



A PROFILE OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S ABORIGINAL POPULATION

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INTRODUCTION

The Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander population of South Australia has a very distinctive demography. No other sub-group in the State's population differs from the total population as much in its social, economic and demographic characteristics. Over 30 years ago the National Population Inquiry (1975, p.455) summarised the situation as follows:

In every conceivable comparison, the Aborigines and Islanders ... stand in stark contrast to the general Australian society ... They probably have the highest death rate, the worst health and housing, and the lowest educational, occupational, economic, social and legal status of any identifiable section of the Australian population.

At that time their demographic characteristics were more those of a Less Developed Country population than of a Developed Country. Although there have been significant changes since then there is still much validity in the NPI's assessment.

The Aboriginal occupation of South Australia goes back at least 25,000 years and possibly up to 40,000 years. As Griffin and McCaskill (1986, p.2) put it 'The Aboriginal occupation of South Australia exceeds 1,200 human generations compared with a maximum of 8 generations of European occupation.'

As will be elaborated below, there are substantial difficulties in the counting of the Aboriginal population partly associated with the marginal circumstances in which many live leading to them being missed in censuses. This problem has been overcome to a degree in recent censuses through the ABS employing special procedures which undoubtedly have led to successively greater proportions of the Aboriginal population being counted. A greater problem relates to variations between censuses in the extent to which people do or do not identify themselves as Aboriginal in the census. Increased readiness to identify oneself as Aboriginal undoubtedly is a major factor in the rapid increase in numbers between 1981 and 1986. Regardless of these data collection problems, however, it is salutary to note that the approximate Aboriginal population in South Australia at the time of first white settlement in Australia (1788) is estimated to have been at minimum 15,000 (Smith 1980a, p.155). The subsequent decimation of the State's black population was such that it took 150 years to get back to that level.

The aim of this paper is to profile the demographic, social, economic and health characteristics of South Australia's Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander population. The pattern of growth of the population and its components are examined first and this is followed by an assessment of the health, social and economic status of the population and finally their changing spatial distribution within the State is addressed.

A number of works concerned with the national Aboriginal population are referred to here but special note should be made of a series of profiles of the indigenous population of Australia prepared by the ABS (2002a, b, 2003a, and b). Other important references are those produced by

the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (AEPR) at the ANU (e.g. Hunter and Dungery 2003).

DATA SOURCES

We will not say much about the data sources employed here but it is necessary to mention some of the cautions which must be heeded if the data presented are to be meaningfully interpreted.

The main source of data is the 2001 Australian Census of Population and Housing. That census included the following special question on Aboriginality:

Please use BLOCK letters.	06	Person 1	Person 2
<p>17 Is the person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?</p> <p>• For persons of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, mark both 'Yes' boxes.</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes, Aboriginal</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes, Torres Strait Islander</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes, Aboriginal</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes, Torres Strait Islander</p>	

The question is reproduced here as it appeared on the census schedule and it is clear that responses to the question involve self-identification as to whether persons consider themselves to be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin. Self-identification means that individuals may vary in their response from one census to the next according to prevailing attitudes and conditions. Hence intercensal growth of the indigenous population is a function of both population growth and the increasing propensity of people to identify their indigenous origin. There is considerable controversy about the extent to which people are likely to identify as indigenous in the census and other official data collections (Gray 1997a, b; Ross, 1999, 2002; Taylor 1997a, b).

In the census enumeration of the 1980s more than half of the growth of the indigenous population was due to the latter. The ABS listed the following reasons for the large increase in the number of Aboriginal persons counted in 1986 compared to 1981 (ABS SA Office 1988, p.2):

- people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin may have been more inclined to identify themselves as such;
- the 1986 census awareness campaign, which included additional measures to inform urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of the importance of the census;
- the implementation of special field enumeration procedures in Aboriginal communities;
- improvements made to the 1986 census processing system to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responses were correctly coded;
- the question was moved to the top of page 2 of the census form so it would not be easily missed; and
- natural increase (births less deaths).

Accordingly intercensal comparisons of census data on Aborigines have to be interpreted with considerable care.

A comprehensive evaluation of the census counts of the Aboriginal population in Australia at the 1971, 1976 and 1981 censuses made by Choi and Gray (1985) and a study of the 1986 census (ABS 1989, p.1) concluded that 'while the natural increase could be expected to contribute no more than about 14,000 of the 68,000 increase recorded, and the other factors probably even less, the major influence is considered to be an increase in the propensity of people to record themselves and their households in the census as being Aboriginal'.

The situation has changed considerably. A study of the 2001 census (ABS 2003a, pp.11-14) made the following observations ...

- There was an increase from 3 to 4.1 percent between 1996 and 2001 in the proportion of the population for which indigenous status was not known.
- Between 1991 and 2001 the census count of indigenous Australians increased by 16 percent of which 12 percent was demographic growth and 4 percent other factors especially increased propensity to identify as being of indigenous status.
- The undercount of indigenous people was estimated to be 6.1 percent compared to 7 percent in 1996.

CHANGING PATTERNS OF ABORIGINAL POPULATION GROWTH

Table 1 shows the changes in the South Australian and Australian Aboriginal population over the period since initial European Settlement. Although the data are poor the pattern they reveal is definitely faithfully indicative of the trajectory of decline and growth in the Aboriginal population over the last two centuries.

At the time of initial European settlement 4.7 percent of the continent's Aboriginal population lived in South Australia. At the 1986 census this had increased to around 6.3 percent compared with 8.6 percent of the national population being enumerated in South Australia. In 2001 the proportion of both had declined to 5.6 and 7.6 percent respectively.

This is not the place to analyse in detail the tragic decline of the Aboriginal population under the catastrophic impact of European settlement which saw their numbers decline to less than a third of their pre-contact population by the 1921 census (in the nation as a whole the decline was to less than a quarter). Suffice it to say that the major elements were:

- increased mortality due to introduction of new diseases, disruption of living patterns, usurpation of traditional lands, displacement from livelihood and outright slaughter.
- greatly decreased fertility due to introduced disease rendering many women sterile and the devastating effects of European penetration on the Aboriginal culture, social patterns and economy.

Table 1: South Australia and Australia: Estimates of Total Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander Population, 1788-2001

Source: NPI 1975, p.478; Smith 1980a, p.155; ABS 1976, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996 and 2001 Censuses

Year	Percent in		
	Australia	South Australia	South Australia
1788	314,500	15,000	4.8
1861	179,482	9,000	5.0
1871	155,285	7,500	4.8
1881	131,366	6,346	4.8
1891	111,150	5,600	5.0
1901	94,598	4,888	5.2
1911	80,613	4,692	5.8
1921	69,851	4,598	6.6
1933	67,314	4,699	7.0
1947	70,465	5,600	7.9
1954	75,567	6,300	8.3
1961	85,685	7,200	8.4
1966	101,978	8,100	7.9
1971	115,953	9,450	8.1
1976	160,915	10,714	6.7
1981	159,897	9,825	6.1
1986	226,837	14,291	6.3
1991	282,979	17,239	6.1
1996	386,049	22,051	5.7
2001	460,140	25,620	5.6

Note: Figures up to 1971 are estimates of Smith (1980a) and involve adjusting census figures upward. In subsequent years the unadjusted census totals are given.

The pattern of change since 1971 is shown in Table 2. The 2001 census count was the most reliable census of the Aboriginal population yet. It is clear that, despite considerable problems with the data and especially comparability between censuses, there has been significant growth of the State's Aboriginal population. Over the last intercensal period the Aboriginal population increased by 16.1 percent while the total population of the State increased by only 2.2 percent.

It can be seen in Table 2 that South Australia has a smaller proportion of its total population made up of Aborigines than does Australia as a whole. Indeed only Tasmania and the ACT have a smaller Aboriginal population than South Australia among the States and Territories. The

Aboriginal population make up only 1.1 percent of the State's total population. As would be expected, there is only a very small representation of Torres Strait Islanders in South Australia.

Table 2: Persons: South Australia and Australia Censuses 1971, 1976, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996 and 2001

Source: Hugo 1990; ABS 1991, 1996 and 2001 Censuses

Census Year	Aborigines No.	Torres Strait Islanders (TSIs) No.	Persons who are of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin No.	Total Aborigines/TSIs No.	Total Population No.	Aborigines/TSIs as Proportion of total Population %	Average Annual Growth Rate %
South Australia							
1971	7,140	159	n/a	7,299	1,173,707	0.6	
1976	9,940	774	n/a	10,714	1,244,754	0.9	
1981	9,476	349	n/a	9,825	1,285,033	0.8	
1986	13,298	993	n/a	14,291	1,345,945	1.1	
1991	14,654	1,595	n/a	16,249	1,400,630	1.2	
1996	18,942	1,136	366	20,444	1,427,936	1.4	
2001	22,063	796	566	23,425	1,458,912	1.6	
Australia							
1971	106,290	9,663	n/a	115,953	12,755,638	0.9	
1976	144,382	16,533	n/a	160,915	13,548,448	1.2	
1981	144,665	15,232	n/a	159,897	14,576,330	1.1	
1986	206,104	21,541	n/a	227,645	15,602,156	1.5	
1991	238,657	26,721	n/a	265,378	16,850,540	1.6	
1996	314,120	28,744	10,106	354,966	17,892,423	2.0	
2001	366,429	26,046	17,528	410,003	18,769,249	2.2	

FERTILITY

The trajectory of Aboriginal fertility over the last two centuries has been quite different to that of the rest of the population. Until World War II Aboriginal fertility was lower than the overall Australian levels. Under the catastrophic impact of dispossession, violence and disease associated with European settlement, Aboriginal fertility fell to low levels despite very high mortality (Smith 1980a). The measure of fertility used here is the *Total Fertility Rate* (TFR), which is a useful measure of fertility since it provides an approximate answer to the question 'how many children are women having these days by the time they complete their childbearing?' More correctly it is the average number of children that would be born alive to a woman during her lifetime if she were to pass through all her childbearing years conforming to the age-specific

fertility rates of a given year (Haupt and Kane 1978, pp.19-20). If a population is to replace itself without immigration from overseas in the long term the TFR needs to exceed 2.115.

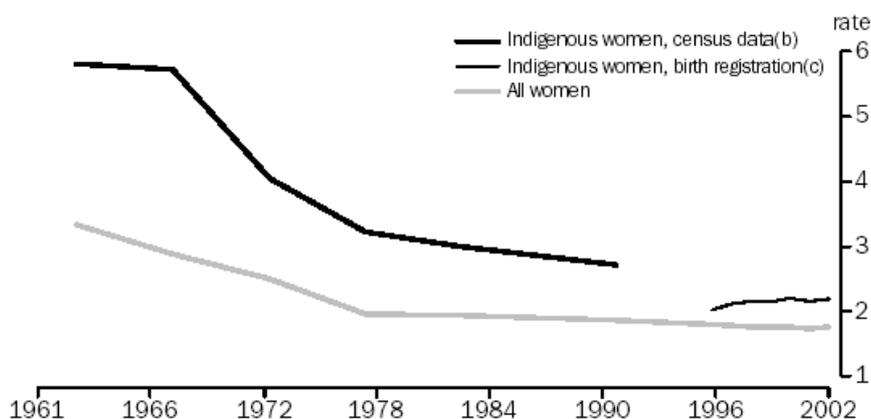
Measurement of Aboriginal fertility is problematical, especially for earlier years. Aboriginality of parents is not a data item on birth registration forms in some states so in most cases indirect techniques using census data on children ever born to women have had to be used to obtain estimates of fertility. A birth is regarded as indigenous if at least one parent identifies on the birth registration form as being of indigenous origin. Indigenous fertility on the other hand only refers to births where the mother is identified as indigenous (ABS 2003c, 18; Kinfu and Taylor 2002). Due to the poor quality of historical indigenous birth registration data up to 1996, indigenous fertility had to be estimated from census data. However with improvements in the coverage, registration data has been able to be used by ABS to estimate fertility since 1996.

The trajectory in indigenous fertility for Australia in recent years compared to that of the total population is presented in Figure 1. This shows that in 1961 the total fertility rate for indigenous women (5.9 babies per woman) was two thirds higher than that for all Australian women (3.5). Since then both TFRs have declined and while indigenous fertility was stable in the 1960s there was thereafter a convergence in the rates so that in 2002 indigenous fertility was estimated at 2.19 and that of the total population at 1.75. Kinfu and Taylor (2002, pp.4-5) point out that the fertility level of indigenous women is now at around replacement level or rather below it given the persistently high indigenous mortality levels. They suggest this is significant for public policy for two reasons:

- (a) Current projections do not assume such low fertility.
- (b) Growth rates of the indigenous population will decline in future.

Figure 1: Total Fertility Rates (a)

Source: ABS 2002, p.19



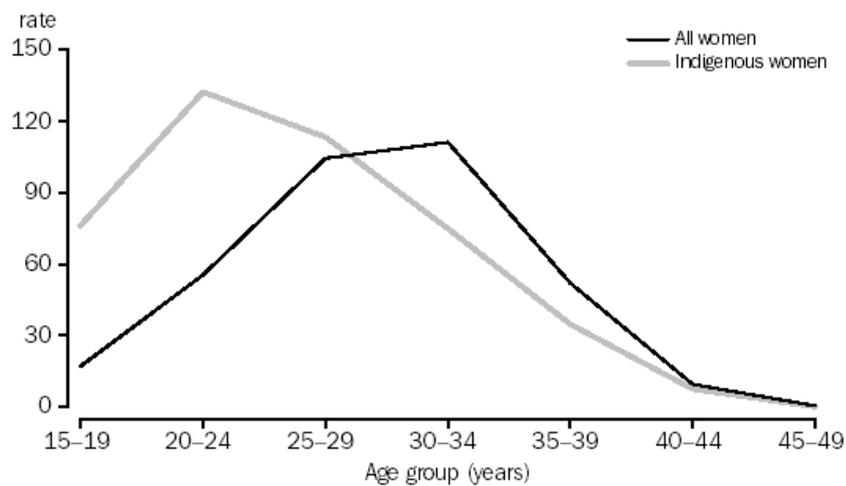
- (a) Births per woman.
- (b) Five-year TFRs (from 1961-66 to 1981-86) and ten-year TFR (1986-96), published by A Gray using census data, plotted against the mid-point.
- (c) Annual TFRs were calculated from birth registrations and 1996 census-based projections of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population (low series), except 2001 were final 2001 experimental estimates of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population based on the 2001 census were used.

