

Work and Development Order

Annual Report
2020/21



Contents

01	About this report	3		
02	Year on a page	4		
03	Message from the WDO Governance Group	5		
04	Governance & support	6		
05	WDO sponsors	12		
	Introduction	13		
	WDO sponsor approvals in 2020/21	13		
	Location of WDO sponsors in NSW	14		
	WDO sponsors outside of NSW	14		
06	Scheme overview	16		
	Growth in WDOs approved	16		
	Debt cleared through WDOs	17		
	Closed WDOs	18		
07	WDO participants – who are they?	19		
	Age	20		
	Gender	21		
	Centrelink status	22		
	WDO sponsors	22		
08	Eligibility & activities	24		
	Eligibility	25		
	Activities	27		
09	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander People	29		
	Participation	30		
	Demographics	31		
	Eligibility	32		
	Activities	33		
10	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse People	34		
	Participation	37		
	Demographics	38		
	Eligibility	38		
	Activities	39		
11	Young people	40		
	Participation	41		
	Debt cleared	42		
	Demographics	43		
	Eligibility	43		
	Activities	44		
12	Location of WDO participants	45		

01 About this report

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

We are celebrating the 10-year milestone since the scheme was made permanent. We are proud that the scheme is an excellent example of co-design and collaboration between government, community, health and private sectors to deliver real community benefit to the people of NSW.

Under the WDO scheme, vulnerable people who have fines can clear their debts by undertaking activities which benefit them and the community. The scheme is limited to people who have medical, mental health or addiction problems; who have a cognitive impairment or intellectual disability; who are homeless; or who are in financial hardship (including under 18s).

WDOs are supervised by sponsors in the community, including government agencies; non-government organisations (such as charities); or health practitioners (doctors, psychologists, nurses). For-profit organisations may be approved on a case-by-case basis.

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

“Sammy has successfully paid off his debt through the WDO program and has made a commitment through this process not to accumulate any more fines. He really is a success story and enjoys living his life debt and fine free.”

Legal Aid NSW

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 2021. 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 Communities and Justice
www.justice.nsw.gov.au

Revenue NSW
www.revenue.nsw.gov.au

Legal Aid NSW
www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au

02 Year on a page

Celebrating
10 years

Since the WDO scheme was made permanent

Education

700

Participants in webinars focused on fines and WDOs

232

Community Legal Education events delivered by Legal Aid NSW

WDO Sponsors

50.6%

of sponsors located outside of Sydney

43%

WDOs supported by non-government organisations

35,231

calls answered by the Revenue NSW WDO Hotline in 2020/21

314

New sponsors approved in 2020/21

WDO Customers

24%

of WDO applicants were under 25

58%

WDOs involved treatment programs

65%

Applicants who were male

28

Applicants identified with a non-specific gender

WDOs Approved and Debt Resolved

29,508

WDOs approved in 2020/21 (194,098 in total)

52%

of WDOs closed with no remaining debt

\$44.2m

debt resolved in 2020/21 (\$257.8m in total)

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander People

More likely to attend educational or life skills courses under a WDO

19.5%

Applicants who were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Culturally & Linguistically Diverse People

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

18%

Applicants who were CALD

Message from the 03 WDO Governance Group

A Message from the Governance Group

I am pleased to share with you the fifth WDO annual report. It highlights some of our achievements in the WDO scheme despite the ongoing challenges posed by COVID-19. I am proud of the continued support the scheme has been able to provide throughout these difficult times, with over 200,000 WDOs approved. I am also grateful for the ongoing commitment of Revenue NSW, Legal Aid NSW, Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) and importantly, the network of 2,500 sponsors across NSW.

Upcoming 2021 Guidelines

The WDO Governance Group has finalised its review of the current WDO Guidelines and looks forward to publishing the new Guidelines by the end of 2021. This is the result of a coordinated and dedicated effort to review and implement the recommendations of a 2019/2020 internal audit, and subsequent consultation with scheme stakeholders including our sponsors.

Strategic Plan

The WDO Governance Group is currently developing a three-year strategic plan, to ensure we remain focused on achieving the scheme's objectives. That strategic plan will also incorporate feedback from sponsors about how they have engaged with the scheme to date, and how they would like to see the scheme to evolve, including discussions at the Strategic Planning Workshops on 23-24 September 2021.

Operations Advisory Group

Following consultation with sponsors, the WDO Governance Group has endorsed the establishment of a new Operations Advisory Group. The Advisory Group will be a forum for Legal Aid NSW, the Department of Communities and Justice and Revenue NSW to engage more easily with sponsors and stakeholders and to better understanding the scheme from the perspective of participants.

Ongoing COVID Support

COVID-19 continues to prevent the delivery of many of the services usually offered by our sponsors. Transitioning from face-to-face to telephone and online support has had some positive impacts: some vulnerable people have improved their access to WDO activities including mental health treatment, drug and alcohol and other counselling, mentoring and voluntary work in community.

The pandemic has also compounded existing vulnerabilities, with some of our clients facing significant hardship as the result of Public Health Order restrictions, and others attracting fines for breaches of those Orders. We are thankful for those sponsors who have been able to continue to deliver activities and services and provide support to the communities impacted by these restrictions.

Legal Aid NSW continues to host webinars in partnership with Revenue NSW and the Department of Communities and Justice, covering issues related to the pandemic including Public Health Orders, their enforcement and impact on sponsors and clients.

More information on these webinars is available on the Legal Aid NSW website: <https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/workshops>

Thank you

On behalf of the WDO Governance Group, I again extend my sincere appreciation to all WDO sponsors for your ongoing contribution to the scheme. Thank you for your dedication to improving the lives of WDO participants.

Natasha Mann

Executive Director, Strategy and Programs
Justice Strategy and Programs
Department of Communities and Justice

04 Governance & support

In this section of the report, we have provided information about how the Work and Development Order (WDO) scheme is governed, the role of partnering agencies in the administration of the scheme and the vision for the scheme in the coming year. In this section of the report, scheme partners include the Department of Communities and Justice, Revenue NSW, Legal Aid NSW and the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT).

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 Communities and Justice, Revenue NSW, Legal Aid NSW and the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT). The Group meets regularly, and the meetings are chaired by the Department of Communities and Justice.

Responsibilities

The WDO Governance Group is responsible for:

- Setting strategic priorities for program development and expansion; for the review and modification of WDO Guidelines and for WDO sponsor and client participation
- Amendment, review and approval of program guidelines and core program documents
- Guiding WDO sponsor and client education and training
- Oversight of program audits and evaluations
- Identifying and managing program risk and program compliance
- Providing information, guidance and advice to departmental Executives, Ministers and any sub-groups, committees and working groups
- Reviewing, investigating and resolving complex program issues and sponsor or client non-compliance

2022 – 2025 vision

The WDO Governance Group has a clear vision for how the scheme will evolve into 2022 and beyond. For the first time since the WDO schemes launch, a 3-year strategy was developed. This 3-year strategy was the result of the WDO Strategy Planning Workshop, which included a sponsor survey, and a review of the program logic. The 2-day planning workshop was very interactive, (despite being completely virtual due to Covid restrictions) and included contribution from team members across all stakeholders involved in the scheme. Some clear focus areas were agreed:

- **Excellence in client focus** to deliver sustainable sponsorship, (supply and support), the right program settings and effective communication
- **Exemplary governance** to deliver clear roles and responsibilities within the partnership framework and a new guidance framework
- **Broader influence beyond our span of control** to deliver transformative partnerships, for breaking the cycle of disadvantage

A significant review of the WDO Guidelines took place in 2021, resulting in changes to the Guidelines. These changes will be published and implemented in the new year.

Department of Communities and Justice

The Department of Communities and Justice governs the WDO scheme by:

- chairing the WDO Governance Group
- reviewing and monitoring the WDO Guidelines
- approving WDO sponsors and ensuring compliance in partnership with Governance Group agencies
- reviewing the risk management framework and issue resolution in partnership with Revenue NSW, Legal Aid NSW and the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT).
- administration and engagement of program audit and review of the sponsor compliance protocol

- supporting the investigation of sponsor issues of non-compliance
- evaluating the WDO scheme

The Department of Communities and Justice helps to expand the scheme by working together with Legal Aid NSW to recruit sponsors at a high level, particularly within government.

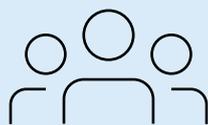
The Department of Communities and Justice also works to promote the scheme to culturally and linguistically diverse community members, people with a disability, support workers and sponsors. Covid-19 had a significant impact on delivering community information events in 2020/21.

DCJ Multicultural Engagement

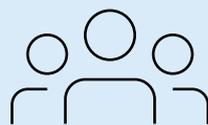
Community Information Events 2020/21



Community Information



COVID-19 Information



TAFE NSW Events



Law Information

6 education events supporting 571 Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Community Members

Revenue NSW

Revenue NSW supports WDO sponsors and customers through the WDO Hotline.

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 a team of specialist staff who are passionate about the scheme. Sponsors often give positive feedback about the personalised service provided on the WDO Hotline.

The WDO Hotline was still busy even though the call volume was less than the previous year, this was due to the impacts of COVID-19. In 2020/21, Revenue NSW answered 35,231 calls on the WDO Hotline.

Revenue NSW is also responsible for:

- sponsor administration and systems, including online application, sponsor register, Hotline and self-service portal functionality
- state-wide WDO sponsor and potential sponsor engagement
- quality assurance and regular testing of sponsor and client records in line with agreed outcomes of the Risk Management framework
- working with partner agencies to ensure program compliance and timely escalation of fraudulent matters
- communication of information to sponsors and provision of training regarding the Self-Service Portal
- debt resolution decisions
- reporting and analysis of WDO data

Revenue NSW

2020/21

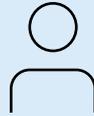
Since the commencement of the Hardship Support Program in 2020, the Program has delivered a range of initiatives for First Nations peoples and vulnerable youth.



11,700

Customers sent tailored letters and text messages

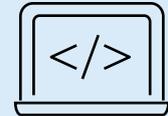
using culturally appropriate language to youth and regional/remote customers aimed at encouraging earlier engagement.



31

Private Practice Social Workers Registered as WDO Sponsors

increasing access to medical and mental health treatment to customers in regional and remote areas.

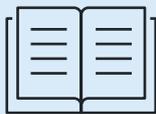


Community Action Plan

Online tool launched

to assist communities in designing a collaborative approach to tackling fines debt based on their individual community's needs.

Hardship Support Program



89,700

Community education sessions

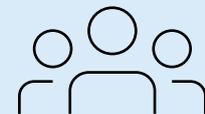
without the need for a lump sum payment, removing barriers to low income and vulnerable customers.



11,200

Sponsor toolkit

Including checklists, practical guides, and templates to support WDO sponsors to effectively administer the WDO scheme.



925

First Nations customers helped

by Revenue NSW's specialised First Nations team.

Hardship Support Program

This program of work aims to break the cycle of disadvantage for customers who may find themselves in situations of vulnerability. Through engagement with communities across NSW, valuable insights into key themes and customer experience were identified, highlighting the disproportionate impact the fines system can have on First Nations peoples and vulnerable youth.

Collaborating across government, non-government and community organisations, a program of work to co-design and deliver solutions was established to break the cycle of disadvantage for these customer groups. The program has been delivered with a focus on ensuring the customer is at the centre, helping us to build strong partnerships with communities and generate a new narrative with Government.

Since the commencement of the program in 2020, the Program has delivered a range of initiatives for First Nations peoples and vulnerable youth.

As at 30 June 2021, the team had

- implemented policy change to allow social workers to become WDO sponsors, increasing access to medical and mental health treatment to customers in regional and remote areas in particular. As a result, there are 31 social workers in private practice now registered as WDO sponsors
- implemented a specialised First Nations team to provide culturally safe services, assisting 925 First Nations customers with fines since its establishment in October 2020.
- deferred the suspension of driving licences as a first response for unpaid fines for people who live in regional and remote areas, helping more than 11,200 customers to retain connection to communities, employment and services (since October 2020)
- lifted sanctions for over 89,700 customers without the need for a lump sum payment, removing barriers to low income and vulnerable customers (since October 2020)
- tailored age and culturally appropriate communications to youth and regional/remote customers, with over 11,700 letters and text messages sent to encourage earlier engagement to assist them in finding an appropriate resolution for their outstanding debt.
- established strategic Community Action Plans aimed at preventing fines and reducing debt encouraging improved service delivery and local accountability in collaboration with communities. Community Action Plans have been activated in three out of five targeted communities.

- provided communities with data, enabling them to address specific areas that are contributing to fines debt within their community.
- launched the Community Action Plan tool online for any community to download to assist them in designing a collaborative approach to tackling fines debt based on their individual community's needs.
- recognised customer assessments from eligible community partners, to streamline and reduce the need for customers to submit documentation multiple times with different organisations to access relief.

Legal Aid NSW

The Work and Development Order Service (WDO Service) at Legal Aid NSW was established in 2012. Staff in six locations across NSW provide fines advice, facilitate WDO placements for vulnerable clients and support the implementation and expansion of the WDO scheme across NSW, including areas of high fines debt and social disadvantage.

The WDO Service recruits and trains sponsors, delivers an extensive community legal education program including outreach events, face to face training and webinars. Lawyers also provide fines advice and assistance services at fines clinics, outreach events and by phone.

Figure 4.2 – Locations of Legal Aid NSW WDO Service



Legal Aid NSW is responsible for:

- sponsor expansion and local engagement
- education training and promotion of the WDO scheme
- publications and communication material
- complying with actions assigned in the risk management framework and issue resolution in partnership with Revenue NSW and the Department of Communities and Justice
- supporting the investigation of sponsor issues of non-compliance

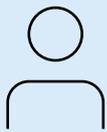
Fines and WDO work continue to be one of the highest categories of work done across the Legal Aid NSW Civil Law Division. There were 3,595 instances of fines and WDO assistance provided to clients and WDO Sponsors during the year. Results are shared on the next page.

In the year ahead, the WDO Service will review and refine its service model to improve access to the WDO Scheme for vulnerable and disadvantaged clients.

Legal Aid NSW

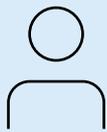
2020/21

Fines and WDO work continues to be one of the highest categories of work done across the Legal Aid NSW civil law division. There were almost 3,595 instances of fines and WDO assistance provided to individual clients during the year



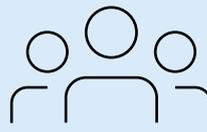
Penalty notice and court fines

474 advices
287 minor assistance



Enforcement orders and victims restitution debts

412 advices
358 minor assistance



WDO matters

1,215 advices
826 minor assistance



Public Health Order and COVID fines

16 advices
7 minor assistance

Legal Aid NSW WDO Service



232

Community education sessions

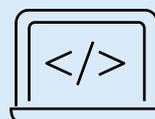
Including outreach events, training, and webinars.



Launched

Sponsor toolkit

Including checklists, practical guides, and templates to support WDO sponsors to effectively administer the WDO scheme.



6

Law webinars

On fines and the WDO scheme, to 700+ WDO sponsors, advocates and community workers.



WDO News

Regular updates and special alerts

Featuring sponsor and client stories.

Legal Aid NSW – LawAccess NSW

In July 2020, Legal Aid NSW officially merged with LawAccess NSW who provided a significant amount of information and advice to people with fines-related legal issues:

Table 4.1 shows the number of services recorded by LawAccess NSW in 2020/21 for fines and victims restitution debt matters.

Table 4.1 – LawAccess NSW - Fines and victims restitution matters 2020/21

Matter type	Information	Advice
Penalty notices and court fines	1,643	168
Public Health Orders	106	87
State debts and victims restitution orders	19	2
Work and Development Orders	43	1

In the above table, ‘information’ refers to legal information provided over the telephone. ‘Advice’ refers to legal advice provided to priority customers over the telephone. Read more about LawAccess NSW’s services at:

<https://www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au/Pages/about-us/how-we-work.aspx>

Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT)

In 2020/21 the Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS) continued to provide advice and support to the WDO Governance Group. The scheme has maintained a strong connection with Indigenous communities across NSW. In 2020/21, 19.5% of WDO clients have identified as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin. The ALS continues to support the scheme by:

- Providing advice on the scheme ensuring access and equity for Aboriginal people
- Promoting the WDO scheme to Aboriginal specific services
- Expansion and local engagement, particularly across Regional NSW
- Supporting the recruitment, education, and training of sponsors.

