



Community summary

Cessnock has a population of 46,000 people (2006 ABS Census) which is projected to grow by 45,000 people by 2031 (Lower Hunter Regional Strategy). The population of Cessnock is ageing, which raises some concerns about the health services and infrastructure available for the elderly.

The cultural diversity in Cessnock is quite limited with only 6.4% of the population born overseas. In addition, the majority of the population speaks English only (93.8%). The next most commonly spoken language is German which is spoken by 0.2% of the population of Cessnock.

Cessnock has two TAFE colleges, one in Cessnock and one in Kurri Kurri, 23 public schools, five catholic schools and one independent school.

The level of education in Cessnock is lower compared to the broader Hunter Statistical Division with:

- A smaller percentage of people with Bachelor or Higher degrees (5.5% compared to 10.6%);
- A greater percentage of people with no qualifications (54.1% compared to 49.2%);
- A larger percentage of people who left school at Year 10 or equivalent (37.4% compared to 34.4%); and
- A smaller percentage of people who left school at Year 12 or equivalent (20.9% compared to 30.7%).

There is also a relatively high illiteracy rate compared to the state average.

The community is represented by a small proportion of high income earners (13.1% of the population) and a relatively large proportion of residents whose income is low (50.0% of the population).

There are two hospitals and two community health centres located in Cessnock and in Kurri Kurri. There has been a downsizing of health services in the area which has resulted in the need for some people to travel to Newcastle for specialist services.

Health and wellbeing



Community area	Current position
Community health	High incidence of psychological distress, asthma, cardio-vascular disease and obesity. A downsizing of health services in the LGA has meant some people need to travel for specialist services.
Education	The retention of students in high school and the accessibility to tertiary level education providers are existing challenges in Cessnock. The level of education and the proportion of people with qualifications are lower in Cessnock compared to the wider Hunter Statistical Division.
Housing	The 2006 Census indicated 71.8% of persons in Cessnock own or are in the process of purchasing their homes. The Centre for Affordable Housing indicated in 2007 that Cessnock had 80%-100% affordable housing. There is growing demand for new land with Cessnock's projected population growth which will potentially create a housing affordability problem.
Community safety	Malicious damage has been the most recorded area of crime in Cessnock, with youth and young adults representing the highest proportion of offenders. Boredom from the inadequate provision of youth activities and high youth unemployment rates are considered as possible contributory factors. Recorded incidents of domestic violence in Cessnock are above the NSW average.
Community identity / pride	Previous consultation activities have indicated that residents in the LGA have a strong sense of community, have expressed pride and have a strong identification with the areas they reside in. The community has expressed the desire for more festivals to bring together people from all communities in the LGA.

A number of community services that are contributing to the social wellbeing of Cessnock have been identified as:

- Coalfields NeighbourCare provides flexible transport options for people who are frail, aged, those with disabilities and the carers of either requiring support to attend appointments.
- Cessnock Youth Centre and Outreach Service (CYCOS) provides a range of supervised social, recreational and educational activities, offering opportunities that foster personal growth for young people aged 12-20 years.
- Tidy Town Committees



As part of the Cessnock 2020 Community Plan consultation, the community will be asked to think about the social challenges facing the community and potential opportunities that may enhance the wellbeing of those living in Cessnock.

Some areas for consideration might be:

- Any opportunities for the provision of services for both youth and the elderly.
- Events, festivals and celebrations that may improve integration and inclusion within the community.
- Accessibility to education and health services.
- Ways of improving engagement in decision making processes for those in more remote rural locations.