Source: Gray, A (1997), *The Explosion of Aboriginality: Components of Indigenous Population Growth 1991-96*, Discussion Paper no. 142/1997, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, Canberra; *Australian Demographic Trends, 1997* (cat. No. 3102.0); *Births, Australia*, various issues (cat. No. 3301.0)

The age-specific patterns of the fertility of indigenous women are quite different to those of all Australian women. This is evident in Figure 2, which indicates that it is high fertility at younger ages which is responsible for the higher level of indigenous fertility. The ABS (2003c) report that in 2002 almost three quarters of the total fertility of indigenous women was accounted

Figure 2: Australia: Age-Specific Fertility Rates 2002

Source: ABS 2003c, p.20

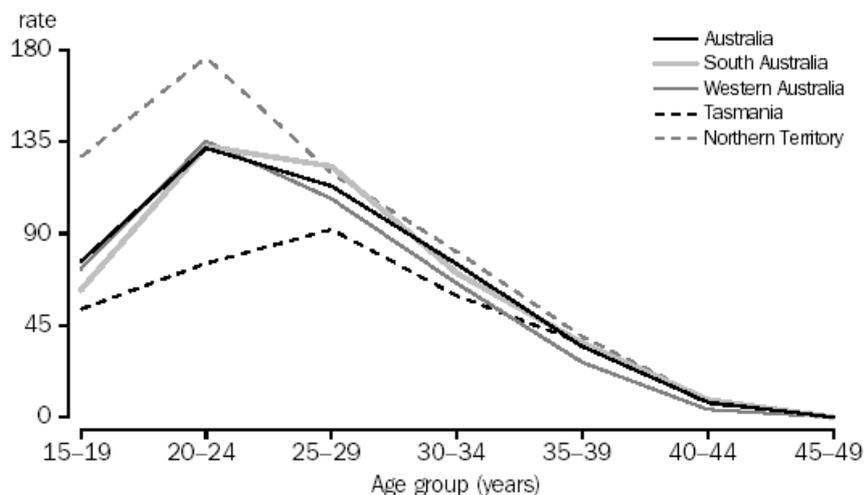


(a) Births per 1,000 women.

for by women aged less than 30 years of age compared to half of the fertility of all women. Peak fertility is in the 20-24 age group compared to 30-34 for all women and teenage fertility is more than four times higher among indigenous, than among all women. The median age of childbearing is 24.6 years compared to 30.2 for all women. The age specific pattern for South Australia is extremely close to the national pattern as Figure 3 demonstrates.

Figure 3: Selected Australian States: Age Specific Fertility Rates of Indigenous Women 2002

Source: ABS 2003c, p.21



(a) Births per 1,000 women.

A detailed time series of South Australian indigenous fertility levels are presented in Table 3. This shows that in 1906-11 indigenous fertility was below that of the total South Australian population, reflecting the massive social dislocation experienced by the indigenous population at that time. There was a gradual recovery in Aboriginal fertility levels during the first half of the twentieth century while those of the total population fell up to 1946. After World War II the 'baby-boom' years saw an upswing in the fertility of the total state population (Hugo 1983). There was also a substantial increase in Aboriginal fertility so that in the late 1950s their fertility was approaching the highest possible levels, indicating virtually no attempts to control fertility in the population. However the 1970s saw a sharp decline in Aboriginal fertility – almost halving between the late 1960s and the late 1970s. In the late 1960s indigenous levels were 130 percent as large as total levels. A decade later the difference was 83 percent. By the late 1980s this had fallen to 53 percent and in 2002 it was 29 percent or equivalent to half a child per woman. Hence there has been a substantial conveyance with indigenous fertility falling much faster than the total population fertility over the last three decades.

Gray (1984, 1990) in his analyses of the decline in fertility has shown that the increased perceived costs in caring for children (especially education costs), the adverse effects on maternal health of childbearing at older ages, and the physical demands of childbearing have shifted the balance between perceived costs and benefits of children among Aboriginal women. Consequently, smaller family sizes are now preferred and there is high acceptance of family planning, much of which is provided through the expanding Aboriginal Health Services system.

Table 3: South Australia: Total Fertility Rates of Aboriginal Women and All South Australians 1906-2002

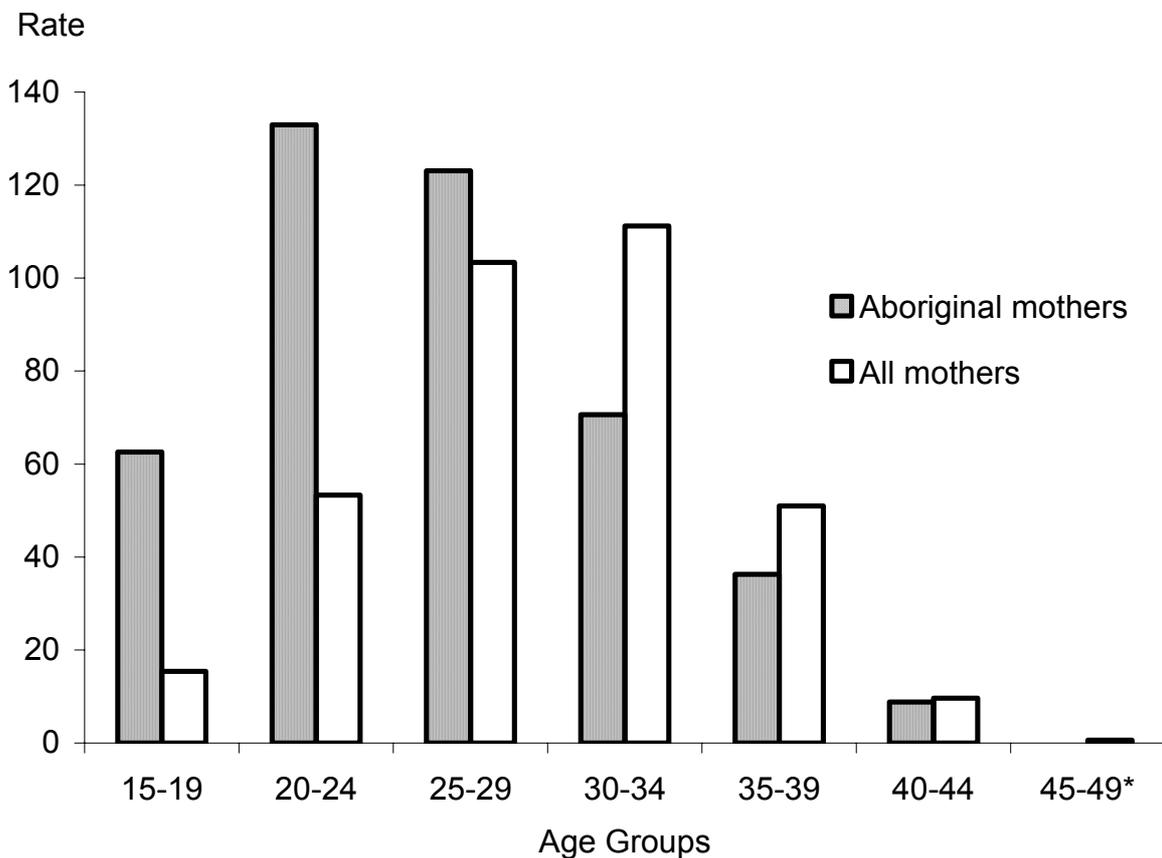
Source: Hugo 1990, ABS 1997, 2002

Aboriginal Women		All South Australians	
Period	Estimated TFR	Period	TFR
1906-11	3.4	1911	4.2
1928-33	4.7	1933	2.3
1942-47	5.8	1947	3.2
1956-61	7.0	1961	3.8
1961-66	6.6	1966	2.8
1966-71	6.3	1971	2.7
1971-76	3.8	1976	1.9
1976-81	3.3	1981	1.8
1981-86	3.2	1986	1.8
1988	2.6	1988	1.7
1997	2.1	1997	1.7
2002	2.2	2002	1.7

It is useful to examine the age specific birth rates for indigenous mothers and Figure 4 shows that there are striking differences when compared to the total population. Aboriginal women are more than three times as likely as all women to have a baby in the 15-19 age groups, more than

Figure 4: South Australia: Age Specific Rates by Aboriginality, 2002

Source: ABS *Births, Australia, 2002*



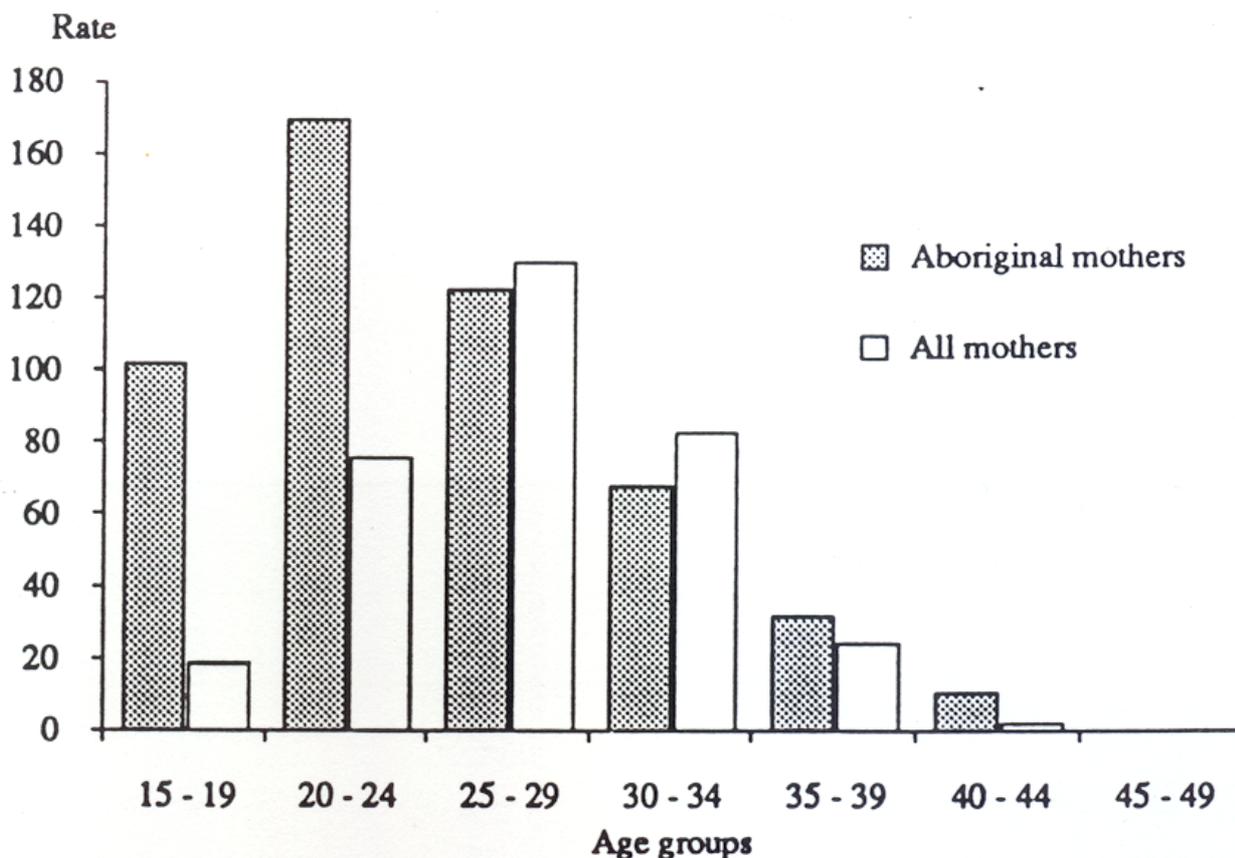
*ASFR not available for Aboriginal mothers aged 45-49

twice as likely in the 20-24 age group and slightly more likely in the 25-29 age group. On the other hand they are less likely to have children in the older age groups. It is interesting to compare the two patterns in 1988 in Figure 5. While the same pattern of the large difference in young ages is apparent, it is important to note that:

- There has been a significant reduction in indigenous fertility at all ages including the young ages.
- In 1988 indigenous fertility was lower than total fertility in the 25-29 age gaps but this was reversed in 2002 due to the increasing age at birth among the total fertility in the 25-29 age groups among the total population (Hugo 2003b).
- In 1988 indigenous women aged 35+ had higher fertility than all women but by 2002 this was reversed.

Figure 5: South Australia: Age Specific Rates by Aboriginality, 1988

Source: Hugo 1990, p.11



These patterns indicate that indigenous women are still having their children at younger ages than the total population but they are practicing contraception in older ages so that they are keeping family sizes to much lower levels than in the past. It is interesting that the peak childbearing age group among indigenous women is still 20-24 although it is not as dominant but that the peak age at childbearing among all women has gone from 25-29 to 30-34.

Table 4 compares the major features of Aboriginal and total fertility in South Australia. In addition to the differences in Age Specific Birth Rates noted above, the following differences are apparent:

- Whereas more male than female babies are born in the total population, female births slightly outnumber males for Aborigines.
- Ex nuptial births are much higher among Aborigines.
- The TFR is above replacement level for Aborigines.
- Aboriginal mothers are 5.3 years younger on average than all mothers, while Aboriginal fathers are 4.1 years younger than all fathers.

Table 4: South Australia: Indigenous Registered Births 2002

Source: ABS 2003c, p.64

		<i>All Indigenous births</i>	<i>Births to Indigenous mothers</i>	<i>All births</i>
<i>Total births</i>	no.	679	490	17 665
Nuptial births	%	16.5	11.0	65.6
Exnuptial births	%	83.5	89.0	34.4
Paternity-acknowledged	%	70.5	71.0	30.9
Paternity-not-acknowledged	%	13.0	18.0	3.5
Both parents Indigenous	%	32.1
Mother only(b)	%	40.1
Father only(c)	%	27.8
<i>Age of mother</i>				
19 years and under	no.	112	88	786
20–24 years	no.	208	152	2 529
25–29 years	no.	174	129	4 914
30–34 years	no.	113	76	6 000
35–39 years	no.	57	34	2 827
40–44 years	no.	10	6	567
45 years and over	no.	—	—	32
<i>Age-specific fertility rates(d)</i>				
15–19 years	rate	..	62.6	15.4
20–24 years	rate	..	133.0	53.3
25–29 years	rate	..	123.1	103.4
30–34 years	rate	..	70.6	111.2
35–39 years	rate	..	36.3	51.0
40–44 years	rate	..	8.8	9.6
45–49 years	rate	..	—	0.6
<i>Total fertility rate(d)</i>	rate	..	2.172	1.723
<i>Total confinements</i>	no.	669	484	17 354
Median age of mother	years	25.5	25.1	30.4
Median age of father	years	28.8	28.5	32.6

(a) Coverage of Indigenous births in South Australia in 2002 has been estimated at 102% on 1996 census-based projections. See table 9.9.

(b) Includes paternity-not-acknowledged and origin of father not stated.

(c) Includes origin of mother not stated (1%).