Let us know your thoughts!

Any ideas, compliments, complaints, good news stories, or other feedback can be shared with the WDO Governance Group by completing a feedback form at:

https://www.apps08.osr.nsw.gov.au/customer_service/forms/wdo/feedback

05 WDO sponsors

Sponsor story: HopeCare Bathurst



HopeCare is a Bathurst based not-for-profit agency whose creative projects provide compassionate solutions to address disadvantage. Utilising the concept of 'waste to welfare' HopeCare has developed a raft of sustainable projects that generate income for advocacy and support. HopeCare has been a WDO Sponsor since 2013, clearing close to \$70,000 of fines debt through volunteer hours. When Justin Fowler approached HopeCare to volunteer, he had not been in the workforce for three years. This was due to a physical disability that rendered him unable to work in his chosen field as a qualified carpenter.

Justin started off his WDO at the Junktion and as an Assistant on their Home Maintenance Service for Seniors Citizens in 2013. Working with HopeCare for two days per week as part of the WDO Scheme was an ideal way to gradually reintroduce Justin back into work related routines. Before long Justin was volunteering at the Junktion on days that were not rostered for his WDO. By this time Justin had become

an integral part of the team, bringing a range of useful trade skills to the operation. It came to HopeCare's attention that due to his disability Justin was eligible for a supported employment program. This supported employment program provided him some paid work on the days where he was not completing his WDO. Upon completing his WDO Justin was offered a fulltime contract with HopeCare.

Eight years on, Justin is now the Manager of the Junktion Reuse Recovery Centre and Assistant Operations Manager of HopeCare. He is also a critical part of Food Rescue Central West, carrying out our logistics and warehousing operations as well as driving hundreds of tonnes of rescued food throughout the Central West to communities in need.

Introduction

All data in this section of the report is based on data as at 30 June 2021. It does not include sponsor applications that were submitted but not approved on 30 June 2021.

WDO sponsor approvals in 2020/21

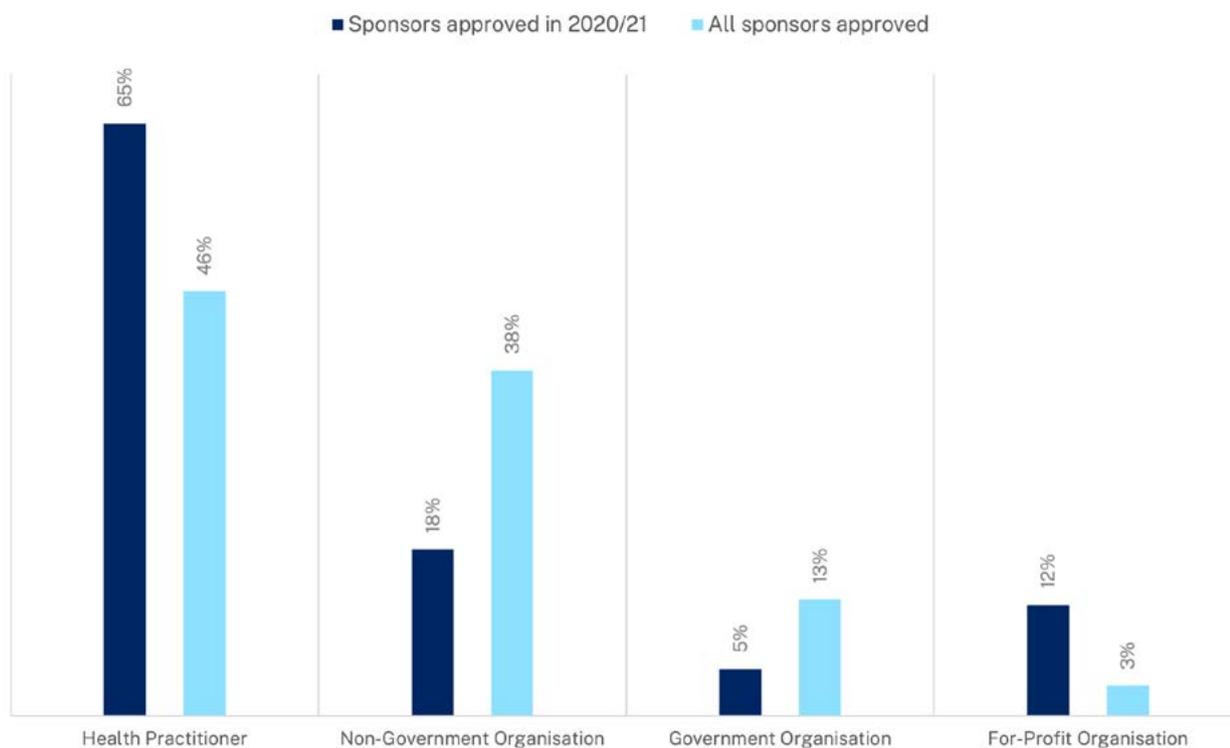
In 2020/21, 314 new WDO sponsors were approved. In total, there were 2,586 approved sponsors as at 30 June 2021.

Table 5.1 – Approved WDO sponsors by type

Sponsor type	Sponsors approved in 2020/21	All sponsors approved
Health practitioner	203	1,198
Non-government organisation	57	975
Government organisation	16	328
For-profit organisation	38	85
Total	314	2,586

Figure 5.1 compares the types of WDO sponsors approved and shows that in 2020/21 a higher percentage of health practitioners were approved compared with other types.

Figure 5.1 – Comparison of sponsor approvals in 2020/21



Location of WDO sponsors in NSW

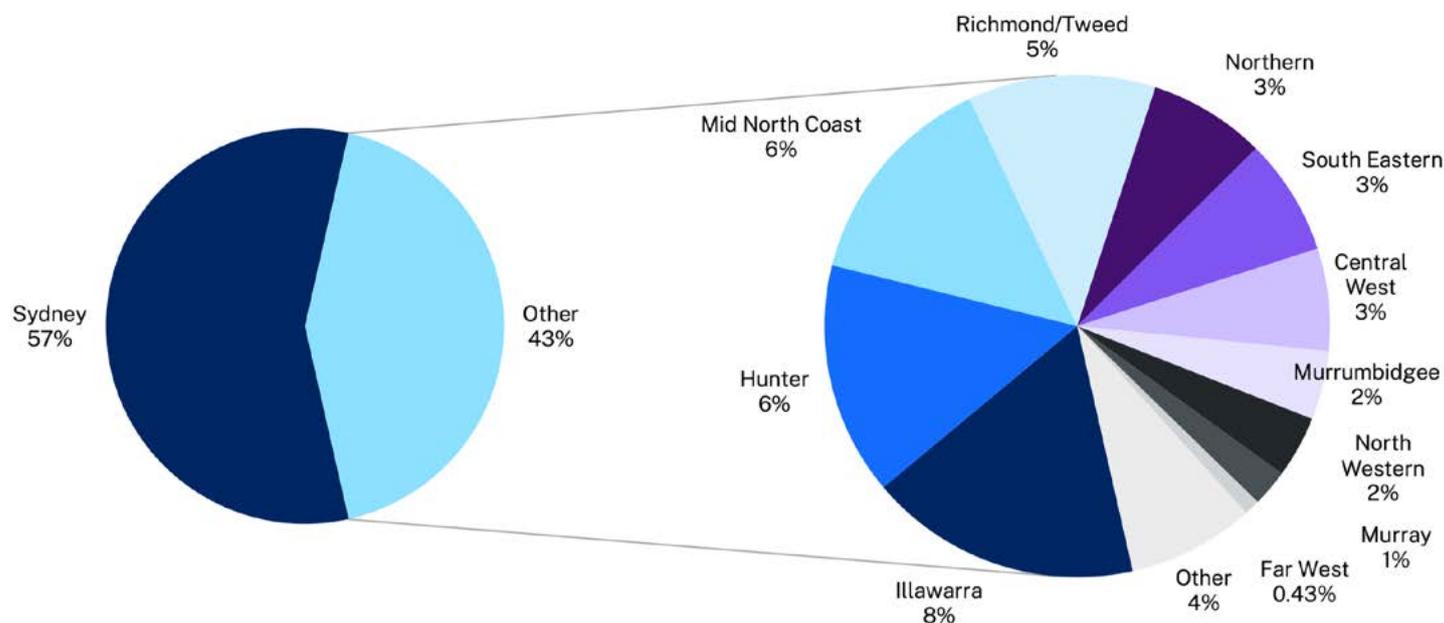
Table 5.2 shows the number of approved WDO sponsors by NSW statistical division.

Table 5.2 – Approved WDO sponsors by statistical division

Statistical division	Sponsors approved - 2020/21	Approved sponsors - total
Sydney	205	1,471
Illawarra	21	193
Hunter	15	166
Mid North Coast	18	156
Richmond/Tweed	13	133
Northern	9	83
South Eastern	7	83
Central West	5	73
Murrumbidgee	1	49
North Western	4	44
Murray	1	26
Far West	1	11
Other	13	90
Total	313	2,578

Table 5.2 and Figure 5.3 show the geographic dispersion of all approved WDO sponsors in NSW as at 2020/21. The statistical division or area is determined by the WDO sponsor's postcode; however, we acknowledge that many WDO sponsors support WDOs for customers outside of their own area.

Figure 5.2 – Geographic dispersion of all approved WDO sponsors in NSW



Sponsor spotlight: TAFE NSW

TAFE NSW is one of the largest WDO providers in NSW. In this section of the report, we shine a spotlight on two TAFE NSW campuses in NSW who have supported their clients to resolve fines through participation in education.



TAFE NSW spotlight: Lismore



At a Youth Interagency meeting held at TAFE NSW Lismore, the Legal Aid WDO Lismore team spoke to the group about fines debt and WDOs. Sarah, a community worker at the

meeting told the group about her personal experience with the WDO scheme. When she was younger, she worked off her fines by being sponsored on a WDO by TAFE NSW. Through the scheme she was able to use her studies to clear her fines debt. She is now working at Mission Australia helping vulnerable youth. This organisation is also a WDO sponsor and offers their clients the same opportunity to reduce their fines debt.

This is a lovely story about the impact that WDOs can have in the community – Sarah worked off her fines while getting qualified to work with vulnerable people. She now works in an organisation that supports clients on WDOs too.

TAFE NSW spotlight: Ultimo



Yadira is 39 years old, a single mother who came to Australia to start a new life from Peru on a Humanitarian visa.

When she arrived in Australia she didn't understand the road rules and accumulated almost \$5,000 in traffic fines. She also had a licence and business restriction in place for ignoring her fines. Yadira didn't know what to do and she approached Legal Aid NSW and was advised about the Work Development Order scheme at TAFE NSW.

She enrolled into a Make-up course at TAFE NSW to learn new skills but as she was paying off her fines she extended her study to a Beauty course and then to a Nail course. This allowed her to complete two WDOs and obtain the qualifications that could help her gain employment and pursue her career goals.

As soon as Yadira engaged in the WDO her licence and business restrictions were lifted. Yadira was gifted a car to help her as a single mum. She is on her Learner's so she can continue learning to drive.

One thing that stood out with Yadira was her 'fighting' spirit and her positive attitude towards the WDO scheme. She followed all the WDO guidelines, provided her supporting documents, attended classes and never complained. She was determined to pay off her fines and obtain her qualifications. Her dream is to own her own beauty salon and she can't wait to study another Beauty course in the next semester.

"I really hope that WDO program continues through TAFE for many more years".

06 Scheme overview

Growth in WDOs approved

For the first year since the WDO scheme commenced, there was a decline in the number of WDOs approved in 2020/21. We believe this can be attributed to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. As at 30 June 2021, a total of 194,098 WDOs have been approved. Figure 6.1 shows the number of WDOs approved per year since the scheme was made permanent.

Table 6.1 – WDOs approved per year since 2012

Financial year	Number of WDOs approved	Increase on previous year
2020/21	29,508	-8%
2019/20	32,150	3%
2018/19	31,286	13%
2017/18	27,676	23%
2016/17	22,413	26%
2015/16	17,804	29%
2014/15	13,774	22%
2013/14	11,310	63%
2012/13	6,931	456%
2011/12	1,246	-
Total	194,098	-

Table 6.1 shows the number of WDOs approved per financial year and the rate at which the scheme has grown since it commenced.

Figure 6.1 – WDOs approved by financial year

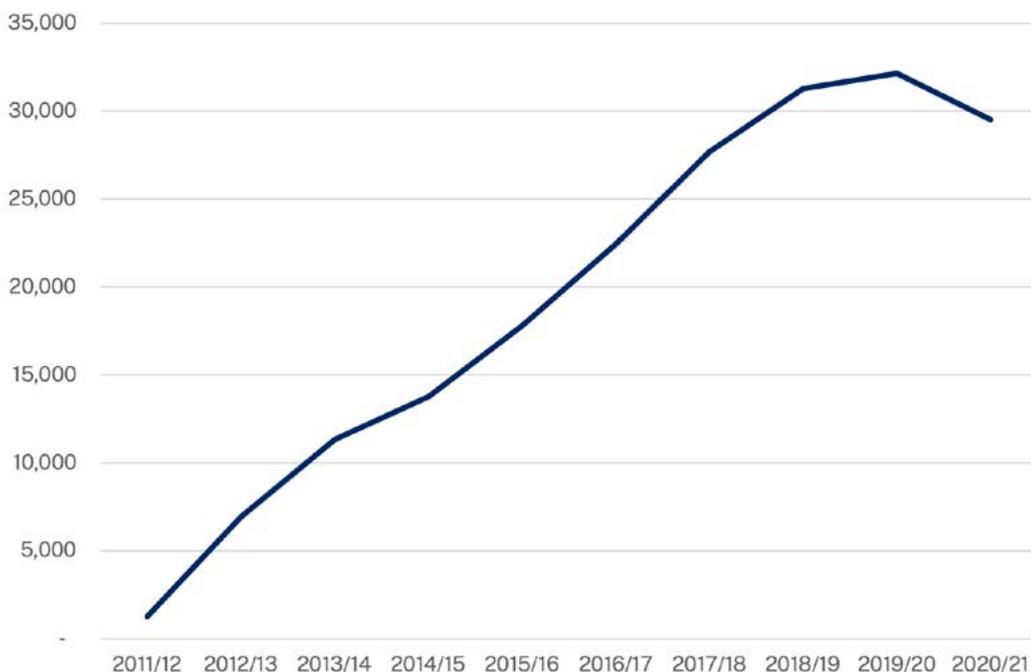


Table 6.2 shows the number of WDOs approved for each month in 2020/21 and the value of debt attached to those WDOs at the time they were approved.

Table 6.2 – WDOs approved in 2020/21

Approval month	Number of WDOs	Value of debt (at time of approval)
Jul	2,070	\$7,913,454
Aug	2,309	\$8,414,618
Sep	2,503	\$9,023,959
Oct	2,370	\$7,901,160
Nov	2,569	\$8,772,195
Dec	2,014	\$7,157,551
Jan	2,069	\$7,228,326
Feb	2,801	\$9,377,299
Mar	3,038	\$10,465,957
Apr	2,423	\$8,199,550
May	2,737	\$9,592,490
Jun	2,605	\$10,388,159
Grand Total	29,508	\$104,434,718

Debt cleared through WDOs

In total, \$257.8m of debt has been cleared through WDOs since the scheme commenced.

Please note, the figures provided in this section of the report are as at 30 June 2021. The value of debt cleared through WDO activity in 2020/21 will continue to increase as WDO sponsors submit their reports of WDO activity.

