



# **The Tyranny of Distance...?**

## **Carers in regional and remote areas of Australia**

**Joan Hughes**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Carers Australia**



# Carers Australia

National organisation for carers

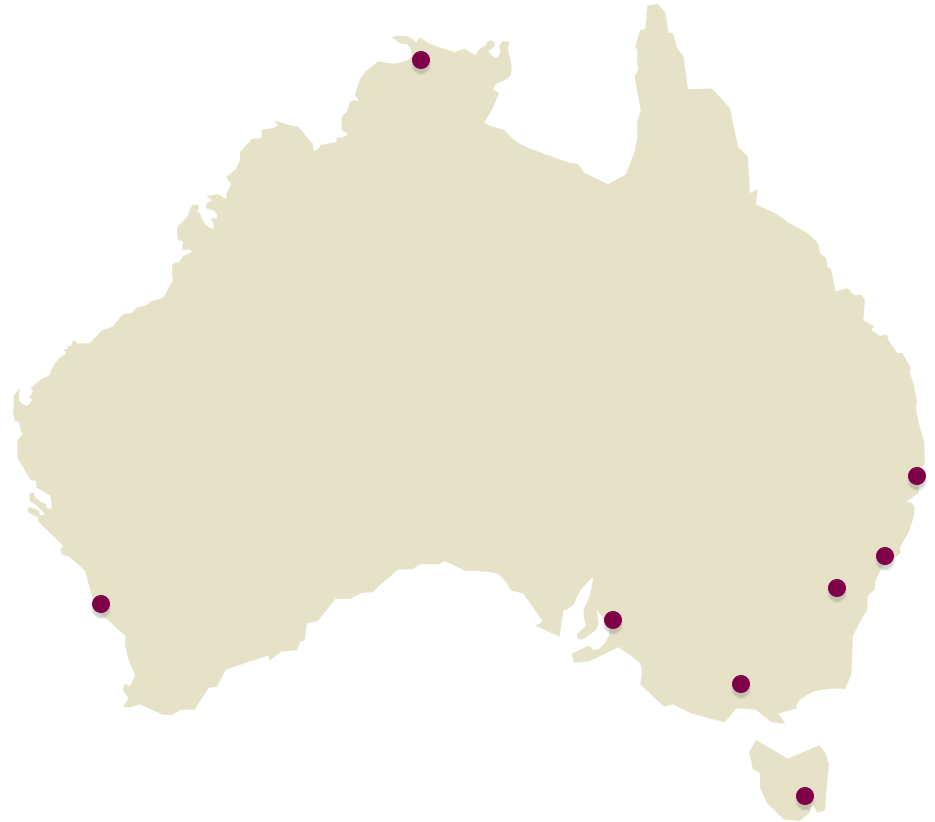
We believe all carers, regardless of their cultural and linguistic differences, age, disability, religion, socioeconomic status, gender identification and geographical location should have the same rights, choices and opportunities as other Australians.

The members of Carers Australia are the state and territory Carers Associations.



# Australia: population and geography

- One of the largest countries geographically
- Total population – 22 million
- One of the lowest population densities
- Majority of population live in urban areas/capital cities on eastern seaboard
- 2.4 million Australians live outside major cities



# The Tyranny of Distance?

- Carers Australia
- Commonwealth Financial Planning
- Australian Institute of Family Studies



**Commonwealth**  
Financial Planning



Australian Government  
Australian Institute of Family Studies

Full report available  
[www.carersaustralia.com.au](http://www.carersaustralia.com.au)

