

# 2022 NSW Statewide Street Count

## Technical Paper

### Executive summary

The 2022 NSW street count, the NSW Government's third annual rough sleeping street count, was completed between 3 February and 28 February 2022.

Over 150 local organisations partnered with the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) to complete street counts in more than 300 towns and suburbs in 76 local government areas (LGA) across NSW.

1,207 people were counted sleeping rough during these street counts.

Partners included Specialist Homelessness Services, local councils and community housing providers, as well Aboriginal organisations, local community groups, and Police.

All scheduled counts were completed as planned except in the towns of Brunswick Heads and Mullumbimby in the Byron Shire LGA of Northern NSW. These counts were scheduled for Thursday 24 February and were cancelled due to severe weather conditions.

Due to prolonged flooding in northern NSW it has not been possible to complete the planned street counts in Brunswick Heads and Mullumbimby. It will be some time before conditions return to close to normal in northern NSW and before a street count would reflect accurately the level of ongoing homelessness. Therefore, in order not to delay publishing the results which have come in, we are publishing the paper now.

Annual street counts provide the NSW Government and partners with data to help meet the Premier's Priority target of reducing street homelessness across NSW by 50 per cent by 2025.

### Purpose

The NSW Government has committed to reducing street homelessness in NSW by 50 per cent by 2025, one of the [NSW Government's 14 Premier's Priorities](#).

Gathering accurate data about the number of people sleeping rough is essential to informing the best way to target resources to those who need the most support.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census is the primary metric in which the Reducing Homelessness Premier's Priority target is measured. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimated that in 2016 there were 2,588 people in NSW who were living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out.<sup>1</sup>

As Census data is only available every five years, the NSW Government has committed to undertaking annual street counts of people sleeping rough to deliver more regular data on our progress towards our Premier's Priority target.

<sup>1</sup> [ABS, 2049.0 - Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016](#)

Street counts help foster local collaboration and inform local approaches to prevention, housing options and post-crisis support. Street count results are used to inform locations for DCJ Assertive Outreach patrols.

DCJ and partners have already commenced follow up Assertive Outreach patrols to locations where people were counted sleeping rough during the street count.

## Summary of results

1,207 people were counted in the 2022 count (see **Appendix A** for full table of results).

In addition there were 212 locations where there was evidence of street homelessness (such as makeshift camps, sleeping bags or personal belongings) but no people were present to be counted, compared to 227<sup>2</sup> in 2021 and 135 in 2020.<sup>3</sup>

The City of Sydney, which accounts for the largest cohort of rough sleepers in the state, recorded 225 people sleeping rough, a 17 per cent reduction compared to February 2021.

LGAs which saw the largest total decrease in the number of people sleeping rough compared to 2021 were:

LGA	2022	2021	Change
City of Sydney	225	272	-47
Northern Beaches	30	57	-27
Shoalhaven	11	20	-9
Kempsey	1	7	-6
Penrith	4	10	-6
Clarence Valley	11	17	-6

LGAs which saw the largest total increase in the number of people sleeping compared to 2021 were:

LGA	2022	2021	Change
Tweed Valley	127	58	69
Bega Valley	26	4	22
Eurobodalla	24	3	21
Mid North Coast	30	11	19
Coffs Harbour	57	43	14

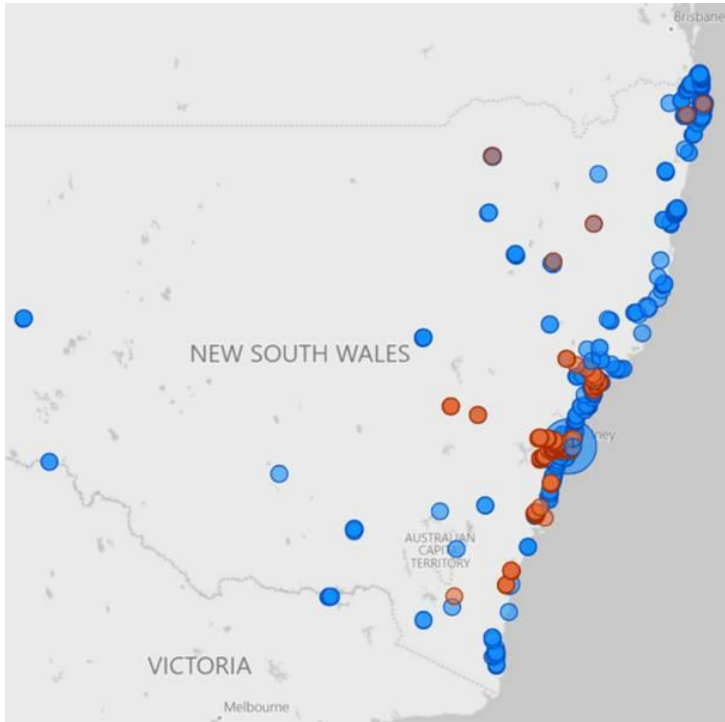
Note, unlike other street counts which are coordinated by DCJ and partners, the City of Sydney conducts its own twice-annual street count in August and February street counts.

