

# COVID-19 Impact on NCIE Community

Report for NCIE and Stakeholder Learning

Blak Impact (NCIE) May 2020



## About this artwork...

“

Being isolated at home but keeping that **connection to culture** and those around you. We are lucky to have

access to so much technology to connect to our people/ mob. Connecting to culture and keeping our **mental health positive** is a little harder. Focusing on those things we can control and knowing **who we are** during this time”

## Acknowledgments...

The NCIE would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather, meet, connect and work – the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation – and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future. We honour and pay tribute to the unique cultural and spiritual relationship of First Nations people to our lands, waters and seas: sources of strength and healing.

We also wish to acknowledge First nations peoples who shared their knowledge and wisdom through this project. This report was made possible by the thoughtful contributions of our interviewees, the Blak Impact team, and all the staff at NCIE who supported this project, whose spirits remained strong even in times of such crises.

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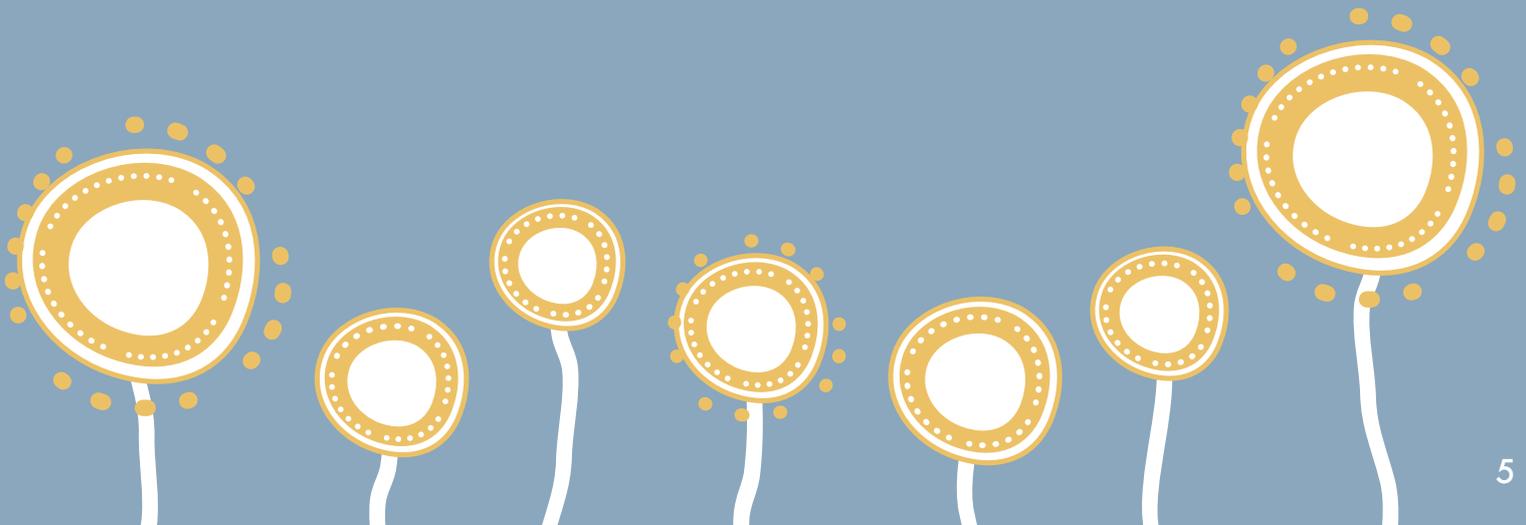
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“we've got  
**excellence** in  
our name, when  
people come  
to visit us, they  
want to see an  
excellence so let's  
show them that”



