in 2017/18. Government agencies were much more likely to support male participants (77%). The gender distribution of WDO participants supported by non-government agencies was more even (56% male and 44% female).

Figure 6.4.3 – Distribution of gender across sponsor type for WDOs approved in 2017/18



7

Eligibility reasons and activities

7.1 Eligibility reasons

Case study

Claire* had been living in Sydney and was homeless. She had moved home to live with her mother in Queensland to get back on her feet and deal with her drug addiction. Claire had been disqualified from driving and was eligible to get her licence back, but was prevented by RMS business restrictions due to unpaid NSW fines.

Claire had recently started treatment for drug addiction through her GP and was keen to undertake a WDO. Legal Aid NSW assisted her GP to become a WDO sponsor, business restrictions were lifted, and Claire got her licence back and cleared her debt by committing to a treatment program.

* Not her real name

The most common eligibility reason for a WDO in 2017/18 was acute economic hardship. Figure 7.1.1 shows the range of WDO eligibility reasons for WDOs approved in 2017/18. Table 7.1.1 shows the number of WDOs approved under each eligibility criterion.

Figure 7.1.1 - WDOs approved in 2017/18 by eligibility criteria

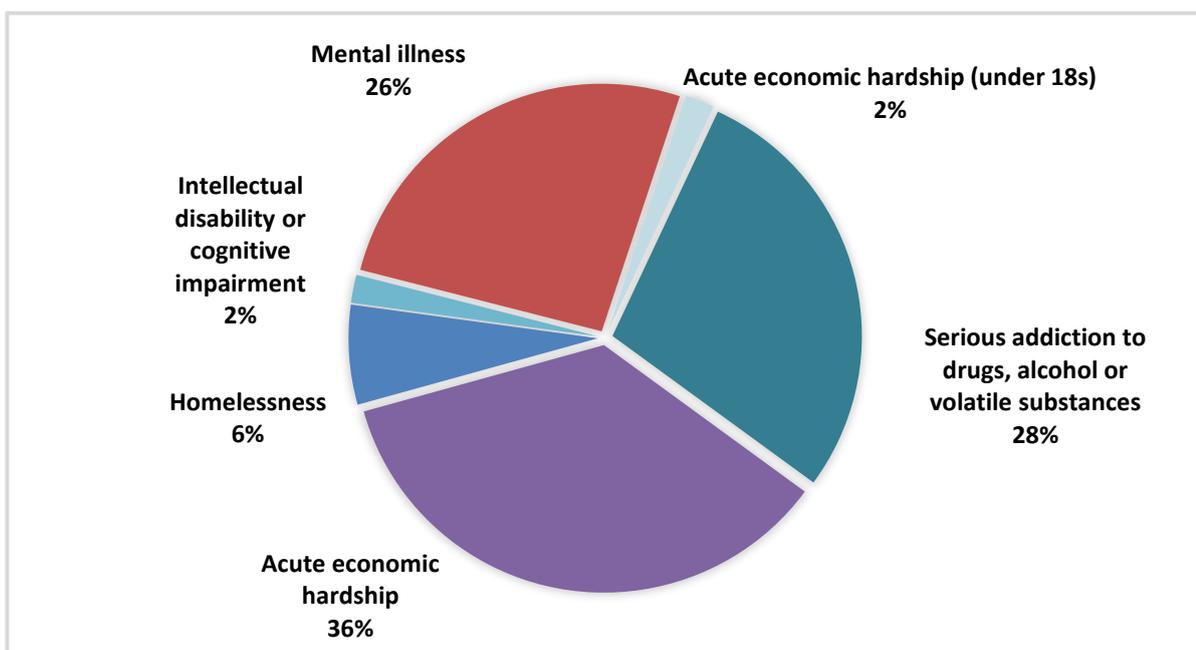


Table 7.1.1 - WDOs approved in 2017/18 by eligibility criteria

Eligibility reason	Number WDOs approved
Acute economic hardship	11,537
Serious addiction to drugs, alcohol or volatile substances	9,121
Mental illness	8,451
Homelessness	2,107
Acute economic hardship (under 18s)	607
Intellectual disability or cognitive impairment	591

Note: WDO participants can choose multiple eligibility criteria. Therefore, some WDOs will be counted in multiple categories above.

We also compared eligibility reasons by participant gender. Figures 7.1.2 through to 7.1.4 below show the eligibility reasons selected by each gender.

Male participants were more likely than females to apply under the ground of serious addiction to drugs, alcohol or volatile substances (32% compared with 22%). Female participants were more likely than males to apply under the ground of acute economic hardship (43% compared with 34%).

Figure 7.1.2 – Eligibility reasons for female participants in 2017/18

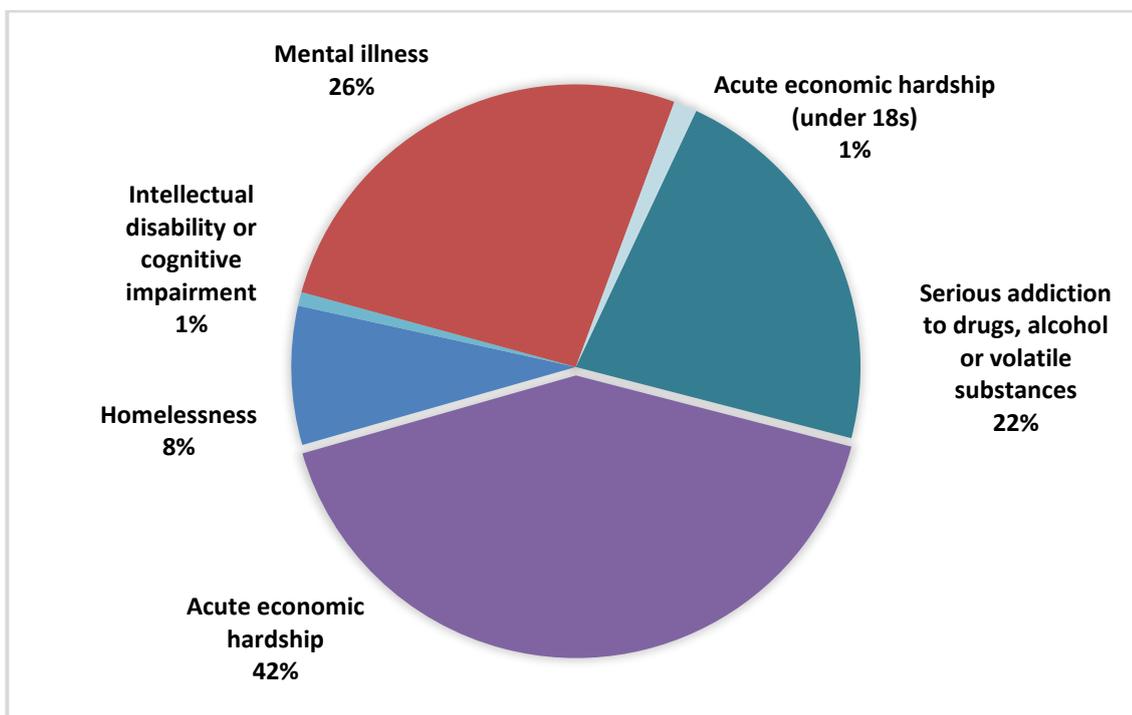
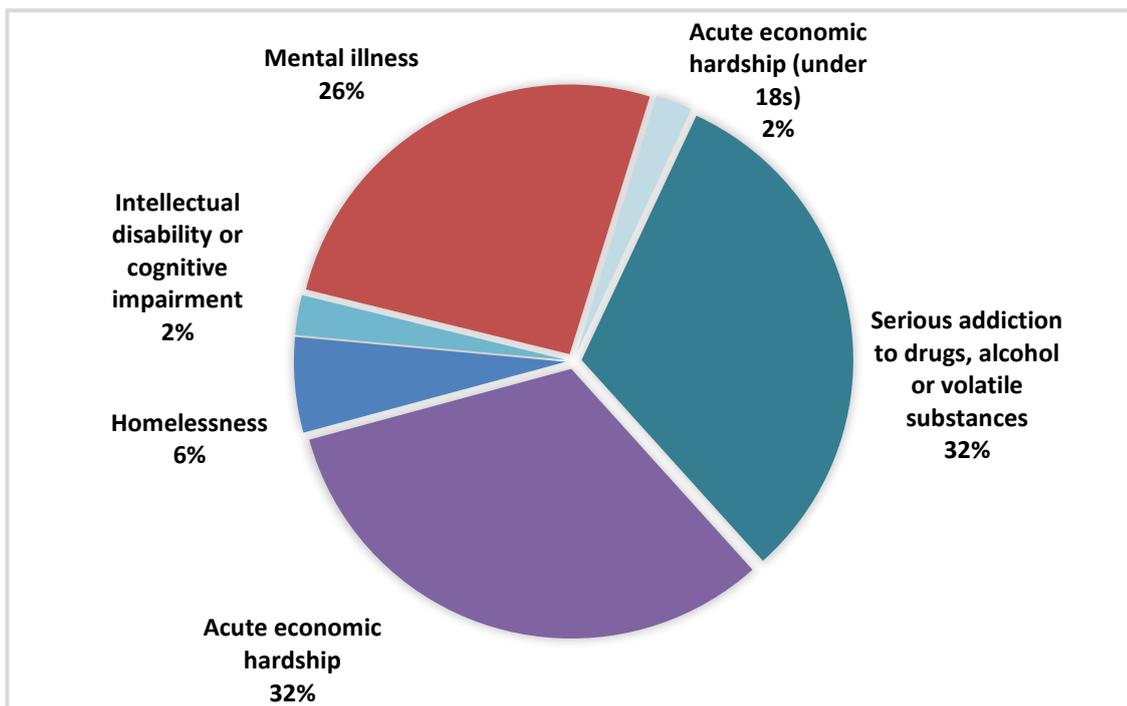
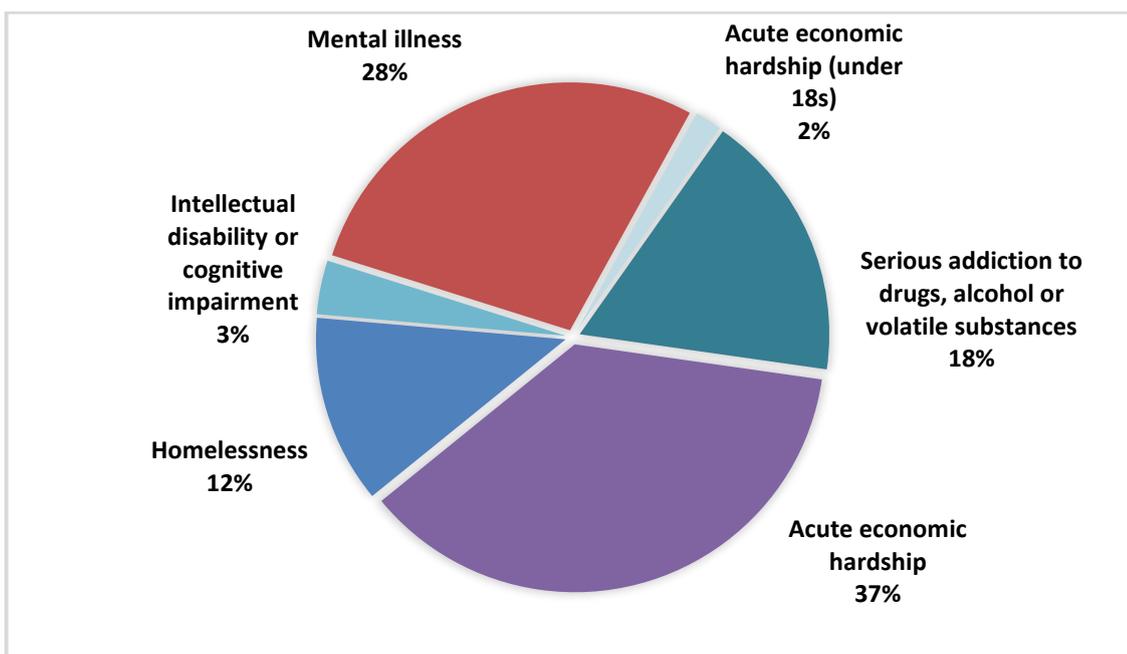