Table 6.3 – Debt cleared through WDOs

Financial year	Value of debt cleared
2020/21	\$44,257,236
2019/20	\$45,971,536
2018/19	\$42,980,386
2017/18	\$34,667,684
2016/17	\$27,600,406
2015/16	\$22,023,512
2014/15	\$17,304,543
2013/14	\$14,663,725
2012/13	\$7,640,939
2011/12	\$676,856
Total	\$257,786,823

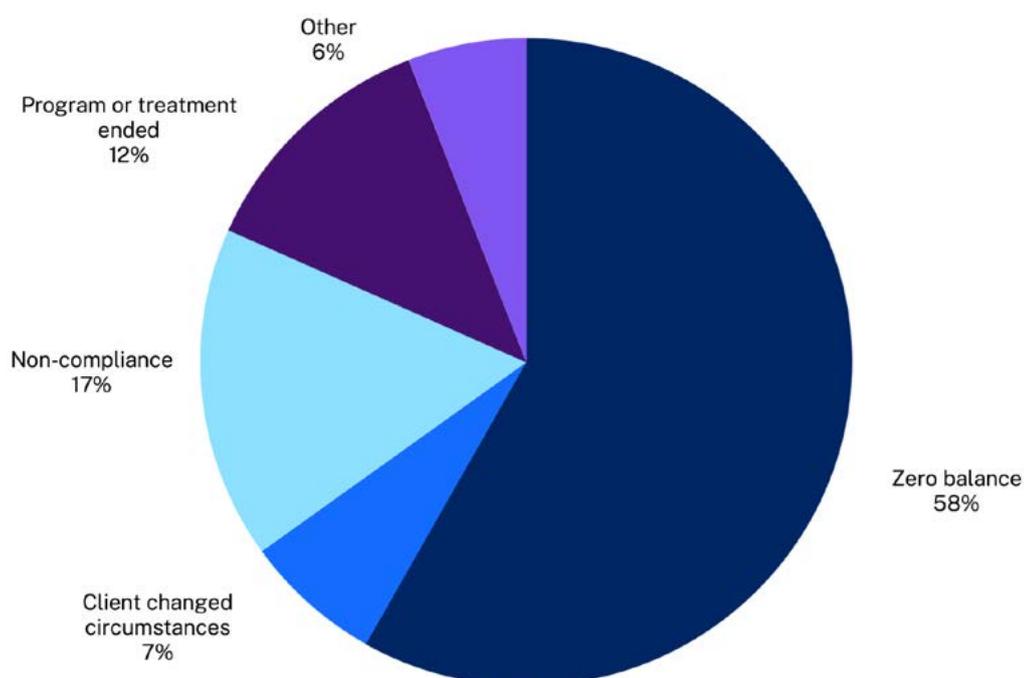
Table 6.4 – Debt cleared through WDOs in 2020/21

Month	Value of debt cleared
Jul	\$3,478,678
Aug	\$3,471,696
Sep	\$3,692,227
Oct	\$3,763,378
Nov	\$3,945,045
Dec	\$3,716,835
Jan	\$3,166,824
Feb	\$3,503,767
Mar	\$4,111,610
Apr	\$3,570,283
May	\$3,973,854
Jun	\$3,926,041
Total	\$44,320,238

Closed WDOs

WDOs can be closed for several reasons. One of the most positive outcomes is that a WDO is closed because all debt attached to the WDO has been cleared and there is a zero balance. In 2020/21, 58% of WDOs were closed because of a zero balance.

Figure 6.2 – WDOs closed in 2020/21 by reasons



07 WDO participants

Sponsor and client stories



Ulladulla & Districts Community Resource Centre

The Ulladulla & Districts Community Resources Centre (the Centre) provides a range of programs and services to the community on the south coast of NSW. Since 2012 the Centre has helped almost 200 people to clear over \$150,000 of fines by engaging in volunteering, counselling and education. WDO activities include volunteering in the food store or packing and distributing food hampers to people in need, attending budget or financial counselling sessions with Lifeline or the Women's Health Centre and undertaking third party activities with outside providers such as mental health professional or drug and alcohol counsellors.

Maria the co-ordinator of the Centre says of the WDO program "It's been wonderful to not only help clients to pay off their fines, but also to provide opportunities to help people set some goals, learn and develop on the way."

Andrew's story

After he was released from prison, Andrew first visited the Centre only to attend his appointment with his Community Corrections officer. That officer discovered that Andrew had unpaid fines and suggested he talk to Maria before he left to see if she could find a suitable WDO activity for him to clear his fines.

Maria said "Andrew was anxious and had a range of personal issues, not just debts. He recently went through a relationship break up and was not eating or looking after himself. He had no support, no friends and didn't know where to turn. We spoke of the type of things Andrew would like to do, and the services that might assist him. He owed approximately \$4000 in fines, so we rang Revenue NSW to get that voluntarily enforced."

Andrew had drug and alcohol issues and Maria suggested that he might like to attend the Narcotics Anonymous (NA) group which ran in the Centre on Mondays. Andrew agreed and started attending weekly as well as seeing his GP for a mental health

care plan and being referred to a private psychologist. Maria was able to enter Andrew onto a WDO for mental health treatment and he was able to clear his fines by \$1000 a month.

Maria said "Each week I saw Andrew, he slowly gained weight, he spoke of changes and how coming to our Centre had changed his life. He got a job! And he continued with NA groups, making friends and becoming confident and happy. He paid off his fines and said that it was such a relief to have no debts anymore.

"Andrew has a job in construction now but continues to attend NA groups weekly, as it is in his lunch break, and when I see him he always wears a smile on his face. We saw the changes as they occurred in him and are so thankful that we could help him on his recovery."

Age

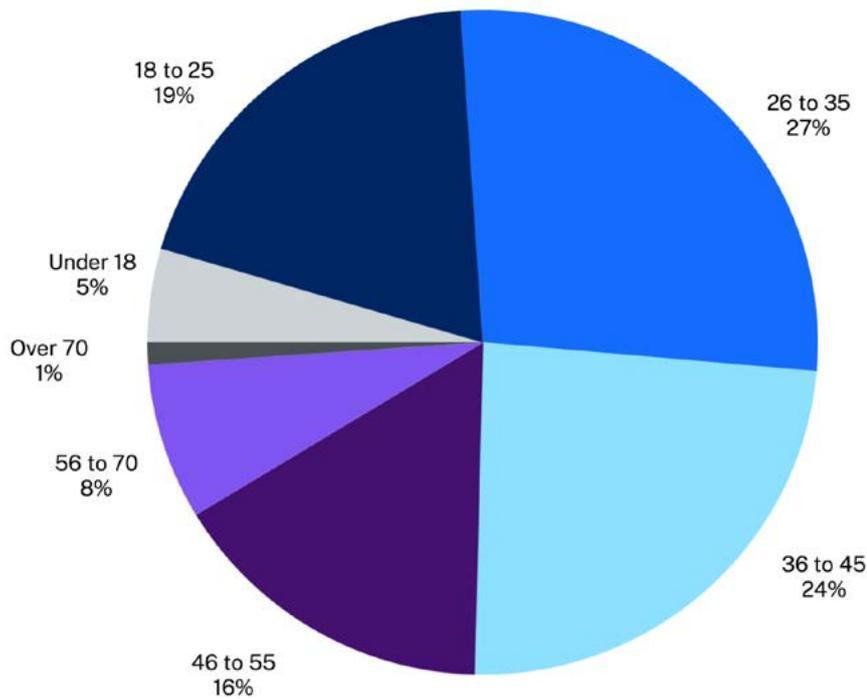
People aged between 26 and 45 accounted for 51% of WDOs approved in 2020/21. Participation by young people remained strong with 1,349 under 18s and 5,717 people aged between 18 and 25 approved for a WDO in 2020/21.

Table 7.1 – WDOs approved in 2020/21 by participant age

Age	WDOs approved in 2020/21
Under 18	1,349
18 to 25	5,717
26 to 35	8,098
36 to 45	7,083
46 to 55	4,700
56 to 70	2,244
Over 70	317
Total	29,508

The age distribution of WDO participants remained similar to the previous financial year.

Figure 7.1 – Distribution of approved WDOs in 2020/21 by age



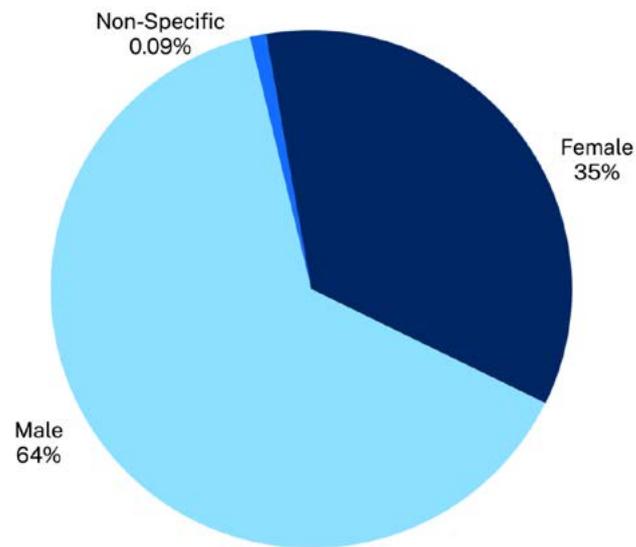
Gender

In 2020/21, more than 64% of WDOs were for males. There were 28 participants who identified with a non-specific gender.

Table 7.2 – WDOs approved in 2020/21 by participant gender

Gender	WDOs approved in 2020/21
Male	19,050
Female	10,430
Non-specific	28
Total	29,508

Figure 7.2 – Gender of WDO applicants in 2020/21



Centrelink status

Fifty-nine per cent of WDO applicants in 2020/21 indicated that they receive a Centrelink benefit. This is consistent with a small downward trend over recent years.

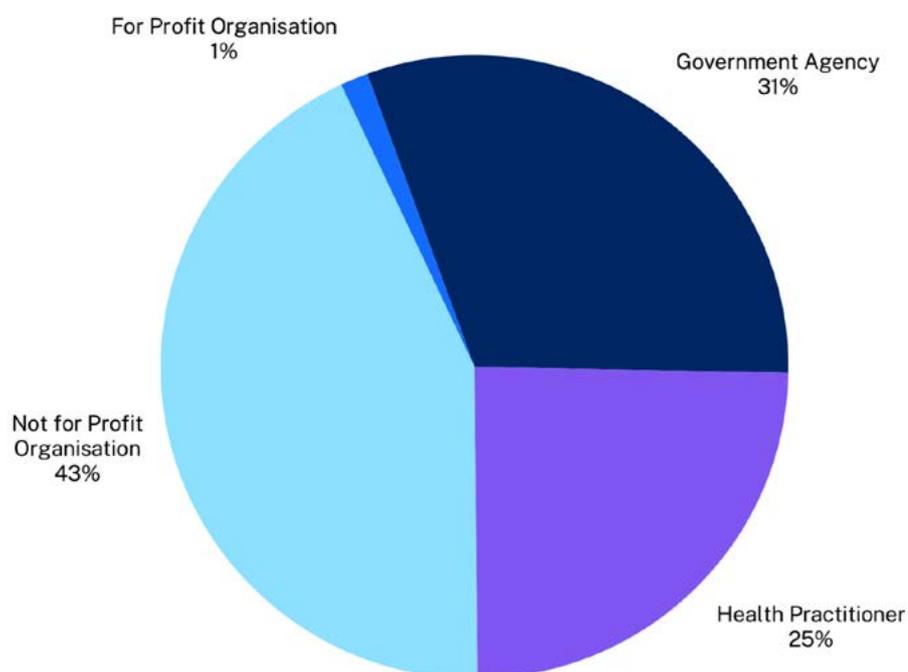
Table 7.3 – Centrelink status

Financial year	% of applicants receiving Centrelink
2020/21	59%
2019/20	60%
2018/19	60%
2017/18	62%
2016/17	65%
2015/16	66%
2014/15	69%

WDO sponsors

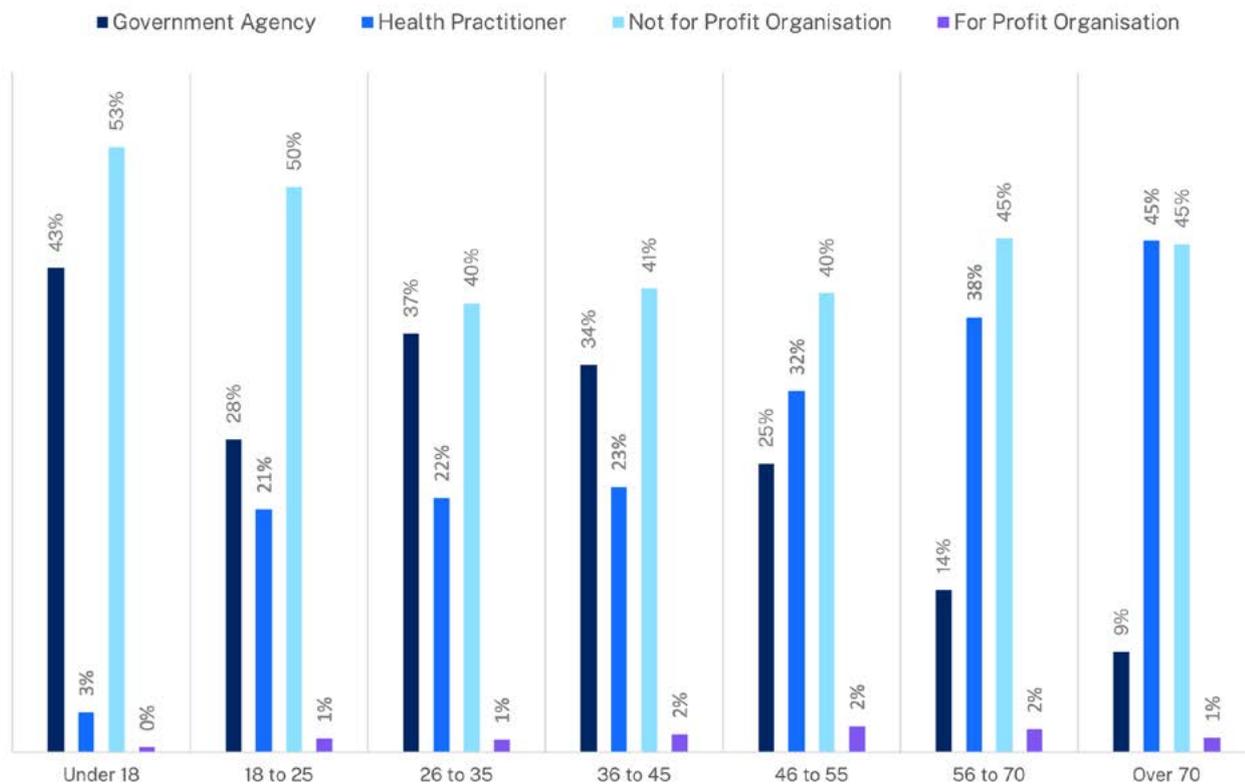
In 2020/21, not for profit organisations were again the biggest supporter of WDOs, helping 12,735 people to participate in the scheme. Health practitioners supported 25% of WDOs approved in 2020/21, representing a 1.5% increase on the previous year.