# Executive Summary

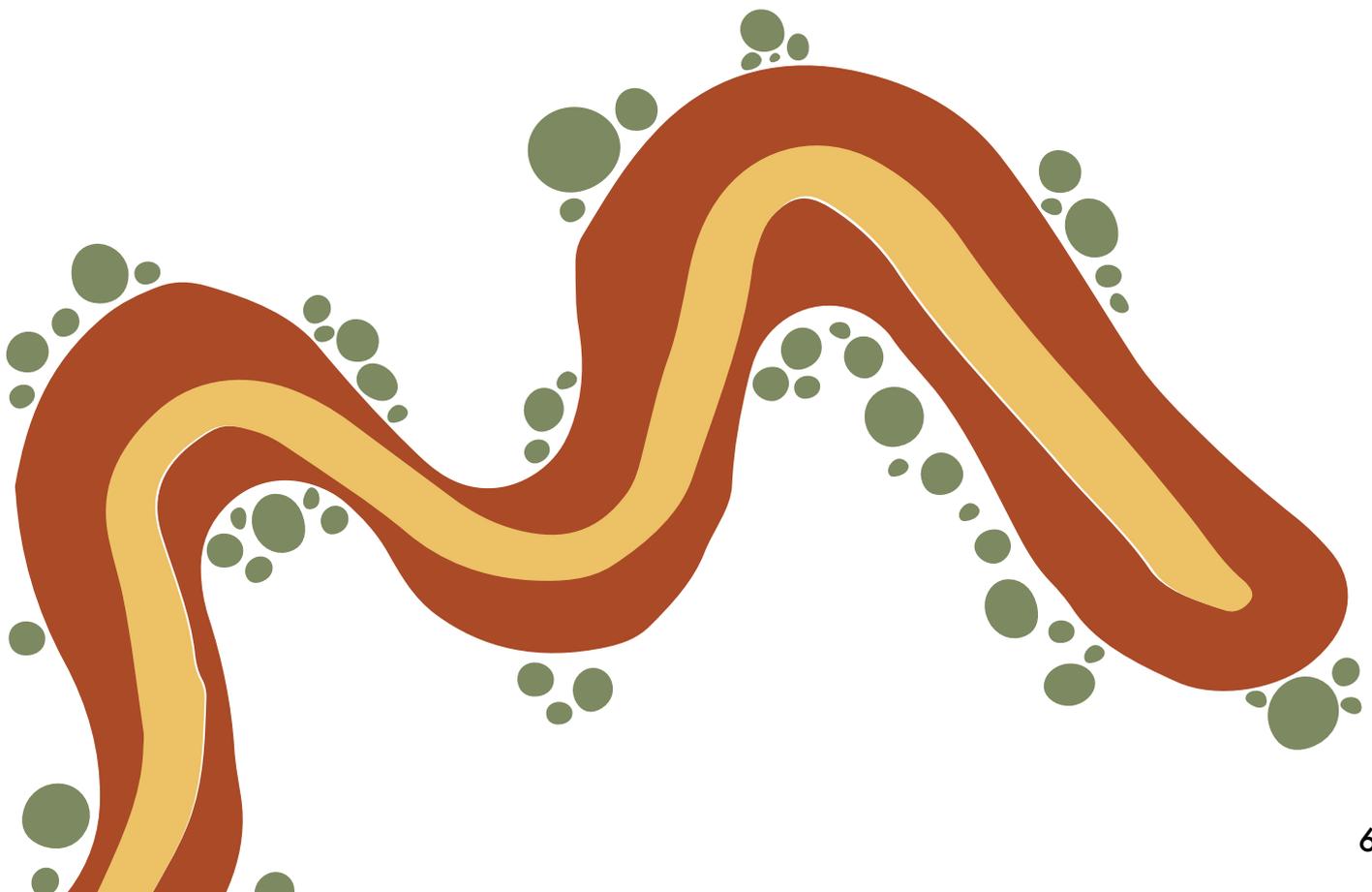
This project sought to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence ('NCIE') and its community, in particular on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The NCIE is a not-for-profit social enterprise that aims to build capability and create opportunities with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. NCIE operates on a large site in Redfern delivering a number of services that have varying local, regional and national remits.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause respiratory infections. COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new form of coronavirus, first reported in December 2019 in China. Identified by the World Health Organisation as a pandemic after a rolling increase in diagnosed cases and deaths globally, COVID-19 sparked varying responses from governments around

the world invoking 'social distancing' measures to contain the spread of the virus. Australian State and Federal governments responded with varying levels of lockdown restrictions.

The frame within which this COVID-19 analysis was undertaken references a broad government Indigenous policy approach, the foundations of the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (NCIE's parent body), and NCIE's own place-based approach and strategy.





The project employed an interview-based methodology alongside an invitation for participants to share other forms of expression on the impact on COVID-19. 22 interviews – 18 Indigenous - were held with key stakeholders including management, staff whose employment was impacted by COVID-19, community organisations, and customers.

To provide context, COVID-19 restrictions led to two out of six NCIE services to cease business-as-usual. NCIE soon proceeded to shut its site to the public to safeguard the health of the community. 61% of NCIE’s Indigenous staff lost all work at this time. It is anticipated NCIE’s revenues will be 73% lower than the comparable prior year period.

Vulnerability data indicates that the local area around NCIE has a high score regarding people employed in vulnerable industries, a medium score on vulnerable types of employment and high social-economic disadvantage.

Impact on our community was assessed across four domains which emerged from the data and directly linked to the frame within which NCIE operates.

This report documents the impact of COVID-19 on the Indigenous place-based Community of NCIE. Our internal and external stakeholders who participated extended beyond Redfern, to Inner Sydney.

A digital story was developed as part of this project to provide a visual narrative and voices of the community.

## Culture, Community and Country

COVID-19 has created a sudden and deeply disruptive disconnection with community, culture and place for the Indigenous community. These connections have traditionally occurred with spontaneity and are very much face-to-face. Restrictions on mobility have not only disrupted family and community interactions, but have also removed the connectedness that stems from the NCIE site as a place to meet and work. An additional layer of loss stems from the inability of people to travel and return to Country. The separation from community, culture, work and place has reinforced isolation in the current environment.

*“And I think we rely on each other for guidance, for respect, for love...and I think they’re going to lose a lot of that, just being able to go and connect; connect with the land. Just go walkabout, so to speak. Just go get in touch with the land, sit around a campfire, talk with your mob and that. It’s pretty harsh not being able to do that”*

The effect of COVID-19 on Elders was a recurrent theme. This presented in two distinct streams – that the low engagement in technology by Elders made them more vulnerable, and that critical Elder-care by members of the community was interrupted.

There was a desire expressed to return to a stronger sense of community and healing from the effect of the pandemic, post COVID-19.

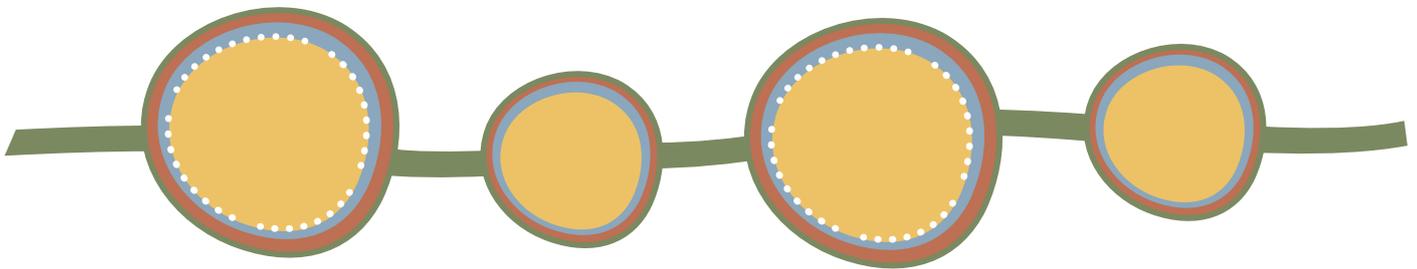
## Education & Employment

Learning, surviving and thriving is fundamental to Indigenous psyche. The interviews suggested great pride in association with the NCIE, as a welcoming Indigenous space with a family-like atmosphere.