Figure 7.1.3 – Eligibility reasons for male participants in 2017/18



This year, participants who identified with a non-specific gender were less likely than other genders to apply under the ground of serious addiction to drugs, alcohol or volatile substances, and more likely to apply under the ground of homelessness. However, the number of participants who identified with a non-specific gender in 2017/18 was small (42), so these results should be interpreted with caution.

Figure 7.1.4 – Eligibility reasons for participants in 2017/18 who identify with a non-specific gender



7.2 Activities undertaken

Case study

Jane* contacted the Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre about doing a WDO. She was eligible on the grounds of acute financial hardship and agreed to undertake 70 hours of volunteer work to clear her debt. Jane had also enrolled online to study a Diploma in Community Services, so staff tailored her WDO activities to complement her studies.

She assisted with preparation and set up of community events and joined the monthly Saturday Community Café Team. Jane also used her admin skills to take minutes for local CDAT (Community Drug Action Team) meetings.

Over a period of three months staff reported Jane's growing social confidence as she connected with other community members. She has now paid off her fines in full and continues to volunteer. Jane is still studying and will undertake her work placement at the neighbourhood centre. She has also secured a part time job with a charity.

* Not her real name

The most common activity in 2017/18 was drug or alcohol treatment. The least common activity was mentoring, however, this activity is limited to people under 25 years of age. Mentoring accounted for 3% of WDOs in 2017/18, in increase on 2016/17 (2%). This is a result of the change to the Guidelines in May 2017 making people under 18 eligible for WDOs under the ground of acute economic hardship.

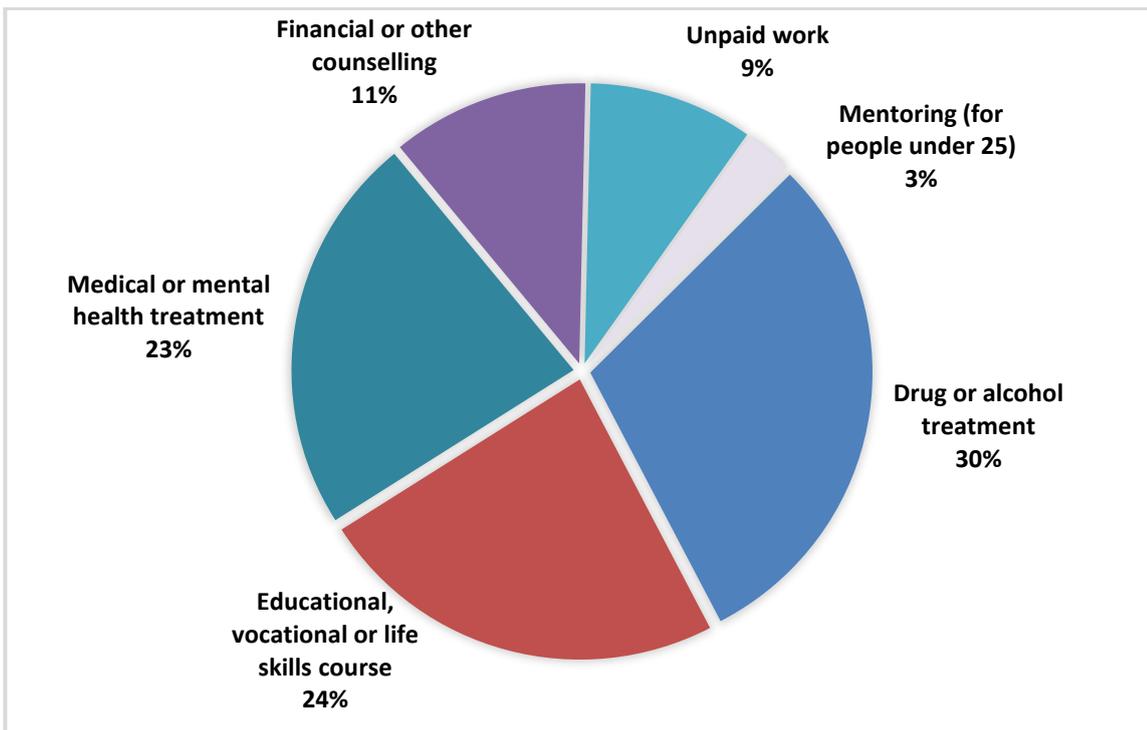
Figure 7.2.1 shows the range of WDO activities undertaken for WDOs approved in 2017/18. In Table 7.2.1, we have provided the actual number of WDOs approved for each activity type.

Table 7.2.1 - Activities undertaken for WDOs approved in 2017/18

Activity type	Number WDOs approved
Drug or alcohol treatment	9,145
Educational, vocational or life skills course	7,238
Medical or mental health treatment	7,056
Financial or other counselling	3,464
Unpaid work	2,886
Mentoring (for people under 25)	835

Notes: WDO participants can undertake multiple WDO activity types. Therefore, some WDOs will be counted in multiple categories above.

Figure 7.2.1 - WDOs approved in 2017/18 by activity type



We also compared types of activities undertaken by each gender group. Figures 7.2.2 through to 7.2.4 below show the activities undertaken by each gender.

Male participants were more likely than females to undertake drug or alcohol treatment (31% compared with 22%).

Female participants were more likely than males to undertake financial or other counselling (17% compared with 7%).