Figure 7.3 – WDOs approved in 2020/21 by sponsor type



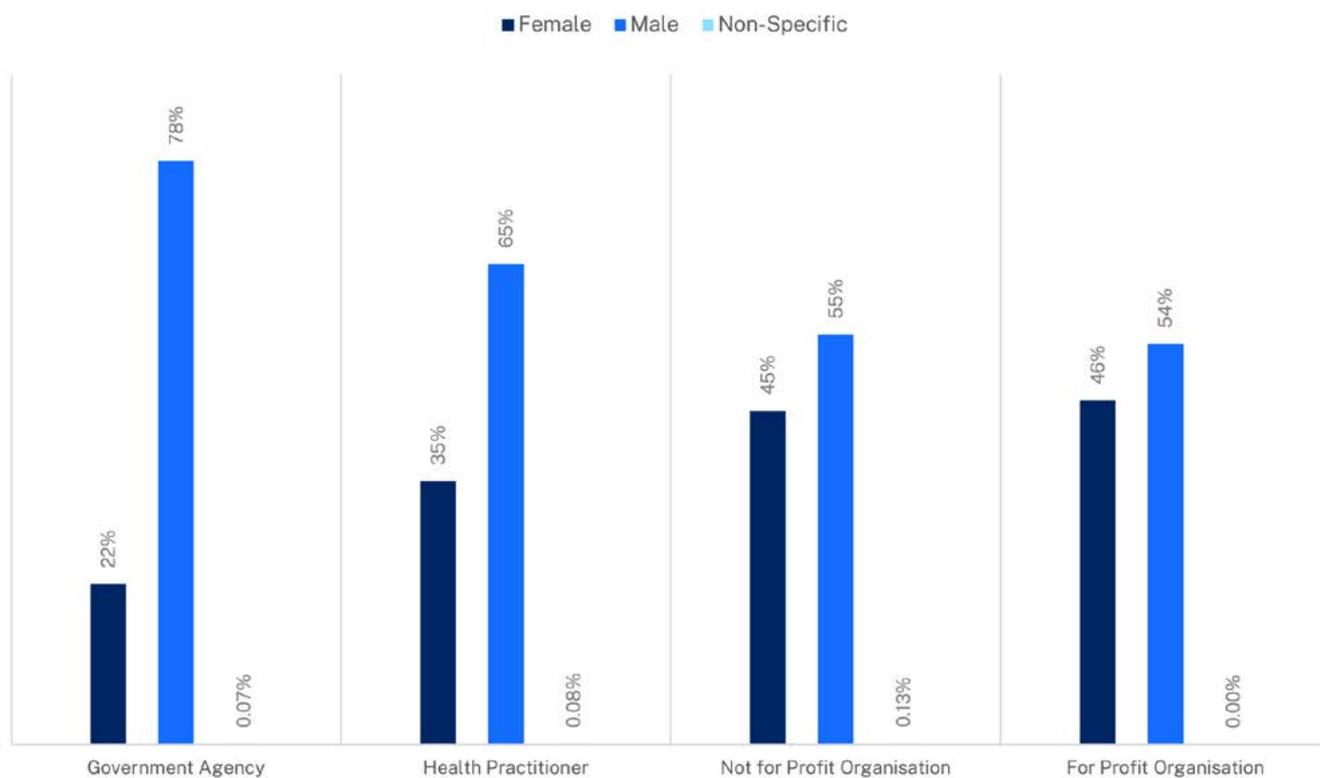
We compared sponsor types by the age groups of WDO participants they supported in 2020/21. Government agencies tended to support younger applicants, whereas health practitioners tended to support older applicants. Applicant age was more evenly distributed for WDO participants supported by not-for-profit organisations.

Figure 7.4 – Sponsor type by age range in 2020/21



We also compared sponsor type by gender of WDO applicants in 2020/21. Males were more likely to be supported by a government agency, whereas females were more likely to seek the assistance of a not-for-profit organisation.

Figure 7.5 – Sponsor type by gender in 2020/21



08 Eligibility & activities

Sponsor and client stories

Recruiting third-party WDO providers

The Legal Aid NSW WDO Service is continuously seeking to increase the number of WDO Sponsors who offer WDOs via referral to third parties, particularly in regional communities where WDO sponsors are limited, and clients frequently present with complex needs and high fines debt. The Central Coast/ Hunter/ Mid North Coast team have observed a high number of clients seeking a WDO placement via medical or mental health treatment, but whose existing medical or mental health practitioner was resistant to becoming a sponsor. This problem became increasingly noticeable from the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic when the capacity of existing third-party referral sponsors such as neighbourhood centres became limited due to lockdown and social distancing measures.

Seeking to fill this gap, Legal Aid NSW recently supported the Hunter branch of the Advocacy Law Alliance to become a dedicated 'by referral' WDO sponsor. A not-for-profit service dedicated to advocating on behalf of people with a disability or mental illness, ALA now offers people already engaged in a productive and healthy relationship with a medical or mental health practitioner the opportunity to undertake a WDO without having to disrupt their existing treatment.

Aaron's story

Aaron*, a Disability Support Pension recipient for a complex mental health condition, was referred to the WDO service for help with a fines debt of over \$10,000. Several attempts by Legal Aid to recruit Aaron's treating psychiatrist as WDO sponsor were unsuccessful, and due to the sensitive nature of Aaron's condition, referring him to an alternative provider was not a feasible option. Legal Aid NSW referred Aaron to Advocacy Law Alliance, who have been able to sponsor Aaron's WDO via referral to his existing psychiatrist. This arrangement offers Aaron the stability he needs, and the best possible chance at completing his WDO successfully.

** Name changed to protect his privacy*

The Engagement and Support Program (ESP)

The Engagement and Support Program (ESP) is a voluntary case management support program for adults and young people who have been identified as vulnerable to violent extremism. ESP is a part of the Office of Community Safety and Cohesion. The team is comprised of a Project Manager, Senior Psychologist, Senior Case Manager and two Case Managers. The Senior Case Manager is a Work Development Order Sponsor.

Many clients that join the ESP have spent a number of years in custody and some have incurred a significant number of fines. Being able to reduce fines provides a real incentive to engage, thus allowing the team to address the underlying issues contributing to their violent extremism. One particular client commenced working with ESP soon after he was released from custody late last year. He was in his late 30's and had spent nearly all of his adult years in custody. Upon release he was grappling with substance dependency issues. Drug use was identified as a contributor to his offending and his propensity for violence, with some violent incidences being ideologically driven. When he commenced the Work Development Order he owed approximately \$6,000 and to date has almost reduced the amount owing. Whilst his attendance to treatment was not always consistent, he did respond to encouragement and was able to maintain the requirements of the WDO, and most importantly, for the first time in his life, has remained drug free and to date has not re-offended.

Eligibility

The most common eligibility type in 2020/21 was acute economic hardship, followed closely by mental illness and serious addiction to drugs, alcohol, or volatile substances.

Figure 8.1 shows the split between eligibility types. Table 8.1 shows the number of WDOs approved for each eligibility type.

Figure 8.1 – Eligibility types for WDOs approved in 2020/21

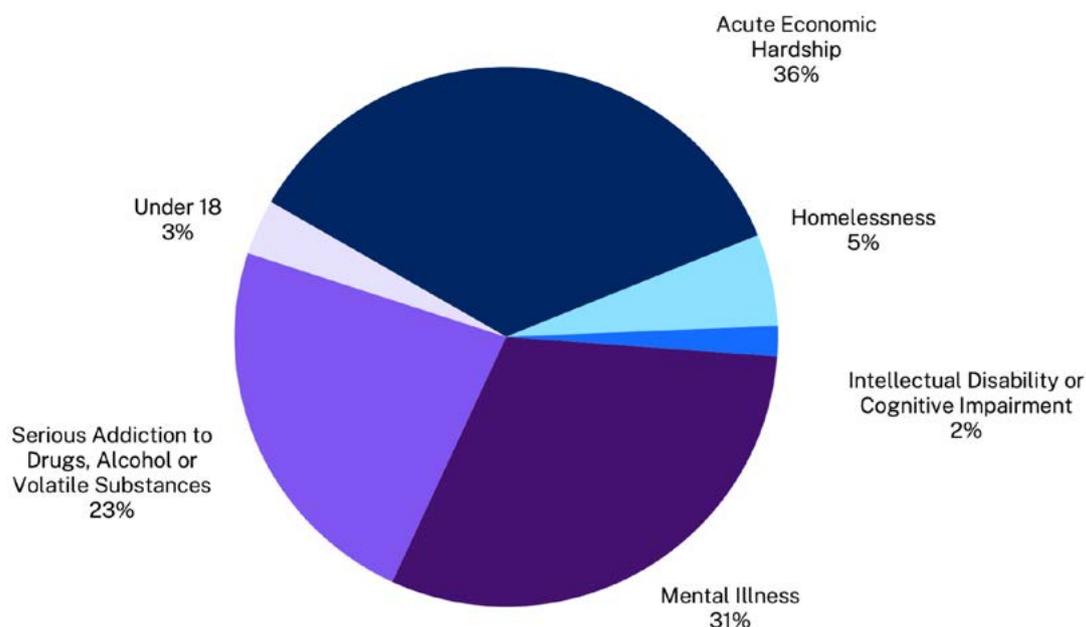


Table 8.1 – WDOs approved in 2020/21 by eligibility type

Applicants can choose multiple eligibility types. Therefore, some WDOs will be counted in multiple categories.

Eligibility type	Number of WDOs approved
Acute Economic Hardship	12,243
Mental Illness	10,593
Serious Addiction to Drugs, Alcohol or Volatile Substances	7,973
Homeless	1,893
Under 18s	1,141
Intellectual Disability or Cognitive Impairment	624

We also compared eligibility types in 2020/21 by participants' gender. Figure 8.2 compares the eligibility types for female and male participants. Female applicants were more likely to apply because of acute economic hardship. Male applicants were more likely to apply because of serious addiction to drugs, alcohol, or volatile substances.

Figure 8.2 – Eligibility types for female and male applicants in 2020/21

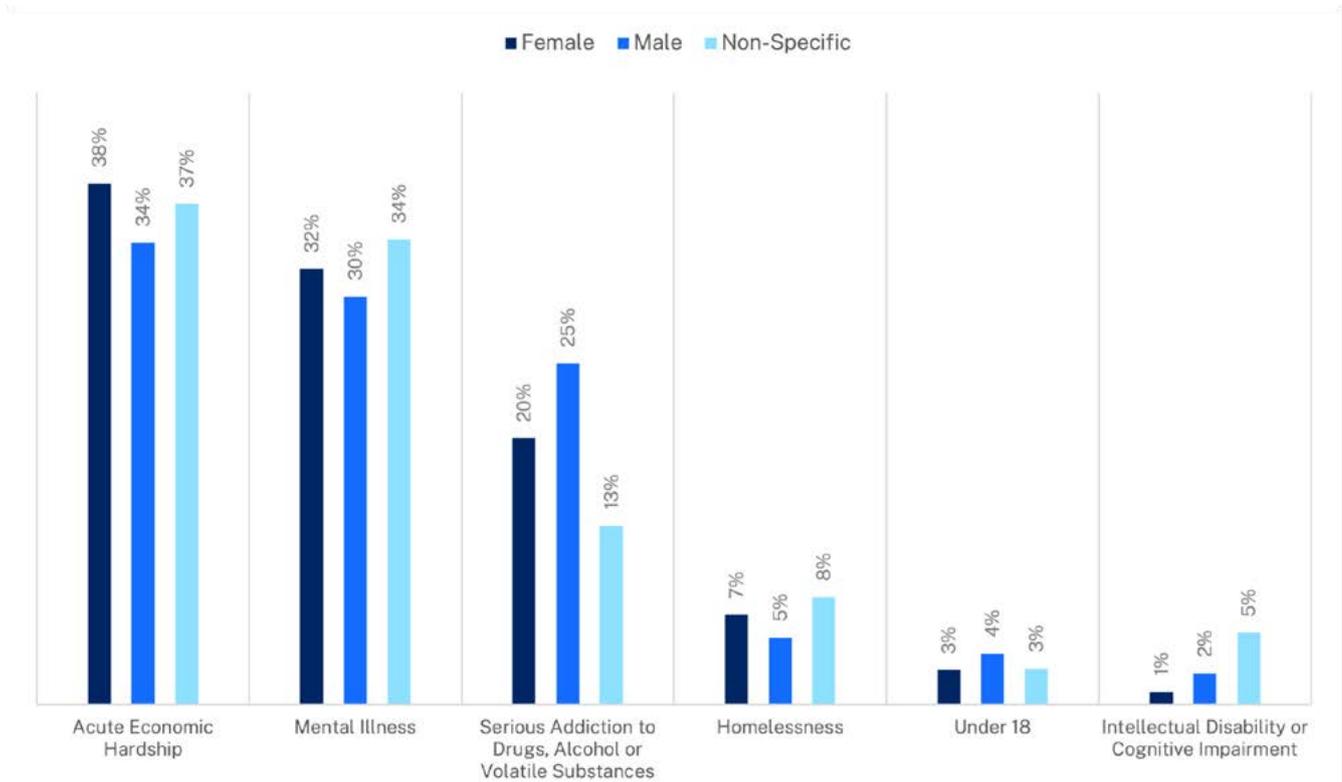
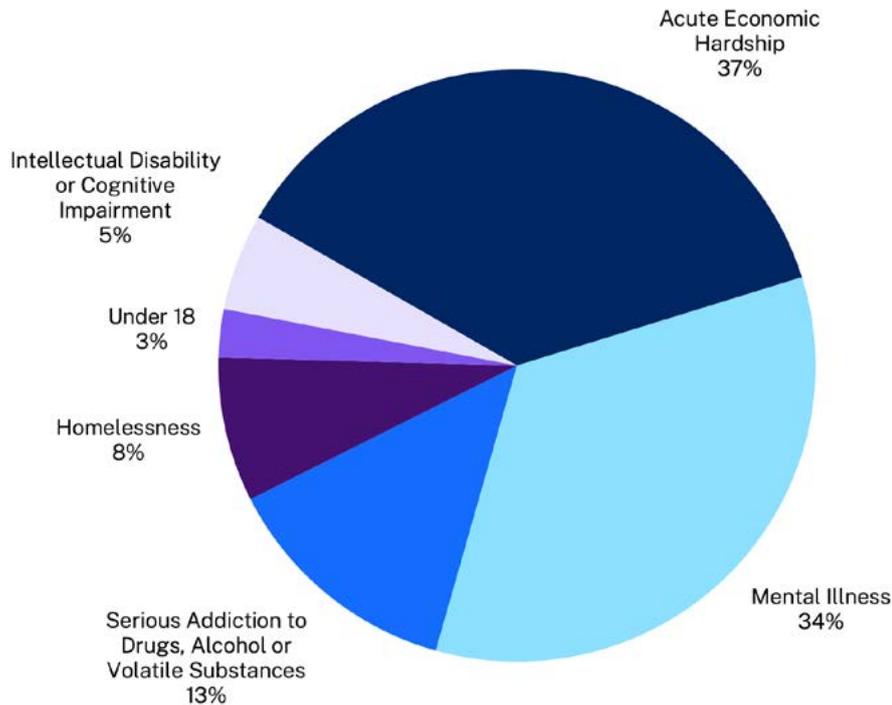


Figure 8.3 shows the eligibility types chosen by people who identify with a non-specific gender. Acute economic hardship and mental illness were most common amongst this group of applicants.

Figure 8.3 – Eligibility types in 2020/21 for applicants identifying with a non-specific gender



Activities

The most common activity in 2020/21 was medical or mental health treatment, followed by drug or alcohol treatment.

Figure 8.4 shows the split between activity types. Table 8.2 shows the number of WDOs approved for each activity type.

