



# Supporting family carers in rural and remote Australia: recent evidence

*Findings from The Tyranny of Distance? Carers in regional  
and remote Australia*

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# The Tyranny of Distance?

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

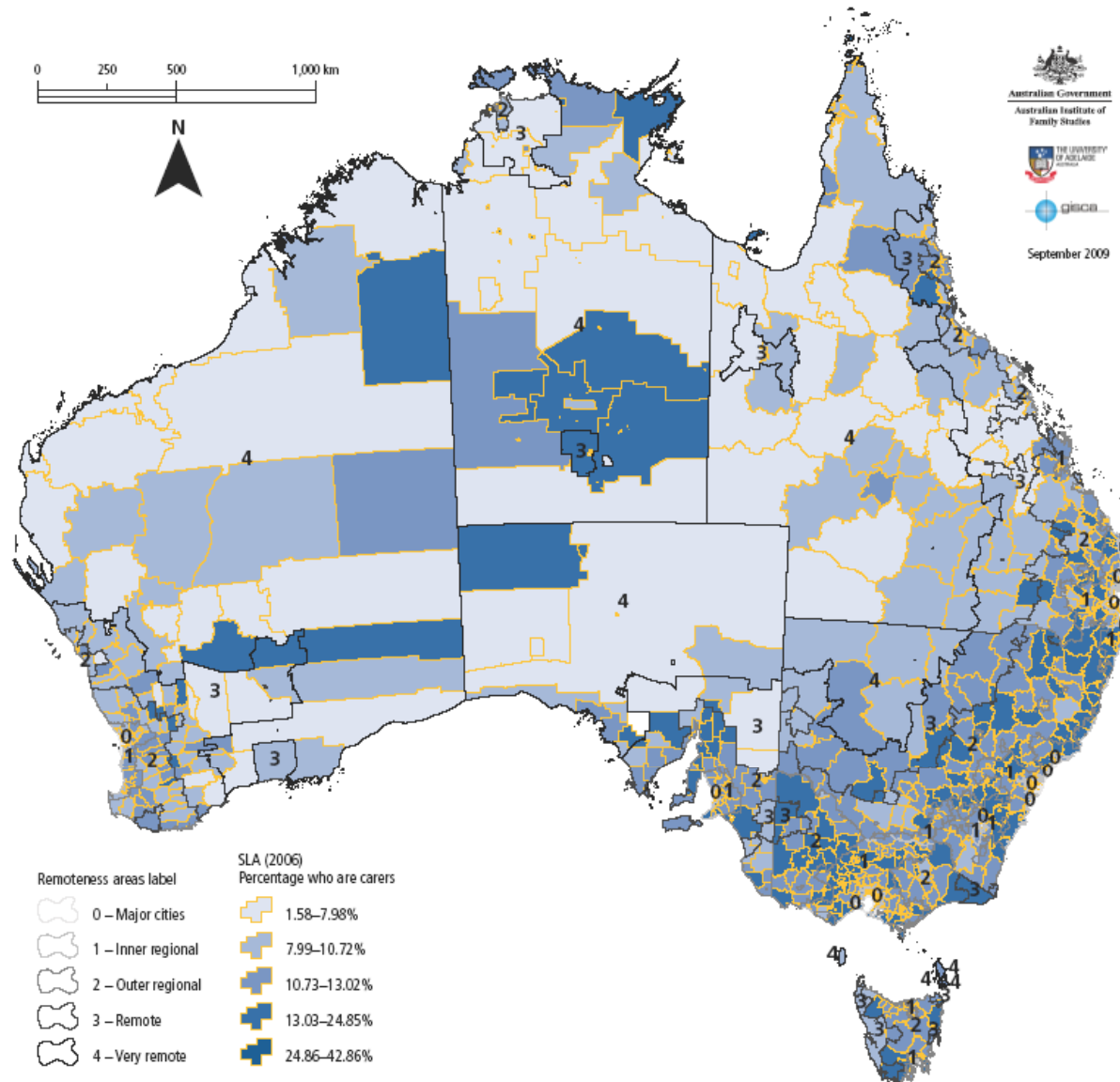


# Key findings

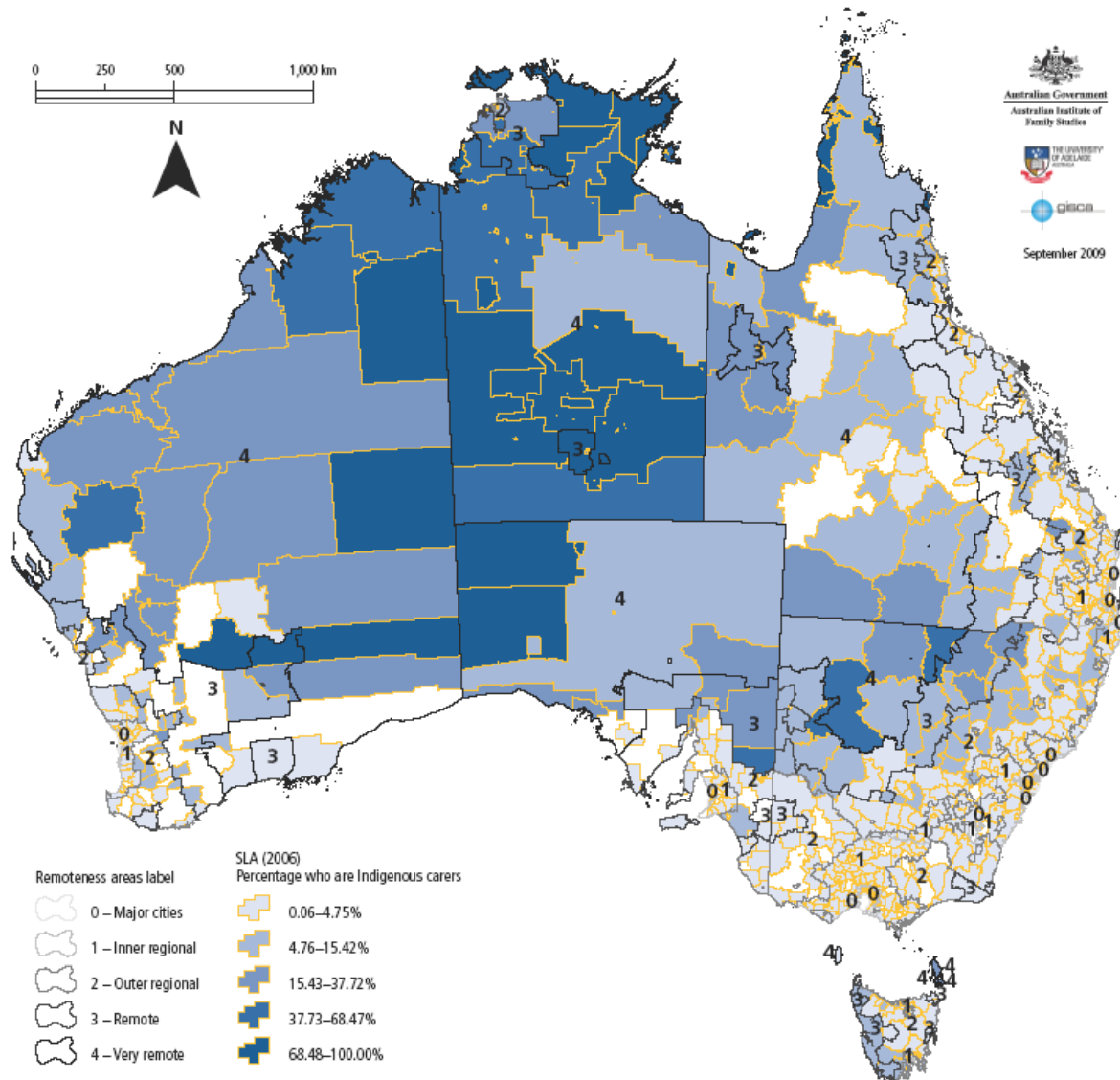
- Distribution of carers across Australia
- Carer health and wellbeing
- Indigenous carers
- Age profile
- Access to services
- Impact of drought



# Proportion of carers in Australia



# Proportion of Indigenous carers



# 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
  - NSW and Qld - largest number of carers in outer regional Australia
  - Vic, SA, Tas, WA- significant outer regional carer populations
  - Large populations of carers in remote and very remote areas in WA, Qld, NT, SA

# Health and disability

- Many carers in regional and remote Australia 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

- A 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 the proportion is 1% and in inner regional locations 2.2%





# Age profile

- Carers in regional and remote areas more likely to be under 25 years
  - In very remote areas 15.7% of carers were aged under 25- more than double the national average of 7.6%
  - The rate in remote areas was 8.3%
  - Conversely these locations had far fewer carers aged 65 years and over
  - The high proportion of young Indigenous carers was an important factor generating this outcome



# Access to services

- Regional and remote carers experience higher levels of difficulty accessing services
  - 45.3% of carers in outer regional and remote locations reported difficulties - almost double the rate reported by those living in major cities 25.7%
  - Distance is a barrier for almost 40% of carers in outer regional or remote areas - compared to 17% of carers in major cities
  - One in three carers in outer regional and remote areas cited difficulty understanding or being understood by service providers - compared to a quarter of those in other locations



# Impact of drought

- Carers in regional and remote locations are less likely to be employed, and much more vulnerable to the economic impact of the drought
  - 70.3% of working age carers in outer regional and remote areas combined caring with employment
  - This is below the rate of employment for non-carers
  - Carers were much more likely to be living in a jobless household than non-carers in the same location or carers in major cities
  - Employment rate of carers was more affected by drought than non-carers in these locations

# In summary

- 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
  - Face greater financial hardship
  - More sensitive to adverse economic events such as drought



# Policy implications

- Unpaid care provided by family and friends is invaluable
- It is a vital part of a caring society and can be the social glue that binds our communities together
- Many factors, including the long-term ageing of the population, will increase the demand for carers and care options
- There is a clear and immediate need to address the vulnerability of unpaid family carers in rural and remote areas



# Addressing need

- Responding to these challenges is critical
- Cannot simply be achieved through a single program or policy
- Important to:
  - improve access to services with specific support services for some groups including Indigenous and young carers
  - expand services, including health services, for both carers and those for whom they support
  - raise awareness of carer needs across a wide range of service provision and government programs





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