Figure 7.2.2 – Activities undertaken by female participants in 2017/18

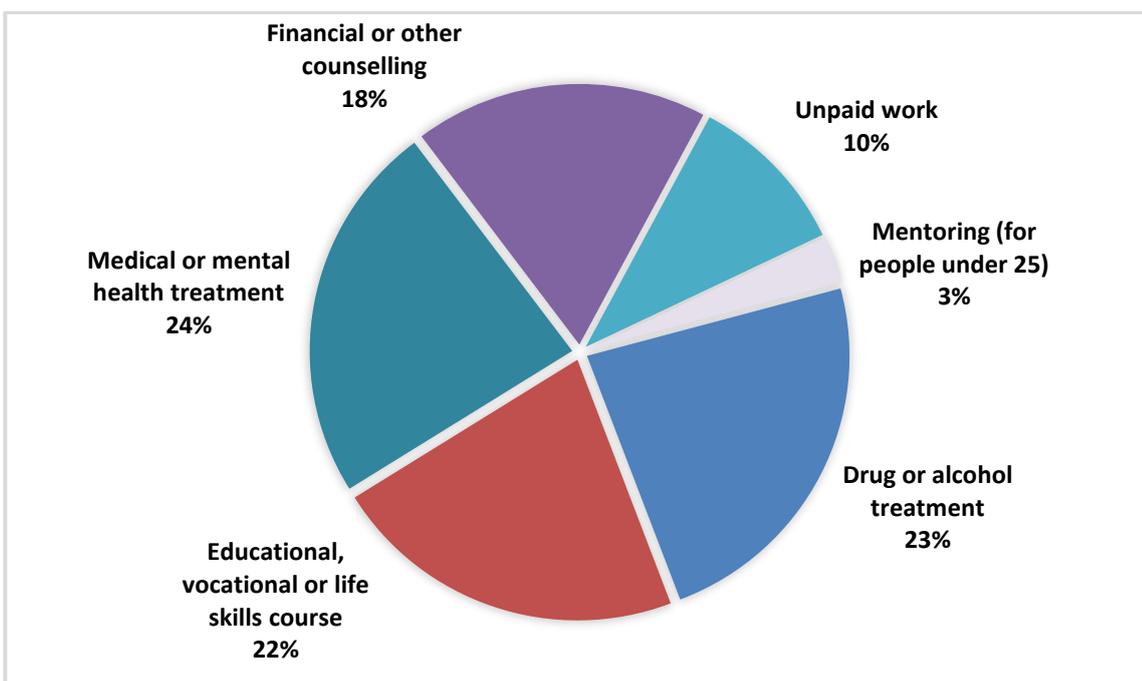
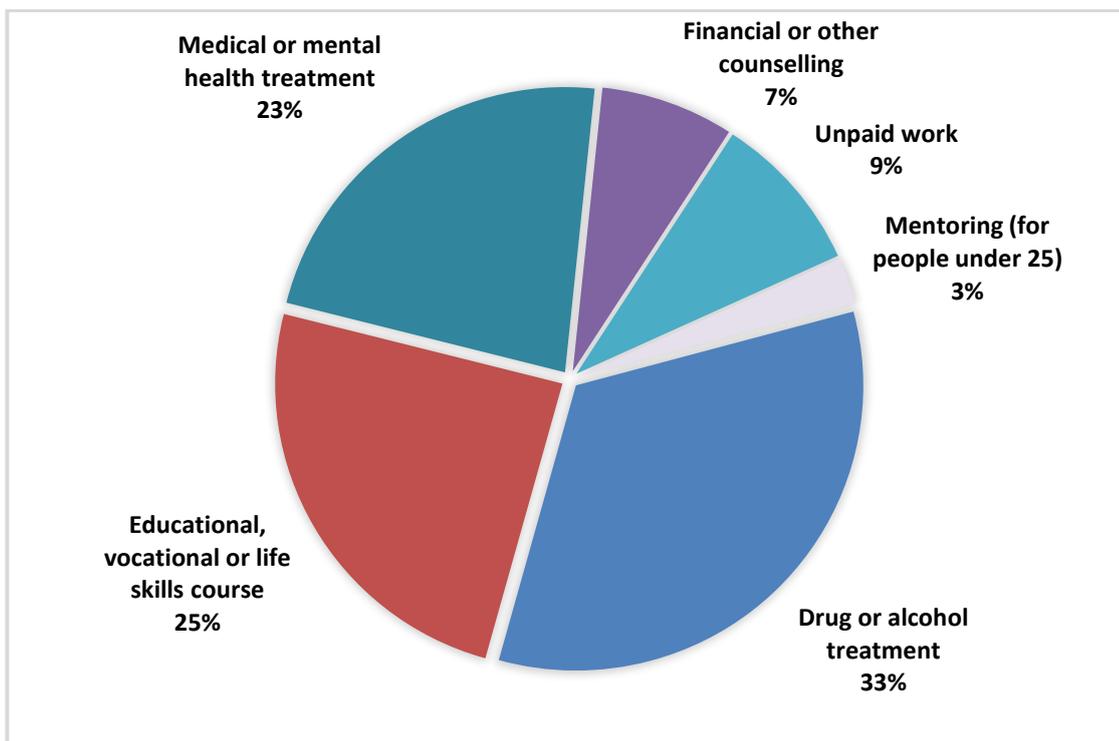
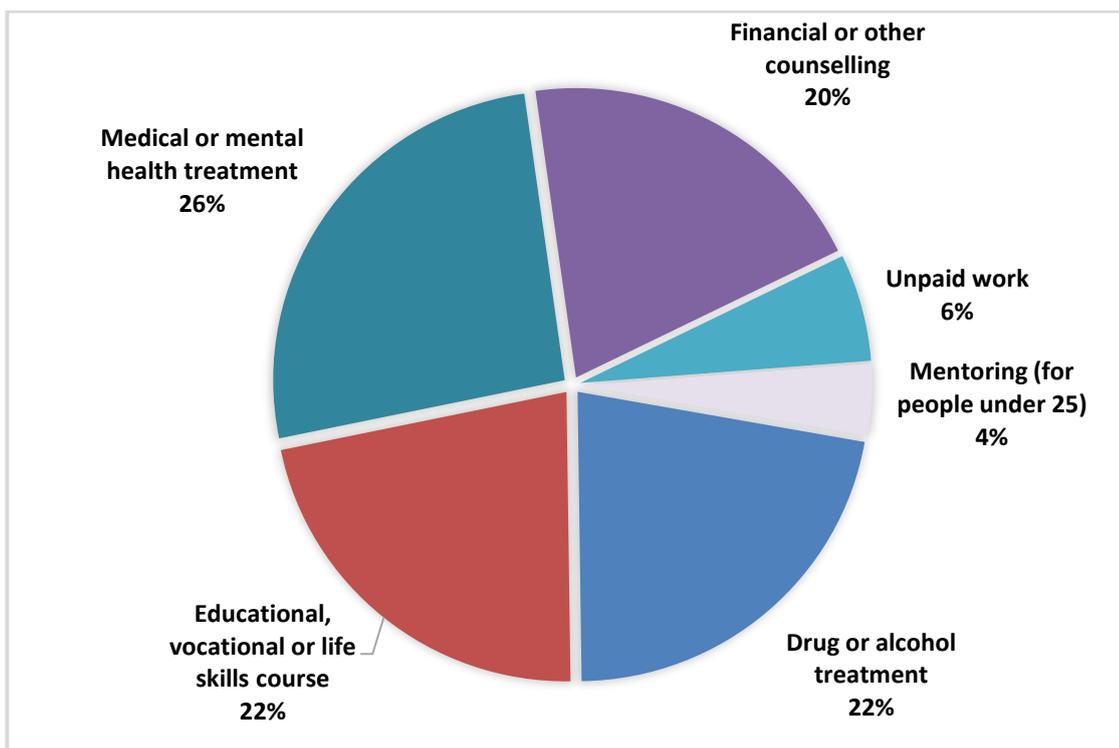


Figure 7.2.3 - Activities undertaken by male participants in 2017/18



Participants who identified with a non-specific gender were more likely than other genders to undertake medical/mental health treatment as their WDO activity, and more likely to undertake financial or other counselling. However, the number of participants who identified with a non-specific gender in 2017/18 was small, so these results should be interpreted with caution.

Figure 7.2.4 – Activities undertaken in 2017/18 by participants who identified with a non-specific gender



8

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people



In this section of the report, we explore the impact the WDO scheme is having on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Note, all figures in the section of the report are based on demographic information captured at the time WDO sponsors submit WDO applications on the self-service portal.

Case study

Brian* is a 55 year old Aboriginal man from a remote community in North Western NSW. He suffers from diabetes and mobility problems following a stroke, affecting his ability to perform everyday tasks. Brian supports and lives with his 12 year old son and has a carer to assist with cleaning, shopping & showering. His only income is the Disability Support Pension.

Brian had outstanding enforcement order debt of \$1,365.95 which he was paying off at \$20 per fortnight through a Centrepay arrangement. After paying rent and utility bills, Brian and his son were living on less than \$100 a week.

Between September and November 2017, Brian participated in a Living Skills program with Birrang Enterprises, a WDO sponsor, clearing \$1,200 off his fines. Given his personal, medical and financial circumstances, Legal Aid NSW made a successful application to Revenue NSW to write-off the residual debt.

* Not his real name

8.1 Participation

There was strong participation in WDOs from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people again in 2017/18. Table 8.1.1 shows the number of WDOs approved each month for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants and the value of debt attached to those WDOs when they were approved.