<sup>2</sup> This figure has been updated. A previous version of the 2022 NSW Statewide Street Count Technical Paper stated 23.

<sup>3</sup> Note, data on locations where there was evidence of street homelessness but no persons present excludes the City of Sydney LGA.

Results from the February City of Sydney street count are combined with results from other street counts to produce the statewide rough sleeping total.

### Locations of people sleeping rough



*Locations of people sleeping rough counted during the NSW 2022 Street Count. The size of the circle corresponds to the number of people counted at that site. Orange circles represent locations where belongings were found but no person was present.*

## Street count planning and preparation

### What is a street count?

Street counts provide a point-in-time count of the number of people in a location who are observed to be experiencing street homelessness.

The street count involves recording a head count of people sleeping rough in a designated geographic area and is purely observational. No person is engaged during the count and the only data collected is the number of people counted in each location, their dwelling situation and whether they were accompanied by companion animals.

### Who was counted?

Counting the number of people experiencing street homelessness is a challenging task. Counts are generally undertaken in the late evening and early morning while most people are asleep. It is not always accurate to assume from a person's appearance that they are experiencing street homelessness and some level of judgment is required. Advice is provided to people undertaking the street count.

The approach used in the NSW street count, which is based on approach used in the City of Sydney street count, is to count all people who:

- are carrying substantial belongings and who appear to have no accommodation

- are sleeping, laying or sitting on the pavement, street, parks, shops/business fronts, parking lots, road or railway underpasses
- are inhabiting a tent or a makeshift structure
- are obviously sleeping in cars - not tourist vans, or
- indicate to those undertaking the count that they are homeless.<sup>4</sup>

Common sense guidelines were provided to those undertaking the count to assist in differentiating between campers or tourists from those who are experiencing homelessness.

Those undertaking the count were instructed not to enter any premises, such as squats, or temporary structures to count the number of people living there. They were also instructed to avoid waking or otherwise disturbing people who were sleeping.

Where those undertaking the count could not accurately make out the number of people in a car or a tent, they were advised to count this as a single person.

Locations where there was evidence of street homelessness (such as makeshift camps, sleeping bags or personal belongings) but no people were seen are also recorded. These locations are not included in the 2022 street count number, but will allow outreach teams to revisit these locations in case people who require support return at a later date.

### **How were the locations identified?**

Each DCJ Housing District and Community Housing Providers in Social Housing Management Transfer sites were tasked with planning and coordinating street counts in their relevant areas.

Planning for the 2022 NSW Street Counts commenced in October 2021. Planning was undertaken in partnership with local stakeholders including Specialist Homelessness Services, local councils, Local Health Districts, Aboriginal Organisations and Police.

Each year there are variations in locations where street counts occur. Street count organisers sought information from housing and homelessness services, and worked with local stakeholders, including local councils and people with lived experience of homelessness, to identify known street homelessness hot spots, and prioritise these locations during their counts.

Street counts took place in 76 LGAs, compared to 71 LGAs in 2021 and 65 LGAs in 2020.

The following LGAs where street counts took place in 2021 were excluded from the 2022 street count:

- Cootamundra
- Narrandera

No persons were counted in either of these LGAs in 2021.

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<sup>4</sup> Advice was provided to street count participants on how to identify themselves in the event they were approached during the street count. While the purpose of the street count is not to provide direct housing support to people street sleeping during the count, participants were provided with Link2Home cards that they could provide to people requiring housing assistance if the event they were approached by someone requiring housing assistance.

The following LGAs were added to the 2022 street count:

- Glen Innes
- Gunnedah
- Inverell
- Moree Plains
- Yass Valley
- Bellingen
- Wentworth

### **When did the count take place?**

Street counts were completed between 3 February and 28 February 2022. The majority of counts took place in the morning, where 61% were scheduled between 3:30am to 7:00am, with the remaining 39% occurring at night between 10:30pm and 3:00am.

### **How was information collected?**

Results were recorded using the Survey123 App. This is the third year The Department of Customer Service has assisted DCJ in customising the app for the street count.

By using the street count app, participants did not need to rely on paper back-ups which results in fewer data validation issues.

The data validation process involved comparing the results recorded in the app with those recorded on paper. In some cases there were discrepancies between the two which required a review with participants to determine the correct result. Where only paper was used to record a result, these results were later manually added to the app.