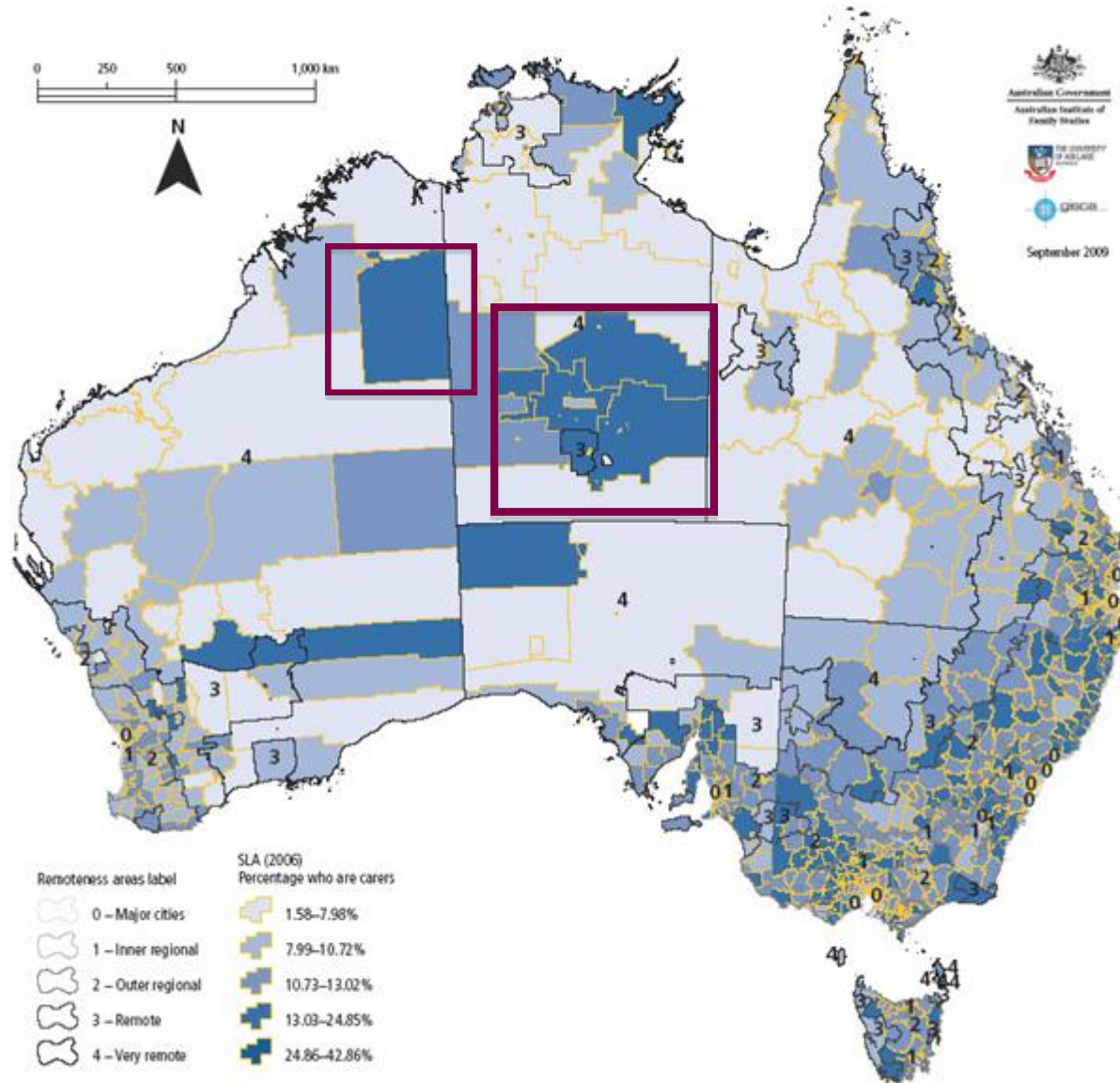


# Remoteness

- Divided into five areas: major cities, inner and outer regional, remote and very remote
- Australian Remoteness Index (ARIA)
  - road distance to major service centres



# Proportion of carers in Australia





# Key focus

- Distribution of carers across Australia
- Carer health and wellbeing
- Indigenous carers
- Age profile
- Access to services
- Stressful life events



# Distribution of carers

- More than 1 in 7 people in regional and remote Australia are unpaid family carers
  - 2.4 million Australians live outside major cities and inner regional areas
  - 363,000 provide unpaid care for family or friends with a disability, long-term illness or who are frail





# Health and wellbeing

- Carers in rural and remote areas have their own health and disability problems
  - 20% of carers in outer regional and remote areas have a profound, severe or moderate disability or long-term health condition
  - compared with 14.3% of carers in major cities and 14.8% of carers in inner regional areas