The significant shift in workplace culture to working remotely has enabled greater flexibility, and the desire to maintain this flexibility post COVID-19. It has also opened dialogue on the value of a dispersed workforce model for engaging skilled Indigenous peoples. However, the lack of suitable technology at NCIE to optimise productivity was highlighted as a source of stress both for delivering work and ongoing learning.

*“The flexibility to work from home, if needed, should be able to happen... proved that you can work from home and you can be very productive”*

From a service perspective, there was positive sentiment around NCIE’s workforce and service delivery adaptability, and an excitement about how services could adapt to improve connectedness with their stakeholders post COVID-19.



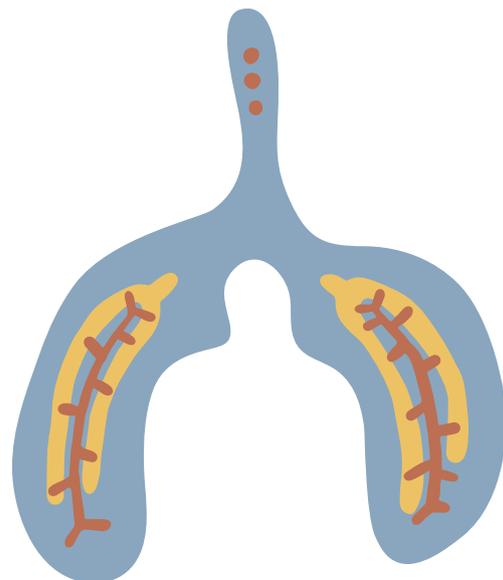
Employment naturally impacted financial stability or instability, and financial impact was polar. Interviewees expressed either a strengthening position due to restricted movements and spending or significant uncertainty about their future if their employment was affected. The financial instability of employees whose jobs were impacted will have ripple effects on families and communities. This is a significant consideration in Indigenous employment, given the strong interconnectedness between place, work and economic wellbeing.

## Health & Wellbeing

Wellbeing for the community requires access to exercise, social interaction, and access to supportive teams. All these have been disrupted. NCIE's role in supporting health and wellbeing emerged through sentiments relating to the closure of the gym for physical health, and the closure of the site as a source of interaction with fellow-staff members and community groups through which people drew strength and wellbeing. The site was identified as a place where people of many ages drew connectedness from – Elders, young mothers, employees. There was also a strong acknowledgement of family being a key source of resilience.

*“...the lack of structured exercise, the lack of easy access to the rest of the team at the NCIE, the chit chat, the jokes, the spontaneity, we've lost all of that”*

The change in work and personal rhythms has left people struggling with a sense of powerlessness, listlessness at times, and volatility in emotional states. There was also a recurrent sense of pressure to deliver work that stemmed from both having too much to do and not having enough to do. There was a parallel drawn between the current lockdown restrictions and the trauma of the past that Indigenous peoples have suffered due to containment and



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## Economic Development

The evidence collected indicates awareness and valuing of collective identity and its related economic power. Reference was made to black communities working together to advance their own economic empowerment.

The interviewees identified NCIE's employees' adaptability to new processes, technologies and platforms as an agile workforce suited to the future. . There was also recognition that the digital environment within which they operate is not simple and requires determination to navigate successfully.

The driver for agility was articulated as building a 'better version of the NCIE', that would be more economically viable and drawing on synergies between services.

Improvements to customer engagement, meeting expectations, digital reach and financial resilience, were seen as important for the NCIE to contribute to ongoing economic development of its stakeholders.

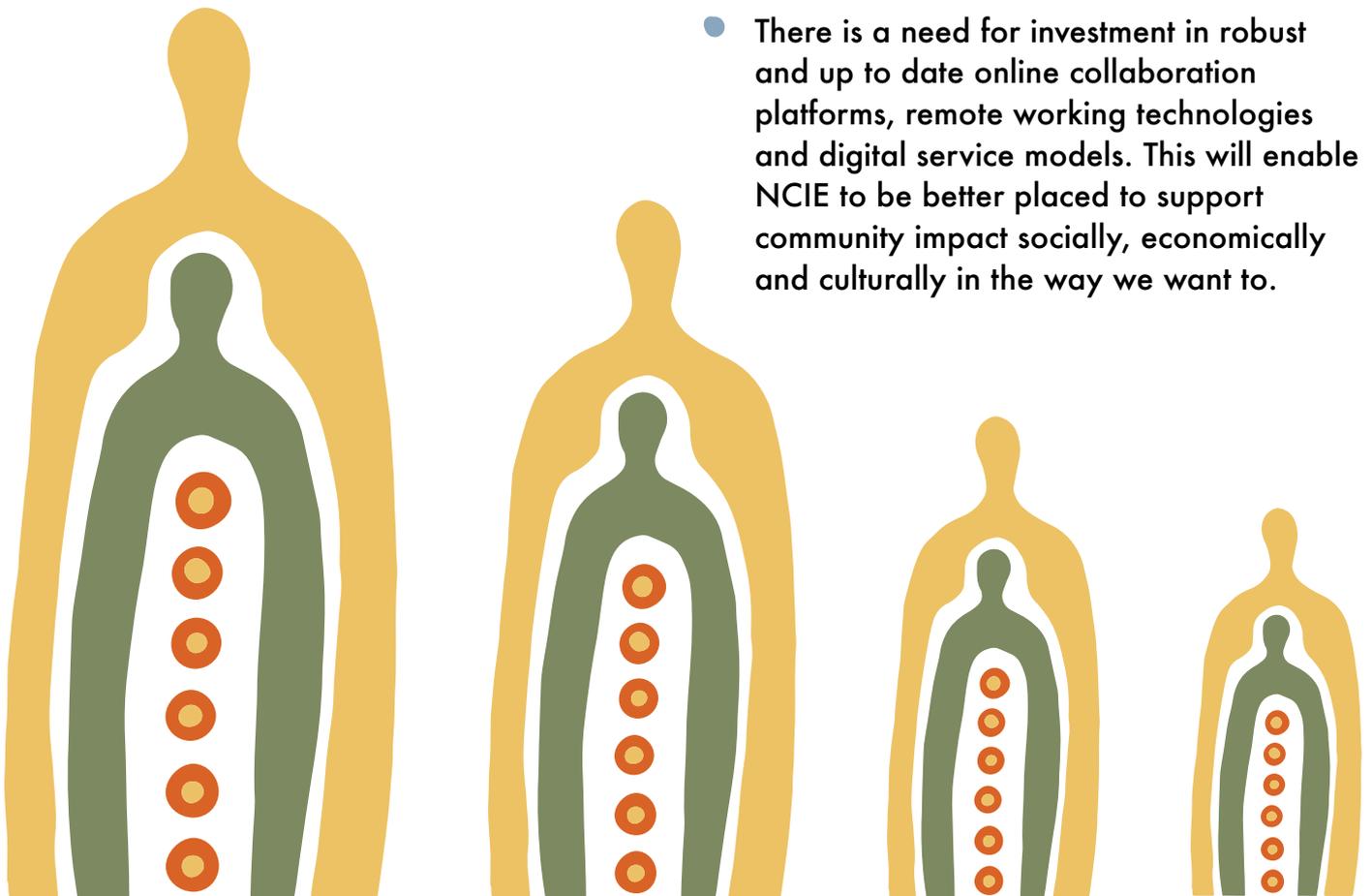
*"It raises questions around sustainable economics"*