(d) Indigenous rates are derived from the 2002 experimental projections of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population based on the 1996 census.

Gray (1983, 1990) has identified a number of differentials between Aboriginal women in their levels of fertility. His findings are still relevant and can be summarised as follows:

- Women with higher levels of education have lower levels of fertility. However, the fertility of Aboriginal women who never attended school or who had few years of schooling is also relatively low due to high incidence of infecundity rather than delayed commencement of childbearing.
- Aboriginal fertility is lower in major urban areas with more than 100,000 inhabitants (TFR = 2.7 for 1981-86) than elsewhere (TFR = 3.2). Other differentials are more marked in major urban areas than elsewhere.
- Aboriginal women who are employed have lower fertility than those who are unemployed and those who are not in the labour force.
- Low family incomes are associated with higher fertility and high incomes with low fertility among Aborigines.

Gray (1990, p.73) argues that there was little fertility decline in the 1981-86 period but that 'changes in age of leaving school account for a very large amount of such fertility decline as has occurred among Aboriginal women in the recent past'. His findings would suggest that the downward drift in fertility is to a large extent 'education-driven'.

With respect to family planning there are few systematic studies of the knowledge, attitudes and practice of Aborigines in South Australia in the use of contraceptives.

Gray's (1987) study has several interesting findings including the following:

- Some 16 percent of women (most of them concentrated in one of the study communities) indicated that they had no knowledge of family planning.
- Aboriginal women approved spacing of children as a reason for using family planning methods and also condoned its use to stop having children.

However, most Aboriginal women continued to have children young and closely spaced and only turn to family planning methods so that they will not have more children. This explains the pattern of abrupt truncation of fertility around age 25 or 30 for Aboriginal women.

Gray importantly points to the large difference between the wishes of Aboriginal women about the timing, spacing and number of their children and their practice of childbearing and points to the important role of health services in bridging this gap.

MORTALITY

There is no greater inequality between people than inequality in the face of death. This is the ultimate unarguable evidence of the disadvantaged situation of the State's Aboriginal population. Currently the death rate among the indigenous population in Australia is more than twice that of the

total Australian population. Moreover the ABS points out that the poor quality of indigenous mortality data means that this differential is likely to be significantly greater (ABS 2002d, p.20). There are problems with death registration data not so much because indigenous deaths are not registered at all but mainly because they are not identified as indigenous deaths. The ABS estimate across Australia the coverage of indigenous deaths is about 55 percent and in South Australia it is 59 percent. However it is important to bear in mind the differentials outlined here comparing indigenous and total deaths tend to understate the actual level of difference.

The ABS has developed an experimental life table of indigenous people, some of the results of which are summarised in Table 5 and show that at birth indigenous boys have an expected life span of 22.3 years less than all boys and for girls the difference is 21.6 years. Even in older years the difference remains substantial. It must be reiterated that this represents an inequality of major and concerning dimensions.

Table 5: South Australia: Comparisons of Life Expectancy at Selected Ages, Indigenous¹ and Total Population² 2001

Source: ABS 2002d, p.90

Age	Males			Females		
	Indigenous	Total	Difference	Indigenous	Total	Difference
0	55.1	77.4	22.3	61.0	82.6	21.6
20-24	37.6	58.2 ³	20.6	43.6	63.2 ³	19.6
30-34	29.0	48.8 ⁴	19.8	34.5	53.4 ⁴	18.9
40-44	22.4	39.4 ⁵	17.0	26.2	43.7 ⁵	17.5
60-64	10.5	21.4 ⁶	10.9	13.7	25.2 ⁶	11.5

¹ Experimental Specific Life Tables of ABS 1999-2001, ² Australian Life Tables 2000-2002 (ABS 2002d, 73-4)
³ 20, ⁴ 30, ⁵ 40, ⁶ 60

To further appreciate the stark differences in mortality between the indigenous and non-indigenous population, Table 6 compares some other measures of mortality. The *median age at death* for Aboriginal males and females was 51.0 and 55.5 years respectively, while the comparable figures for non-indigenous South Australians were 79.8 years. As long ago as 1979 a parliamentary report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs concluded that ‘the standard of health of Aboriginals is far lower than that of the majority of Australians and it would not be tolerated if it existed in the Australian community as a whole’. There can be no doubt that at present, as throughout the entire period of European settlement, the mortality and health levels among the Aborigines are the worst of any large sub-group in Australian society. Historical data on death rates among the state’s indigenous population are limited

Table 6: Indigenous, Non-Indigenous and Total Deaths, South Australia(a) 2001

Source: ABS 2002d, p.85

		INDIGENOUS.....			NON-INDIGENOUS	TOTAL(b)
		Males	Females	Persons	Persons	Persons
.....						
Total deaths	no.	74	51	125	11 444	11 891
Age at death (years)						
0	no.	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	75	79
1-14	no.	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	39	42
15-24	no.	n.p.	n.p.	5	84	95
25-34	no.	10	3	13	150	173
35-44	no.	12	7	19	286	324
45-54	no.	11	13	24	471	513
55-64	no.	15	10	25	910	962
65 and over	no.	17	16	33	9 429	9 703
Not stated	no.	—	—	—	—	—
Median age at death	years	51.0	55.5	53.2	79.8	79.6
Indirect standardised death rate (ISDR)(c)	rate	18.3	10.1	13.7	5.6	5.8
Infant mortality rate(d)	rate	9.7	9.9	4.9	4.7	4.6

although what are available are summarised in Hugo (1990). It is indicative that the median age at death for males in the indigenous population was 38 in 1988 but improved substantially to 51 in 2002 but that for women has been constant at 55.5 over the intervening period.

The level of mortality among infants is one of the most sensitive indicators of differences in social wellbeing between groups. In the late 1960s the Infant Mortality Rate (number of children born alive dying at under one year of age per 1000 live births) for Aboriginals was estimated at 144 for males and 143 for females (NPI 1975, p.523), while the comparable levels for the total Australian population were 18.8 for males and 15.0 for females. Table 6 shows that in 2001 these had fallen in the State to 9.7 for males and 9.9 for females. In 1983 they were 14.5 for the total indigenous population in the State (Hugo 1990, p.20). The dramatic decline in IMRs has been a result of decreased fertility (reducing the number of high risk births), greater prenatal and post natal care, greater education especially among indigenous women but also the enormous changes in the availability of health services following documentation of exceptionally high infant mortality levels in the 1980s (Thomson 1983, p.10). Nevertheless it is apparent in Table 6 that in 2002 the Aboriginal IMR was twice as high as that for the total population. This compares to four times as high in 1975 and 1980, (Hugo 1990, p.17). The SA IMRs for the indigenous population are considerably lower than the estimated national figure (12.7).

The causes of continuing comparative high levels of infant mortality are the classical concatenation of the concomitants of poverty and inequality:

- low nutrition of mothers and infants;
- conditions at birth being less than ideal;

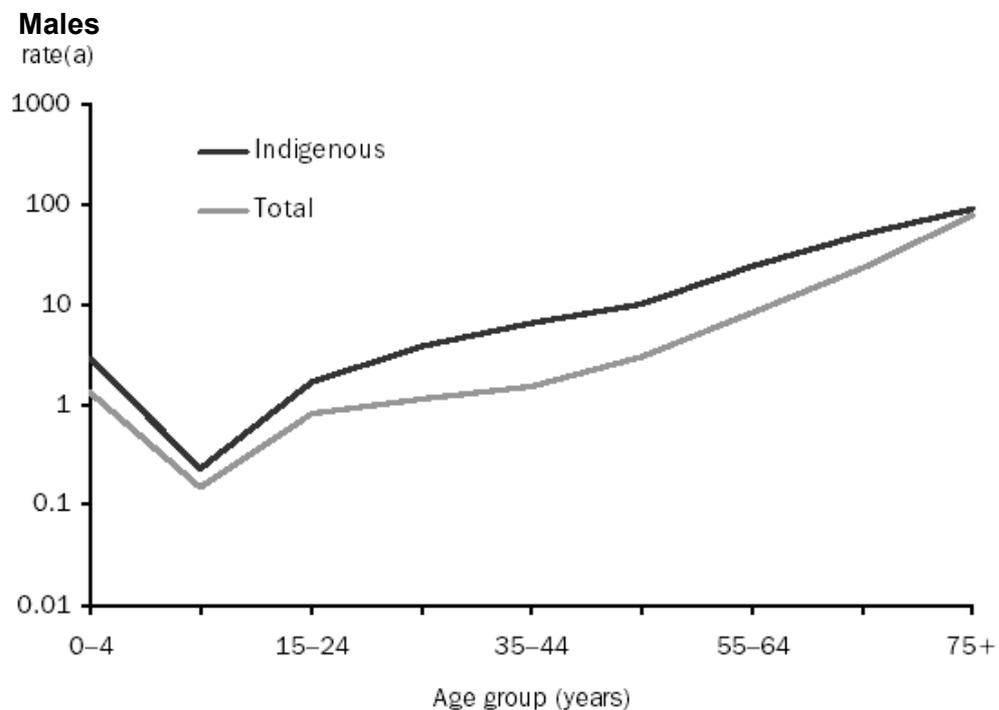
- low access to medical services;
- poor housing, overcrowding.

The major causes of the excessive Aboriginal deaths at the youngest ages are gastro-intestinal and respiratory infections and accidents. In principle almost all such deaths are preventable and there is still a considerable challenge to provide relevant health services.

Data on adult mortality among the Aboriginal population are even more limited than that for infants. However, it is clear that the achievements in reducing mortality among infants in the last two decades have by no means been replicated in the adult population. Indeed the lack of improvement, especially for males, is a cause for considerable concern. The ABS (2002d, pp.21-2) has estimated differences in Age Specific Death Rates¹ (ASDRs) for the indigenous population of Australia. The data for South Australia are poor since the numbers involved are quite low (Table 6). Hence it is most indicative to look at the rates for Australia as a whole. Figure 6 shows that the ASDRs were higher for the indigenous population in all age groups but especially in the 35-44 age group where they are four times as high. This represents an important challenge to not only Australia's health system but to the entire society.

Figure 6: Australia: Age Specific Death Rates : Indigenous and Total Population 2000-2002

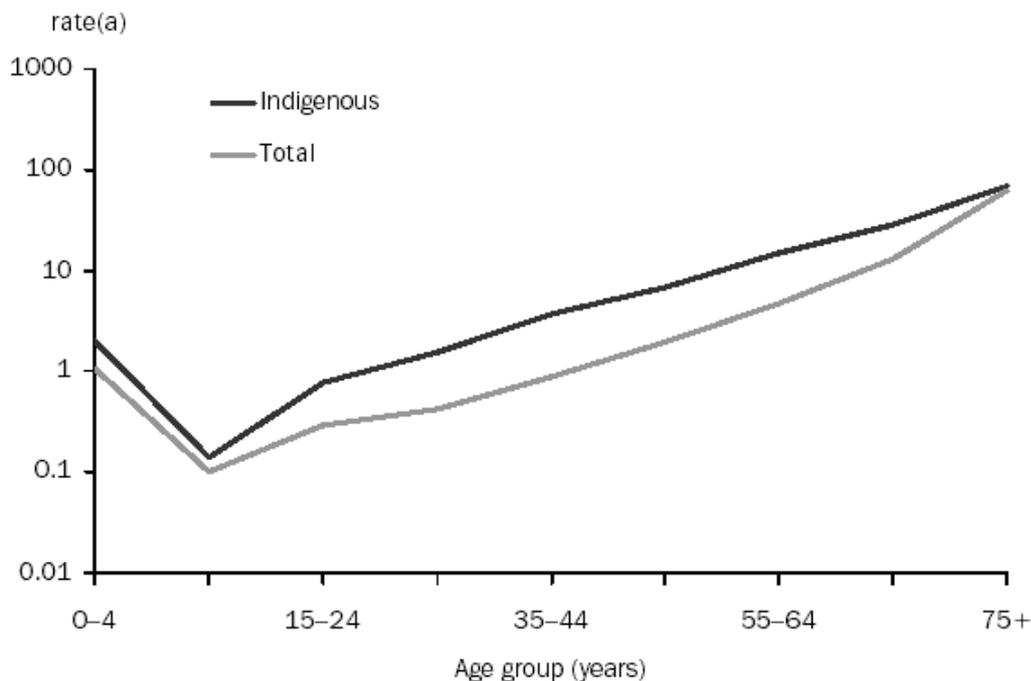
Source: ABS 2002d, p.22



(a) Logarithmic scale.

¹ Death per 1000 in particular age group.

Females

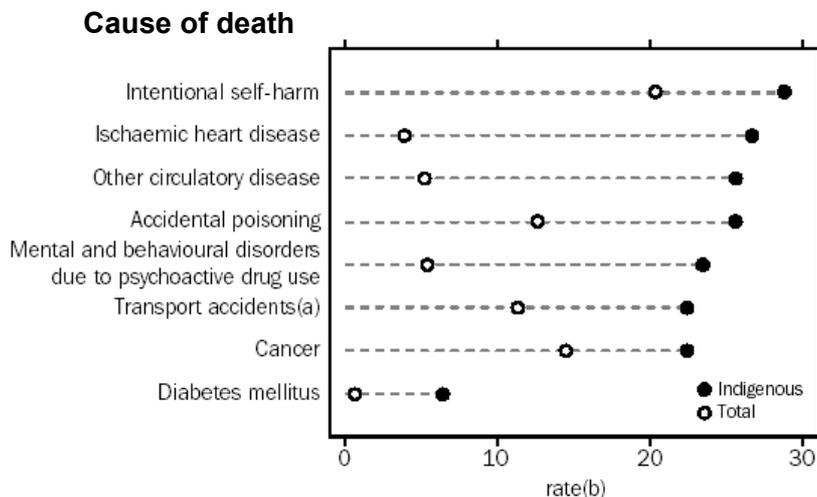


(a) Logarithmic scale.

It is indicative to consider the causes of death of persons aged 25-39 in Australia and compare the situation for the indigenous and total population. Figure 7 shows that the death rate in this age is greater for the indigenous than the total population for each of the leading causes of

Figure 7: Indigenous and Total Australian Death Rates, Persons Aged 25-39 Years, 1999

Source: ABS, *Deaths, Australia*, 1999



(a) Excluding water, air and space accidents.

(b) ASDR per 100,000 population aged 25-39 years.

death. In fact the greatest difference exists for the second most significant cause of death – ischaemic heart disease – with ASDRs of 27/100,000 and 4 respectively. This reflects the strongly disadvantaged situation of the indigenous population.

The causes of death of the indigenous population are quite different to those of non-indigenous Australians. Table 7 compares the main causes of death and the following are noticeable.