In total, 6,091 WDOs were approved, representing 21.4% of all WDOs. The average debt per participant was \$3,752.49, which is approximately 14% higher than the average for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Figure 8.1.1 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in WDOs

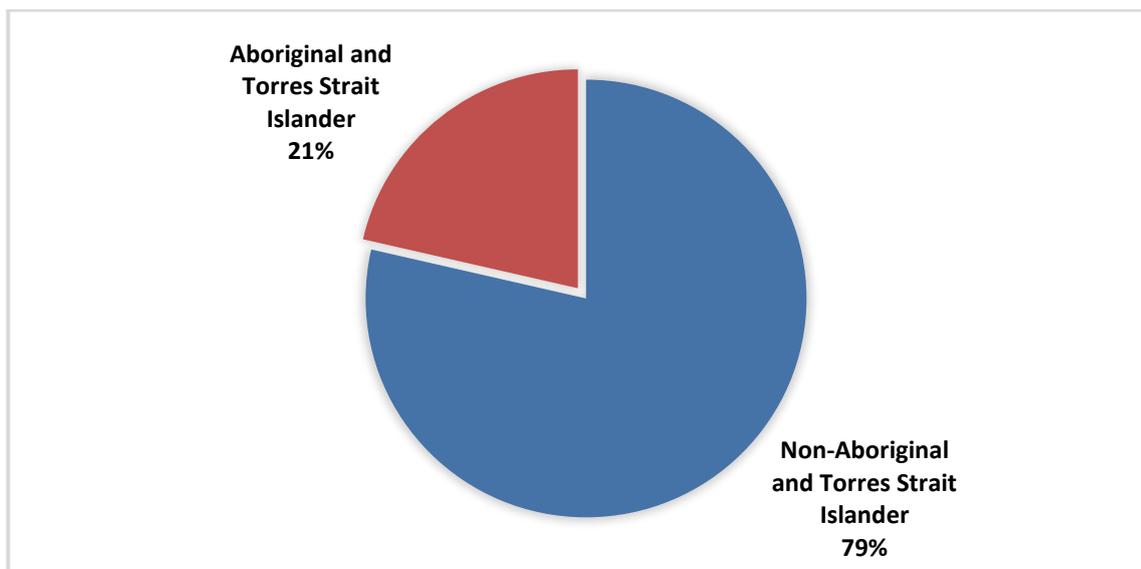


Table 8.1.1 - WDOs approved in 2017/18 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants

Month	Number of WDOs approved	Value of debt attached to WDOs (at time of approval)
Jul	452	\$1,670,607
Aug	549	\$2,105,910
Sep	433	\$1,910,737
Oct	513	\$1,682,727
Nov	493	\$1,612,301
Dec	287	\$907,879
Jan	489	\$2,195,545
Feb	636	\$2,263,366
Mar	587	\$2,111,169
Apr	477	\$1,868,235
May	679	\$2,614,865
Jun	496	\$1,913,079
Total	6,091	\$22,856,422

8.2 Demographics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants

Gender

The gender distribution amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants was similar to non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants (62% male, 38% female). Table 8.2.1 provides a breakdown of gender for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants.

Table 8.2.1 – Gender for WDOs approved in 2017/18

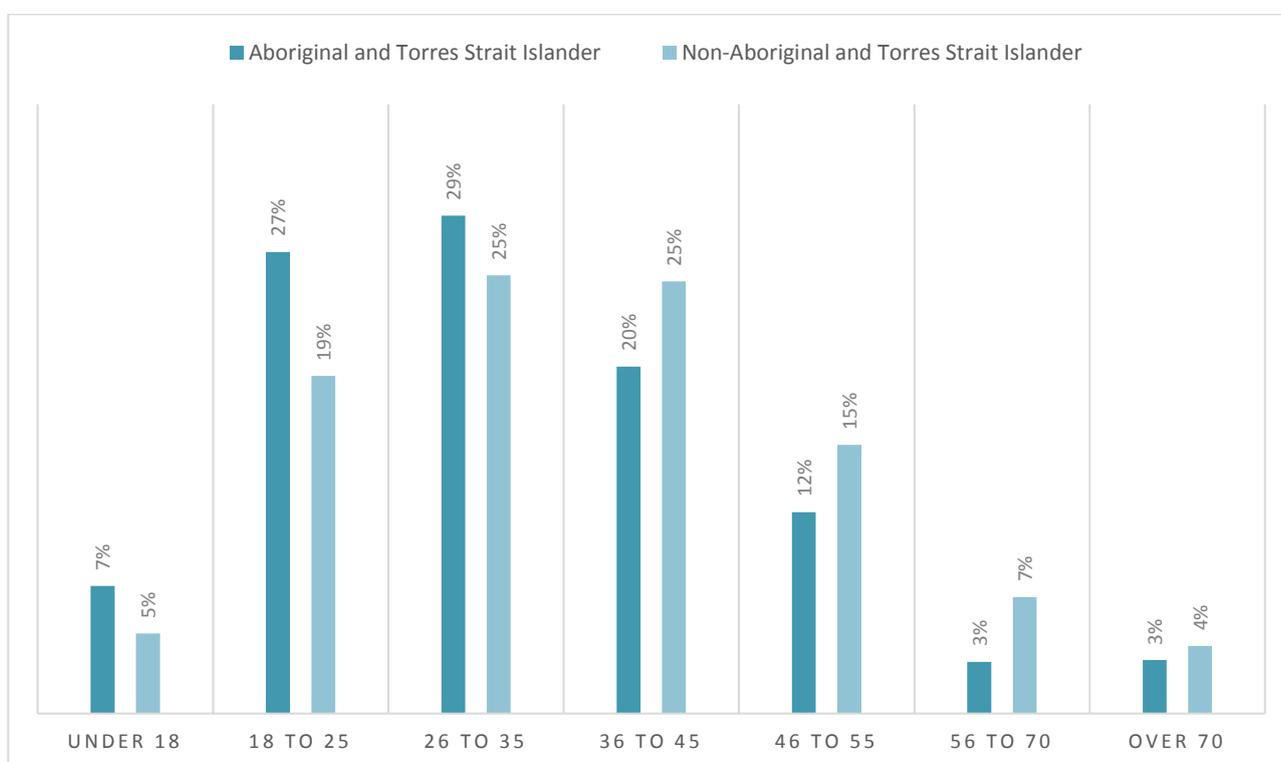
Gender	Number of WDOs approved in 2017/18
Male	3,768
Female	2,313
Non-specific	10

Age

In 2017/18, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants tended to be younger than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants. 62% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants were 35 or under, compared with 49% of participants who were not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Figure 8.2.1 compares the age distribution between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants and participants who are not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Figure 8.2.1 – Participant age in 2017/18 – comparison between ATSI and non-ATSI participants



8.3 Eligibility reasons for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants

The most common reason for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people in 2017/18 was acute economic hardship.

Table 8.3.1 shows the number of WDOs approved for ATSI participants under each eligibility criterion.

Table 8.3.1 - ATSI WDOs approved in 2017/18 by eligibility criteria

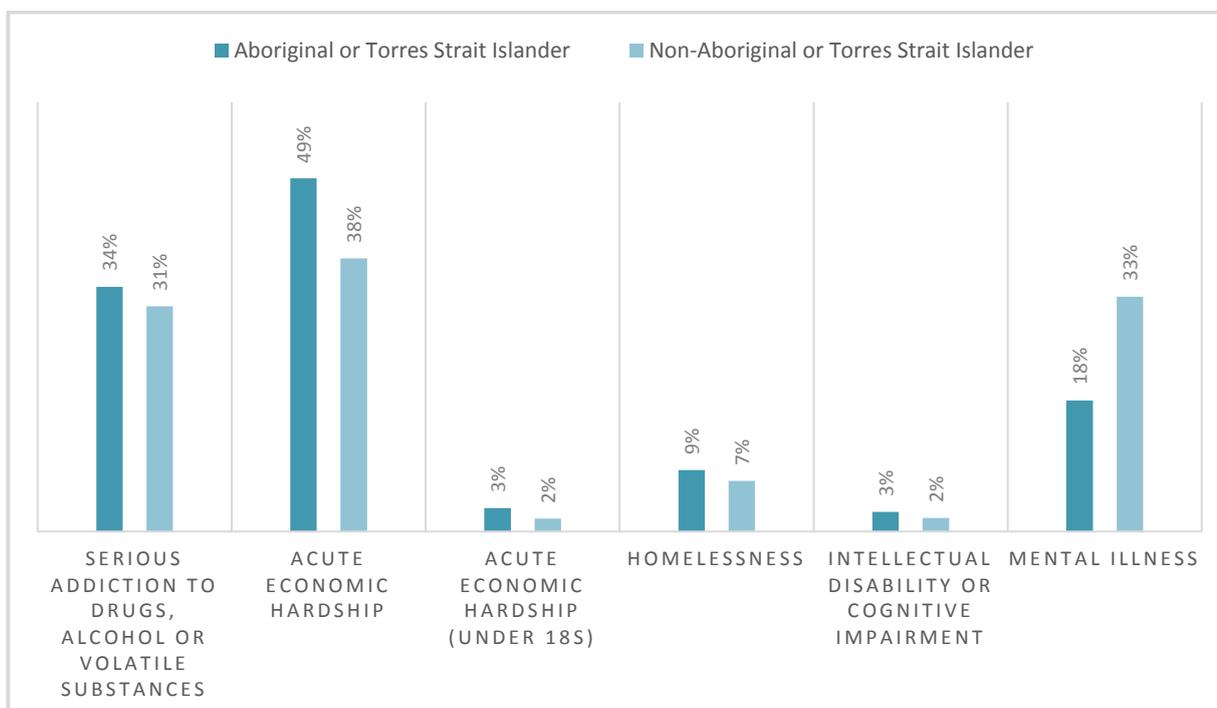
Eligibility reason	Number of WDOs approved
Acute economic hardship	3,006
Serious addiction to drugs, alcohol or volatile substances	2,084
Mental illness	1,116
Homelessness	524
Acute economic hardship (under 18s)	199
Intellectual disability or cognitive impairment	168

Note: WDO participants can choose multiple eligibility criteria. Therefore, some WDOs will be counted in multiple categories above.

Figure 8.3.1 compares the eligibility reasons used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants with the eligibility reasons used by participants who are not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants were more likely to apply under acute economic hardship, and less likely to apply under the ground of mental illness.

Figure 8.3.1 – Eligibility reasons for WDOs – comparison between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants



Note: WDO participants can choose multiple eligibility criteria. Therefore, some WDOs will be counted in multiple categories above.

8.4 Activities undertaken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants

The most common activity undertaken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants was educational, vocational or life skills courses. Table 8.4.1 shows the number of WDOs approved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants by each activity type.