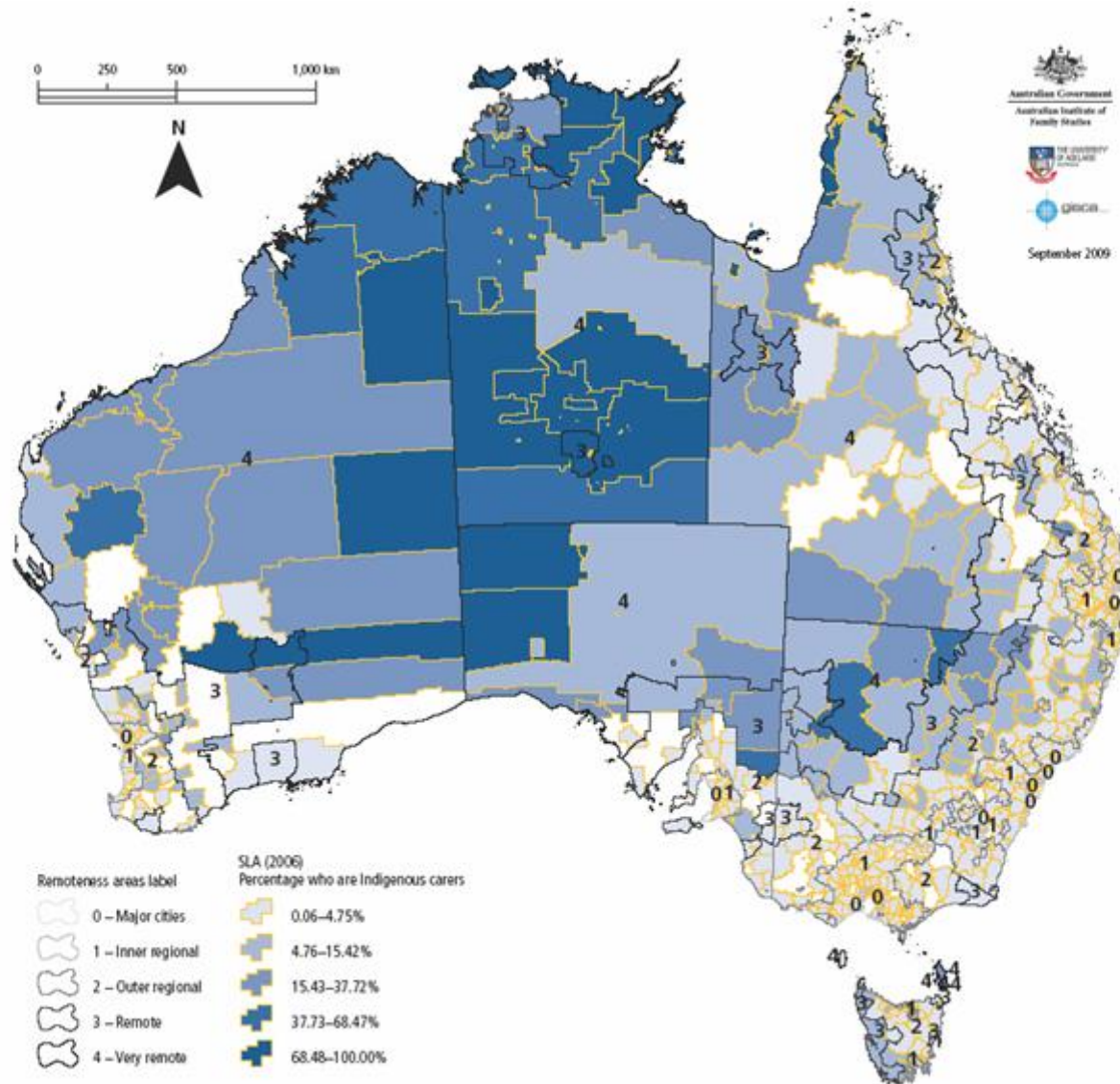


# Indigenous carers

- High proportion of carers in remote and very remote areas are Indigenous Australians
  - 46.8% of carers in very remote areas
  - 12.5% of those in remote areas
  - 4.6% of those in outer regional areas
  - in major cities this proportion is 1% and in inner regional locations 2.2%



# Proportion of Indigenous carers



# Age profile

- Carers in regional and remote areas more likely to be under 25
  - in very remote areas 15.7% of carers were aged under 25 - more than double the national average of 7.6%
  - the rate of young carers in remote areas was 8.3%
  - conversely these locations had far fewer carers aged 65 years and over



# Access to services

- Outer regional and remote carers have more difficulty accessing services
  - 45.3% of carers in these locations reported difficulties
    - in major cities 25.7%
  - distance is a barrier for almost 40% of carers in these locations
    - in major cities 17%
  - 1 in 3 carers in these locations cited difficulty understanding/being understood by service providers – a quarter of carers in other locations





# Stressful life events

- Number of stressful life events associated with poorer mental and physical health outcomes
  - carers experienced 1.71 - 1.80 life events
  - 1.03 – 1.07 for non-carers
  - highest for carers in major cities and outer regional/remote areas





# Summary of findings

- Carers in regional and remote locations show a high degree of vulnerability
  - more likely to be experiencing their own health and disability problems
  - a higher proportion are young, fewer over 65
  - in remote areas a higher proportion are young and Indigenous
  - carers in these areas face greater financial hardship
  - general high levels of disadvantage among Indigenous Australians in these areas influenced findings.

# Implications for health and wellbeing

- Access to services can determine health outcomes
- Many carers also dealing with own health problems
- Indigenous carers doing disproportionate amount of caring
- Younger carers in rural and remote areas may be at risk
- Employment rates have significant impact on ability to afford medical assistance. Low socioeconomic status has relationship to poor health.

# Addressing inequity

- There is a clear and immediate need to address the vulnerability of unpaid family carers in rural and remote areas of Australia by:
  - improving access to services with specific support services for some groups including Indigenous and young carers
  - expanding services including health services for both carers and the people they support
  - raising awareness of carer needs across a wide range of programs and services



**Joan Hughes**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Carers Australia**  
Email: [jhughes@carersaustralia.com.au](mailto:jhughes@carersaustralia.com.au)  
Phone: +61 2 6122 9900  
Facsimile: +61 2 6122 9999

