

4 GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

This chapter discusses different ways of approaching a geographical analysis. Then it focuses on the distribution of the homeless population in the Australian Capital Territory.

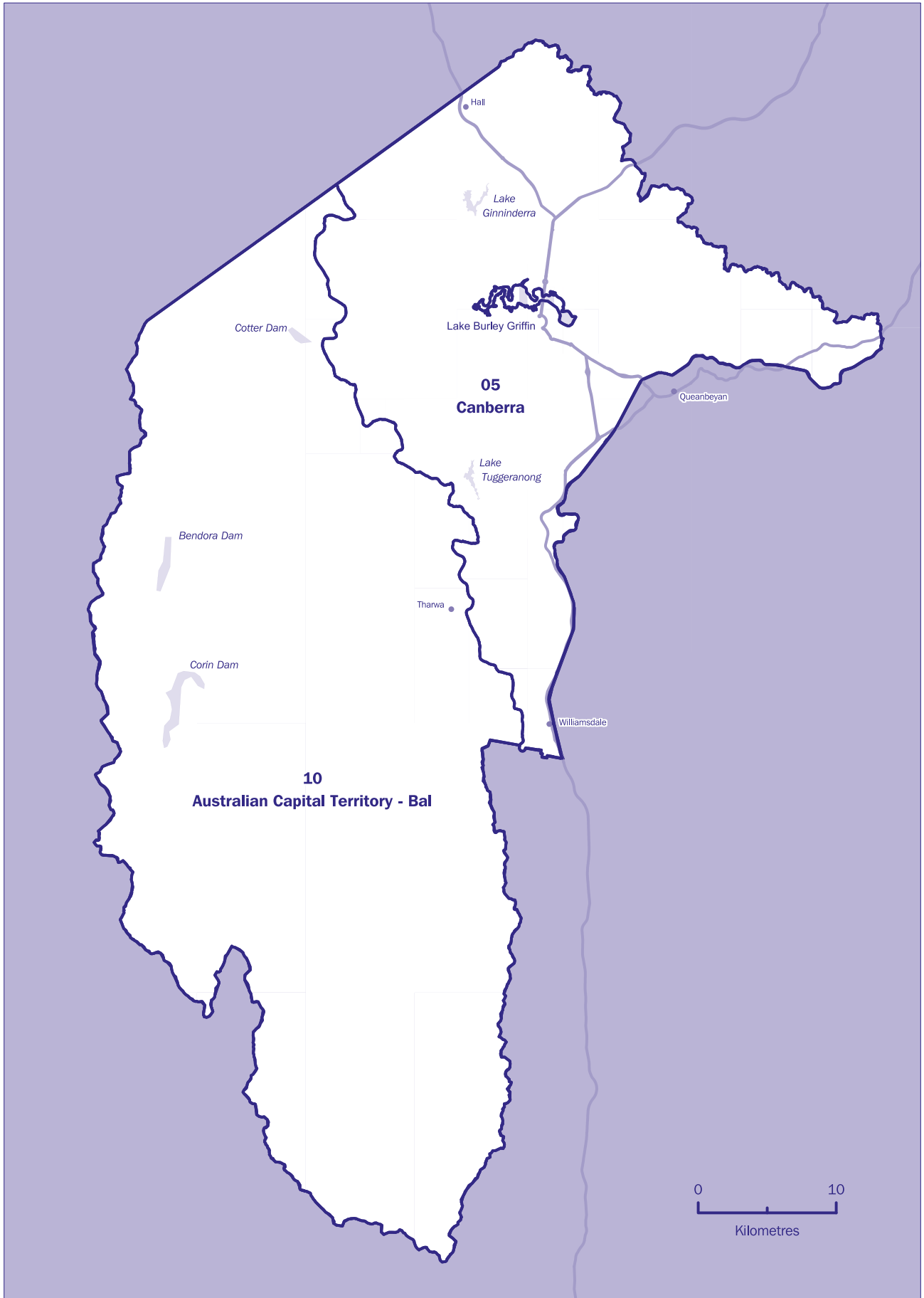
4.1 NUMBERS AND RATES

There are two ways of approaching the geographical spread of the homeless population and both are important. First, there is the number of homeless people in particular communities on census night. This is the 'raw' count and policy makers always need to be aware of these figures. Second, homelessness can be expressed as a rate per 10 000 of the population. This statistic is required for comparing communities of different sizes. For example, the number of homeless people will always be greater in New South Wales than the Australian Capital Territory, because New South Wales has a larger population. Nonetheless, the rate of homelessness may be the same in both jurisdictions