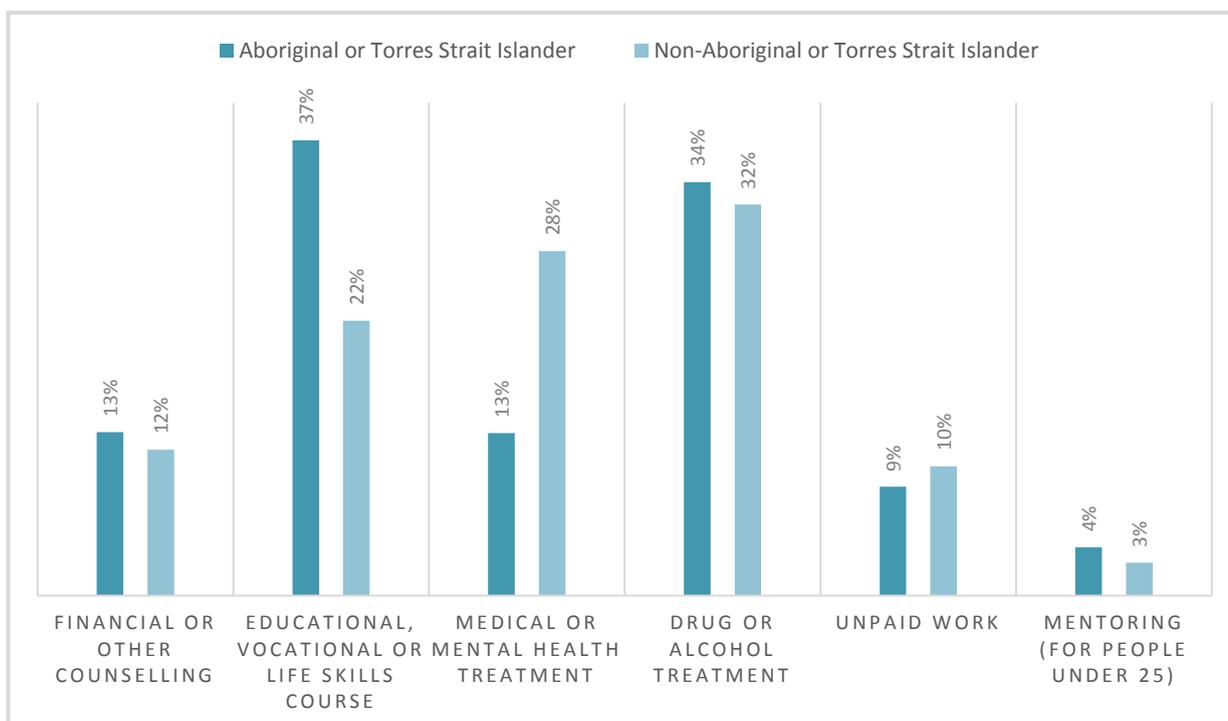
Table 8.4.1 - WDOs approved in 2017/18 by activity type

Activity	Number of WDOs approved
Educational, vocational or life skills course	2,251
Drug or alcohol treatment	2,047
Financial or other counselling	811
Medical or mental health treatment	804
Unpaid work	538
Mentoring (for people under 25)	239

Note: WDO participants can choose multiple WDO activities. Therefore, some WDOs will be counted in multiple categories above.

Figure 8.4.1 compares the activities undertaken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants with the activities undertaken by participants who are not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants were more likely to undertake educational, vocational or life skills courses, and less likely to undertake medical or mental health treatment.

Figure 8.4.1 – WDO activities undertaken - comparison between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants



Note: WDO participants can choose multiple WDO activities. Therefore, some WDOs will be counted in multiple categories above.

9

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities



In 2017/18, 3,785 WDOs were approved for participants who identified as being from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community. In total, \$9.9m of debt was attached to those WDOs at the time they were approved. The average debt for CALD participants was \$2,621.10, which is 25.12% less than non-CALD people.

Approximately 64% of CALD participants were male, and 36% were female. There were seven participants who identified with non-specific gender. There was no significant difference in the gender distribution between CALD and non-CALD participants.

There was no significant difference in the age distribution between CALD and non-CALD participants.

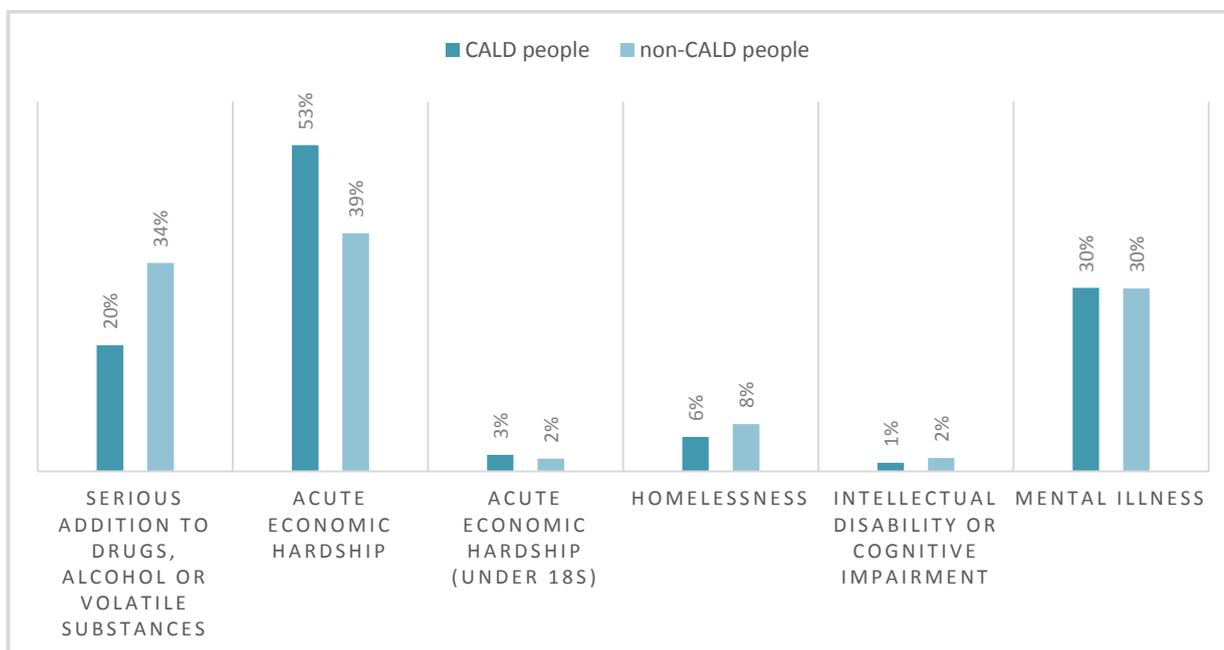
Table 9.1 shows the eligibility criteria for WDOs approved for CALD participants in 2017/18. Figure 9.1 compares this with participants who are not from CALD communities. People from CALD communities were more likely to apply under acute economic hardship, and less likely to apply under the ground of serious addiction to drugs, alcohol or volatile substances.

Table 9.1 - WDOs approved in 2017/18 by eligibility criteria

Eligibility reason	Number of WDOs approved
Acute economic hardship	2,004
Mental illness	1,127
Serious addiction to drugs, alcohol or volatile substances	775
Homelessness	211
Acute economic hardship (under 18s)	101
Intellectual disability or cognitive impairment	52

Note: WDO participants can choose multiple eligibility criteria. Therefore, some WDOs will be counted in multiple categories above.

Figure 9.1 – Eligibility criteria – comparison between CALD and non-CALD community participants



Note: Participants can choose multiple criteria. Some WDOs will be counted in multiple categories.

Table 9.2 shows the activities undertaken by CALD WDO participants in 2017/18. Figure 9.2 compares this with participants who are not from CALD communities.

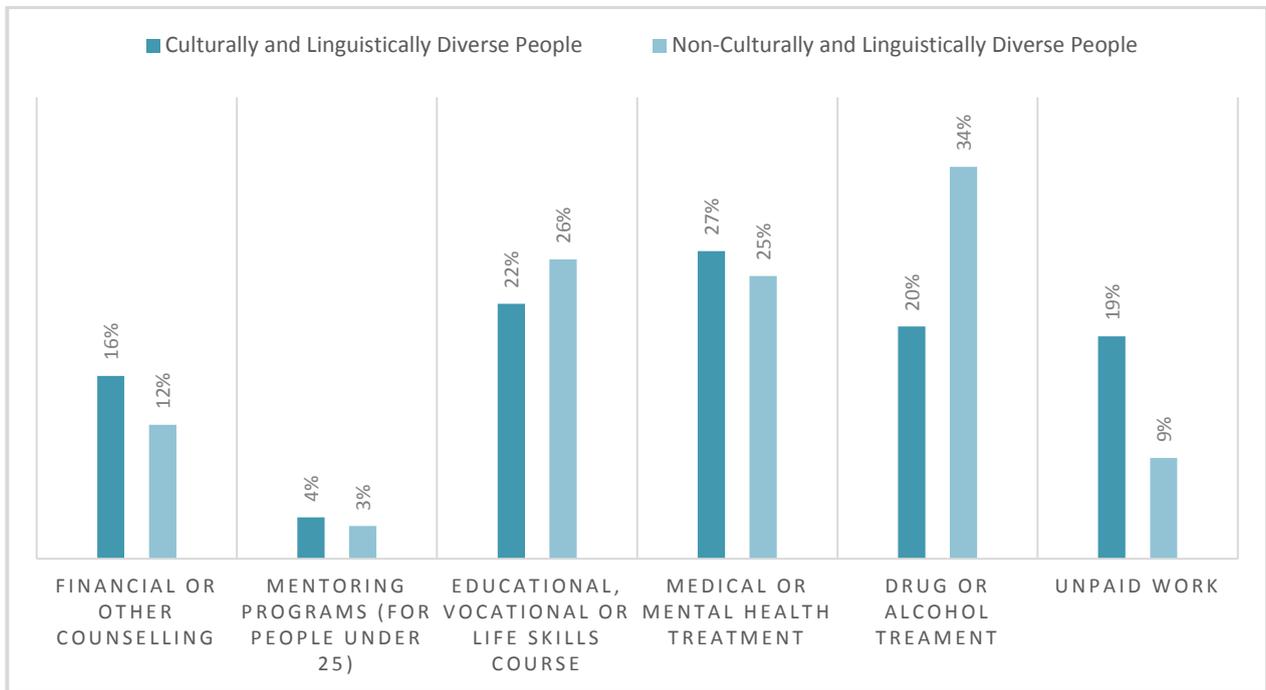
People from CALD communities were more likely than non-CALD people to undertake unpaid work as their WDO activity, and less likely to undertake drug or alcohol treatment.