## Connectedness & a Way Ahead

The key emergent theme was the loss of connectedness due to the closure of NCIE's site and remote working arrangements. This came into particular focus given the history and rhythm of how Indigenous communities interact with place and people. This loss of connectedness and place has affected physical and mental wellness. It has also sparked new thinking on economic strength and workforce agility after COVID-19.

This broad theme informs suggestions for the future on how NCIE and its related ecosystem might adapt.

- The use of NCIE's site and facilities for community needs in times of crisis should be incorporated into future planning.
- The interconnectedness of place, community and culture is a significant factor in employment for Indigenous peoples and should be a strong consideration in employment initiatives
- The loss of connectedness is useful for policy-makers to consider novel approaches to balancing policy and cultural practice. This will support community connectedness for Indigenous communities that rely on physical community, country and culture for wellbeing.
- There is a need for investment in robust and up to date online collaboration platforms, remote working technologies and digital service models. This will enable NCIE to be better placed to support community impact socially, economically and culturally in the way we want to.



# Introduction



## About COVID-19<sup>1</sup>

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause respiratory infections. These can range from the common cold to more serious diseases.

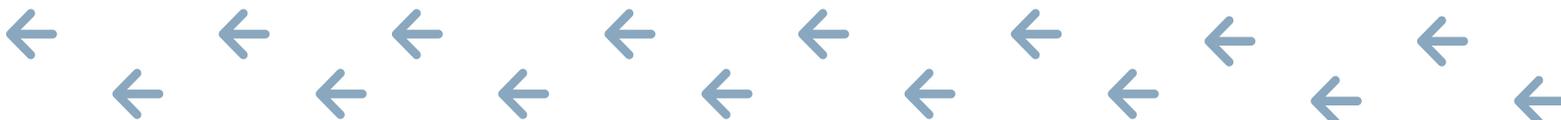
COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new form of coronavirus. It was first reported in December 2019 in Wuhan City in China. Other coronaviruses include Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

## Symptoms

Symptoms of COVID-19 can range from mild illness to pneumonia. Some people will recover easily, and others may get very sick very quickly.

People with coronavirus may experience:

- Fever
- Symptoms such as coughing, a sore throat and fatigue
- Shortness of breath



## How it spreads

The virus can spread from person to person through:

- Close contact with an infectious person (including in the 48 hours before they had symptoms)
- Contact with droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze
- Touching objects or surfaces (like doorknobs or tables) that have droplets from an infected person, and then touching your mouth or face

COVID-19 is a new disease, so there is no existing immunity in our community. This means that COVID-19 could spread widely and quickly.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/what-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-covid-19>

## Who is most at risk?

In Australia, the people most at risk of getting the virus are:

- Travelers who have recently been overseas
- Those who have been in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19
- People in correctional and detention facilities
- People in group residential settings

People who are, or are more likely to be, at higher risk of serious illness if they get the virus are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples 50 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions
- People 65 years and older with chronic medical conditions
- People 70 years and older
- People with compromised immune systems

At this stage the risk to children and babies, and the role children play in the transmission of COVID-19, is not clear. However, there has so far been a low rate of confirmed COVID-19 cases among children, relative to the broader population.

There is limited evidence at this time regarding the risk in pregnant women.

## COVID-19 in Australia and NSW<sup>2,3</sup>

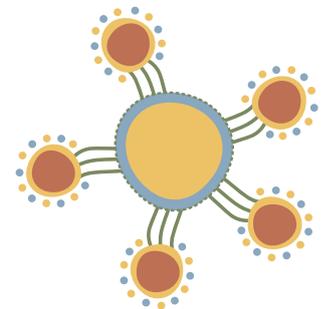
Australia recorded its first positive case of COVID-19 in late January 2020. As positive cases increased, there was a spike in March 2020. During that time the Federal Government took action to help control the spread and 'flatten the curve'.