Figure 8.4 – Activity types in 2020/21

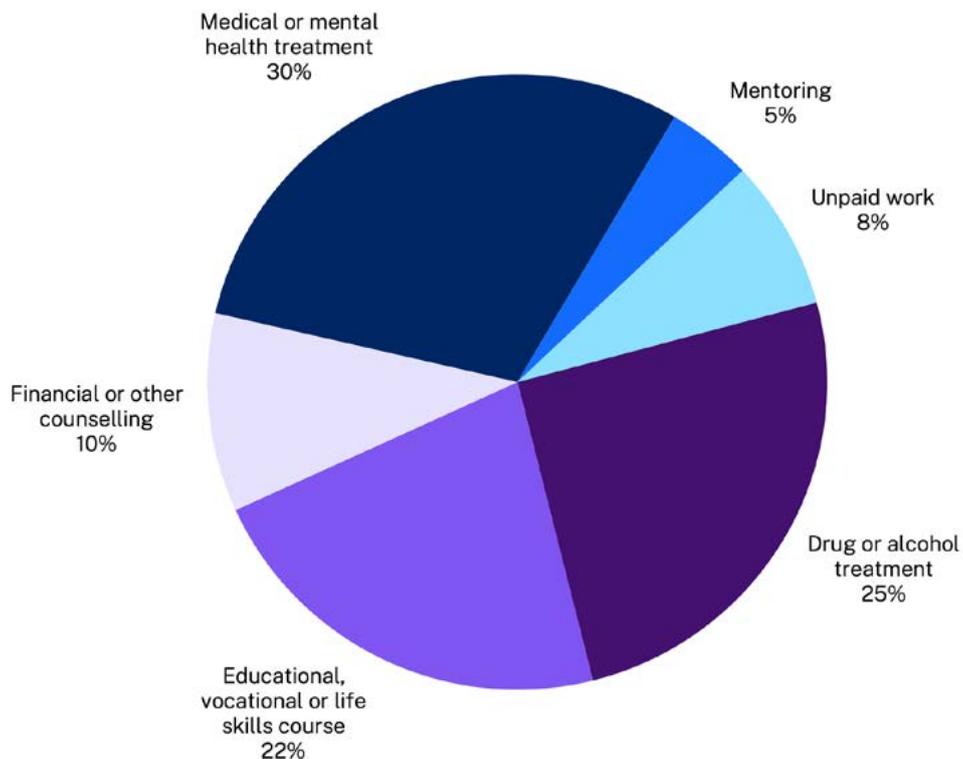


Table 8.2 – WDOs approved in 2020/21 by activity type

Activity type	Number of WDOs approved
Medical or mental health treatment	9,277
Drug or alcohol treatment	7,841
Educational, vocational or life skills course	6,860
Financial or other counselling	3,241
Unpaid work	2,449
Mentoring	1,389

We also compared WDO activity types in 2020/21 by participants' gender. Figure 8.5 compares the activity types for each gender. Female applicants were more likely than males to undertake financial or other counselling. Male participants were more likely to undertake drug or alcohol treatment or education as their nominated WDO activity.

Figure 8.5 – Activity types undertaken by female and male applicants in 2020/21

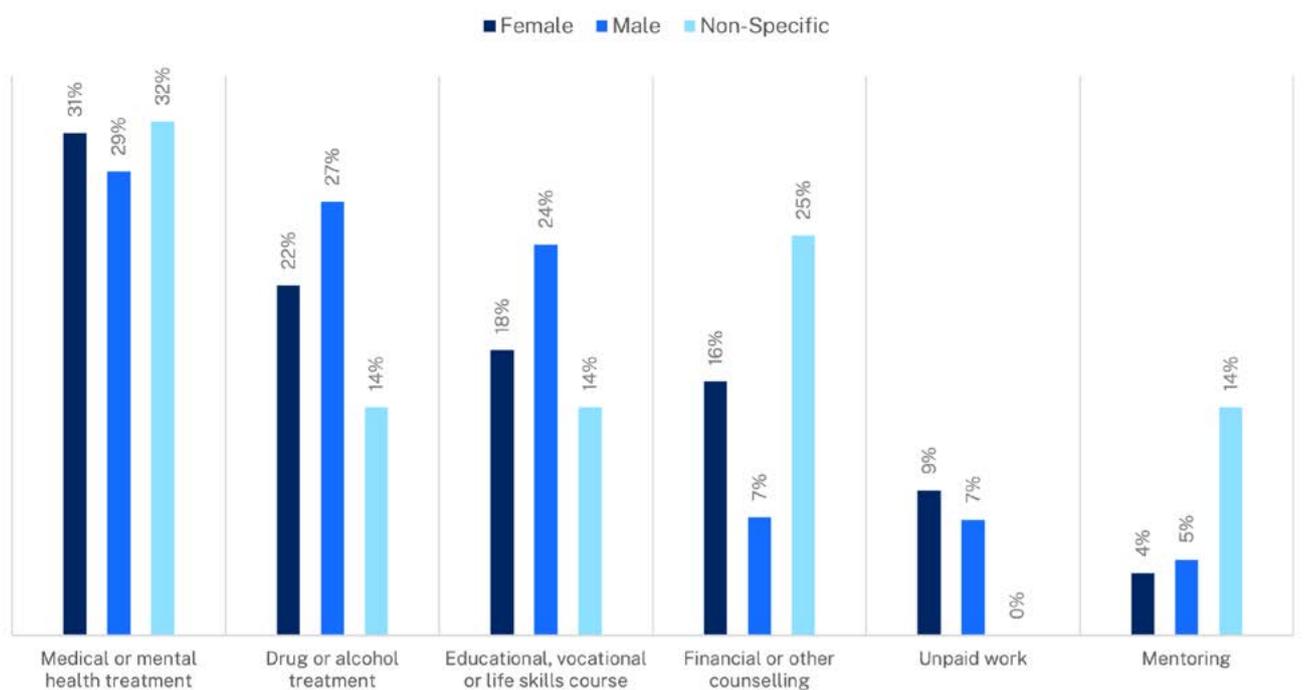
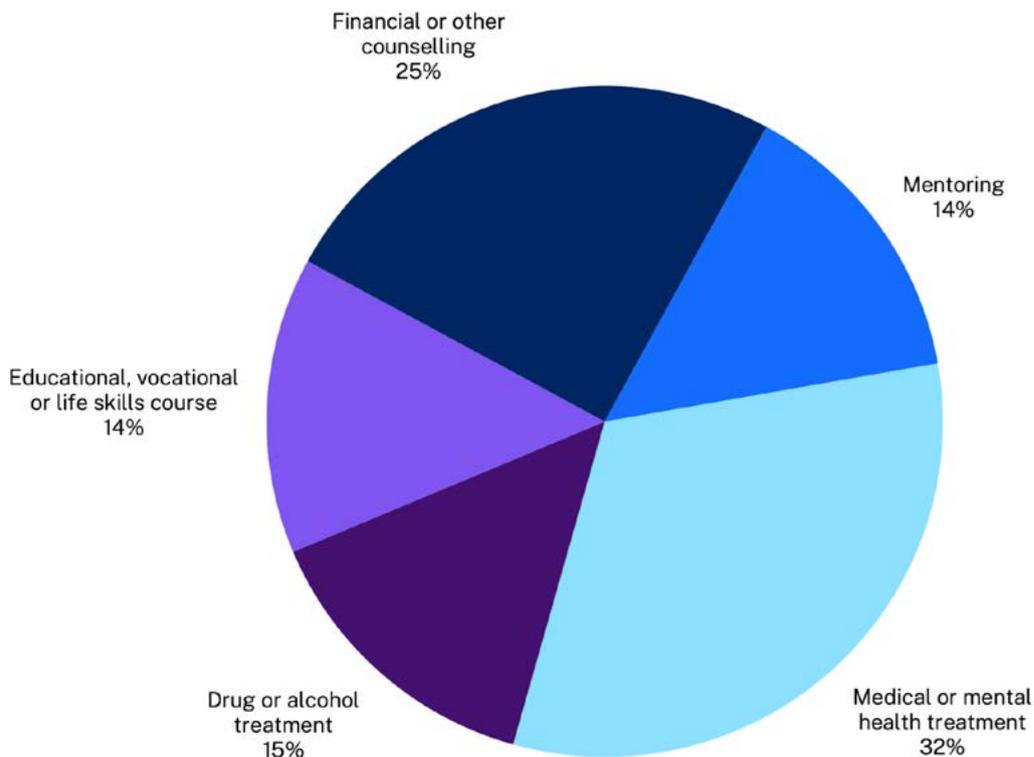


Figure 8.6 shows the activity types undertaken by people who identify with a non-specific gender. Medical or mental health treatment was more common amongst this group of applicants. No applicants who identified with a non-specific gender undertaking unpaid work as their WDO activity.

Figure 8.6 – Activities in 2020/21 for applicants identifying with a non-specific gender



09 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People



In this section of the report, we look at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's experience with the WDO scheme.

We are proud that the last financial year continued a trend of strong participation in WDOs by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Sponsor story: The Biripi Aboriginal Corporation Medical Centre

Established in 1981, The Biripi Aboriginal Corporation Medical Centre (ACMC) is a community controlled Aboriginal health organisation that provides culturally appropriate services in health, aged care, community programs, social support, and out-of-home care in Taree, Purfleet and Inverell. The Biripi ACMC has been a WDO sponsor since 2013, offering WDO participants the opportunity to clear fines debt through medical and mental health treatment, drug and alcohol treatment, mentoring, and volunteer work.

Since 2013, the Biripi ACMC has supported their community to clear almost \$140,000 worth of fines debt, through over 500 individual WDOs. In April 2021, members of the Legal Aid NSW WDO Service met with staff from Biripi on site at the clinic in Purfleet to brainstorm ways in which the WDO Scheme could be used strategically to support the public health objectives of the organisation, and to increase uptake of WDOs in the community. During the meeting, Legal Aid NSW and Biripi ACMC drafted a plan to roll out a series of WDO 'health campaigns' via social media over the coming year.

The campaigns will use WDOs as an incentive to target identified public health concerns in the community, such as increasing pre-and post-natal care check-ups. The campaigns will allow Biripi to employ the WDO Scheme in a way that best serves the interests of their community, with Legal Aid NSW available to provide support and advice if necessary.

Participation

In total, 5,755 WDOs were approved in 2020/21, representing 19.5% of all WDOs. The average debt of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants in 2020/21 was \$4,182, which was higher than the average debt of non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.

Figure 9.1 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in WDOs in 2020/21

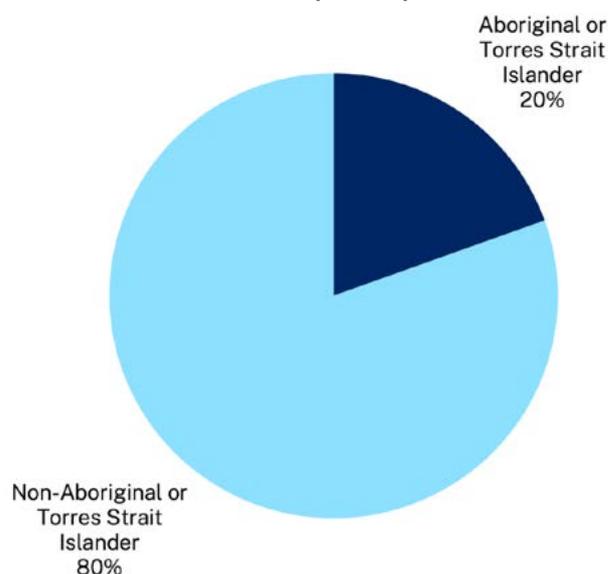


Table 9.1 – Number of WDOs approved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 2020/21

Month	Number of WDOs approved	Value of debt attached to WDOs at time of approval
Jul	373	\$1,651,540
Aug	439	\$1,778,202
Sep	514	\$2,095,323
Oct	490	\$2,029,759
Nov	518	\$2,069,304
Dec	291	\$1,127,943
Jan	404	\$1,720,659
Feb	588	\$2,320,568
Mar	626	\$2,614,345
Apr	491	\$1,981,884
May	521	\$2,278,620
Jun	500	\$2,400,249
Total	5,755	\$24,068,397

Demographics

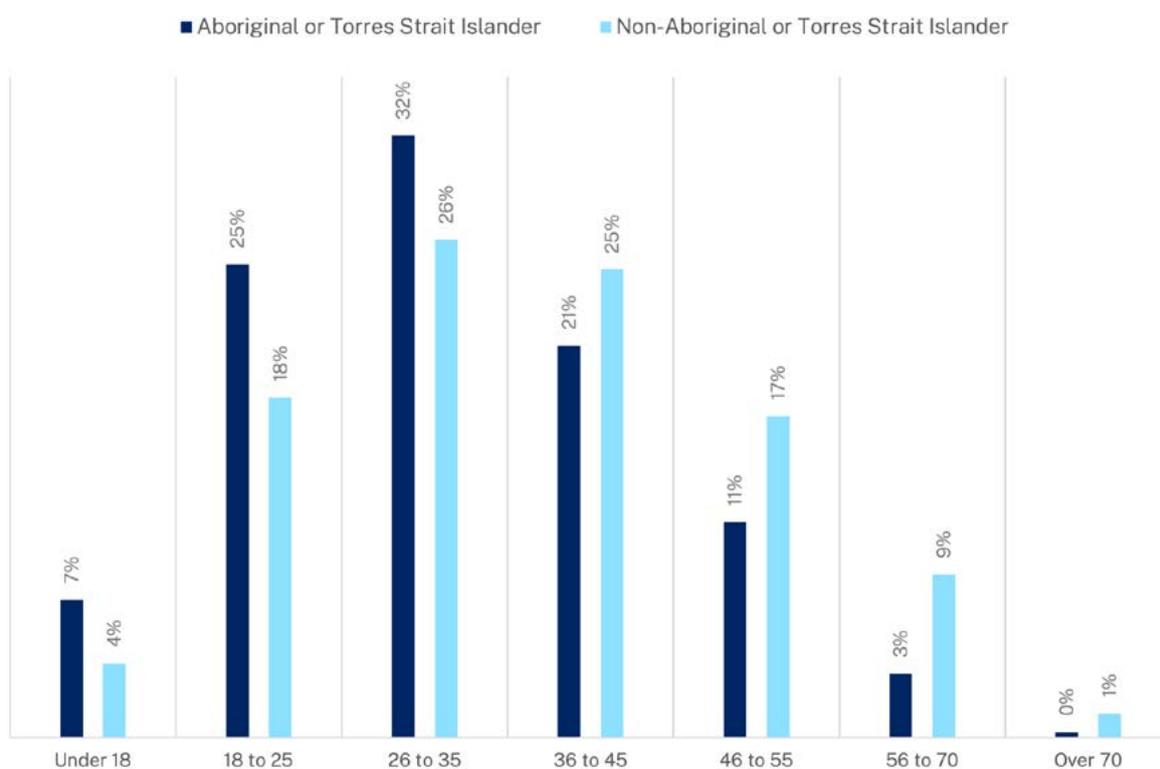
The gender distribution of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander WDO participants in 2020/21 was similar to non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander WDO participants. Table 9.2 shows the number of WDOs approved for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people in 2020/21 by their gender.

Table 9.2 – Number of WDOs approved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 2020/21 by gender

Gender	Number of WDOs approved
Male	3,568
Female	2,185
Non-specific	2

In 2020/21, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander WDO participants tended to be younger than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants; 64% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander WDO participants were under 35, compared with 48% of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander WDO participants.