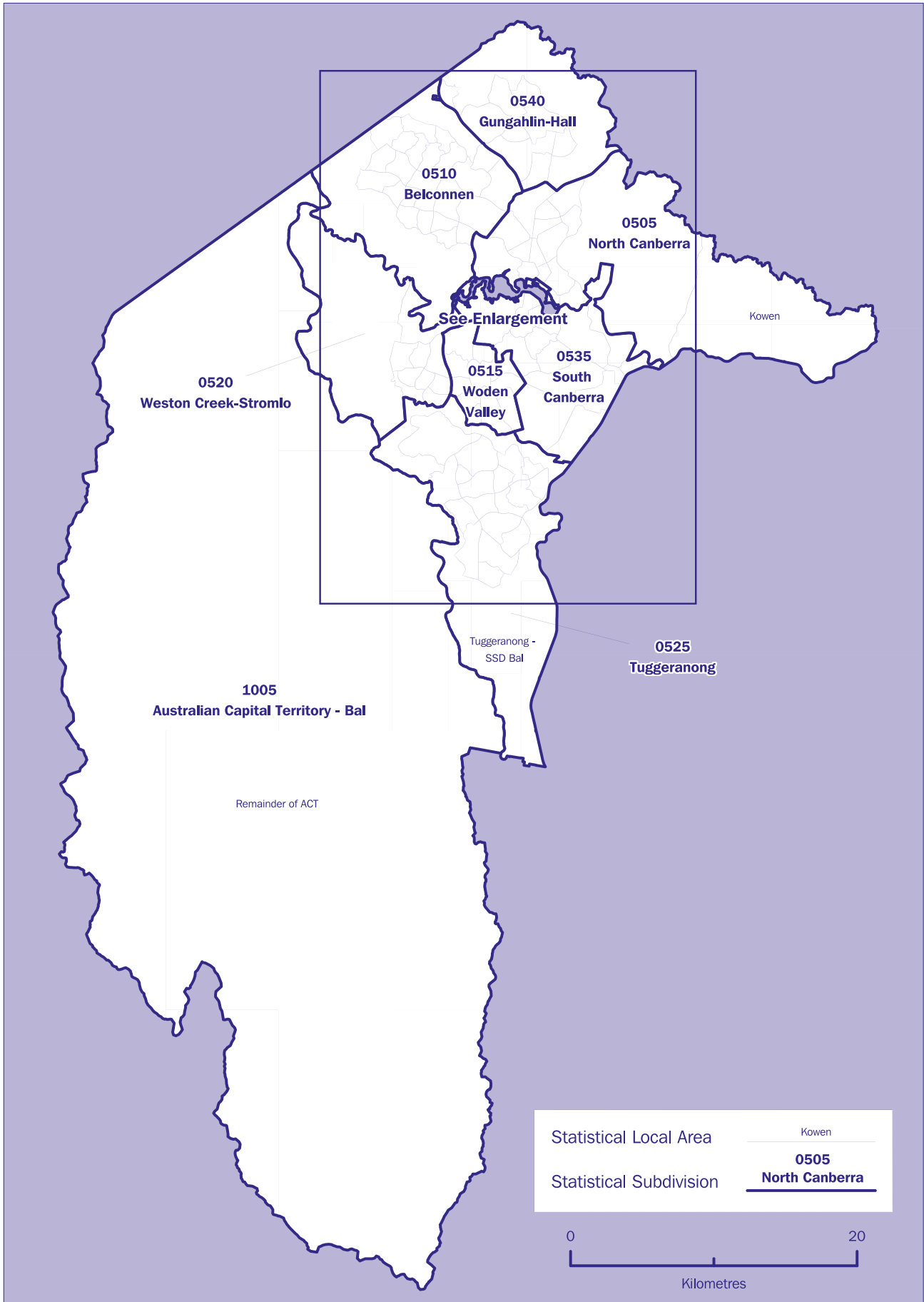
However, it is important to be cautious when interpreting rates for two reasons. First, the rate of homelessness in a particular area does not tell us how many in that community became homeless. For example, the rate of homelessness in the ACT region of Belconnen quantifies the number of homeless people in relation to the Belconnen population, but it does not tell us whether those people came from Belconnen, other parts of the Australian Capital Territory, or from interstate. Homeless people move around and the numbers in particular areas partly reflect the services that are available.

Second, it is important to be cautious when interpreting rates for geographical areas with small populations. For example, in most statistical subdivisions in the Australian Capital Territory the Indigenous population is less than 1000 people, but the rate of Indigenous homelessness is high (Appendix 2). When policy makers allocate resources, they have to consider both the number of homeless people in a community and the rate of homelessness, as well as local intelligence about what is happening 'on the ground' in order to match services with expressed need.

MAP 1: AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY, Statistical Divisions



MAP 2: AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY, Statistical Subdivisions and Statistical Local Areas



MAP 3: AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY, Statistical Subdivisions and Statistical Local Areas: Enlargement