The Australian Government health response to COVID-19 outbreak aims to:

- Minimise the number of people becoming infected or sick with COVID-19
- Minimise how sick people become and the mortality rate
- Manage the demand on our health systems
- Help you to manage your own risk and the risk to your family and community

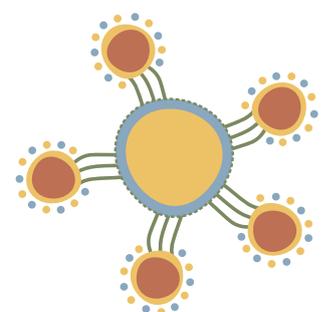
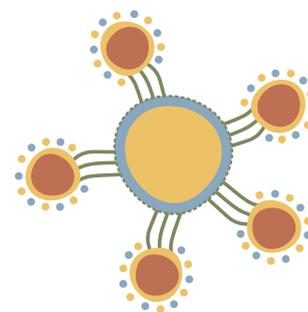
This is achieved by:

- Having effective social distancing
- Increasing our health system capacity
- Isolating people with the virus and their close contacts



The Australian States and Territories Governments are responsible for health matters relating to COVID-19 with the guidance of the Australian Federal Government and health experts.

The NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian put in place the temporary shutdown of non-essential activities and business effective Midday 23rd March 2020.<sup>4</sup> This included and not exclusive to gyms and indoor sporting venues. Government agencies have been providing a range of supports and stimulus packages to help stop the spread of COVID-19, and to support economy, health and wellbeing.



<sup>2</sup> <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-current-situation-and-case-numbers>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/government-response-to-the-covid-19-outbreak>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nsw.gov.au/premier-of-nsw/media-releases-from-premier>



## About NCIE

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The National Centre of Indigenous Excellence (NCIE) is a not-for-profit social enterprise that aims to build capability and create opportunities with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, from Sydney and across Australia.

NCIE fulfils these functions by ensuring its programs, services and enterprises are designed with the sole purpose of creating long-term improvements in wellbeing.

Born out of an idea in 2006 for a National Indigenous Development Centre, the Indigenous Land & Sea Corporation (ILSC) with the support of the local community, purchased the land where the Redfern Public School had operated for over a hundred years. Redfern is a significant place for Indigenous people, historically, and in a contemporary context.

The heritage listed buildings were converted to conference, accommodation and office spaces and a purpose built gym and aquatics centre, and sports field were developed.

NCIE is a wholly-owned but independent subsidiary of the ILSC. The ILSC is an independent Commonwealth statutory corporation established to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to acquire and manage land to achieve economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits.

The ILSC Board appoints the NCIE Board of Directors.

### Our point of difference

NCIE takes a strengths-based approach - with culture at the core - to deliver outcomes. We start from a place of excellence and build from a foundation of positives. We recognise and celebrate the existing and emerging strengths and assets in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

### Our Purpose

NCIE builds capability and creates life-changing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to positively impact wellbeing.

## Our Values

**Excellence:** In everything we do and in everything we deliver

**Integrity:** Through honesty and consistency in our actions

**Inclusiveness:** By embracing diversity, fairness, equality and equity

**Growth:** Through recognising opportunity in challenges and embracing change

## Our Outcome Pathways

### **Culture:**

We respect, honour and celebrate the unique and diverse cultures and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and recognise the importance of embedding culture in all that we do

### **Wellbeing:**

We recognise that wellbeing encompasses all facets of an individual's life, including social, cultural, economic and environmental factors, and extends beyond the individual to include family and community

### **Learning:**

We acknowledge the importance of education, training and employment in providing the foundation for intergenerational wellbeing

### **Innovation:**

We strive to create a strong and robust business model that encourages innovation to deliver sustainable benefits to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

### **Collaboration:**

We value the contribution of others with a shared vision, and we seek to work in partnership to maximise value and impact. We lead, collaborate on and facilitate the design, development and delivery of life-changing programs and breakthrough learning experiences in the pathways.

## Blak Impact

The National Centre of Indigenous Excellence (NCIE) is a not-for-profit social enterprise that is committed to continually improving how we do business to deliver sustainable benefits to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Blak Impact is an emergent team within NCIE; our collective years of wisdom and experience working on the ground with First Nations communities, enterprises and peoples saw a need to evolve our internal approaches to developing and delivering Indigenous-led social impact narrative and methodologies. This incorporates:

- Indigenous Thought and Practice Leadership
- Readiness Building
- Indigenous Measurement Evaluation and Learning
- Indigenising Strategies and Service Design

## What it means to be place-based

NCIE operates within a genre of operation, often grouped thematically under the name 'place-based approaches' (PBA). The shape and scope of place-based approaches varies but largely are collaborative long-term approaches to building thriving communities - delivered in a defined geographic location. These approaches are usually characterised by partnering and shared design, shared stewardship and shared accountability for outcomes and impact. PBAs are often activated to respond to complex, interrelated or challenging issues – such as to address social issues impacting those experiencing, or at risk of, disadvantage, or for natural disasters.

PBAs have gathered traction as a policy response for working with complex issues in communities over the past 10 to 15 years, in Australia and internationally. Research indicates that disadvantage is not spread evenly geographically and tends to be concentrated in places. Place-based services are seen as a way to increase the effectiveness of services which are all seeking to alleviate the symptoms of disadvantage in highly localised ways.

PBAs are seen as a panacea for some of the most fraught issues which impede the effectiveness of the community sector: siloed services, fragmented service delivery, and the historic lack of funding and policy drivers which can support effective and integrated response and delivery. Place-based services are intended to increase the capacity of clients to exert voice and control over the services they receive by promoting accessibility (ease with which people can engage with services) and seamlessness (ease with which people can move around in the service sector as needed).