Figure 9.2 – Age of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants in 2020/21



Eligibility

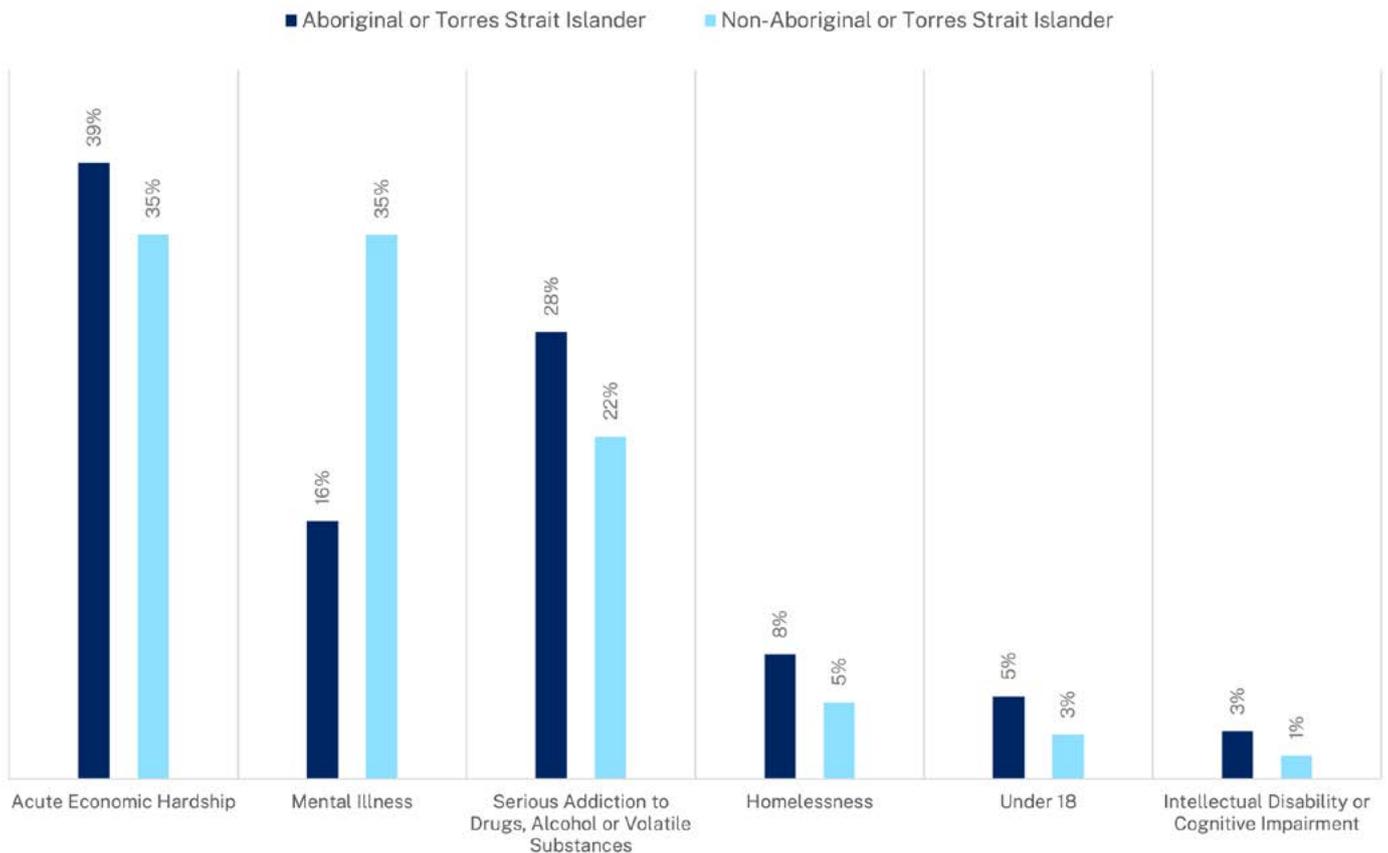
The most common eligibility type for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander WDO participants in 2020/21 was acute economic hardship, followed by serious addiction to drugs, alcohol, or volatile substances. WDO participants can choose multiple eligibility types, so WDOs may be counted in multiple categories.

Table 9.3 – Eligibility types for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 2020/21

Eligibility types	Number of WDOs approved
Acute Economic Hardship	2,813
Serious Addiction to Drugs, Alcohol or Volatile Substances	2,041
Mental Illness	1,176
Homeless	568
Under 18s	376
Intellectual Disability or Cognitive Impairment	219

We compared eligibility types for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander WDO participants in 2020/21 with non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants were significantly less likely to apply on the basis of mental illness.

Figure 9.3 – Comparison of eligibility types for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants in 2020/21



Activities

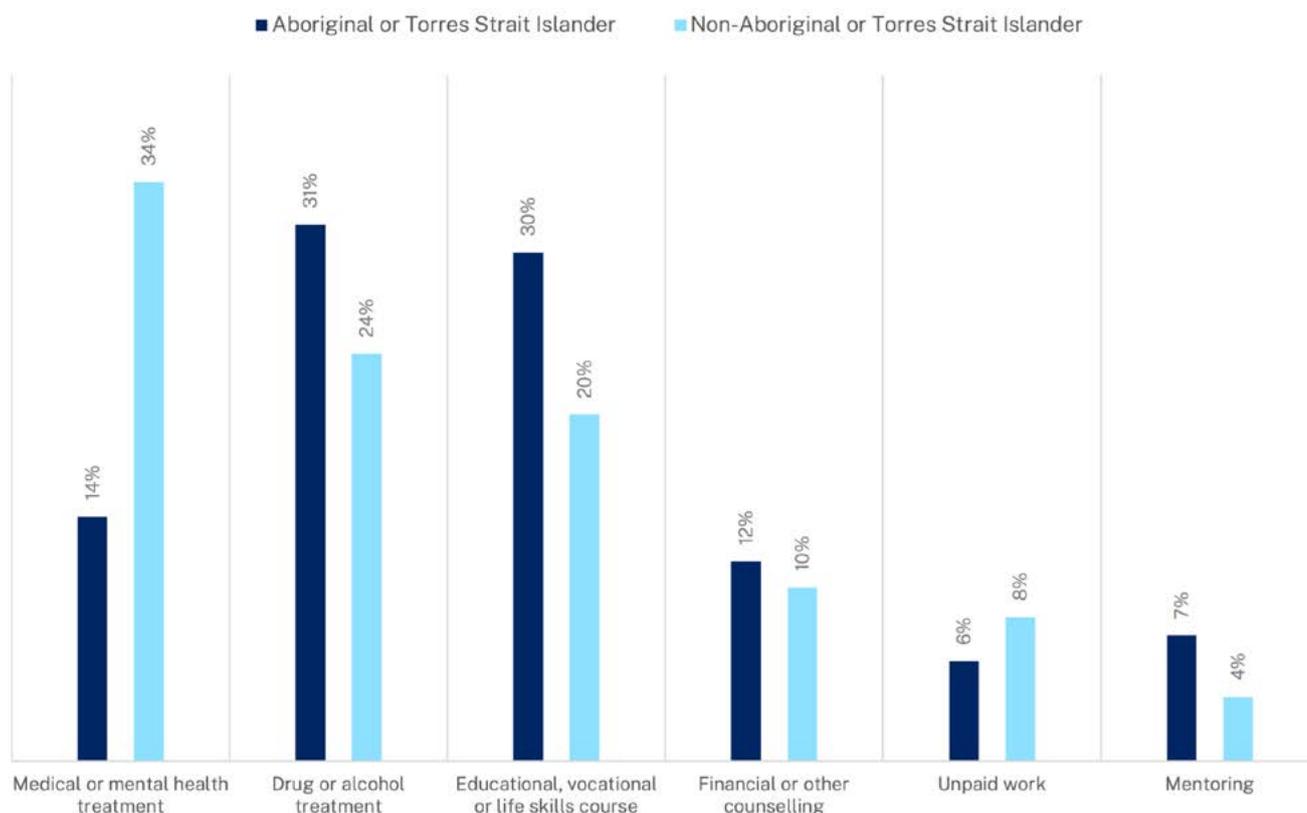
The most common activity types for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander WDO participants in 2020/21 were drug or alcohol treatment and educational, vocational or life skills courses. WDO participants can undertake multiple activity types on a WDO. Therefore, WDOs may be counted in multiple categories.

Table 9.4 – Activity types for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 2020/21

Activity type	Number of WDOs approved
Drug or alcohol treatment	1,935
Educational, vocational or life skills course	1,834
Medical or mental health treatment	882
Financial or other counselling	721
Unpaid work	360
Mentoring	454

We compared activity types undertaken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander WDO participants in 2020/21 with non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants were significantly less likely to undertake medical or mental health treatment and more likely to undertake education, vocational or life skills courses.

Figure 9.4 – Comparison of activity types for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants in 2020/21



10 Culturally and Linguistically Diverse People



In this section of the report, we look at Culturally and Linguistically Diverse people's experience with the WDO scheme.

In the last financial year, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse people continued a trend of strong participation in the WDO scheme.

Client story

A client came into the centre with three fines for continuously going through a safety camera on three occasions. He was a newly arrived refugee and was very worried about losing his license and the stress of not being able to pay the fines. He heard through the community radio that the Assyrian Resource Centre offers WDOs.

The client came into the centre quite distressed. The staff informed him of the process, and he was immediately relieved. He took part in mentoring and support group at the centre each week and through this he was able to work on setting up his own business and working in partnering with Woolworths Group in delivering a service to build his career.

The client remains grateful for the skills and knowledge that he acquired in the sessions that he attended at the Assyrian Resource Centre.

Client story

A client came into the centre with a \$40,000 fine. He took part in certain activities across the centre which contributed to a WDO, and he also had one on one support from a case manager.

The client revealed over time that he had a gambling problem, and this was affecting his life and his family immensely. Through this the client was referred onto other supporting agencies to assist him with his gambling issues that he disclosed.

Because of the WDO, the client was filled with gratitude that he has been able to receive support for a problem that he has held for several years. Through his WDO, he has been able to build on his self-esteem, his mental health and improve his family relationships.

Multicultural Communities and WDOs

Since community engagement commenced in December 2016, Multicultural Communities accessing the WDO scheme increased from 9% to 15% by June 2018. This number has increased further to 16% in 2020/2021.

Table 10.1 – Community engagement and WDO scheme 2020/21

Presentation	No of Attendees	Audience
Presentation to Nepalese Community members – on 11 Sept. 2020	67 attended	Service providers from NSW and Interstate attended the event which was held online.
Meeting with religious leaders from Saint Zaia Cathedral, Assyrian church	4 attended	Religious leaders
WDO and Fines information session developed in partnership with SWSLS and Navitas	200 attended	English Language students and their supports
Essential Services Update webinar on the 3rd December	300 attended	TAFE students from the south west Sydney
Refugee week celebration 2021, 22nd June 2021 Casula Powerhouse museum	Open forum	Students and service providers.
TAFE NSW – online seminar COVID 19, Fines and the Law (Adol)	200 attendees	Teacher and service providers

WDO Sponsors providing specialist Multicultural services

These include NAVITAS, TAFE NSW - English Language courses, Migrant Resources Centres, Settlement Services International (SSI), Western Sydney Health district – Multicultural problem gambling service, Drug and Alcohol Multicultural Education Centre, SydWest Multicultural Service, the Multicultural Council of Wagga Wagga, Sydney Multicultural Services and Sydney Multicultural Resource Centre incorporated.

There are number of religious organisations and small non-for-profit groups which include but are not limited to the Muslim women’s association, Muslim Women’s radio, Assyrian Australian Association and Jewish Care, to name a few.

This number does not include mainstream WDO sponsors that Multicultural communities are engaged with or Health Practitioners who are from Multicultural backgrounds supporting communities with similar backgrounds.

WDO postcard in community languages

Our WDO postcard is available in 6 community languages:

- Arabic
- Assyrian
- Chinese (simplified)
- Dari/Farsi
- English
- Vietnamese

You can order these resources online through the Legal Aid NSW publications page:
www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/publications/order-a-publication

These resources were developed by Legal Aid NSW, together with the Diversity Services Unit at the Department of Communities and Justice.



English



Assyrian



Arabic



Simplified Chinese



Dari/Farsi



Vietnamese

Participation

In 2020/21, 18% of WDOs approved were for people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities. This represents a 2% increase from the previous year. The average debt per CALD participant was \$2,212 which is less than non-CALD participants.

Figure 10.1 – Rate of participation in WDOs by CALD people in 2020/21

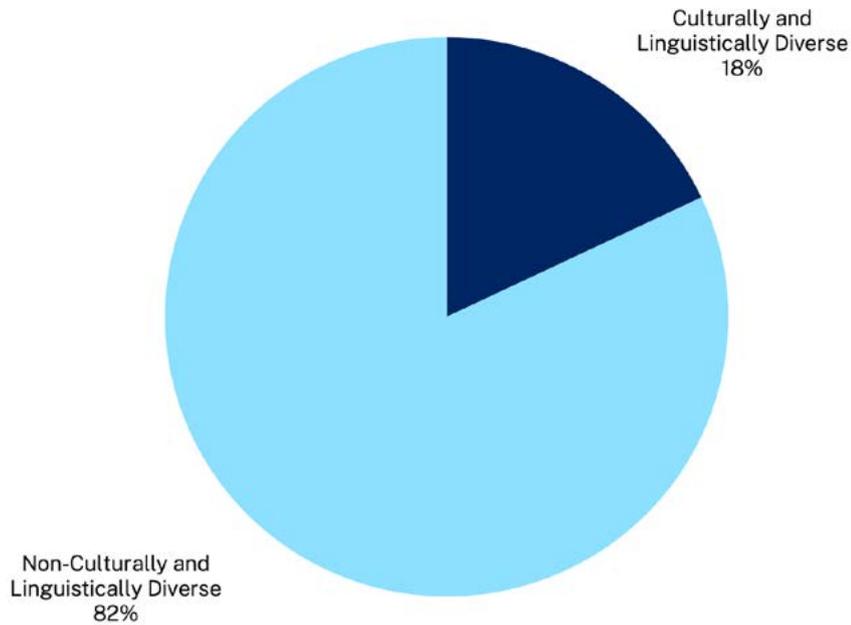


Table 10.1 – WDOs approved in 2020/21 for CALD people

Month	Number of WDOs approved	Value of debt attached to WDOs at time of approval
Jul	373	\$918,403
Aug	424	\$1,101,127
Sep	466	\$1,096,187
Oct	420	\$809,668
Nov	435	\$1,051,407
Dec	367	\$874,281
Jan	360	\$864,346
Feb	525	\$1,151,618
Mar	536	\$1,237,527
Apr	414	\$720,636
May	508	\$956,429
Jun	477	\$956,730
Total	5,305	\$11,738,359

Demographics

In 2020/21, 64% of CALD WDO participants were male and 36% were female. This distribution is similar to non-CALD participants. Eight CALD participants identified with a non-specific gender.

The age distribution was also similar between CALD and non-CALD participants in 2020/21.

The most notable difference in demographics between CALD and non-CALD people was location, a higher proportion of CALD participants located in Sydney compared with non-CALD participants.

Eligibility

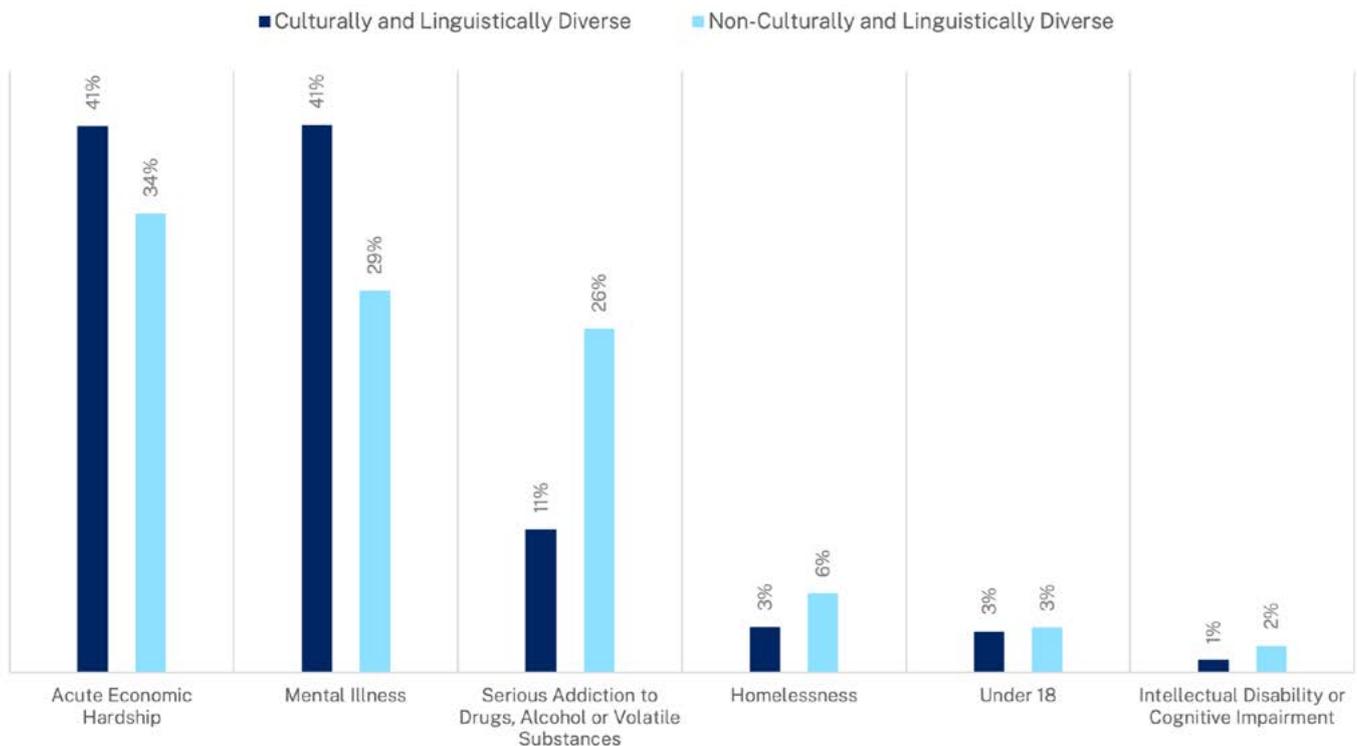
The most common eligibility types for CALD participants in 2020/21 were acute economic hardship and mental illness. WDO participants may choose multiple eligibility types. Therefore, WDOs may be counted in multiple categories.

