

5 GOLD COAST AND SUNSHINE COAST

Regional Queensland covers a huge geographical area stretching 1500 kilometres from the New South Wales border to the tip of Cape York. It has a population of 2.141 million and 35 per cent were in the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast statistical divisions.

The Gold Coast has a population of 482 000 and is the most rapidly growing population centre in Australia, as well as one of the most visited tourist locations. The Gold Coast comprises four statistical subdivisions. The first is Gold Coast East (population 173,000) which includes Surfers Paradise, Southport and other tourist destinations abutting the ocean. Gold Coast West is inland from the ocean and has a population of 243 000. Gold Coast North has a boundary with Logan City and a population of 51 000. Gold Coast SD Balance is a rural subdivision with 14 000 people.

The Sunshine Coast subdivision has a population of 276 000 and is another popular tourist destination. Sunshine Coast comprises two statistical subdivisions. The first is Sunshine Coast which has a population of 210 000 and includes tourist resorts such as Noosa, Maroochydore and Caloundra. The second is Sunshine Coast SD Balance. This is a large, rural subdivision with a population of 66 000.

We describe the homeless population in Gold Coast first, followed by the Sunshine Coast.

5.1 GOLD COAST

There were 2289 homeless people on the Gold Coast and the rate of homelessness was 47 per 10 000 (Table 5.1), similar to the rate of homelessness in Brisbane (45 per 10 000). Ninety per cent of the homeless were in Gold Coast East and Gold Coast West. There were 1328 homeless people in Gold Coast East where the rate of homelessness was 77 per 10 000 and 726 homeless people in Gold Coast West where the rate was 30 per 10 000.

5.1 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, GOLD COAST

	Gold Coast North	Gold Coast East	Gold Coast West	Gold Coast SD Bal	Total
Number	178	1328	726	57	2289
Rate	35	77	30	41	47

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

Table 5.2 shows the number of people in different sectors of the homeless population on census night.

In Gold Coast East, 53 per cent of the homeless (701 people) were staying temporarily with other households and local informants told us there was 'lots of couch surfing'. Another 24 per cent of the homeless were in boarding houses (323 people). One local service provider said, 'There are quite a few boarding houses around here. There are four that accommodate about 40 people, another takes 10'. Thirteen per cent of the homeless were in SAAP.

5.2 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, GOLD COAST

Percentage

	Gold Coast North	Gold Coast East	Gold Coast West	Gold Coast SD Bal	Total
Boarding house	7	24	6	14	17
SAAP	34	13	9	0	13
Friends/relatives	59	53	75	65	61
Improvised dwellings	0	10	10	21	9
	100	100	100	100	100

Number

	Gold Coast North	Gold Coast East	Gold Coast West	Gold Coast SD Bal	Total
Boarding house	12	323	48	8	391
SAAP	61	171	65	0	297
Friends/relatives	105	701	542	37	1385
Improvised dwellings	0	133	71	12	216
	178	1328	726	57	2289

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

Ten per cent of the homeless (133 people) in Gold Coast East were recorded in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough. One informant knew of a 'number of young people sleeping in parks, using cars, or sleeping at the beach'. Another service provider had been involved in the census count. She told us, 'Lots of people were not counted in the national park ... they were sleeping rough but it was not safe [for census officials] to go there'. Another informant said 'squatting is common'.

In Gold Coast West the pattern was different. 75 per cent of the homeless were staying temporarily with friends or relatives. There were 71 people in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough (10 per cent), nine per cent were in SAAP and six per cent were in boarding houses.

There were only small numbers of homeless people in Gold Coast North and Gold Coast SD Balance. Most were staying with other households, but in Gold Coast North 34 per cent (61 people) were in SAAP. Local informants confirmed these figures.

There were 650 marginal residents of caravan parks in Gold Coast (Table 5.3), including 433 in Gold Coast West and 148 in Gold Coast East. There are a number of large caravan parks in Gold Coast West and local informants described some of them. Some are 'mainly tourist parks', but one was described as a 'black hole'. Our informant said this park was 'very run down' and mainly used as emergency accommodation. If marginal residents of caravan parks are included in the population, then the rate of homelessness increases in all the subdivisions, notably from 77 to 85 per 10 000 in Gold Coast East and from 30 to 48 per 10 000 in Gold Coast West.

5.3 NUMBER OF HOMELESS AND NUMBER OF MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, GOLD COAST

	Gold Coast North	Gold Coast East	Gold Coast West	Gold Coast SD Balance	Total
Number of homeless	178	1328	726	57	2289
Rate per 10 000	35	77	30	41	47
Caravan	46	148	433	23	650
Total	224	1476	1159	80	2939
Rate per 10 000	44	85	48	57	61

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

5.2 SUNSHINE COAST

There were 1658 homeless people in Sunshine Coast (Table 5.4) where the rate of homelessness was 60 per 10 000, somewhat higher than the rate in Gold Coast (47 per 10 000). The rate was 50 per 10 000 in the urban subdivision of Sunshine Coast where there were 1040 homeless people, but 93 per 10 000 in Sunshine Coast SD Balance where there were 618 homeless people.

Table 5.5 shows that the population was distributed somewhat differently in the two subdivisions. In Sunshine Coast, about three-quarters (76 per cent) of the homeless were staying temporarily with friends and relatives, 14 per cent were in SAAP and eight per cent were in boarding houses.

5.4 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, SUNSHINE COAST

	Sunshine Coast	Sunshine Coast SD Balance	Total
Number	1040	618	1658
Rate	50	93	60

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

The picture was different in Sunshine Coast SD Balance. Fifty-six per cent were staying temporarily with other households, and 40 per cent were in the primary population. Some people in the primary population were sleeping rough or living in cars. However, many were living in improvised dwellings that were owned or being purchased. These were probably self-assembled garages or large metal sheds out in the bush. Some of these people would have intended to build a conventional house, but most were on low incomes and this dream had not been realised.

5.5 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, SUNSHINE COAST

Percentage			
	Sunshine Coast	Sunshine Coast SD Bal.	Total
Boarding house	8	4	7
SAAP	14	0	9
Friends/relatives	76	56	68
Improvised dwelling	2	40	16
	100	100	100

Number			
	Sunshine Coast	Sunshine Coast SD Balance	Total
Boarding house	89	23	112
SAAP	142	0	142
Friends/relatives	787	347	1134
Improvised dwelling	22	248	270
	1040	618	1658

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

The other issue in the Sunshine Coast statistical division is the large number of marginal residents of caravan parks. Table 5.6 shows that there were 484 marginal residents of caravan parks in Sunshine Coast and 245 marginal residents in Sunshine Coast SD Balance.

In the Sunshine Coast, there were 112 people in boarding houses (Table 5.5) but 729 marginal residents of caravan parks (Table 5.6). This is one of a number of areas across the country where caravans are used as an alternative to boarding houses.

5.6 NUMBER OF HOMELESS AND NUMBER OF MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, SUNSHINE COAST

	Sunshine Coast	Sunshine Coast SD Balance	Total
Number of homeless	1040	618	1658
Rate per 10 000	50	93	60
Caravan	484	245	729
Total	1524	863	2387
Rate per 10 000	73	129	86

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

If marginal residents of caravan parks are included in the homeless population, then the rate of homelessness in Sunshine Coast increases from 50 to 73 per 10 000, and in Sunshine Coast SD Balance the rate increases from 93 to 129 per 10 000.