Table 9.2 - WDOs approved in 2017/18 by activity type

Activity	Number of WDOs approved
Medical or mental health treatment	1,009
Educational, vocational or life skills course	836
Drug or alcohol treatment	762
Unpaid work	730
Financial or other counselling	600
Mentoring (for people under 25)	136

Note: Participants can choose multiple activities. Some WDOs will be counted in multiple categories.

Figure 9.2 – Activities undertaken– comparison between CALD and non-CALD community participants



Note: Participants can choose multiple activities. Some WDOs will be counted in multiple categories.

10

Young people



The *Fines Act 1996* and the WDO Guidelines 2017 provide specific concessions for people under 25 and additional concessions for people under 18. This section of the report provides information about both groups.

Case study

Jamie*, a 17 year old, was referred to the Legal Aid WDO Service through the Parramatta Youth Koori Court. Jamie was homeless and had \$6,784 in unpaid fines, including multiple train fines. Jamie had finished his engagement with Juvenile Justice, was couch surfing, and had no money to pay back his fines.

The WDO Solicitor told Jamie about the 'Learn your Ls' TAFE course offered by the Aboriginal Education & Training Unit at the Mt Druitt campus of the Western Sydney Institute. TAFE Western Sydney has been a WDO sponsor since December 2012 and supports WDOs in an area of high juvenile fine debt. Mt Druitt has the highest overall fine debt in NSW, over \$23 million in unpaid fines. TAFE offers WDOs to all enrolled and eligible students, and is a key WDO sponsor in an area of such high need. Jamie enrolled in the course, got on a WDO with the TAFE, and was able to clear his fine debt at the same time that he studied for his Ls.

* Not his real name

Figure 10.1 shows the age distribution of WDOs approved in 2017/18 - 26% were for people under 25.

Figure 10.1 – WDOs approved in financial year - age distribution

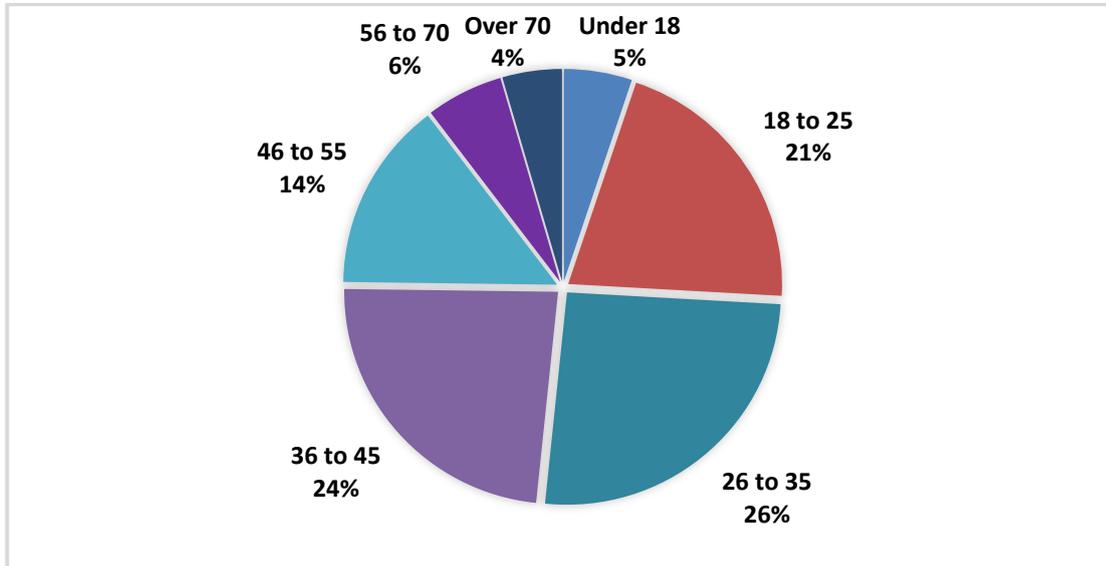


Table 10.1 shows the number of WDOs approved for young people in 2017/18 and the value of debt attached to those WDOs at the time they were approved. The average debt was \$806.35 for under 18s and \$2,259.11 for under 25s.

Table 10.1 - WDOs approved in 2017/18

	Number of WDOs approved		Debt attached to WDOs (at time of approval)	
	Under 18	Under 25	Under 18	Under 25
Jul	125	642	\$ 101,360	\$ 1,419,880
Aug	126	656	\$ 82,320	\$ 1,397,006
Sep	104	566	\$ 91,039	\$ 1,223,719
Oct	111	592	\$ 100,486	\$ 1,440,436
Nov	141	646	\$ 101,687	\$ 1,381,236
Dec	90	395	\$ 95,740	\$ 809,096
Jan	107	563	\$ 79,800	\$ 1,457,695
Feb	150	704	\$ 102,690	\$ 1,319,075
Mar	132	697	\$ 86,080	\$ 1,743,790
Apr	142	609	\$ 137,580	\$ 1,386,685
May	135	782	\$ 114,172	\$ 1,859,838
Jun	113	577	\$ 97,220	\$ 1,344,473
Total	1,476	7,429	\$ 1,190,173	\$ 16,782,929

Note: Under 25 refers to all people under 25, including those under 18.

Gender

The gender distribution for under 25s was comparable to people over 25, with the ratio of males slightly higher for under 25s (66% compared with 64% for over 25s).

Eligibility

Table 10.2 shows the number of WDOs approved for young people under each eligibility reason.

Table 10.2 - WDOs approved in 2017/18 by eligibility reason

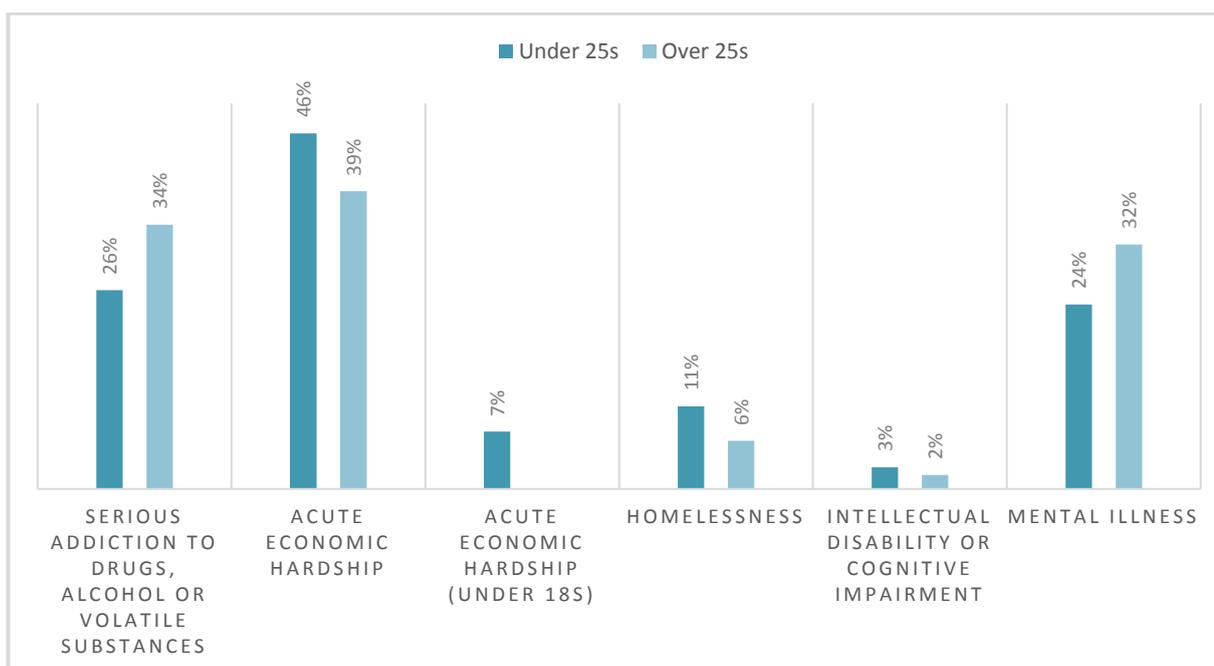
Eligibility reason	Number of approved WDOs	
	Under 18	Under 25
Acute economic hardship	610	3,420
Serious addiction to drugs, alcohol or volatile substances	298	1,918
Mental illness	225	1,774
Homelessness	155	794
Acute economic hardship (under 18s)	547	580
Intellectual disability or cognitive impairment	53	208

Notes: Under 25 refers to all people under 25, including those under 18. Participants can choose multiple criteria - some WDOs will be counted in multiple categories.