- Circulatory disease is the main cause of death for both groups, but more significant among the total population (38 percent of deaths) than for Aboriginals (29 percent).
- Accidents, poisonings and violence accounted for 17 percent of all Aboriginal deaths but only of 6 percent of all deaths. This compares to 25.2 percent of all indigenous deaths in 1988.
- However, a main killer of the oldest Australians – cancer (29 percent) – account for a much smaller proportion of all Aboriginal deaths (16 percent).
- Endocrine, nutrient and metabolic diseases, predominantly diabetes mellitus accounted for 8 percent of indigenous deaths and 3 percent of all deaths.

Table 7: Underlying Cause of Indigenous Death, 2001

Source: ABS, *Deaths, Australia, 2002*

Cause of death and ICD-10 code	Indigenous		Total		Indigenous	Total	Indigenous SMR(a) rate
	Deaths		Deaths		Median Age	Median Age	
	no.	%	no.	%	Age at Death years	at Death years	
All causes	2063		128 544		54.2	78.5	2.1
Diseases of the circulatory system (100-199)	595	28.8	49,326	38.4	61.8	82.5	2.1
Malignant neoplasms	329	15.9	36,750	28.6	62.7	73.7	1.3
External causes (V01-Y98)	343	16.6	7,876	6.1	31.1	44.2	2.2
Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases	173	8.4	4,314	3.4	59.5	78.0	6.0
Diseases of the respiratory system (J00-J99)	194	9.4	10,616	8.3	65.2	80.5	3.5
Diseases of the digestive system (K00-K93)	96	4.6	4,089	3.2	47.7	78.4	2.3

(a) Standardised mortality ratio. See Glossary on page 105. Standardised using the age-specific death rates of the total Australian population at June 1999, in five year age groups from 0-4 years to 75 years and over. The SMR is derived using the ratio of observed deaths to expected deaths. Due to the undercoverage of indigenous observed deaths, the SMRs presented here are likely to be conservative estimates. Further, undercoverage of indigenous observed deaths may vary by cause of death.

In each of the leading causes of death the median age at death for the indigenous population is lower than for the total population. The causes of death shown in Table 7 do not show the deeper underlying causes of death but rather the disease which caused death. The deeper underlying causes are associated with poverty, deprivation, dispossession, powerlessness, etc.

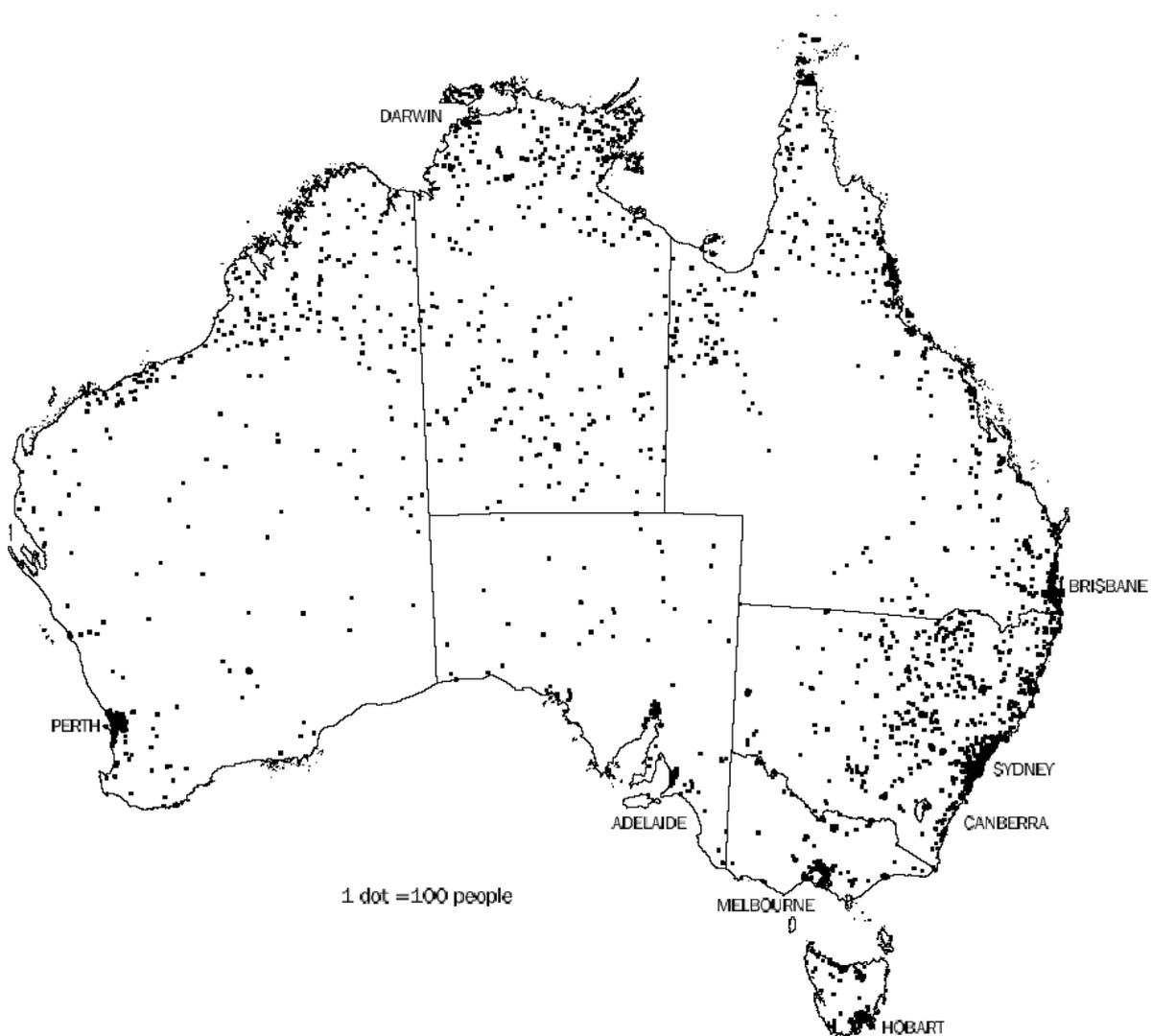
Thomson (1984, p.946) in demonstrating the failure of more than a decade of special Aboriginal health programmes to attain the goal of equal health status succinctly and accurately identifies these inequalities as stemming from 'the extreme social inequality experienced by Aborigines. The social inequality is characterised by poverty and powerlessness, and is directly related to the dispossession and discrimination to which Aborigines have been, and are still being, subjected'. One needs look no further to explain the huge contemporary differences between Aboriginal mortality in contemporary South Australia and that of the population as a whole.

THE SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF ABORIGINES

The distribution of Aborigines in Australia is shown in Figure 8. It has been noted earlier that

Figure 8: Distribution of the Indigenous Population(a) – 2001

Source: ABS, *Year Book Australia*, 2003



(a) Represents a random distribution within Statistical Local Area boundaries.

South Australia has less than a proportionate share (in relation to the total population) of the national Aboriginal population. However, it is interesting to note in Figure 8 how evenly the Aboriginal population are distributed across the continent compared to the total population which is strongly concentrated in the south-eastern corner.

The most closely studied aspects of the demography of the South Australian Aboriginal population are its changing distribution and how this has been influenced by migration. The historical pattern of increasing concentration in more recent years in metropolitan Adelaide, has been investigated in a number of papers by Gale (1966, 1969, 1972, 1981). Table 8 shows that the proportion of the State's Aboriginal population living in metropolitan Adelaide, increased from less than a quarter in 1971 to a third in 1986 and to 44.8 percent in 2001. The proportion in 'other urban areas' increased from a fifth in 1971 to almost a third in 1986 and has remained steady. On the other hand the proportion in rural areas has fallen from more than half to less than a quarter. This reflects the continuing urbanisation of the indigenous population in the state.

Table 8: South Australia: Distribution of Aboriginal Population Between Metropolitan, Urban and Rural Areas at Recent Census

Source: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics and ABS Censuses

	1971		1986		2001	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Major urban	1,172	24.1	5,696	39.9	11,451	44.8
Other urban	1,512	21.2	4,580	32.0	8,206	32.1
Rural	3,907	54.7	4,015	28.1	5,887	23.1
Total	7,140	100.0	14,291	100.0	25,544	100.00

While this distribution is converging toward the overall pattern of distribution of the state's population, the indigenous population is still much more dispersed than the total population. This is apparent when we examine Table 9, it is clear that the indigenous population are much less concentrated in Adelaide than the total population.

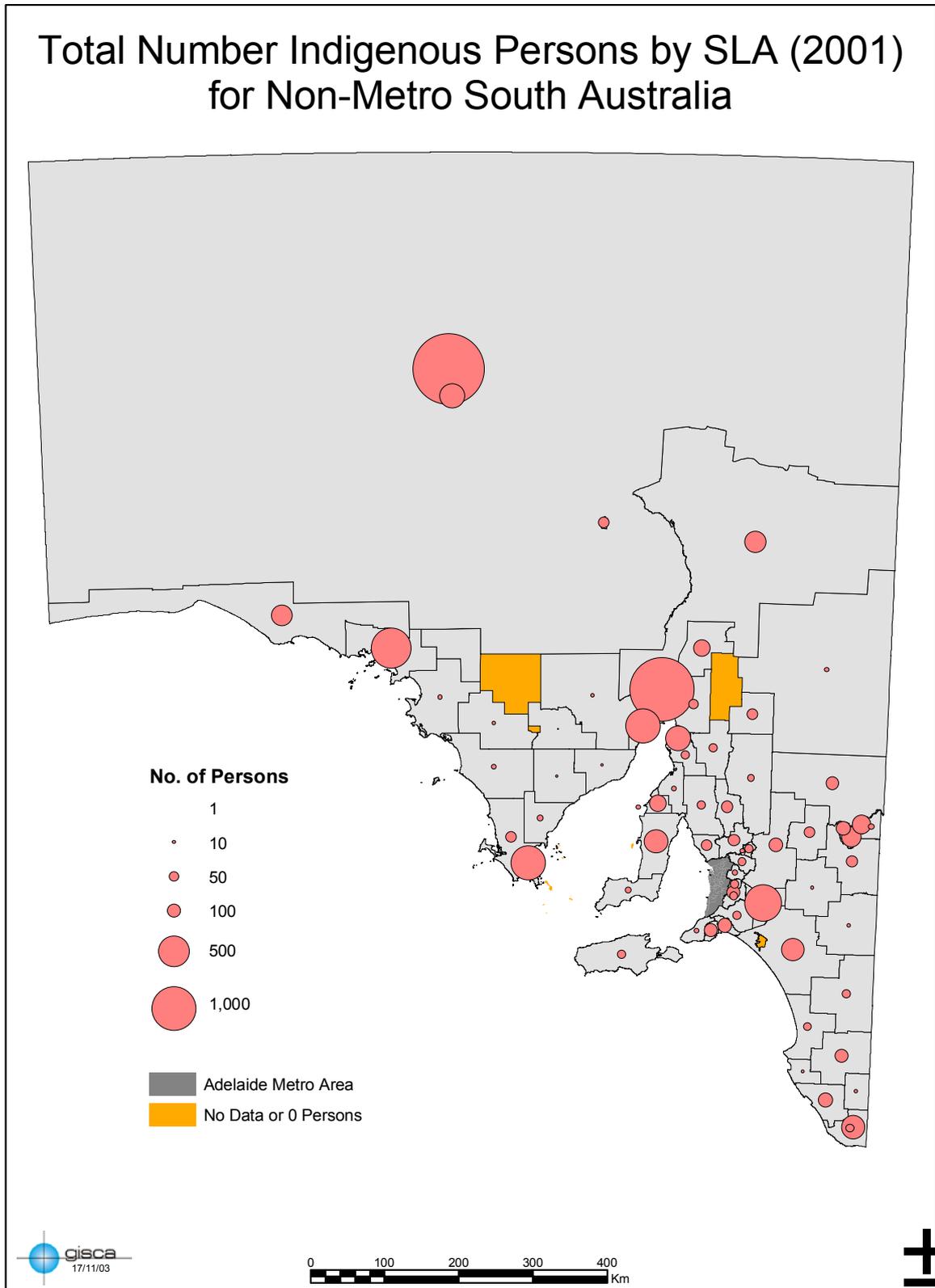
Table 9: Estimated Resident Population, Indigenous Status by Section of State and South Australia, 30 June 2001

Source: ABS, SA Office

	Persons					
	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Major urban	11,451	44.8	1,023,266	68.9	1,034,717	68.4
Other urban	8,206	32.1	260,926	17.6	269,132	17.8
Bounded locality	2,229	8.7	44,472	3.0	46,701	3.1
Rural balance	3,658	14.3	157,520	10.6	161,178	10.7
South Australia	25,544	100.0	1,486,184	100.0	1,511,728	100.0

Figure 9 shows the distribution of indigenous people living outside Adelaide in 2001. It is

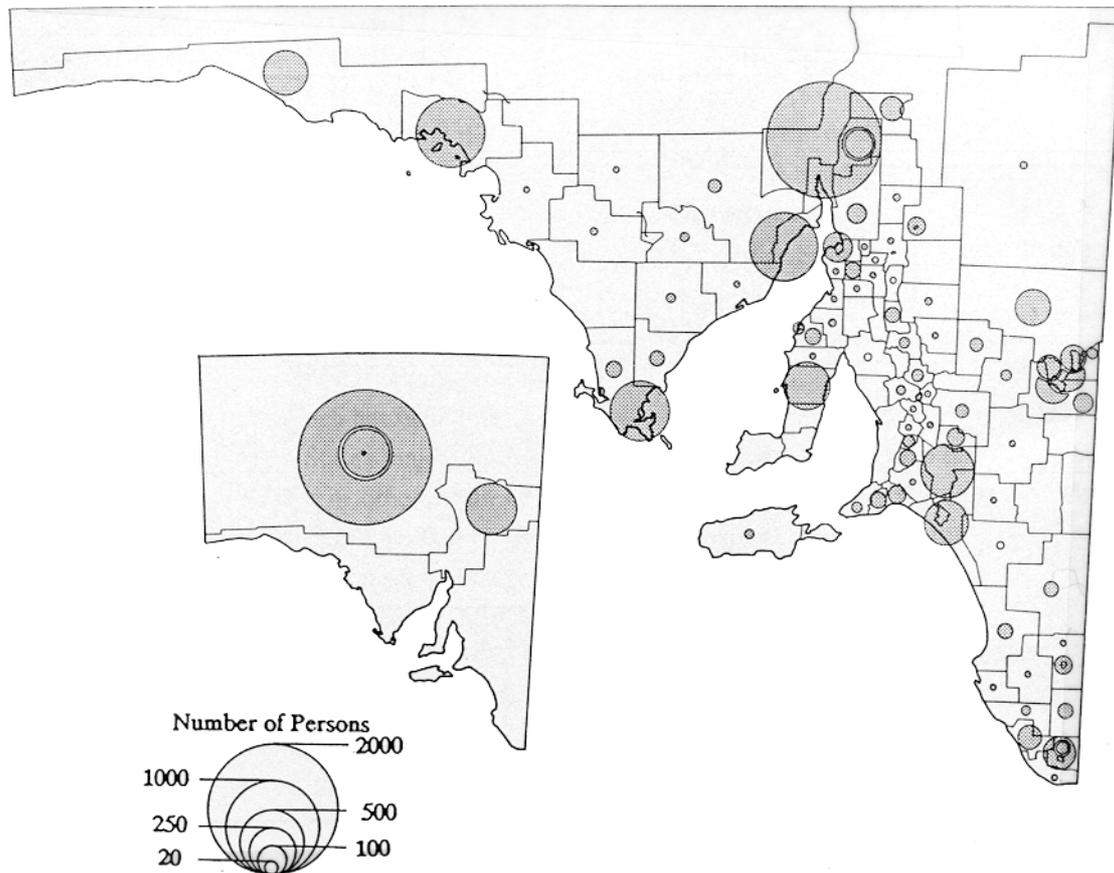
Figure 9: Non-Metropolitan South Australia: Total Number Indigenous Persons by SLA, 2001



interesting to compare it to the pattern in 1986 depicted in Figure 10. It is immediately apparent that there has been a reduction in significance of the indigenous population in the northern “outside