Community services have historically been siloed and fractured in their service delivery. For this reason PBAs ask that services engage in structural changes at the strategic, governance, and service delivery levels to promote opportunities for accessibility and seamlessness for the communities they serve. The types of changes needed to promote place-based responses span across structural (policy, funding, governance), operational (service policy, governance), service delivery (case management and referral), and relational (collaborative relationships within and between services); and changes are required at all levels concurrently to embed successful place-based responses. Because structural barriers to implementing place-based approaches can be so pervasive, many place-based approaches have significantly focused (and relied on) the informal and relational factors between services, with the view that increased collaboration can address some of the barriers to delivery of integrated services.

The common characteristics of place-based approaches include:

- Responding to complex, interrelated or challenging issues, including social issues impacting those experiencing, or at risk of, disadvantage
- A strengths delivery approach that focuses on prevention and not just intervention
- Identifying and working on community priorities, valuing local knowledge and building on and from social and cultural relationships
- A commitment to strategic learning, and using data and evidence to collectively adapt in real time
- Ongoing building of capacity and capability among all stakeholders
- Focus on collective and collaborative action, active engagement, and partnership with communities so that all stakeholders see themselves as active participants

NCIE's 'local' community incorporates Redfern and surrounds, and the inner city of Sydney (east and west). NCIE's services have a local, regional or national reach depending on their particular remit.

### **About this document**

This document is an impact report of COVID-19 on the Indigenous place-based Community of NCIE in Redfern, NSW. Furthermore our internal and external stakeholders that participated were located beyond Redfern. These include La Perouse and Inner West Sydney. This document is intended for NCIE and collaborating partners.

# Vulnerability for the NCIE Community

Data maps of the Redfern area are a good starting point to understanding vulnerability. The vulnerability cohorts for NCIE are both internal (staff) and external, i.e. community members utilising NCIE facilities for service or connection. The NCIE's local community incorporates Redfern and surrounds, and the inner city of Sydney (east and west).

The area surrounding the NCIE is characterised by financial, employment and housing vulnerability, as shown by the data heat maps below and Appendix 1. The evidence we have collected supports the notion of financial vulnerability. The identified gap in our data – missing voices of those recently unemployed – prevents us from generating deeper insights into the other areas.

## Financial vulnerability map

### Industries of Employment

#### People Employed in Vulnerable Industries



The number of people employed in the industries of Accommodation and food services, Arts and recreation services and Retail trade.

Data Source: 2016 Census of Population and Housing, General Community Profiles Table G53 (ABS)

Time Period: 2016

#### Percent Employed in Vulnerable Industries

### Types of Employment

Small Business

Mortgage or rental stress

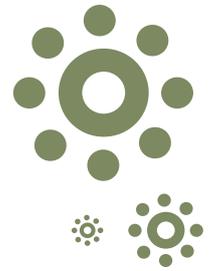
Welfare support

Homelessness

Socio-Economic Index For Areas (SEIFA)



It is important to note the correlation between financial vulnerability, the impact of COVID-19 and psychosocial harms. These are articulated in this report and research studies have repeatedly shown that psycho-social harms cluster around high-risk individuals, high-risk families and high-risk communities. These harms include suicide, domestic violence, crime, injuries and accidents, and premature death. These harms are not just to individuals, but spill-over into negative impacts on families and communities through a range of harms, including the experience of violence, being victims of crime and feeling unsafe.



The causal factors associated with being at high-risk of harm, and experiencing these harms, are mental health, drug and alcohol abuse and being of low-socioeconomic status. Therefore, being more proactive in addressing these issues, as opposed to predominantly being reactive, is one promising way to reduce a whole range of harms across communities generally, but especially reducing harms that are clustered around high-risk families and neighbourhoods within communities.



The point at which high-risk individuals are able to be reached is when they access services (Centrelink, accident & emergency care, supported housing, etc.) and this is true for the COVID-19 pandemic also. Despite individuals and families having multiple needs during this time, services are typically designed to only address one need. The focus on one issue at a time reduces the likelihood that the support provided will be effective or, even if it is effective initially, sustained over time. NCIE has a place-based approach, applying diverse programmatic and systemic approaches to supporting individuals and families in order to be proactive and responsive to need and vulnerability within the community.



The magnitude of vulnerability in the NCIE community area is explored below; the extent of impact is intensified with the concurrence and clustering of vulnerability:



## People employed in vulnerable industries

The NCIE community area has a high to moderate population of people employed in vulnerable industries. Vulnerable services in this context is described as accommodation and food services, arts and recreation and retail trade. Interestingly, these are primary services of the NCIE, alongside Fitness, which was also heavily impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown measures.

## Types of employment

There is a moderate rate of part time workers in the NCIE community area; part time work is considered to be a vulnerable cohort in times of crisis. By THE COVID-19 lockdown, 64% of NCIE's total pre-COVID-19 workforce was casual. We have estimated that 61% of NCIE's Indigenous staff were stood down or received no work after COVID-19, highlighting the vulnerability of our workforce.

## Welfare support

The NCIE community area also has a moderate rate of welfare support recipients.