## **Factors that may have impacted results**

### **The impact of extreme weather**

During the week beginning 21 February, many parts of NSW experienced storms and heavy rainfall. During periods of heavy rainfall, some people sleeping rough may seek shelter off the street. This may have impacted the number of people counted during this week.

Street counts which had been planned for the Northern Beaches on 22 February were rescheduled for 28 February.

On Monday 28 February, Northern NSW experienced severe flooding. Many parts of the region were placed under mandatory evacuation orders.

The Northern NSW street count teams were able to complete all scheduled counts prior to flooding, except in the towns of Brunswick Heads and Mullumbimby in the Byron Shire LGA which were scheduled for Thursday 24 February and were cancelled due to unsafe conditions. These counts were unable to be rescheduled as DCJ Housing staff focus on disaster recovery.

In the 2021 NSW Street Count Brunswick Heads, Mullumbimby and surrounding areas accounted for 105 people who were sleeping rough. It is not known how many people would have been counted in these locations if these street counts had been able to proceed.

### **People sleeping rough at campsites in Eurobodalla, Bega LGAs**

During the 2021 street count, Eurobodalla Council notified DCJ there were over 40 people at Council run camp sites who had been camping for six weeks or more. These campers were not been included in the street count total as DCJ was not able to ascertain if any of the people staying at these sites was sleeping rough. DCJ committed to working with Specialist Homelessness Services to assess if any of the people staying at these sites were experiencing homelessness and required housing assistance.

Since the 2021 street count, DCJ has been conducting assertive outreach patrols at campsites across the Eurobodalla and Bega LGAs. DCJ has been able to identify people sleeping rough at campsites in both these LGAs and this has led to a significant increase in the number of people counted in both LGAs.

### **People sleeping rough in Hasting-Port Macquarie LGA**

In preparation for the 2022 street count in the Hasting-Port Macquarie LGA, local partners identified a number people sleeping in cars, and in makeshift campsites in National Parks east of Wauchope. Local services believe people at these sites are sleeping rough.

Many of the sites identified by services were in locations where street counts were unable to be conducted people due to WHS concerns for participant safety. People who may be sleeping rough in these areas were not included in the 2022 NSW Street Count results.

### **Additional LGAs in the New England region**

Following feedback from local Aboriginal stakeholders in 2020, it was determined that additional planning was required before a street count could occur in several locations in New England, including Moree.

In consultation with local service providers, a partner was found to conduct the count in Moree Plains LGA and surrounding LGAs in the 2022 street count.

For the 2022 NSW Street Count, the following LGAs in the New England region were added:

- Glen Innes
- Gunnedah
- Inverell
- Moree Plains

### **Rail disruption in Sydney**

Street counts across most of metropolitan Sydney took place on the night of Monday 21 February and morning of 22 February. During this time there was a Sydney wide train shutdown. Any persons sleeping rough would have been unable to travel into Sydney by train, while any person sleeping rough in Sydney who may have been seeking to travel out of Sydney would not have been able to do so. It is not known what impact this may have had on the final street count results.

### **Count cancelled in Broken Hill**

Street counts in Broken Hill were unexpectedly cancelled by the local partner on the scheduled count day due to staff illness. Local DCJ staff had conducted a pre-count on 15 February recording four people, which was corroborated by local Police, Health and Specialist Homelessness Services. This figure has been included in the final result.

### **Improvements in street count planning, coordination and delivery**

The 2022 NSW Street Count is the NSW Government's third annual street count. DCJ and other participating organisations are now better experienced at undertaking street counts, and have more experience in knowing when and where to conduct counts to improve the likelihood of identifying people sleeping rough.

DCJ and partners now also have more information, from expanded assertive outreach services and other homelessness programs including the Together Home program, on where people in NSW are sleeping rough.

In addition to the new LGAs that were added to this year's counts, several additional towns and suburbs were added to list of locations for the 2022 street counts. These locations represent additional towns and suburbs within LGAs that had street counts in 2021. These additional locations include:

- Kingsford (Randwick LGA)
- Darling Point (Woollahra LGA)
- Crows Nest and Neutral Bay (North Sydney LGA)
- Thurgoona and Glenroy (Albury LGA)
- Berry (Shoalhaven LGA)
- Urunga and Bellingen (Bellingen LGA)
- Wardell and Cabbage Tree Island (Ballina LGA)