Table 10.2 – Eligibility types for CALD people in 2020/21

Eligibility types	Number of WDOs approved
Acute Economic Hardship	2,445
Mental Illness	2,450
Serious Addiction to Drugs, Alcohol or Volatile Substances	640
Homeless	204
Under 18s	184
Intellectual Disability or Cognitive Impairment	55

CALD people were much more likely than non-CALD people to apply because of mental illness and acute economic hardship, and less likely to apply because of serious addiction to drugs, alcohol or volatile substances.

Figure 10.2 – Comparison of eligibility types between CALD and non-CALD people in 2020/21



Activities

The most common activity type for CALD WDO participants in 2020/21 was medical or mental health treatment. WDO participants can undertake multiple activity types on a WDO. Therefore, WDOs may be counted in multiple categories.

Table 10.3 – Activity types for CALD people in 2020/21

Activity type	Number of WDOs approved
Medical or mental health treatment	2,362
Educational, vocational or life skills course	1,099
Unpaid work	700
Financial or other counselling	567
Drug or alcohol treatment	562
Mentoring	236

We compared activity types undertaken by CALD WDO participants in 2020/21 with non-CALD participants. CALD participants were significantly less likely to undertake drug or alcohol treatment and more likely to undertake medical or mental health treatment.

Figure 10.3 – Comparison of activity types for CALD and non-CALD participants in 2020/21



11 Young people



Sponsor and client stories

Macleay Vocational College, Kempsey

Mark Morrison and his team at Macleay Vocational College have been supporting young people to do WDOs since 2013. At a recent WDO forum in Port Macquarie, Mark spoke with passion about the work the school does with young people. And how WDOs help.

“We work with kids who, due to anger issues and past trauma, can’t talk to police who pull them up when they aren’t wearing a helmet. We teach them skills to communicate, with the police, with authorities and to remain calm and respectful. It’s a safe place. The WDO takes away some of the worry about how they are going to deal with these fines. These young kids are trying as hard as they can to be better. And the WDO opportunity is showing them that they are in a better place than they were last week, last month or a year ago.”

Mark introduced a personal story from one of the school’s first WDO participants:

“The only way I could get him to see a clinical psychologist, or to talk to a drug and alcohol counsellor was through the WDO program. We helped change his life. The program ... gave him an opportunity to develop knowledge about himself. Because he knew he was now able to pay off these exorbitant fines. He had significant fines. As you do. When you steal cars and other stuff. But the program allowed him the time to see an AoD counsellor. A psychologist. He reinforced that to me a number of times. We have stayed in touch. These kids need people who can work with them in a holistic way.”

Client story: What I have done with myself?

“It was only because of [Macleay Vocational College] that I had the patience and showed me how to be patient. How to sit. How to get me to fall in love with the outdoors. How to know how lucky I was to have land around me, how lucky I was to see birds, how lucky I was to see the koalas out the back. When I was angry I didn’t realise that I had any of that.

Living in Kempsey steals that from you. Because you get so fixated on trying to be the best fighter. Or the staunchest. And getting on the bong and all the rest of the lovely things that comes with that lifestyle. That you already know. I became a hardened person and I spent some time away.

You all showed us how to get out.

Becoming a father, you can still be that, but in other ways like being strong for your family. Choosing my family instead of choosing to fight. Choosing my kids instead of choosing what other people are telling you to do. Work hard. Because that’s what I want my kid to do. Instead of fighting. Waking up to the slobbering kiss of a little boy, that thinks you’re a god and loves you no matter how hard life gets. No-one can take that from you. I’m grateful there are people like you guys that can see past the criminal, that can see past the disguise. That made me go and see a counsellor. That made me talk about some of the things that have happened in my life. The things I’d lost touch with, about nature, about time. Time when I could just spend for myself. About finding things that made me strong, instead of people who made me feel strong, but made me shit and weak ...

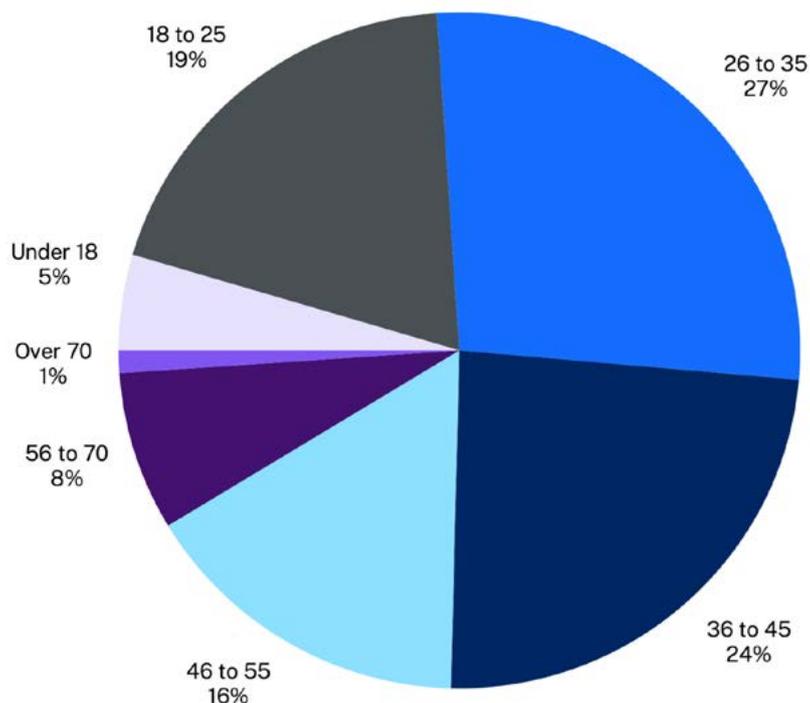
You were right. I haven’t had a drink in four years. And I haven’t had a bong for five.”

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

Participation

In 2020/21, 24% of approved WDOs were for people under 25 years of age, which represents a small decline from the previous financial year.

Figure 11.1 – Age distribution of WDO participants in 2020/21



In 2020/21, 1,349 young people under 18 and 8,339 young people under 25 were approved for a WDO.

Table 11.1 – Number and value of WDOs approved in 2020/21 for young people

Month	Number of WDOs approved		Debt attached to WDOs at time of approval	
	Under 18	Under 25	Under 18	Under 25
Jul	153	866	\$55,788	\$1,028,860
Aug	160	852	\$64,371	\$1,219,144
Sep	118	760	\$71,350	\$1,754,989
Oct	155	874	\$169,721	\$1,910,504
Nov	132	762	\$76,429	\$1,534,148
Dec	98	532	\$48,609	\$1,227,772
Jan	105	646	\$89,000	\$1,578,754
Feb	181	785	\$198,491	\$1,673,054
Mar	137	700	\$117,311	\$1,562,413
Apr	86	482	\$66,202	\$1,181,626
May	116	537	\$92,190	\$1,338,225
Jun	132	543	\$100,285	\$1,257,927
Total	1573	8339	\$1,149,747	\$17,267,417

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

Debt cleared

In 2020/21, young people under 18 cleared \$837,669 through participation in WDOs, while young people under 25 (including under 18s) cleared \$8.5m.

Demographics

In 2020/21, young people under 18 were more likely to be male (70%) compared with the general WDO population (64%). The gender distribution of WDO applicants in 2020/21 was similar amongst young people under 25 and over 25. There were 8 participants under 25, including 2 people under 18, who identified with a non-specific gender.

There were 419 WDO participants under 18 and 1,861 participants under 25 in 2020/21 who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This represents a participation rate of 31% for under 18s and 26% for under 25s. This is much higher than the overall participation rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of 19.5%.

There were 233 WDO participants under 18 and 1,280 participants under 25 in 2020/21 who were from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities. This represents a participation rate of 17% of under 18s and 18% of under 25s.

Young people participating in WDOs were less likely to receive a Centrelink benefit in 2020/21. 19% of young people under 18 and 52.5% of young people under 25 received a Centrelink benefit, compared with 64.5% of WDO participants over 25.

Eligibility

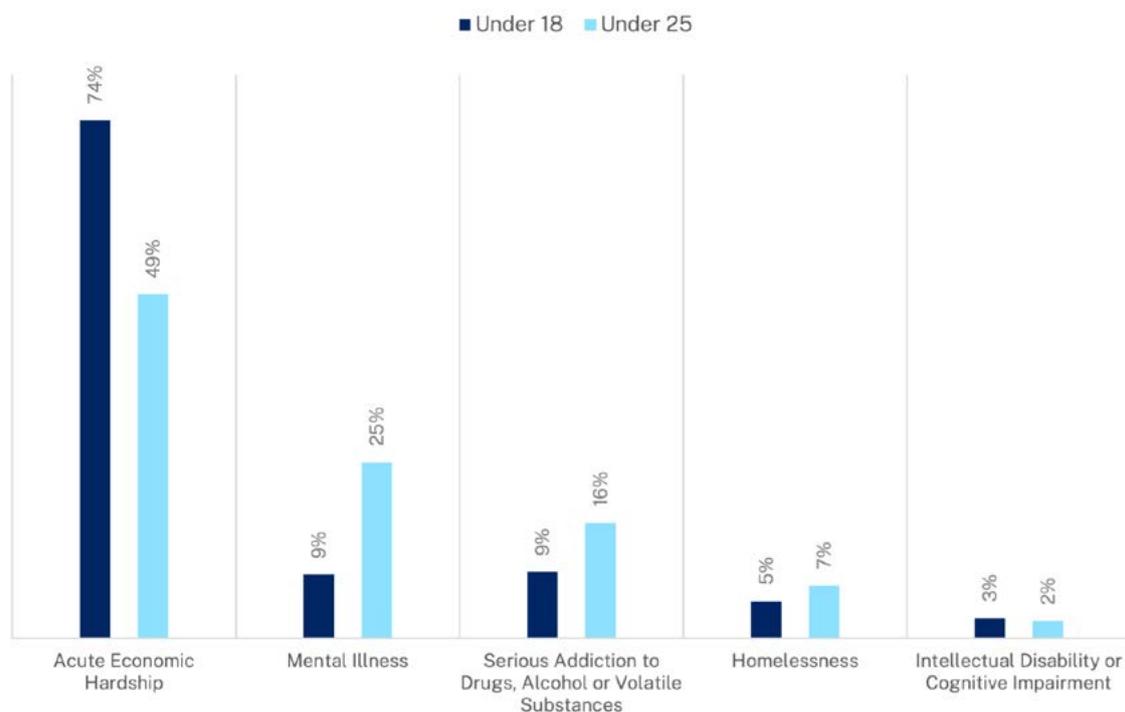
The most common eligibility type for young people, in both the under 18 and under 25 categories, was acute economic hardship, followed by mental illness and serious addiction to drugs, alcohol or volatile substances.

Table 11.2 – WDO eligibility types for young people in 2020/21

Eligibility type	Number of WDOs approved	
	Under 18	Under 25
Acute Economic Hardship	1,390	4,169
Mental Illness	170	2,132
Serious Addiction to Drugs, Alcohol or Volatile Substances	178	1,399
Homeless	99	639
Intellectual Disability or Cognitive Impairment	54	206

Young people under 18 were more likely than people over 18 to apply on the basis of acute economic hardship. This is unsurprising, given changes to the WDO Guidelines in 2017 to deem all under 18s as being in acute economic hardship.

Figure 11.2 – Eligibility types for WDO participants in 2020/21 by age range



Activities

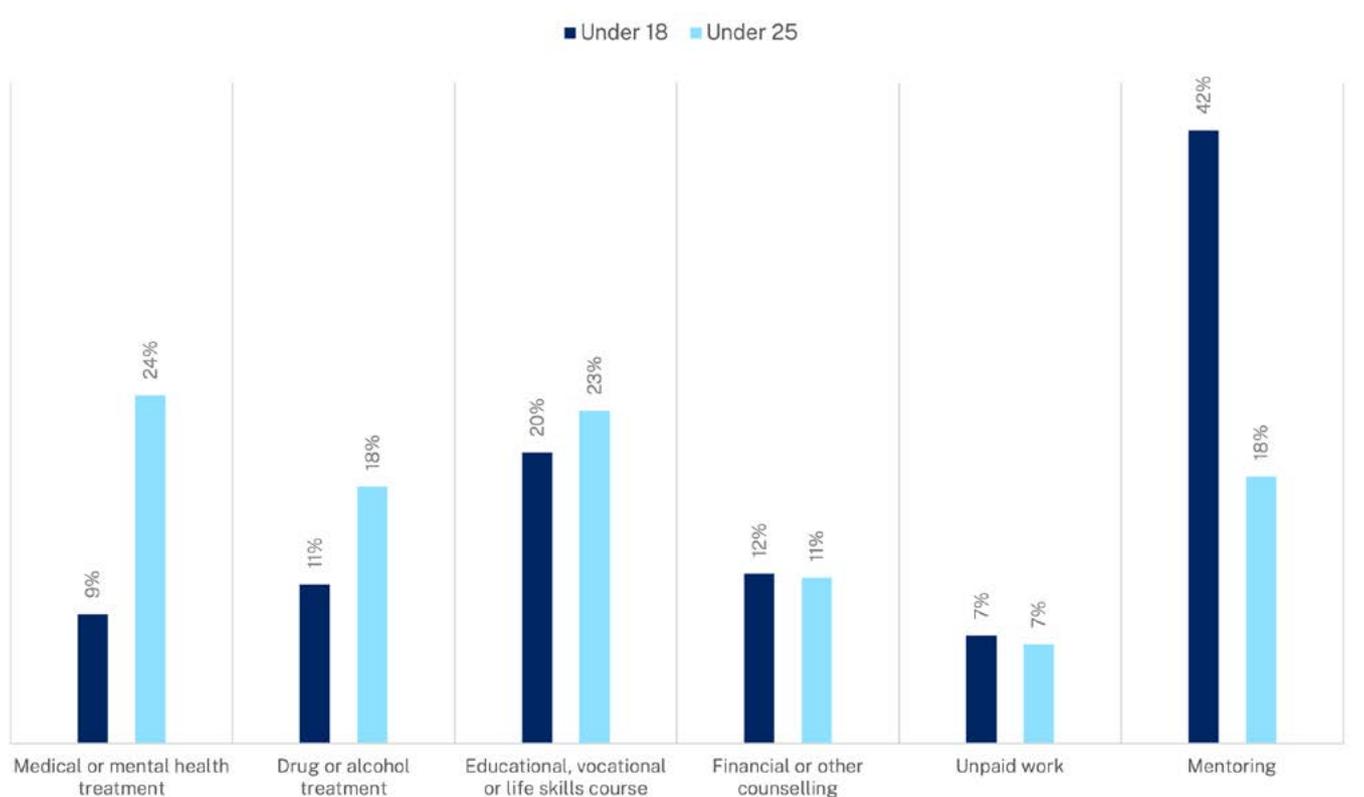
In 2020/21, the most common activity for under 18s was mentoring, followed by educational, vocational or life skills courses. The most common activity for under 25s was medical or mental health treatment, followed closely by educational, vocational or life skills courses.