Figure 10: Non-Metropolitan South Australia: Number of Aborigines, 1986 Census

Source: ABS 1986 Census

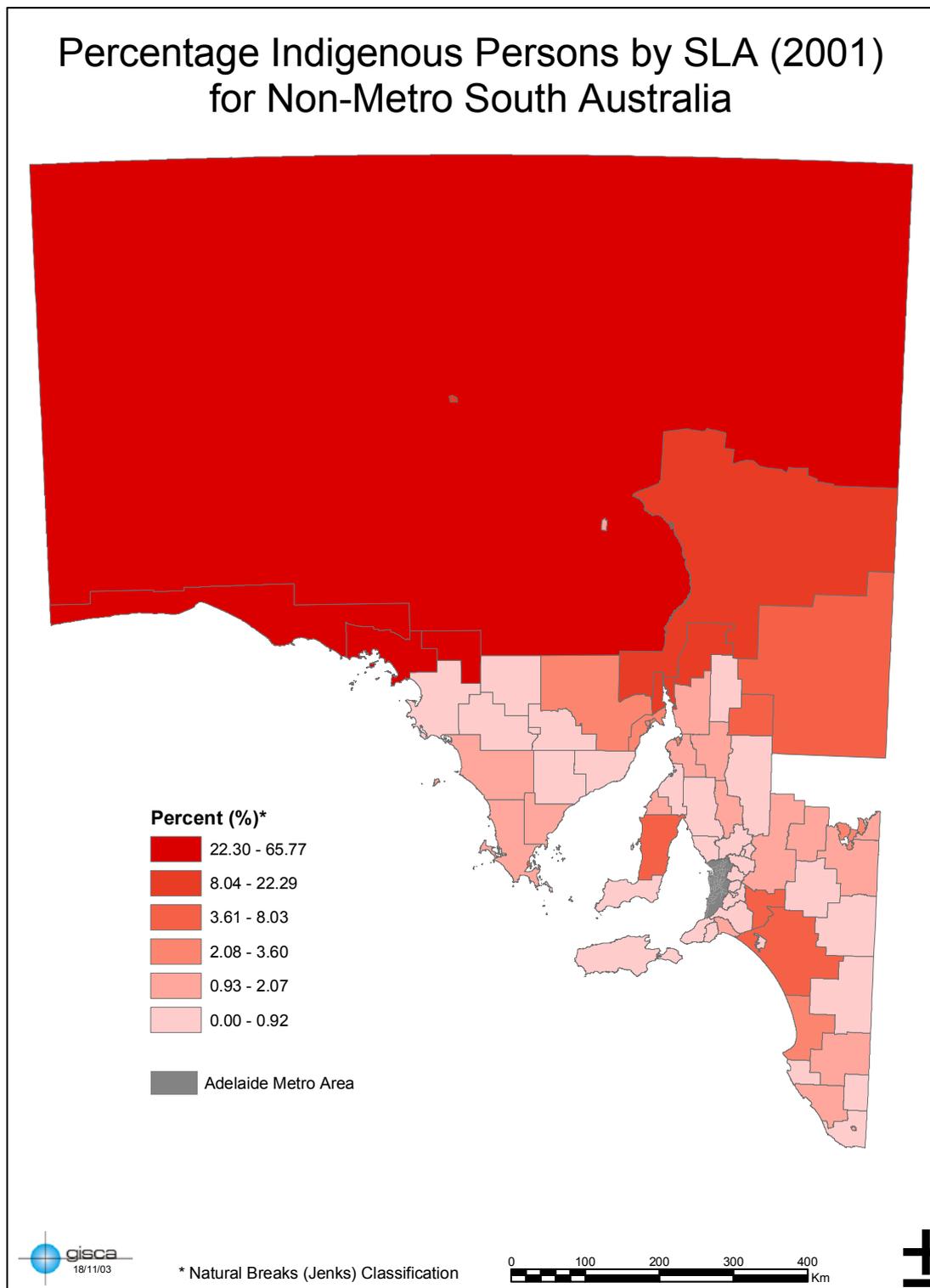


the counties” part of the state. However, Figure 11 shows that this is the part of the state where the indigenous population make up the highest percentage of the resident population. Indeed they make up the majority population in many communities in this region. Table 10 shows the main communities in provincial cities. By far the largest group is in Port Augusta and this has been the case over a long period. There are also substantial communities in the west coast cities of Whyalla, Port Lincoln and Ceduna and in Coober Pedy in the north. It will be noted however that the most rapidly growing other urban communities are in Murray Bridge and Mount Gambier.

Turning to the communities outside of the provincial cities, despite a decline in its relative significance in the State’s Aboriginal population distribution, the far north remains the area with the highest proportion of its total population made up of Aborigines. More than one in five persons outside the counties is an Aborigine. The area is a huge one – covering more than two thirds of the State – so it is important to consider the distribution of the Aboriginal population within it. There

is a concentration in the north-western corner of the State, the region to which the Pitjantjatjara

Figure 11: Non-Metropolitan South Australia: Percentage Indigenous Persons by SLA, 2001



people gained full title in 1981. Other concentrations are found in the small urban centres of the far north – Oodnadatta, Coober Pedy and Marree. The Aboriginal population in the opal mining centre

of Coober Pedy has increased but the numbers in Marree and Oodnadatta declined. The other major concentrations are in the Yalata S.A. Aborigines land trust area on the far west coast of the State and Nepabunna.

Table 10: Aborigines in Major South Australian Non-Metropolitan Urban Centres, 1981-86

Source: ABS SA Office 1988, p.8

Urban Centre				Percentage Change
	1981	1986	2001	1986-2001
Port Augusta	1,120	1,415	2,041	+44.2
Whyalla	320	515	630	22.3
Ceduna	312	403	825	104.7
Pt. Lincoln	348	394	622	57.4
Murray Bridge	178	298	695	133.2
Coober Pedy	70	244	339	38.3
Mount Gambier	60	131	296	125.3

Another major pattern evident in Figure 9 is the concentration of Aboriginal population in small towns and rural areas near former missions or reserves. Hence the concentrations in the Riverland around the Gerard mission, in the Central Yorke Peninsula area near the Point Pearce mission and in the Murray Mouth area near the Point McLeay (Raukkan) mission.

The recent patterns of growth in non-metropolitan South Australia apart from the provincial cities are shown in Table 11. The main concentrations are clearly on the west coast, Yorke Peninsula, the Upper Murray and the Coorong area, and in the north. These are all areas where there were previously missions located.

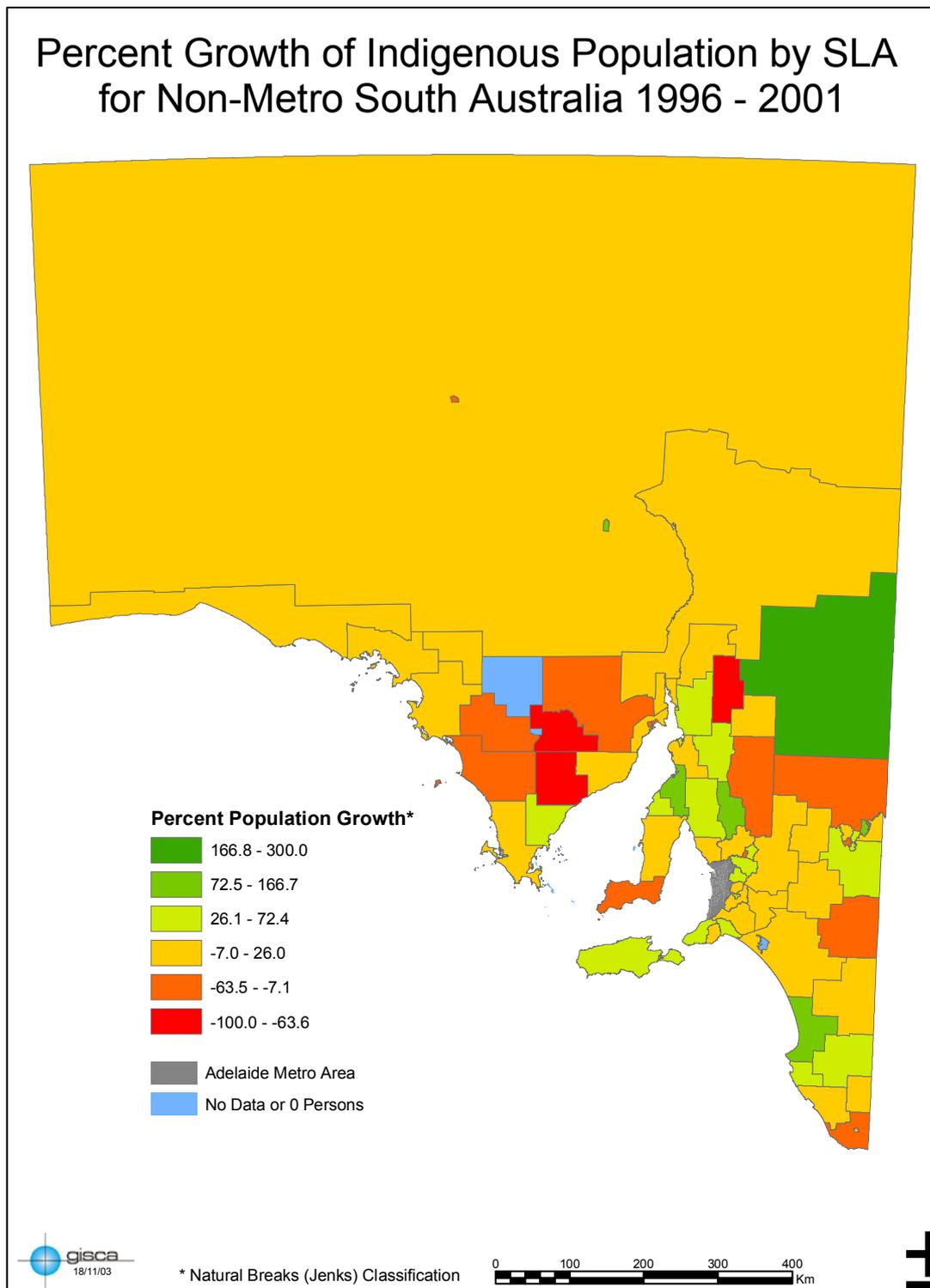
Table 11: Selected South Australian Non-Metropolitan SLAs Growth of the Indigenous Population 1996-2001

Source: ABS SA Office

	1996	2001
Yorke Peninsula	316	328
Meningie/Alexandrina	112	163
Copper Coast	92	147
Berri, Barmera, Renmark, Loxton	699	886
The Coorong	286	282
Unincorporated West Coast	255	256
Flinders Rangers	366	399
Unincorporated Far North	2,282	2,252

Figure 12 shows the rates of population growth in non-metropolitan SLAs over the 1996-2001 period. The main areas of growth are limited to the Riverland, Upper South East, near Adelaide and mid north. The more remote parts of the State have experienced decline or relative stability over the intercensal period.

Figure 12: Non-Metropolitan South Australia: Percent Growth of Indigenous Population by SLA 1996-2001



The most striking and important tendency in the changing spatial distribution of the Aboriginal population in Australia in the post-war period has been the growing concentration in the nation's largest cities. This has been associated with substantial rural-urban migration and consequent economic, social, political and cultural change. South Australia is no exception to this pattern and through the pioneering work of Gale (1972, 1981) more is known of the adjustment processes associated with this movement in South Australia than is the case in other States.

As was the case with the non-English speaking immigrants, the story of Aboriginal urban settlement within the Adelaide Metropolitan Area is overwhelmingly one of the post World War II period. Although Aboriginal occupation of the site of Adelaide goes back many thousands of years, the city 'between 1850 and 1950 had few Aboriginal residents' (Griffin and McCaskill 1986, p.33). However, the Aboriginal movement to cities, which began in the 1950s, was encouraged by government agencies and by the growing concentration of job opportunities, services and facilities in the State Capitals. Further impetus was given to the movement when Aborigines belatedly were granted full citizenship and other rights as a result of a 1967 referendum. Adelaide now has the largest single community of Aborigines within the State and is the focal point of many Aboriginal organizations.

The growth of Adelaide's Aboriginal population, as it is reflected in census data, is presented in Table 12. The dramatic shifts in census population are in part artefacts of the unreliability

Table 12: Adelaide Statistical Division: Growth of the Census Aboriginal Population 1966-1986

Source: ABS Censuses

Year	No. of Aborigines	Percentage Change over
		Previous 5 Years
1966	883	-
1971	1,910	+116.3
1976	4,356	+128.1
1981	3,217	-26.2
1986	5,696	+77.1
1996	9,384	Na
2001	11,047	17.7

of census data. The 1966 census data were a severe underestimate because only persons said to have more than 50 percent Aboriginal ancestry were defined as Aboriginal compared to the self-identification of later censuses. Gale (1972) carried out a virtual complete population count of the Aboriginal community in 1966 and found that it was two and a half times larger than the census count of the same year. She shows that there was substantial immigration of Aborigines to Adelaide (as well as in the other capital cities) during the second half of the 1950s and the 1960s

and a slowing down of that movement in the 1970s (Gale 1980, p.8). This would suggest strongly that the 1971 and 1981 censuses were undercounts while that of 1976 was an overcount of the Aboriginal population. Even given the problems of intercensal differences in persons identifying themselves as Aboriginal, it would appear that the 1980s has seen an upturn in the rate of immigration of Aborigines after the stabilisation identified by Gale in the 1970s. The subsequent years' counts have been more reliable and indicated a continued pattern of growth.