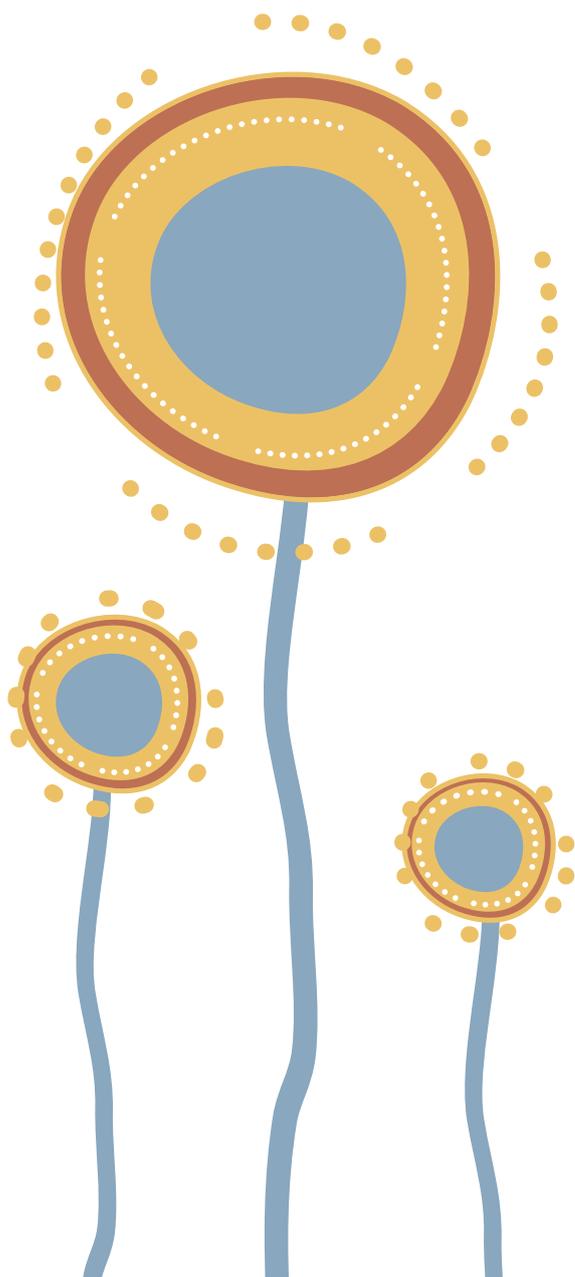
## Homelessness

Homelessness in the NCIE community area is between 37.6-66.5 per 10,000 persons according to 2016 ABS data.

## Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA)

The SEIFA index of economic resources for 2016 shows the NCIE community area as having a relative lack of economic resources compared to other areas.

The SEIFA index of relative socio-economic disadvantage shows the NCIE community area as having moderate and great levels of disadvantage, relative to other areas.

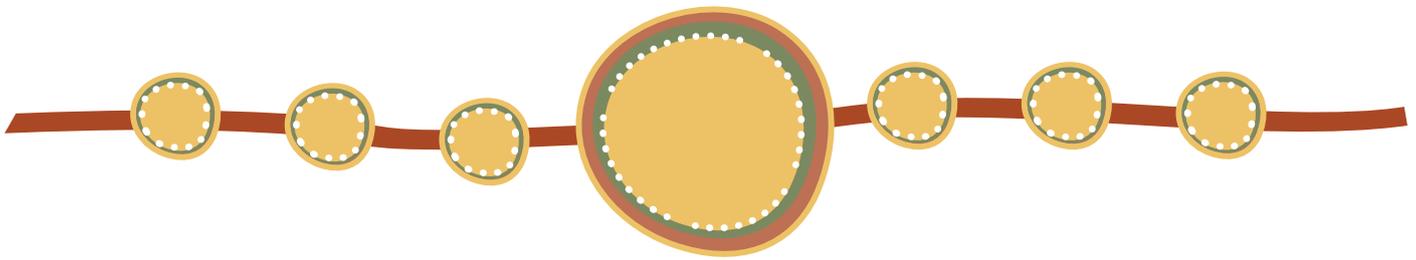


# A Snapshot of COVID-19 Impact on NCIE



The effect of COVID-19 on NCIE was wide-ranging. It affected the site operations, service delivery, workforce, and financials. This section provides a summary of these impacts, as context to interviewee comments and perspectives.

The NSW Government's lockdown laws were particularly restrictive on industries that related to gatherings of people. The majority of NCIE's trading services fell in this category. NCIE made a decision soon after the specific industry lockdown measures to close the site to all visitors to ensure community safety. Each service responded in different ways over the first quarter of lockdown restrictions (when this report was written).



## Services

The reduction in service delivery and related impact was significant as over 60% of our services ceased. NCIE's services pivoted where possible.

- Fitness & Aquatics: full physical shutdown; online classes developed for the first time
- Hospitality: shutdown of conferencing and accommodation; corporate catering had significantly reduced; developed smaller home-delivery product
- Job Ready: service scope shifted from supporting people into employment to supporting people into unemployment services
- TATU: service delivery shifted from majority physical delivery to online campaigns
- IDX: ceased remote outreach and moved to an online learning and virtual camp model
- Blak Impact: start-up in a crisis environment. Developed a dispersed workforce model

## Finances

NCIE revenues were forecast to reduce by 73% in the Apr-Jun 2020 quarter versus the same period in 2019.