The distribution of eligibility criteria was comparable between under 25s and people 25 and over. Young people were more likely to apply under the grounds of acute economic hardship, and less likely to apply under the grounds of serious addiction or mental illness.

Figure 10.2 compares eligibility reasons for young people with people 25 and over.

Figure 10.2 – Eligibility criteria – comparison between under 25 year olds and people 25 and over



Note: Participants can choose multiple criteria. Some WDOs will be counted in multiple categories.

Activities undertaken

Young people were more likely to participate in educational, vocational or life skills courses, and less likely to undertake medical or mental health treatment or drug or alcohol treatment.

There was some variance between the activities completed by young people and people over 25, however, it is important to remember that people 25 and over cannot undertake mentoring, so variance across the other activity categories was expected to be exaggerated.

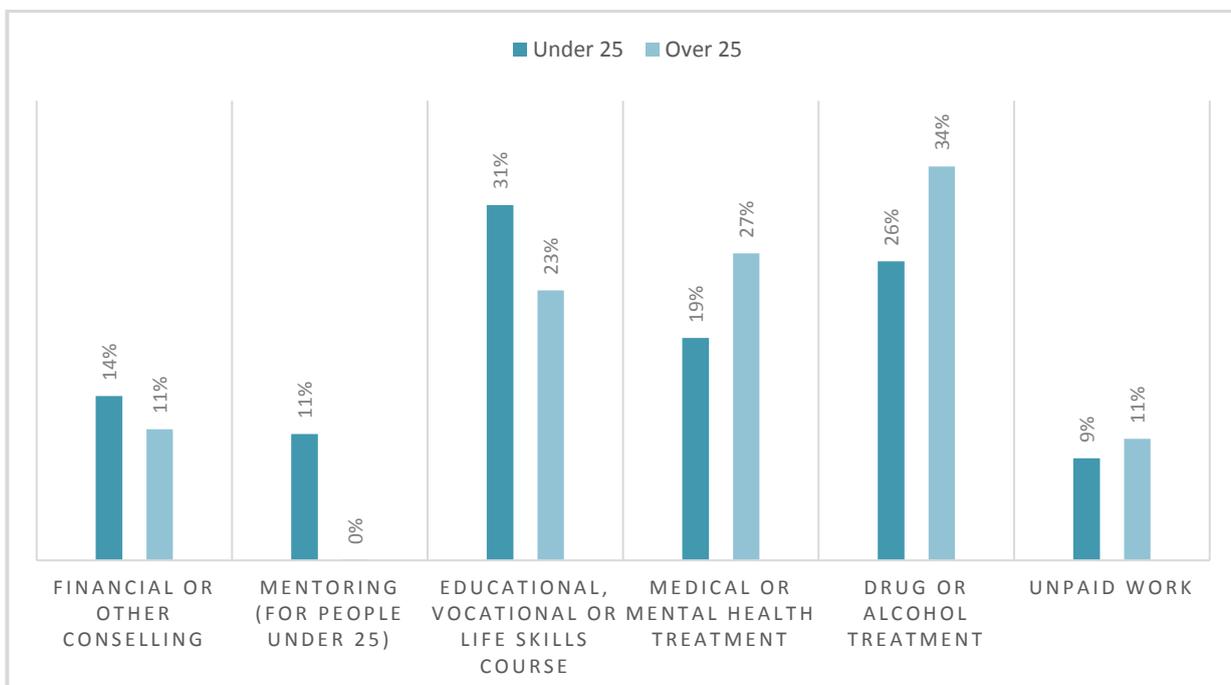
Table 10.3 shows the number of WDOs approved for young people by activity type. Figure 10.3 compares this with people 25 and over.

Table 10.3 - WDOs approved in 2017/18 by activity type

Activity type	Number of approved WDOs	
	Under 18	Under 25
Educational, vocational or life skills course	513	2,298
Drug or alcohol treatment	336	1,934
Medical or mental health treatment	178	1,438
Financial or other counselling	282	1,062
Mentoring (for people under 25)	339	818
Unpaid work	129	661

Notes: Under 25 refers to all people under 25, including those under 18. Participants can choose multiple activities - some WDOs will be counted in multiple categories.

Figure 10.3 – Activities undertaken – comparison between under 25 year olds and people 25 and over



Note: Participants can choose multiple activities. Some WDOs will be counted in multiple categories.

11

Geographic dispersion of approved WDOs

Case study

Greg* is a truck driver living in South Australia with a history of mental health issues. He incurred two truck driving related fines totalling \$1300 which he unsuccessfully attempted to dispute. When his bank account was garnisheed, his frustration and anger escalated.

Greg's Legal Aid solicitor explained that if he engaged in mental health treatment he could clear his fines by \$1000 per month. This motivated Greg to get a new mental health plan with his doctor and psychologist. The solicitor arranged for a third party WDO sponsor to enter the WDO.

Greg was grateful for this assistance and the alternative resolution that was offered to him through a WDO. He admitted that he suffered from anxiety and depression and that the WDO motivated him to see his doctor again for a referral into treatment.

* Not his real name

In 2017/18, scheme partners again focused on expanding WDO services to all NSW locations. Legal Aid NSW and its specialist WDO staff across the state continued to recruit new WDO sponsors and support existing sponsors through training, education and support.

In this section of the report, we have provided heat maps showing the geographic dispersion of WDOs across NSW. Location is determined by the applicants' residential postcodes. This is important, because WDO sponsors often support customers outside of their own location (for example, when undertaking outreach services), so the location of the WDO sponsor would be misleading.

Where the customer elected to use the sponsor address when submitting the WDO application, the sponsor's postcode was used (for example, homeless customers and those who are living in a residential treatment facility).

All WDOs supported by Corrective Services NSW and Juvenile Justice NSW were excluded, as including these WDOs would lead to exaggerated outcomes in locations where there is a correctional facility.

As noted earlier in this report, more than 50% of WDO sponsors are located outside of Sydney.

There has been good coverage across NSW since the scheme commenced. There were only a few Local Government Areas where there has not been a WDO approved. This trend continued into 2017/18.

There was also good geographic coverage across NSW of WDOs approved for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. However, the distribution was less evenly spread compared with the general population. There were Local Government Areas in Northern NSW, North Western NSW, and the South Coast that showed dense activity again in 2017/18, a trend that has continued on from last year.

Figures 11.1-11.4 on the following pages show:

- Spread of all WDOs approved since 2011
- Spread of all WDOs approved in 2017/18
- Spread of WDOs approved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People since 2011
- Spread of WDOs approved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in 2017/18