Gale (1972, 1980) and Gale and Wundersitz (1982) have identified many distinctive features of the Aboriginal migration to Adelaide. The movement to Adelaide has been strongly selective of Aborigines who previously lived on missions and reserves in the southern part of the State. The movement is strongly selective of particular kin groups and chain-migration processes similar to those of Southern Europeans operate to influence who moves to Adelaide and where they settle. The movement is not as age-selective of young adults as is that of the rural-urban migration of the white population. Aborigines in Adelaide have made considerable adjustment in their lifestyle, marriage patterns and household structures but have tended to maintain strong kinship-based networks.

Gale (1980, p.16) found that in the Adelaide Aboriginal population there were several competing forces operating to shape their spatial distribution within the metropolitan area:

- Firstly, there are forces making for spatial agglomeration. These include the kin networks which are such an important influence shaping Aboriginal settlement. The lack of ability of some migrants to communicate in English would also encourage concentration. Moreover, the fact that most Aborigines have low incomes greatly restricts the area in which they can afford housing.
- Secondly, there is a set of influences which are encouraging a more dispersed pattern of settlement. One element here is the fact that a high proportion of the Aboriginal population occupy rented State housing authority dwellings, as is shown in Table 13. Moreover, the bulk of those currently purchasing homes are actually buying them from the SAHT. While these SAHT houses are almost entirely restricted to low socio-economic status areas, Gale (1980, p.16) has pointed out that ...

the actual procedure for selecting the sites for such houses has spread them quite extensively through the available suburbs. This attempt at dispersal was a decision taken quite consciously by those initiating the housing project (i.e. the Aboriginal Funded Housing Unit) in the early seventies. They believed that full acceptance and integration would occur only if 'ghettos' were prevented and Aborigines were scattered throughout the suburbs.

Gale (1980, p.18) also found that there were some Aboriginal families in Adelaide who deliberately sought not to live in an Aboriginal area. Table 13 shows that the reliance on public housing has been reduced between 1986 and 2001 but is still significant.

Table 13: Persons and Households: In Private Dwellings by Nature of Occupancy of Private Dwellings, Census 1986 and 2001.

Source: Hugo, 1990, p.40 and ABS 2001 Census

	Aboriginal Dwellings		Total Dwellings	
	1986	2001	1986	2001
Owned	8.5	10.5	35.2	40.3
Being purchased	11.1	20.0	37.1	29.5
Rented – SAHT	46.2	30.6	10.9	7.9
- other government agency	3.9	-	1.5	-
- private incl. landlord not stated	27.1	20.8	11.8	14.8
Other/inadequately described	2.4	14.1	2.6	4.2
Not stated	0.7	3.9	0.8	3.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

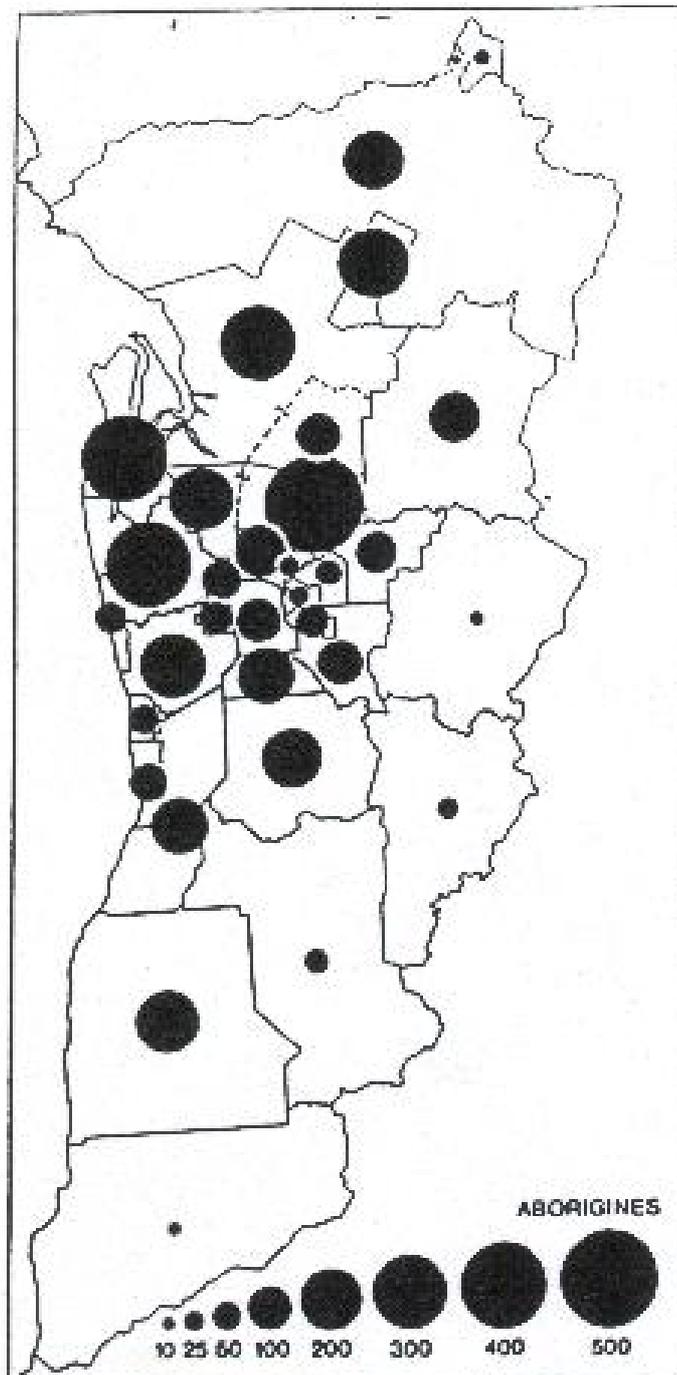
Accordingly the Adelaide Aboriginal population is only moderately spatially concentrated. It is interesting to examine the evolution of the distribution of the indigenous population in Adelaide. In the 1960s the following pattern of distribution was in evidence (Hugo 1990, pp.41-2).

- A strong pattern of concentration in the inner suburbs – especially in the southern part of the City of Adelaide, Thebarton, Hindmarsh and Norwood. This was the pre-gentrification era in which the inner suburbs had the city’s main stock of cheap rundown rental housing.
- Another concentration was evident along Grand Junction Road in the middle north-western suburbs. This is a highly industrialised, low socio-economic status area of relatively cheap housing and SAHT housing.
- Port Adelaide had a major concentration of Aboriginal population. Indeed in 1971 Port Adelaide had more Aboriginal inhabitants than any other LGA. It shares many of the characteristics of the inner suburbs at that time (rundown, cheap rental housing) as well as having substantial areas of SAHT housing in the Taperoo area.
- Salisbury and Elizabeth in the northern part of the city were also important areas of concentration largely due to the availability of SAHT housing in those suburbs.

The pattern of distribution a decade later is presented in Figure 13 and, a somewhat different situation is apparent. Certainly the inner-suburban and north-western bias is still strongly in evidence but there has also been some dispersal to the southern and north-eastern suburbs. This is due to the dispersal policy followed by the Aboriginal Funded Housing Unit in the early 1970s. As a result many more Aborigines are found in the areas where there is a large amount of State housing in 1976 – not only the northern and western suburbs but also the south-western, southern and north-eastern areas.

Figure 13: Distribution of Aborigines in Adelaide, 1976

Source: Gale 1980, p.17

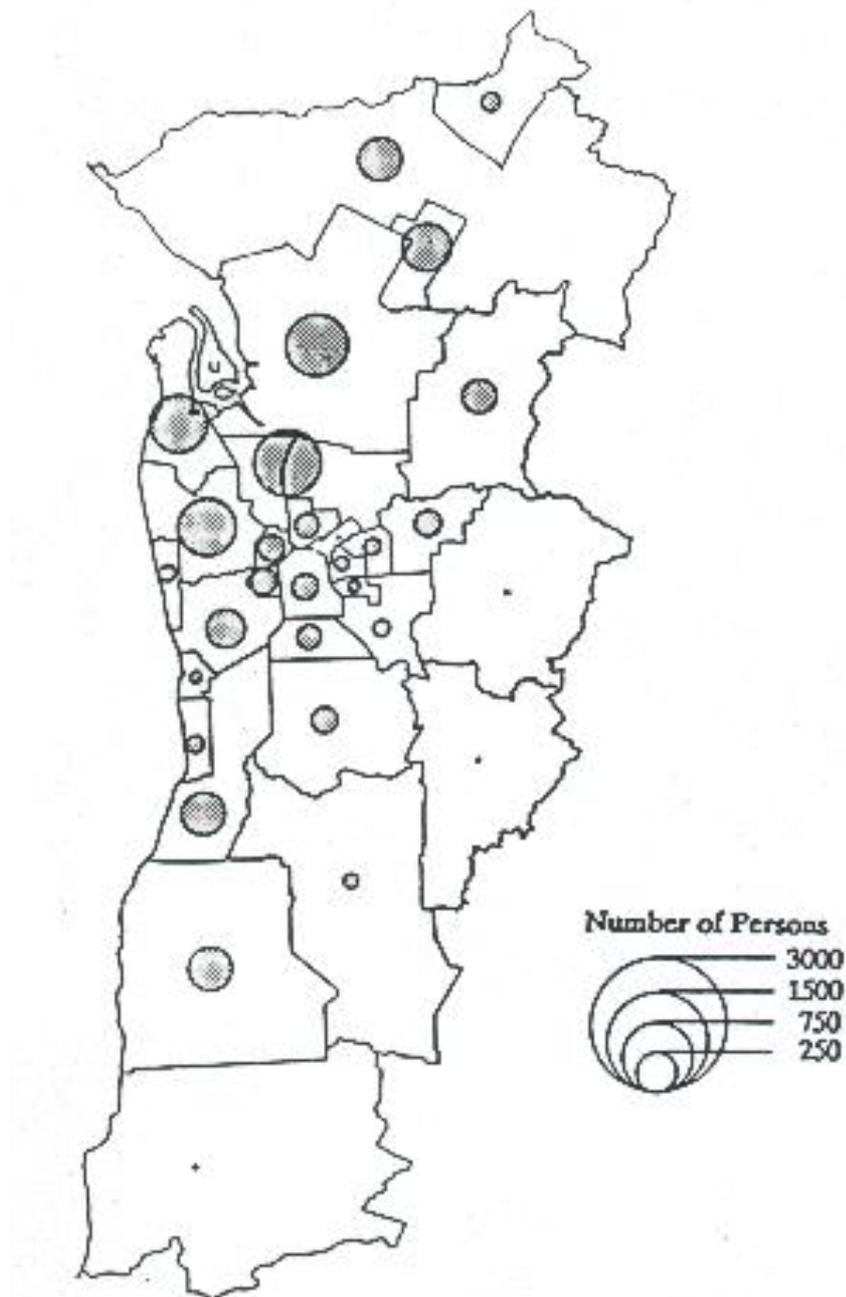


Turning to the 1986 census, Figure 14 shows the growing northern and north-western orientation in the distribution of the Aboriginal population. Enfield has replaced Port Adelaide as the LGA with the largest Aboriginal population. Salisbury LGA had the second largest Aboriginal community in Adelaide in 1986 and its Aboriginal population increased fivefold in the preceding 15 years. Woodville, Elizabeth and Port Adelaide also retained important Aboriginal communities. However, it is also noticeable that the inner suburbs have declined in significance as centres of

Aboriginal settlement in Adelaide. This is undoubtedly associated with the gentrification process as well as the growing proportion of the Aboriginal population who live in State housing. The correlation with the distribution of state housing has become closer.

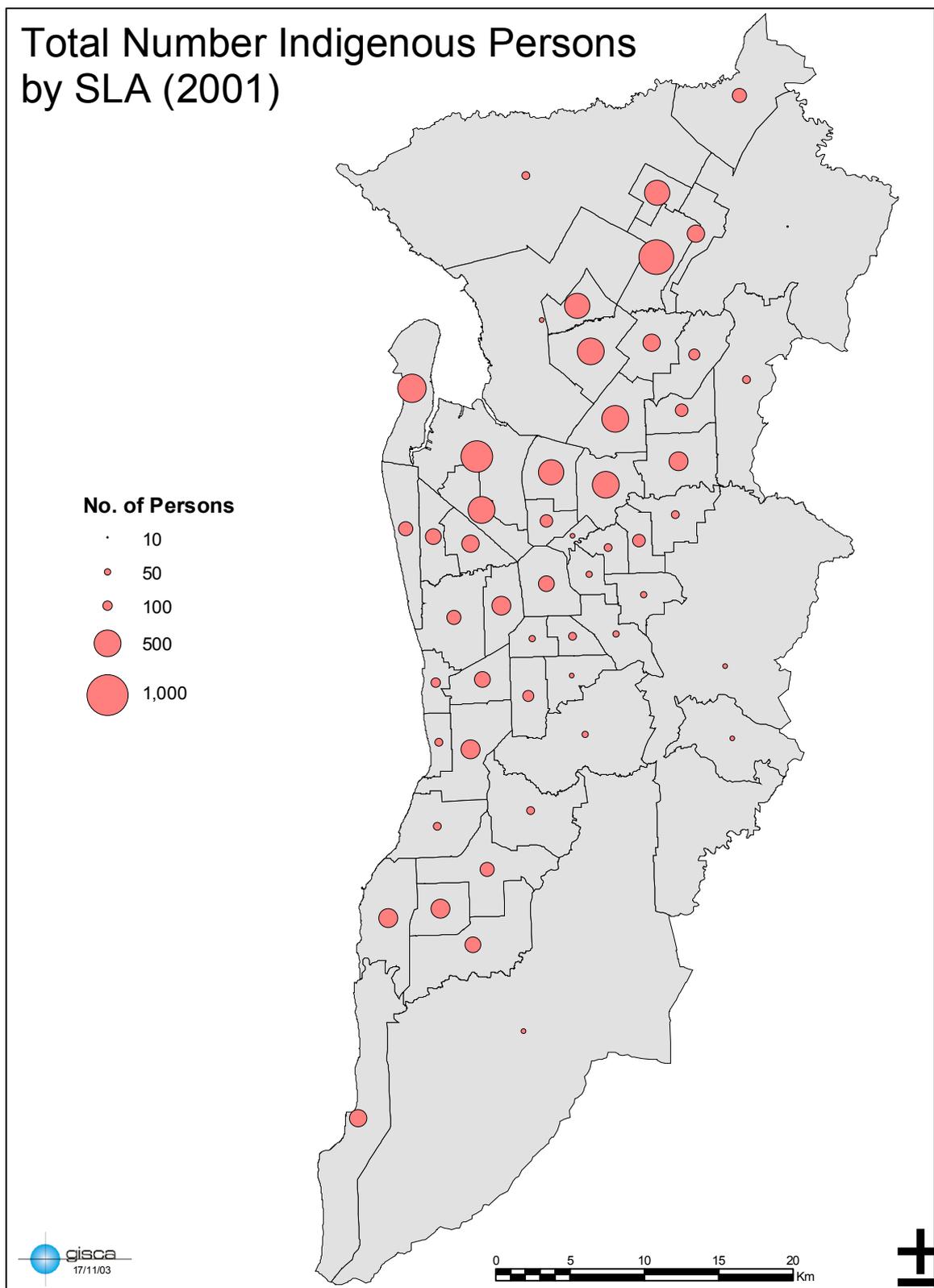
Figure 14: Adelaide Metropolitan LGAs, 1986: Distribution of Aboriginal People

Source: ABS 1986 Census



The distribution of the indigenous population of Adelaide in 2001 is shown in Figure 15. It shows a consolidation of the pattern of 1986 with a strong north-west orientation.