Table 11.3 – WDO activities undertaken by young people in 2020/21

Activity type	Number of WDOs approved	
	Under 18	Under 25
Medical or mental health treatment	139	1,810
Educational, vocational or life skills course	313	1,729
Mentoring	661	1,386
Drug or alcohol treatment	171	1,337
Financial or other counselling	183	861
Unpaid work	116	513

In the under 18 age range, participants were more likely to undertake mentoring than medical or mental health treatment, compared to under 25s.

Figure 11.3 - WDO activities undertaken in 2020/21 by age range



12 Location of WDO participants

Sponsor and client story

Southern Youth and Family Services (SYFS)

Southern Youth and Family Services (SYFS), in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven region, provide services to support and care for children, young people, adults and families who are disadvantaged, including those who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness and their families. The service provides supported accommodation, community social housing, counselling, mediation, support and the delivery of a range of programs to improve the life situation of children, young people, adults and families.

SYFS have championed the WDO scheme since its early days as a pilot program. Since 2011 the organisation has entered 279 WDOs, helping clients to clear over \$280,978 in fines by engaging in support programs, education and mentoring. See the client story below.



Sammy's story

As a young person, Sammy experienced significant family relationship breakdown and trauma. Often he found himself with nowhere to go and spent time couch surfing with friends, sleeping on trains, and moving between refuges. Trying to maintain his studies at university, he would make ends meet by busking on the streets for money. Sammy often came to the attention of train transit officers for not having a valid ticket. Over time, he accumulated \$9,145.00 in mostly train fines. Sammy felt the debt was insurmountable, so he just ignored it.

Sammy eventually found himself at Southern Youth and Family Services (SYFS) Crisis Youth Refuge. Over time, Sammy opened up to his support worker at SYFS about his debt from fines, and how worried he was about them. The worker told him about the Work and Development Order (WDO) program and explained he could pay off his fines by doing everything he was already doing with SYFS such as engaging in the living skills support and mentoring programs. Finally, Sammy saw a way to reduce the debt he had accrued and started a WDO at SYFS.

Some of the mentoring and support programs run by SYFS were exactly what Sammy was looking for and needed. One program in particular is an annual song-writing workshop with renowned Aboriginal singer and songwriters Shellie Morris and Jungaji Brady. The program aims to provide young people the opportunity to express themselves and tell their story through music. Sammy is a young budding artist who could not wait to get involved and try it out. Through this program Sammy gained experience in song writing, recording music in a recording studio, performing in front of a live audience and making contacts with other local young artists all while developing his self-esteem, teamwork skills and building positive relationships with peers and mentors.

Sammy has come a long way since he first came to SYFS over five years ago. He still attends the regular song writing workshops and has now become a peer mentor for the other young people. Sammy now lives independently in his own unit and he has converted one of the bedrooms into his home recording studio. Sammy has established a band of likeminded young people and has performed at local music festivals and events. He is currently in the process of recording his second album and is really proud of his personal achievements.

Sammy has successfully paid off his debt through the WDO program and has made a commitment through this process not to accumulate any more fines. He really is a success story and enjoys living his life debt and fine free.

Location of approved WDOs

A key objective of the WDO Governance Group is ensuring the WDO scheme is accessible to all people in NSW. In particular, this is a focus for Legal Aid NSW which has specialist staff across NSW who continue to recruit new WDO sponsors in all areas of the state, as well as supporting existing sponsors through education and training.

In this section of the report we have provided heat maps showing the geographic dispersion of approved WDOs.

Location is determined by the WDO participant's residential postcode. Where a customer elected to use the sponsor's address for the WDO (for example, because they are in a residential facility or homeless), the sponsor's postcode was used.

WDOs supported by Corrective Services NSW or Youth Justice NSW for people in custody were excluded so areas with correctional facilities are not over-represented.

The figures on the following pages show the WDO scheme has reached community members right across NSW.

Figure 12.1 shows the geographic coverage of the WDO scheme for all customers in 2020/21. There was good coverage across the State, with only a small number of locations where a WDO was not available. The coverage in 2020/21 is consistent with coverage since the scheme commenced, which is illustrated in Figure 12.2.

Figures 12.3 and 12.4 show the geographic dispersion of WDOs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants. Although the rate of participation in WDOs by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remained strong in 2020/21 (20%), Figure 12.3 shows that there were several areas in Southern NSW where there were no WDOs undertaken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This may be an area for further investigation in 2021/22.

Figure 12.1 – Geographic dispersion of WDOs approved in 2020/21

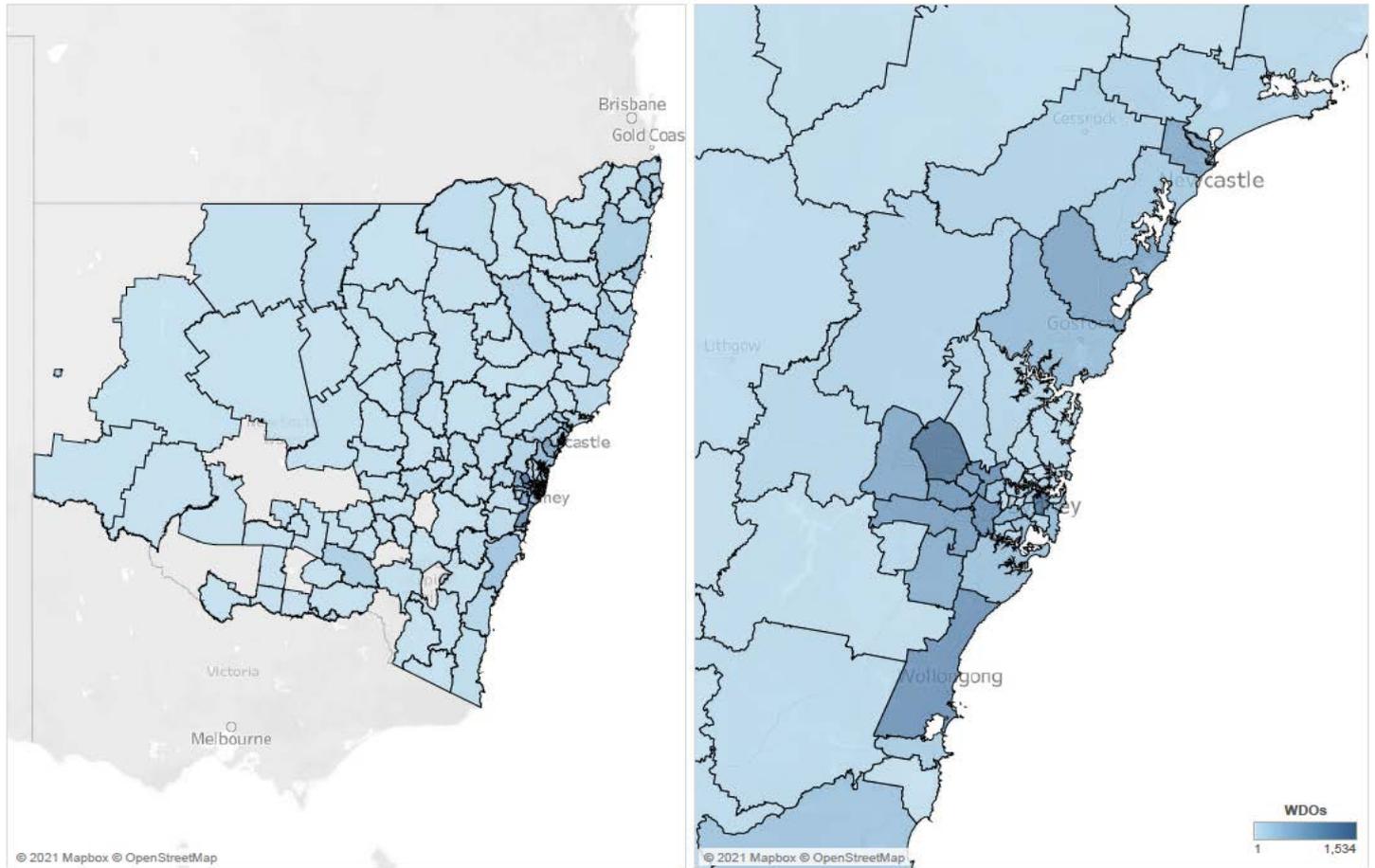


Figure 12.2 – Geographic dispersion of WDOs approved since the scheme commenced

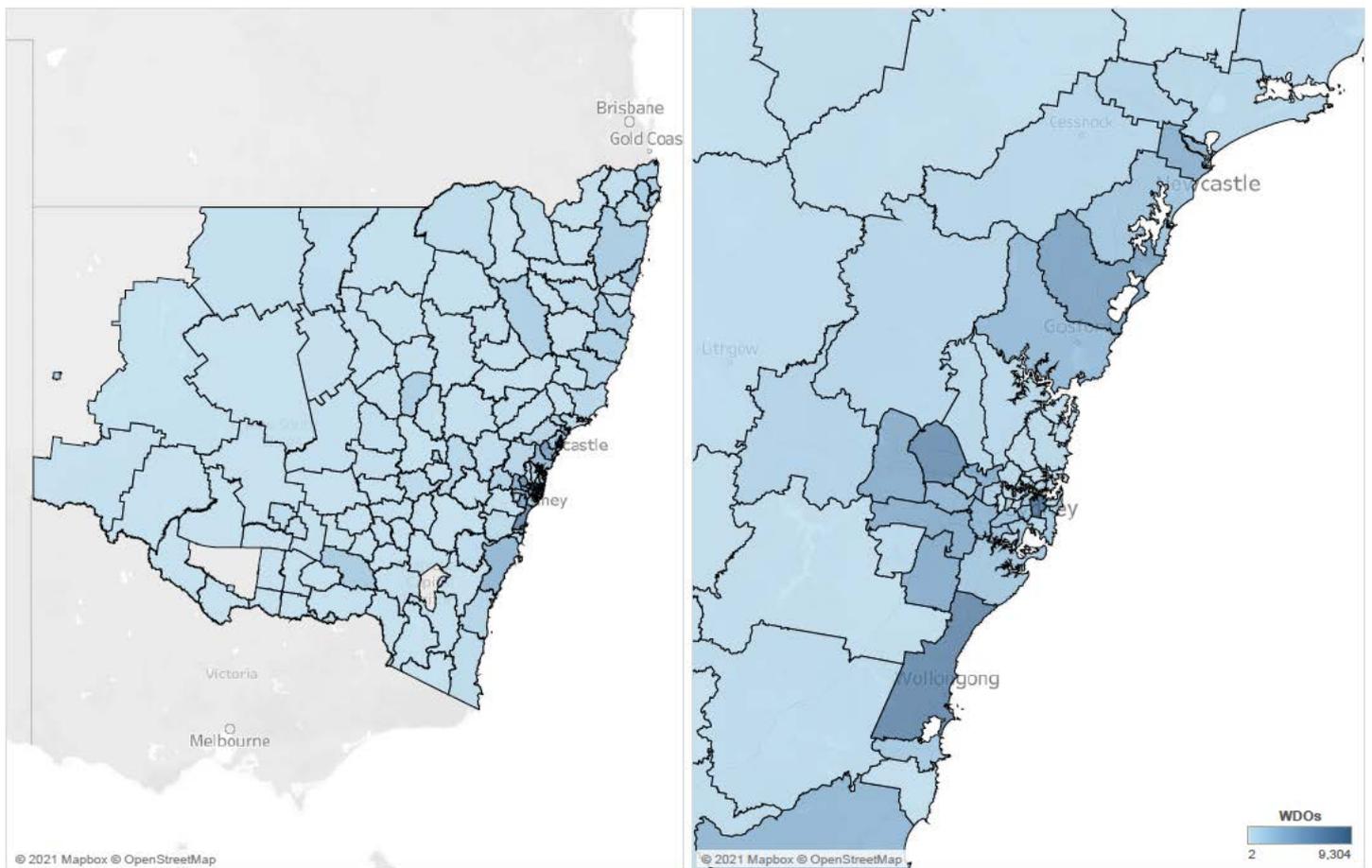


Figure 12.3 – Geographic dispersion of WDOs approved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 2020/21

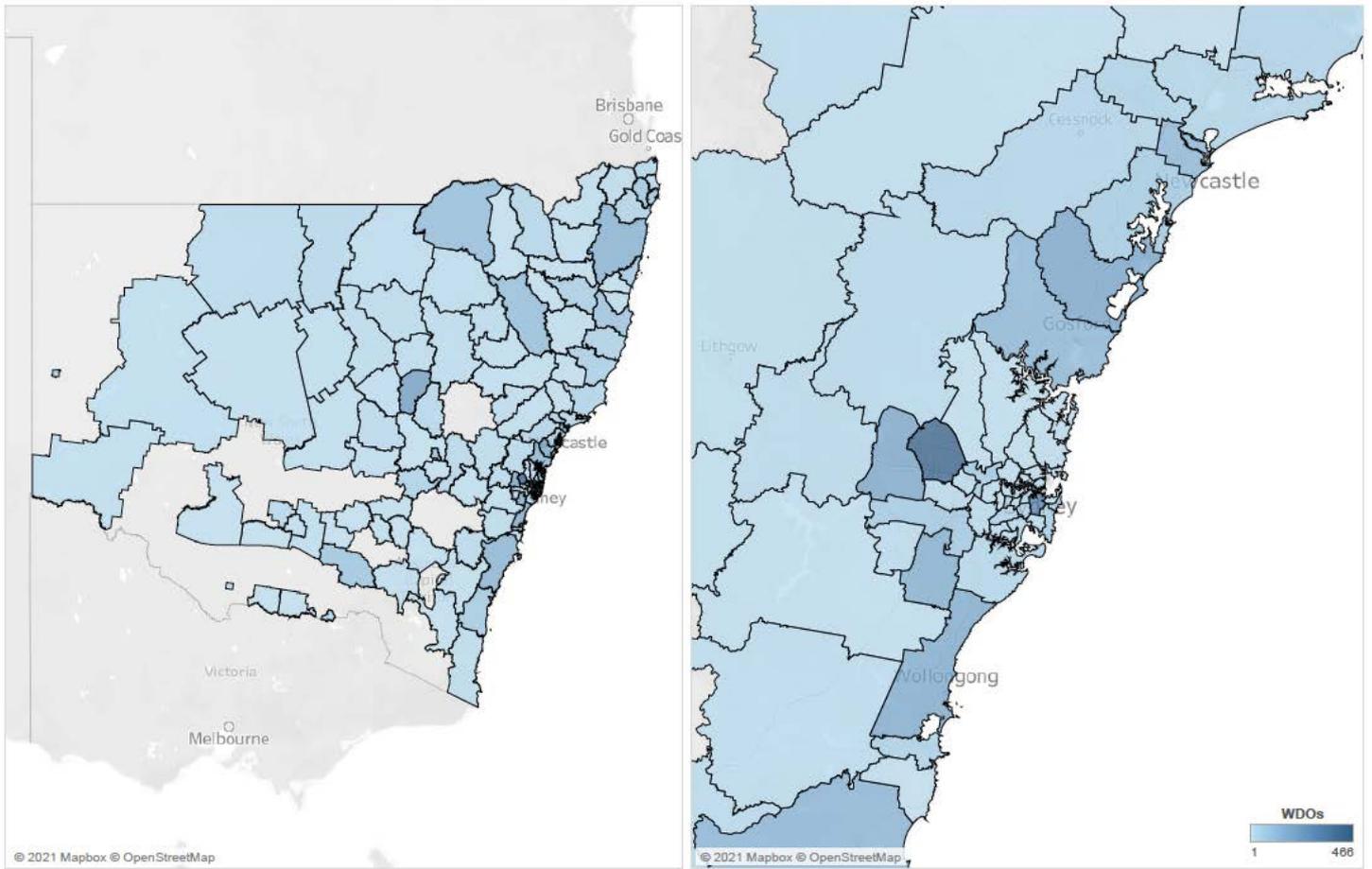


Figure 12.4 – Geographic dispersion of WDOs approved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people since the scheme commenced