Figure 11.1 - Approved WDOs by LGA - All WDOs since 01-Jul-2011

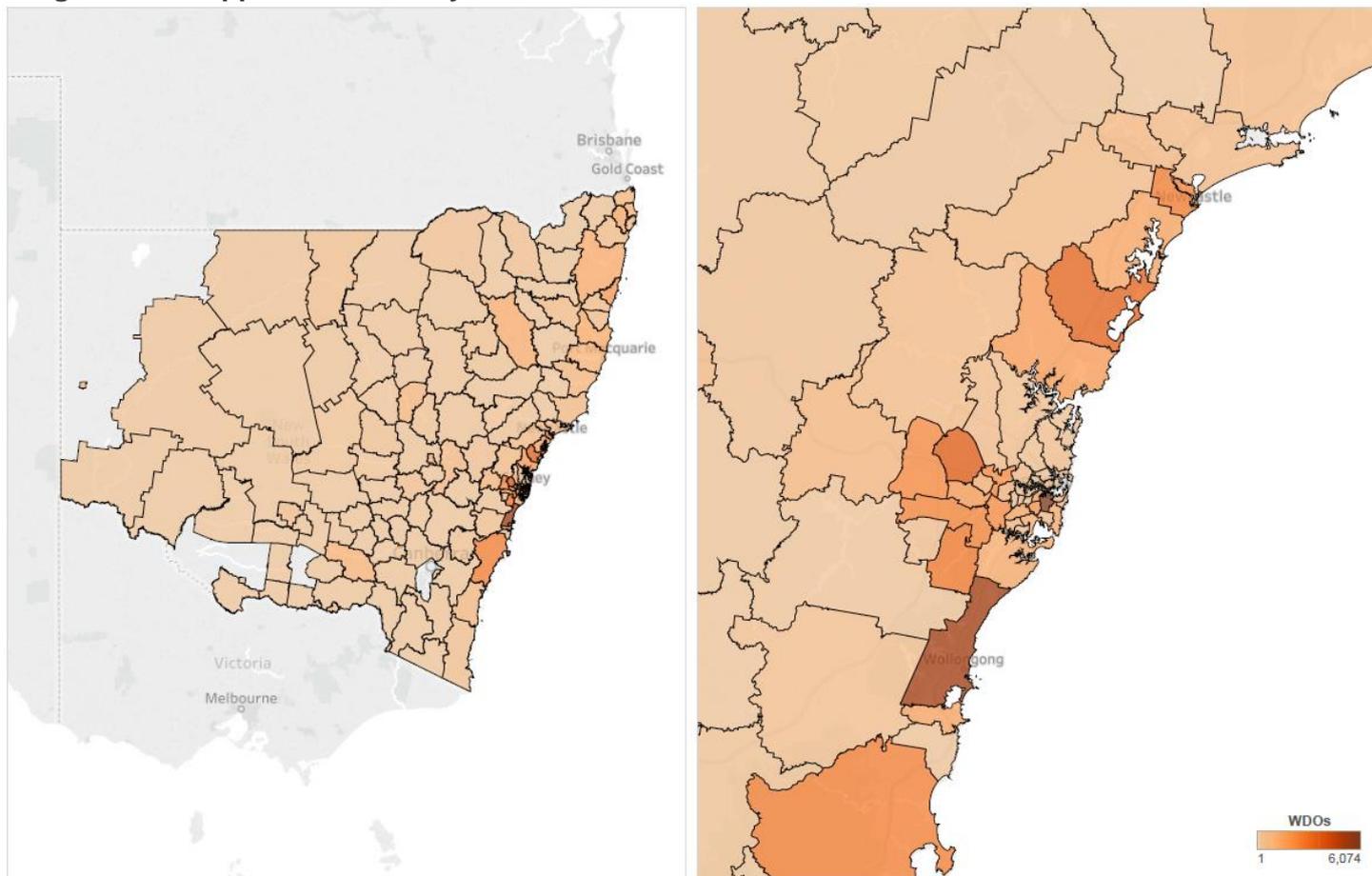


Figure 11.2 - Approved WDOs by LGA - All WDOs in 2017/18

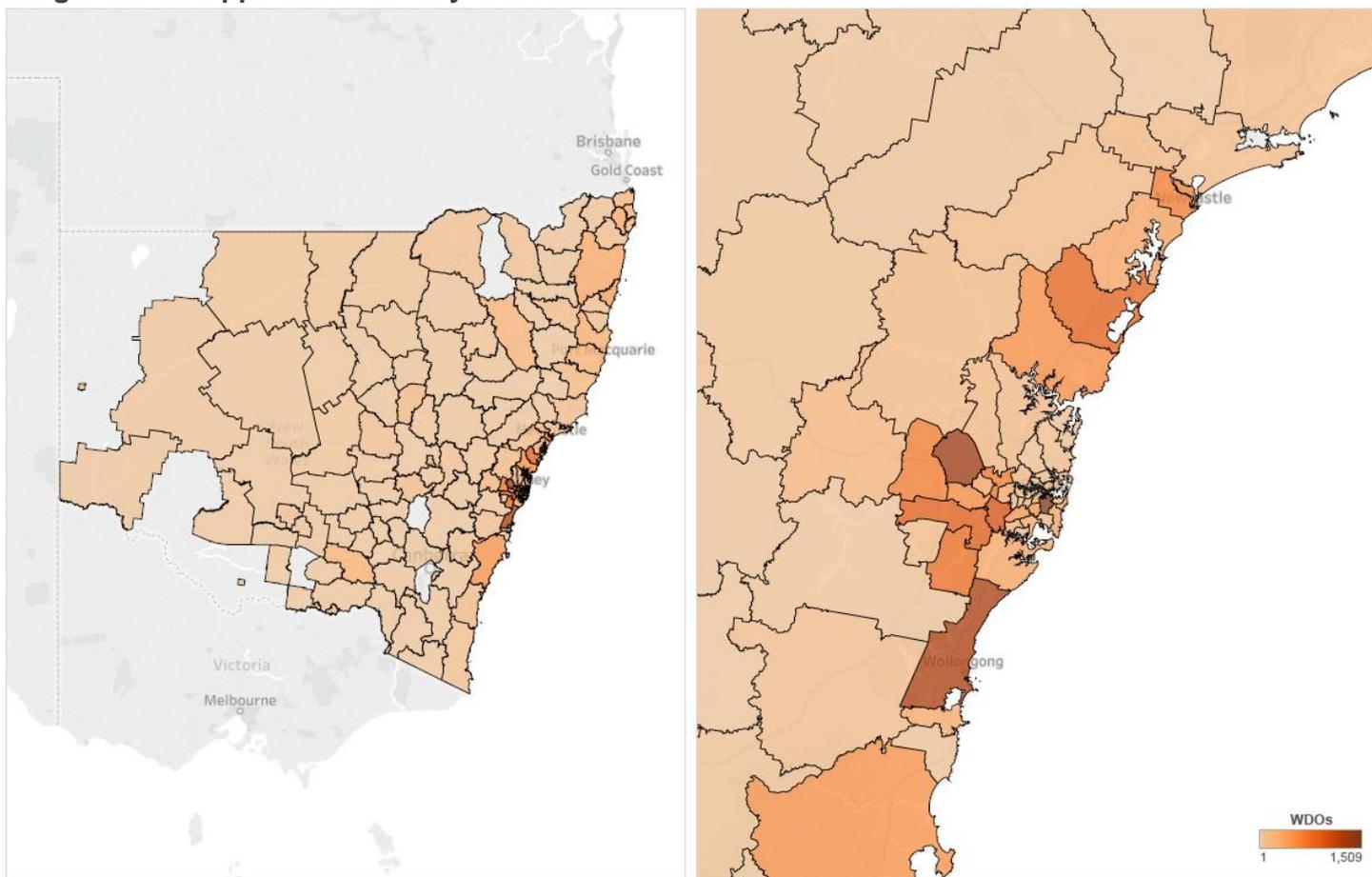


Figure 11.3 - Approved WDOs by LGA - for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders since Jul-2011

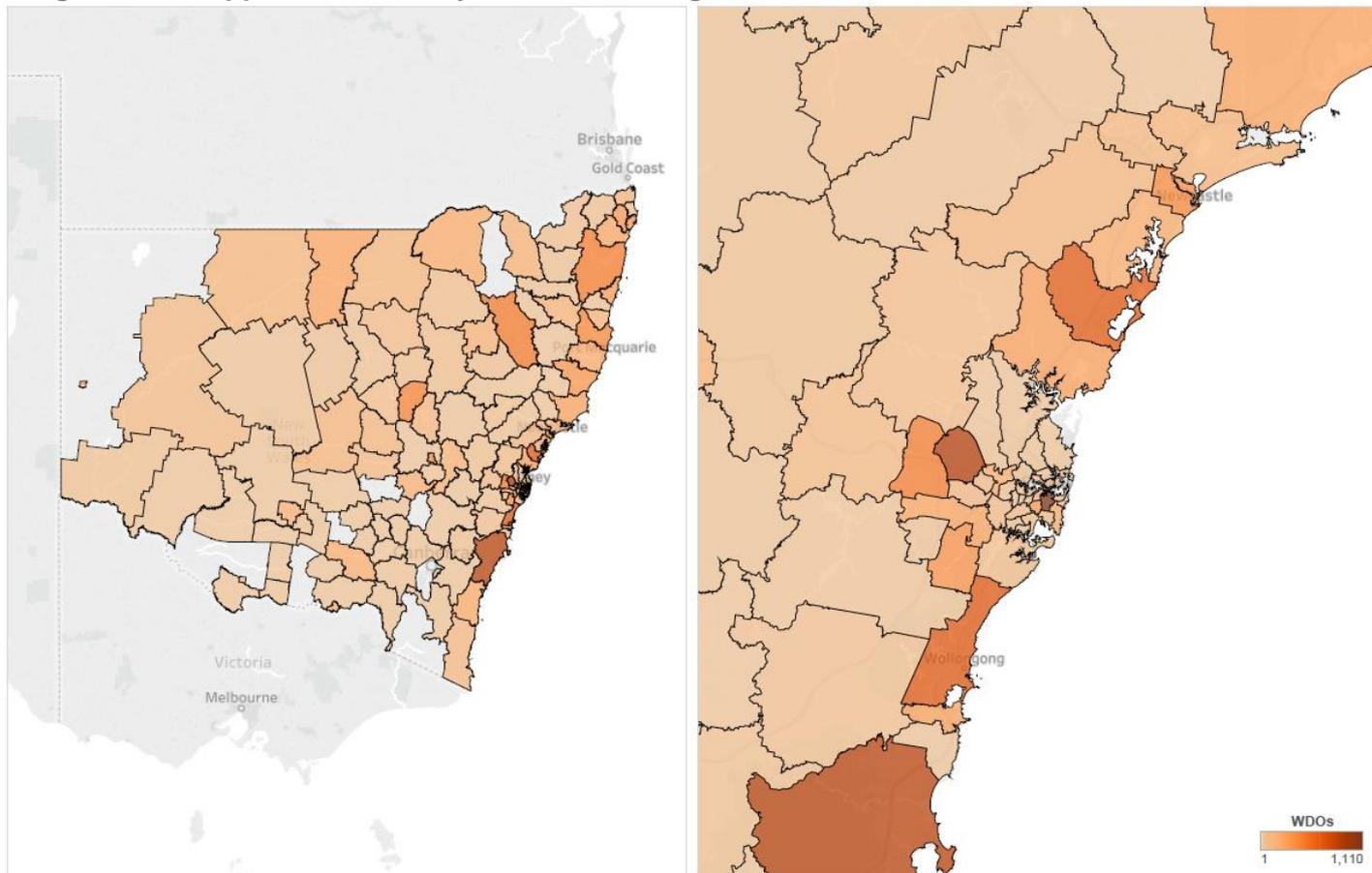


Figure 11.4 - Approved WDOs by LGA - WDOs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in 2017/18