Figure 15: Total Number Indigenous Persons by SLA 2001



The pattern of growth of the indigenous population in some key areas in Adelaide is shown in Table 14. By 2001 the largest concentration of indigenous people in the local government area of

Salisbury followed by Port Adelaide and Enfield, Playford, Elizabeth and Woodville. The north-west orientation of the population is clear.

Table 14: Adelaide: Selected SLAs – Growth of Indigenous Population 1971-2001

Source: Hugo 1990, ABSA 2001 Census

SLA	1971	1986	2001
Enfield	252	754	964
Port Adelaide	239	519	1,198
Woodville	160	552	725
Elizabeth	61	403	751
Marion	122	289	565
Munno Para/Playford	83	317	781
Salisbury	116	626	1,752

This pattern is also reflected in Figure 16 which shows the indigenous population as a percentage of the total population. Nevertheless it is apparent from Figure 17 that the fastest growth of the indigenous population in Adelaide is occurring in the north-eastern and southern suburbs and not in the areas of greatest concentration. This suggests a dispersal is occurring.

The evolution of Aboriginal settlement in Adelaide has shared many characteristics with that of the post-war immigrants to the city. Both movements have occurred around the same time and been subject to similar processes. On the one hand, Aboriginal settlement (especially in its initial stages) has been similar to that of Southern Europeans in that kinship linkages played a major role as did the distribution of the stock of cheap rundown rental housing. Accordingly, the initial settlement of both groups was strongly concentrated in the inner suburbs and north-west industrial areas. Subsequently with gentrification and adjustment to the city the inner suburban concentrations of both groups have been somewhat diluted. On the other hand, Aboriginal settlement has been strongly influenced by the distribution of SAHT housing and this has also been a very important determinant of the distribution of post-war immigrants from UK and Eire. In the main, however, the distribution of the Aboriginal population in Adelaide reflects strongly their disadvantaged position within the total community, being concentrated in lower socio-economic status areas as much as any group.

Figure 16: Percentage of Indigenous Persons by SLA 2001

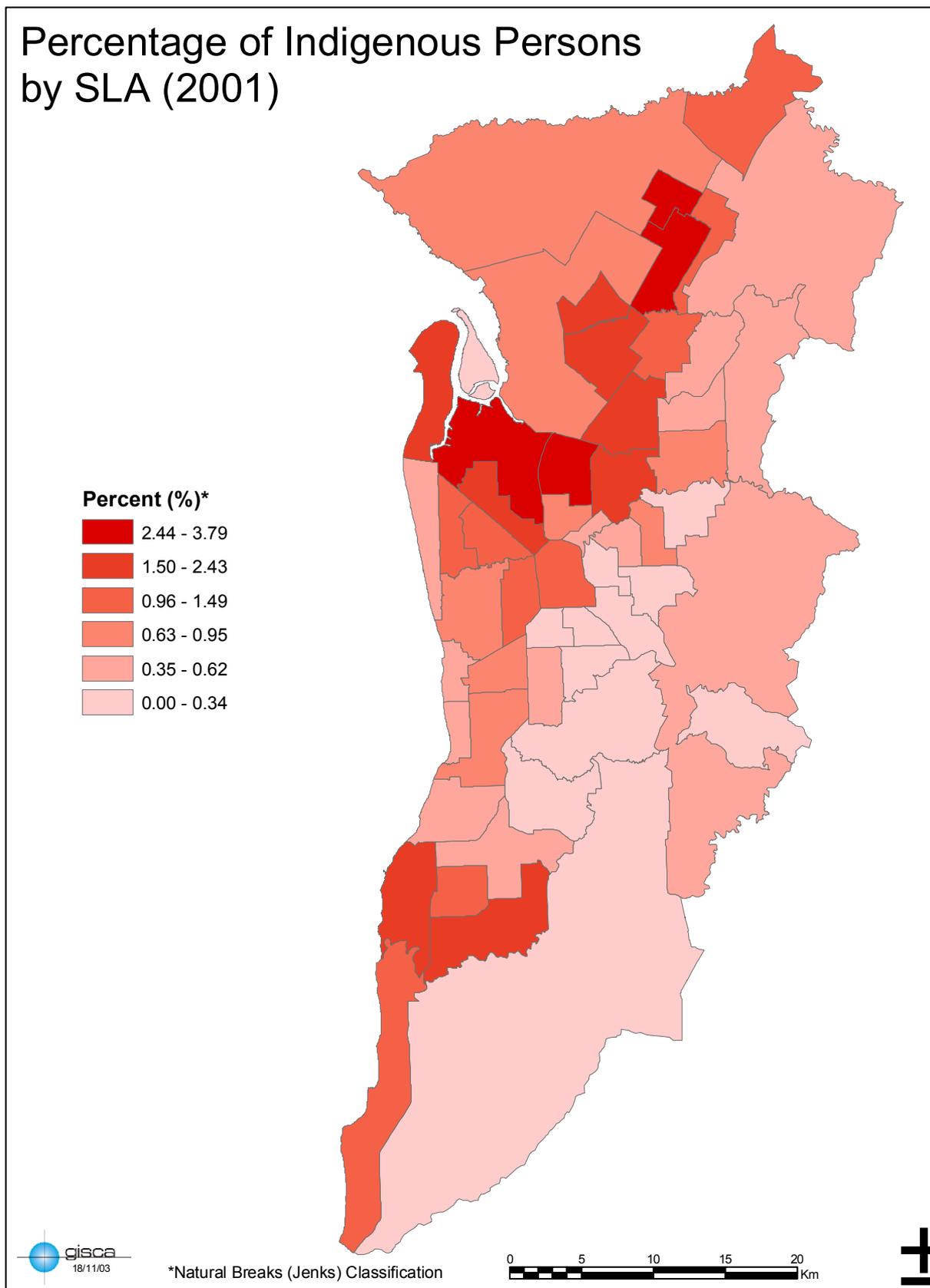
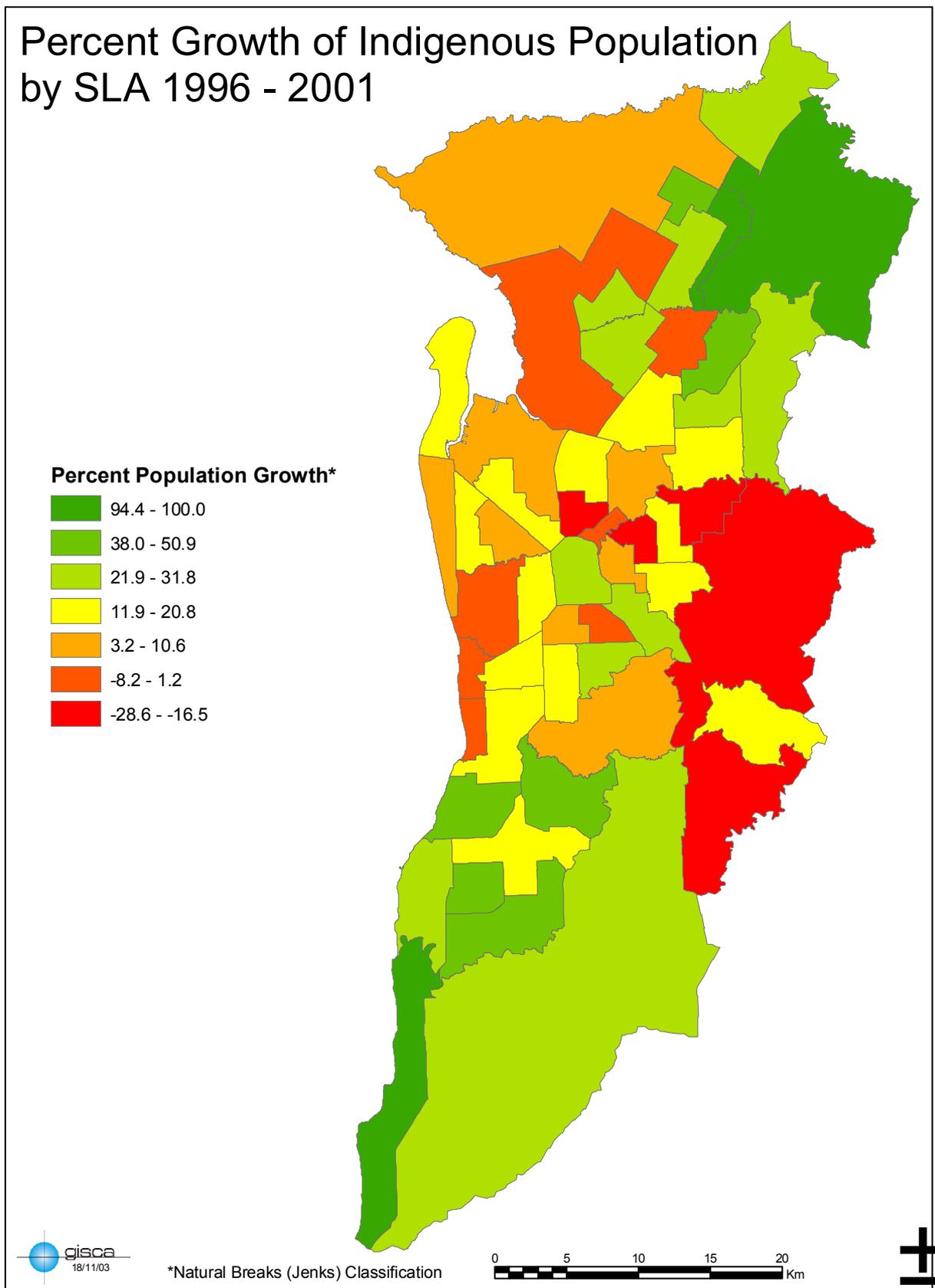


Figure 17: Percent Growth of Indigenous Population by SLA 1996-2001

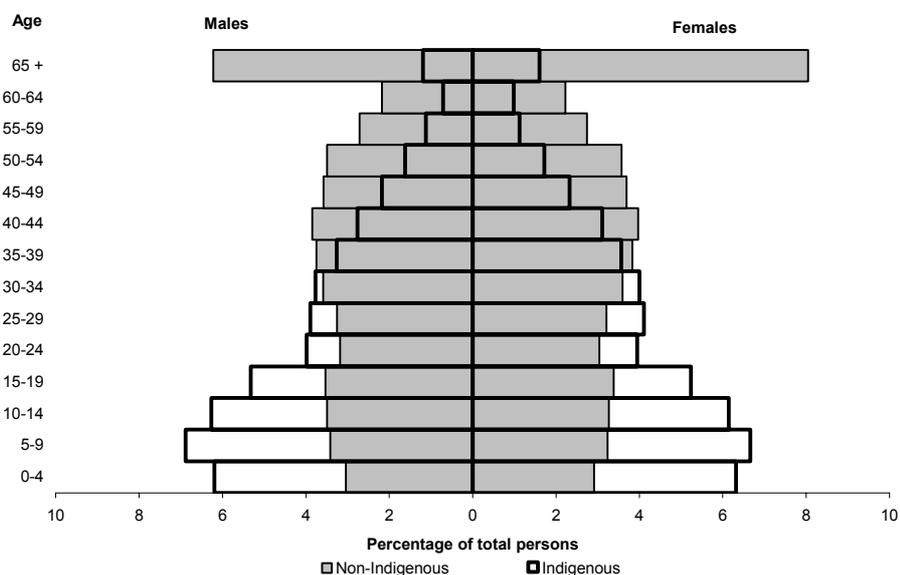


AGE COMPOSITION

Figure 18 compares the Aboriginal age structure with that of the total population of South Australia and it is clear that it is substantially younger, reflecting the quite different fertility and mortality patterns outline in earlier sections. This means of course that the structure of service need and demand differs substantially between the two groups. There is clearly a strong 'over-representation' of dependent children and young adults (especially in the school-leaving age groups) and low representation of older age groups.

Figure 18: South Australia: Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Population by Age and Sex, 2001

Source: ABS 2001 Census



At the 2001 census, while only 32.2 percent of non indigenous South Australians were aged less than 25 years, the proportion of Aboriginals in the age category was 64.9 percent. On the other hand, only 2.8 percent of Aboriginal people were aged 65 years and over compared with 14.9 percent of the non-indigenous population. The Aboriginal population profile has not aged markedly between 1981 and 2001 with 64.4 percent being aged under 25 in 1981 and 4 percent aged 65 years and over.

There are, however, regional variations in the age structure of Aboriginal groups. There is a particular predominance of children in the age structure in provincial urban centres, as are young adults in metropolitan Adelaide. The rural population has an older age structure although it is still significantly younger than the total rural population. It is interesting to note that the Section of State differentiation is in precisely the opposite direction for Aborigines than for the total population. The oldest age structure among the total population is in the metropolitan sector and the youngest in rural areas. Again this has significant implications for planning service provision for the Aboriginal populations.

The Aboriginal age structure depicted in Figures 19 reflects the relatively high levels of fertility and mortality in the population described in earlier sections. It is important to point out that the age structure carries the potential for high rates of growth in the future. This is because it is clear that over the next 15 years the number of women in the childbearing years is going to increase significantly. Whereas the number of Aboriginal women aged 15-44 in 2001 was 6105, those aged 0-29 (who will be aged 15-44 in 2016) was 8260. Hence, even if significant declines in fertility (births per woman) occur over that period, the fact that there will be substantially more potential mothers than in the past will see a continuation of large numbers of births and a high growth rate. The crucial point here is that all the mothers of Aboriginal babies to be born over the rest of this century have already been born.