## Appendix A: 2022 NSW Street Count results

District Group	LGA	Dates	Scheduled locations	2020 street count results	2021 street count results	2022 street count results
<b>Western Sydney &amp; Nepean Blue Mountains</b>	Parramatta	22 February	1	94	32	39
	Cumberland	22 February	10	5	7	3
	Blacktown	22 February	10	11	8	4
	Penrith	22 February	2	13	10	4
	<b>Total</b>		<b>23</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Sydney, South Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney</b>	North Sydney	15 February	5	4	7	10
	Inner West	21 February	8	25	15	11
	Burwood	21 February	2	4	3	6
	Canada Bay	21 February	1	Not counted	2	3
	Canterbury/ Bankstown	21 February	8	9	7	12
	Strathfield	21 February	2	3	1	1
	Waverly	21 February	2	18	14	13
	Woollahra	21 February	3	4	3	3
	Randwick	21 February	4	6	11	11
	Sutherland Shire	21 February	8	33	19	15
	Georges River	21 February	2	Not counted	2	1
	Ryde	21 February	4	2	2	2
	Willoughby	22 February	1	3	5	6
	City of Sydney	22 February	23	334	272	225
	Bayside	25 February	7	12	4	0
Northern Beaches	28 February	18	71	57	30	



	Hornsby	28 February	3	2	6	1
	Ku-ring-gai	28 February	4	Not counted	1	1
	<b>Total</b>		<b>105</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>351</b>
<b>South Western Sydney</b>	Camden	21 February	3	1	0	0
	Campbelltown	21 February	10	10	0	8
	Fairfield	21 February	6	7	15	13
	Liverpool	21 February	5	7	9	8
	<b>Total</b>		<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Murrumbidgee, Far West, Western NSW</b>	Broken Hill	22 February	1	3	5	4
	Bathurst	22 February	1	4	2	1
	Wentworth	22 February	2	Not counted	Not counted	2
	Orange	22 February	1	0	1	0
	Dubbo	22 February	1	4	8	8
	Parkes	22 February	1	1	1	0
	Albury	22 February	1	2	7	6
	Griffith	22 February	1	4	0	2
	Wagga Wagga	22 February	1	1	9	12
	Hilltops	22 February	1	3	1	0
	Cootamundra	-	-	1	0	Not counted
	Narrandera	-	-	Not counted	0	Not counted
	<b>Total</b>		<b>11</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Mid North Coast, New England, Northern NSW</b>	Mid North Coast	15 February	4	2	11	30
	Clarence Valley	15 February	4	7	17	11
	Moree	15 February	1	Not Counted	Not Counted	11
	Inverell	15 February	1	Not Counted	Not Counted	0
	Gunnedah	15 February	1	Not counted	Not counted	6

	Tamworth	16 February	6	6	5	4
	Armidale	16 February	1	0	0	1
	Bellingen	16 February	4	Not Counted	Not Counted	10
	Coffs Harbour	16 February	4	51	43	57
	Richmond Valley	17 February	4	3	3	5
	Kyogle	17 February	1	0	1	1
	Narrabri	18 February	1	3	4	2
	Lismore	18 February	2	55	48	48
	Nambucca	21 February	5	Not counted	0	0
	Kempsey	21 February	5	3	7	1
	Hastings-Port Macquarie	21 February	5	5	10	23
	Glen Innes	21 February	1	Not counted	Not counted	1
	Tweed Valley	22 February	13	77	58	127
	Ballina	23 February	4	21	20	27
	Byron Bay*	24 February	8	174	198	138
	<b>Total</b>		<b>71</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>503</b>
<b>Hunter, Central Coast</b>	Newcastle	3 February	12	52	19	16
	Central Coast	10 February	27	58	27	40
	Upper Hunter	17 February	6	2	5	4
	Muswellbrook	17 February	3	0	0	0
	Singleton	17 February	3	3	0	1
	Dungog	17 February	3	7	7	12
	Cessnock	17 February	4	7	8	9
	Lake Macquarie	24 February	14	33	18	16
	Port Stephens	24 February	7	4	12	10

	Maitland	24 February	6	12	3	5
	<b>Total</b>		<b>85</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Illawarra Shoalhaven, Southern NSW</b>	Eurobodalla	15 February	3	0	3	24
	Bega Valley	15 February	6	5	4	26
	Wollongong	16 February	13	10	37	45
	Shellharbour	16 February	6	1	2	7
	Kiama	16 February	1	4	1	4
	Shoalhaven	17 February	8	6	20	11
	Snowy Monaro	17 February	2	Not counted	1	4
	Goulburn Mulwaree	23 February	1	0	0	2
	Queanbeyan Palerang	23 February	1	1	3	2
	Yass Valley	23 February	1	Not counted	Not counted	1
	<b>Total</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>126</b>
	<b>NSW</b>	<b>Total</b>		<b>350</b>	<b>1314</b>	<b>1141</b>

\*Byron Bay Shire result for 2022 excludes Brunswick Heads, Mullumbimby and surrounding areas as counts were unable to be completed in these areas due to extreme weather.