The other issues relating to the age structure is, of course, the implications for social welfare and need for particular types of services. The need for education of children among Aborigines will continue to expand while that of the total population stabilizes. The number of Aborigines coming into the labour force ages will greatly expand over the next 15 years. This raises grave questions in a climate of economic downturn, low rates of job creation and high rates of unemployment, especially among Aborigines.

FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

The Aboriginal population differs quite markedly from the total population in that few live alone and, as Table 15 shows, a much larger population live in single parent families that is the case with the total population. Single parent families are more prevalent in Adelaide than elsewhere in the state and more families in the metropolitan area have children than elsewhere.

Table 15: South Australia: Household Type : Indigenous and All Households 2001

Source: ABS 2001 Census

Household type	Indigenous	Average Household Size	All	Average Household Size
	%	%	%	%
One-family households				
Couples with dependent children	27.9	4.6	24.4	4.1
One-parent families with dependent children	26.5	3.5	7.3	2.9
Families without dependent children	21.1	2.5	36.1	2.3
Total	75.5	3.6	67.8	3.0
Multi-family households				
Group households	3.7	7.9	0.6	5.4
Lone person households	5.0	2.3	3.1	2.2
Other not classifiable households	15.7	1.0	27.0	1.0
Total	0.1	3.3	1.5	2.1
Total	100.0	3.3	100.0	2.4

This is important for several reasons, not least of which is the fact that Single Parent Families are the family type most prone to poverty in the entire Population (Hugo 2000). Of all Aboriginal families more than 1 in 4 is a Single Parent Family compared with less than 1 in 13 of all families in the State. It is interesting to note that 58.1 percent of indigenous families have dependent children present compared to 32.3 percent of all families. Clearly there are major policy implications from this. On the other hand couple households and one person households account for only 36.8 percent of indigenous households but 63.1 percent of total households.

The issue of children in indigenous households needs to be stressed. Table 16 shows that despite the downturn in Indigenous fertility, the proportion of households with children is greater for all categories of number of children for indigenous than non-indigenous households.

Table 16: South Australia: Number of Children in Households : Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Households 2001

Source: ABS 2001 Census

Number of Children	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
1	42.9	68.3
2	20.5	12.1
3	18.5	13.4
4	10.2	4.8
5	4.8	1.2
6	1.8	0.2
7	0.8	0.1
8	0.5	-

These patterns are also reflected in the marital status characteristics of Aborigines in South Australia. A much larger proportion of the Aborigines aged 15 years and over have never been married compared with all South Australians, reflecting partly the young age structure of the Aborigines. A greater incidence of separation is especially noticeable. Aboriginal couples however are more likely to be living in a defacto relationship than couples in the population as a whole. More than one in three Aboriginal couples are in a defacto relationship. It is especially marked in provincial urban areas.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Assessment of the levels of wellbeing among the Aboriginal population has been a difficult task partly due to lack of suitable data but also as Young (1985, 19) points out:

“Census definitions and criteria are derived from internationally recognized standards which enable them to be used in a comparative sense. But they may not be appropriate to the real life situation of many Aboriginal groups”.

Hence in interpretation of data to the wellbeing of Aborigines it is essential to be sensitive to the meaning of the indicators used to the Aboriginal population. Nevertheless, regardless of the data problems, it is clear that the incidence of poverty and deprivation is greater among the Aborigines than any other large sub-groups in the total population.

Employment is a crucial element in the wellbeing of any group and as the ABS SA Office (1988, 19) has pointed out there are two useful measures of employment status, which are especially useful in considering the Aboriginal population:

- The *labour force participation rate* – the percentage of a total population of working age which is in the labour force (i.e. either employed or actively seeking work); and
- The *unemployment rate* – the proportion of the labour force who did not have a job but were actively looking for work.

Regarding labour force participation rates it is apparent in Table 17 that the rates for Aborigines are significantly lower than for the total population. This applies in all age groups for both males and females. Overall in 2001 49.5 percent of the Aboriginal population aged 15 years and over was in the workforce, compared to 60.8 percent of the total population. Participation

Table 17: South Australia: Labour Participation and Unemployment of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Persons Aged 15+ 2001 (Percent)

Source: ABS 2001 Census

	Indigenous %	Non-Indigenous %
Labour Force Participation Rate	49.5	60.8
Males	56.2	68.6
Females	43.2	53.3
Unemployment Rate	20.3	7.4
Males	22.8	8.2
Females	17.4	6.5

rates are slightly higher in Adelaide than elsewhere in the State. Young (1985, 25) has discussed the reasons for low Aboriginal labour force participation rates and these include:

- Cultural factors which involve such considerations as 'whether the job is interesting and relevant to community interests, or whether the duties of the job will be comparable with other demands on the person's time'. Clearly blind conformity to 'the conventional non-Aboriginal work ethic' does not necessarily occur.
- Personal relationships and individual contacts greatly influence whether or not an Aboriginal person is able to get a job he/she is able to get.
- Attachment to the local and region may prevent them seeking work elsewhere.

One of the major pressing problems within the Aboriginal community is the high rate of unemployment. In 1986 34.5 percent of Aboriginal workers in the State were unemployed compared with 9.6 percent for the total population. Although the comparative figures in 2001 were 20.3 and 7.4 it remains a huge problem. Unemployment is especially high in provincial urban centres and lower in rural areas than in Adelaide. Unemployment rates are highest among young indigenous groups. Table 18 shows that Indigenous men, and to a lesser extent women, are more likely to be employed part time than non-indigenous people. It also indicates that they are much more likely to be an employee than an employer.

Table 18: South Australia Labour Force Characteristics of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Population Persons Aged 15+ 2001 (Percent)

Source: ABS 2001 Census

	Indigenous			Non-Indigenous		
	Male %	Female %	Total %	Male %	Female %	Total %
Hours Worked						
Full time	52.9	40.7	47.2	76.0	46.7	62.7
Part time	35.6	48.1	41.4	17.5	46.6	30.6
Employment Status						
Employee	93.2	95.8	94.4	78.1	86.8	82.0
Employer	1.8	1.2	1.5	8.4	4.9	6.8
Own Account Worker	4.2	2.5	3.4	13.1	7.4	10.5
Contributing Family Worker	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.5	1.0	0.7

The occupational structure of Aborigines presents a strong contrast to the total population. Table 19 shows that Aborigines are twice as likely to be employed in the unskilled 'Labourers and

Table 19: Employed Persons Aged 15+: Occupation Group, 2001 Census (Percent)

Source: ABS 2001 Census

Occupational Group	Indigenous %	Non-Indigenous %
Managers and administrators	4.3	9.5
Professionals	12.9	16.9
Para-professionals	10.1	11.6
Tradespersons	9.9	12.3
Clerks	19.0	19.8
Sales and personal services	6.5	9.2
Plant and machine operators	8.1	8.3
Labourers and related workers	22.6	10.4
Inadequately described	2.9	0.9
Not stated	3.8	1.0
Total	100.0	100.0

related workers' category than the population as a whole. They are especially under-represented in the managers, administrators and professional categories.

Comparing the industry in which the indigenous were employed, Table 20 shows that there has been a significant decline in Aboriginal employment in agriculture between 1981 and 2001.

Table 20: Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Employed Persons Aged 15+: Industry Group, 1981 and 2001 Censuses

Source: Hugo, 1990, p.63 and ABS 2001 Census

Industry Group	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous	
	1981 %	2001 %	1981 %	2001 %
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting	12.0	4.7	7.2	5.8
Mining	1.3	0.6	0.9	0.8
Manufacturing	8.4	7.0	15.9	14.7
Electricity, gas, water	1.5	0.4	1.7	0.7
Construction	3.8	4.2	6.1	5.7
Wholesale and retail trade	5.7	9.6	19.2	19.6
Transport and storage	4.4	2.1	4.6	3.8
Communication	0.5	1.7	2.0	1.6
Finance, property, business services, etc.	2.6	7.4	8.6	12.6
Public administration defence	5.6	19.4	4.9	4.1
Community services	32.9	23.5	19.8	18.5
Recreation, personnel, other services	3.2	13.6	6.1	10.4
Non-classifiable	18.0	1.4	0.8	0.5
Not state		4.1	2.3	1.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The proportion of Aborigines employed in community and other services is larger than for the non-indigenous population and accounts for more than a third of all Aborigines who are employed. It is also significant to note that more than a quarter of Aborigines who were working at the time of the 2001 census were employed by the government sector (24.5 percent), compared with 15.7 percent of the non-indigenous population in the State. Another 21.9 percent were working on CEDAP programs.

Nowhere are the contrasts between the Aboriginal community and the non-indigenous population of South Australia more apparent than in a consideration of incomes. Although there are a much greater proportion of the total population who are aged persons receiving pensions, the mean household weekly income of Aborigines is lower (\$351) than that for the total population (\$531). Moreover, because 15.1 percent of Aborigines did not state their income at the census compared with 9.1 percent of the non-indigenous population, the data probably understate the differences in their income distribution. Table 21 also shows the concentration of indigenous people (74.4 percent) in the two largest income quintiles compared to the non-indigenous population (44.3 percent).

Table 21: South Australia: Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Persons Equalised Gross Household Income 2001

Source: ABS 2001 Census

		Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Mean	\$	351	531
Income quintile			
Lowest	%	45.9	22.4
Second	%	28.8	21.9
Third	%	13.1	21.1
Fourth	%	7.6	19.8
Highest	%	4.6	15.4
Total	%	100.0	100.0
Total no.		17,808	1,199,611
Unknown no.		3,177	119,642
Total		20,985	1,139,253

One area in which the disadvantageous situation of the Aboriginal population is especially evident is education. This is dramatically illustrated by Table 22, which shows that, while 34.9 percent of the non-indigenous population completed year 12, only 14.9 percent of the indigenous population did so. Only 14.4 percent of the State's Aboriginal population aged 15 years or more had a degree compared to 32.6 percent of the non-indigenous population. The profile of educational qualifications is lower in rural than urban areas. As the ABS SA Office (1988, p.16) point out, educational attainment is important because it has significant effects on labour force experience, earning capacity and access to goods and services. Moreover, at the 2001 Census, only 17.1 percent of the indigenous population recorded using computers at home compared to 42.1 for the rest of the population. The equivalent for internet usage are 17.1 and 26.5 respectively.

Table 22: South Australia: Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Persons Aged 15+ Highest Level of Schooling 2001

Source: ABS 2001 Census

	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Still at school	5.7	3.4
Did not go to school	3.6	0.8
Year 8 or below	17.6	10.5
Year 9 or equivalent	12.0	7.1
Year 10 or equivalent	21.5	19.3
Year 11 or equivalent	16.8	19.5
Year 12 or equivalent	14.9	34.9
Not stated	8.0	4.3
Total	14,388	1,131,878

HOUSING

Housing conditions are of fundamental significance to the health and wellbeing of any group and it is clear that this is yet another area in which the contrast between Aborigines and the total population is stark. Aborigines are slightly more likely than the total population to live in non-private dwellings (4.7 compared with 3.1 of all persons). However, there are great contrasts with respect to private housing and this contrast is evident with houses being smaller and with more residents.

Table 23: South Australia: Occupied Private Dwelling, Number of Bedrooms, Average Number of Residents and Housing Utilization – Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Persons 2001

Source: ABS 2001 Census

	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous	
	No.	%	No.	%
Number of bedrooms				
One (b)	318	3.7	24,887	4.4
Two	1,461	17.0	122,303	21.6
Three	5,198	60.5	306,407	54.0
Four	1,146	13.3	85,945	15.1
Five or more	250	2.9	13,439	2.4
Not stated	222	2.6	14,396	2.5
Total	8,595	100.0	567,377	100.0
Residents per household	3.3		2.4	
Housing utilisation(c)				
One or more extra bedrooms needed	1,140	14.0	12,271	2.3
No extra bedrooms needed	2,473	30.5	106,297	19.7
One bedroom spare	2,963	36.5	213,014	39.5
Two or more bedrooms spare	1,545	19.0	207,934	38.5
Total	8,121	100.0	539,516	100.0
Unable to determine	474		27,861	
Total dwellings	8,595		567,377	

CONCLUSION

At the outset it was suggested that in some respects the Aboriginal population represents a 'Third World' minority in a Developed Country. Gray (1989, p.1) argues that this is not an accurate characterization. In Table 24 some of the key characteristics of the Aboriginal population are compared with those of the total Australian population. It is clear that there is considerable evidence to support Gray's contention and that the 'third world' sub-population categorization is

less appropriate that it was when it was first used in the National Population Inquiry (1975) nearly two decades ago. This is due to:

- The huge decline in infant mortality which sees Aboriginal rates only a sixth the size of those in LDCs. Nevertheless the Aboriginal rates are still unacceptably high compared with the total population.
- Related to the above, however, is the fact that there are extremely high rates of mortality among young adult Aborigines. This contrasts with LDCs where the mortality is strongly concentrated in the infant years.
- Aboriginal fertility is only half that of LDCs

These differences are all differences that have developed in the last three decades.

On the other hand, there are some aspects of Aboriginal populations which are much more similar to LDC populations than the Australian population as a whole. These include:

- The concentration of population in the dependent child ages
- The very low proportion of the population in the early age categories
- The comparatively low proportion in urban areas

Table 24: South Australia: Comparison of Various Demographic and Social Characteristics of the Indigenous and Total Population, 2001

Source: ABS 2001 Census

Characteristics	Indigenous Population	Total Population
Expectation of life at birth (years) - male	55.1	76.7*
Expectation of life at birth (years) - female	61.0	82.4*
Infant mortality rate	10.6	5.3
Total fertility rate	2.0	1.7
Percentage in major urban	45.2	68.3
Percentage aged less than 15 years	38.5	19.7
Unemployment rate	20.3	7.6
Percentage employed as managers, administrators, professionals	29.2	38.6
Percentage labourers and related workers	24.3	10.8
Percentage with diploma, degree or higher	6.1	17.9
Individual income \$199 or less per week	47.8	30.1
Individual income \$600 and over per week	12.5	26.5
Percentage of households living in public rental accommodation	49.3	7.7
Percentage of persons in prisons, corrective and detention institutions (for adults)	1.0	0.1

* Figure for total population is for Australia

The present paper has concentrated on examining the profile of South Australia's indigenous population as a whole. It must be remembered however that they are, like any subgroup in the population, differentiated in many ways. Nevertheless the Aboriginal population remains a highly distinctive group in South Australian society, differing sharply from the total population in their

characteristics, despite two decades of very rapid change. The socio-economic indicators in Table 24 and elsewhere in this report point to the deprivation which they still experience. The removal of this huge inequality must remain an important priority of all Australians.

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