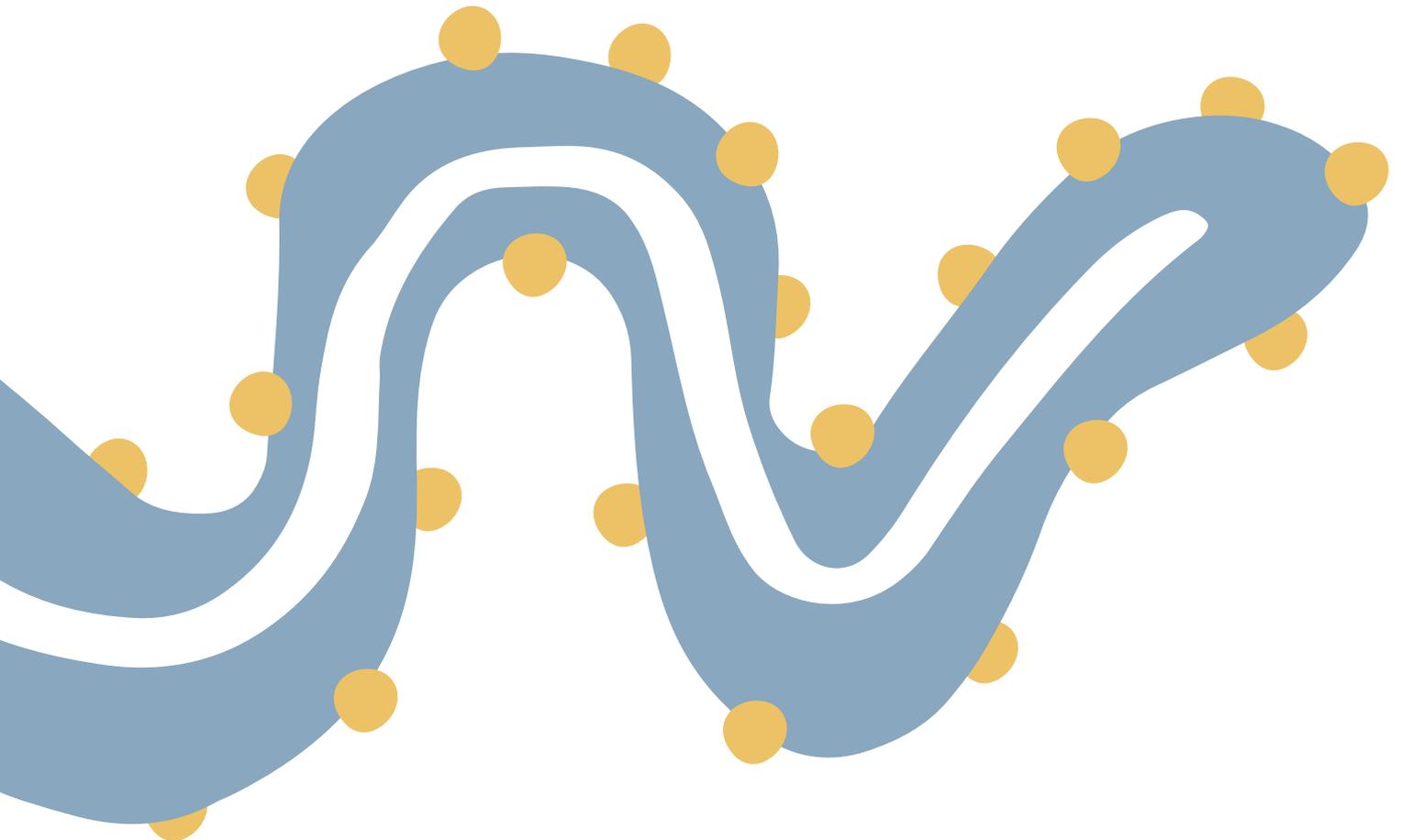
## Employees

Casual staff hours were reduced and permanent staff were asked to work from home with skeletal staff present on site. 61% of our Indigenous staff were stood down or had no work.

## Digital

43% of the employees who worked from home did not have access to NCIE laptops. They were provided with desktops or used personal devices.

NCIE's outdated technology platforms required at least 11 system workarounds to enable collaborative workflows, remote communication, and other enterprise functionalities.



# Methodology

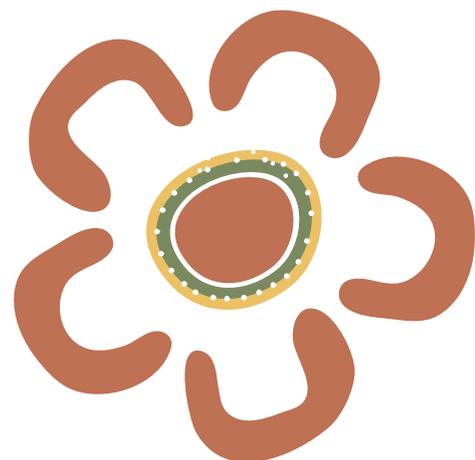
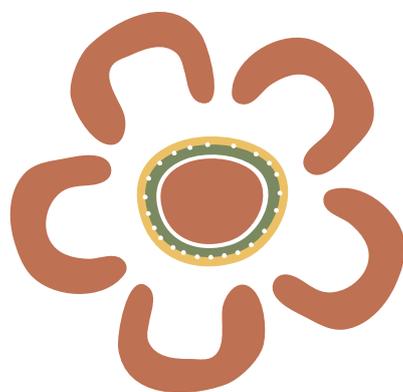
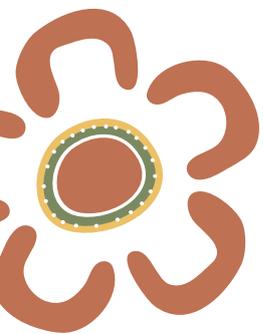
## Approach

Blak Impact applied a rich media approach to collecting stories of change and impact. Collaborative analysis and sense making sessions were held within the Blak Impact team to make sense of the data collected. Reporting approaches include a written report and digital storybook.

Rich media responses were guided by a series of questions based around the interviewees' story on how COVID-19 impacted their ongoing participation and/or support to the NCIE.

Response suggestions included:

- Audio Story
- Photo Collage
- Song/Poem
- Drawing/Artwork
- Written Testimonials or Interview Responses
- Self-video
- Video Interview



## COVID-19 Impact Stories Process

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Gather stories from individuals using a media of their choice	Transcribe the stories	Complete analysis of the stories to understand the shared themes of impact	Digital story and draft report for stakeholders	Check back in with storytellers to make sure they are happy with how their story is being communicated

## Focus

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, members and organisations were the focus cohorts for this impact study. The table below details the interview cohorts for this project. A total of 22 stakeholders were engaged, 18 of whom were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

<b>Cohort-type</b>	<b>Number of interviewees</b>	<b>Number Indigenous</b>
NCIE Internal Staff	<b>12 (10 interviews, 1 written responses &amp; 1 artwork)</b>	<b>8</b>
NCIE Casual Staff (work lost)	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
Community Organisations	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
Customers	<b>6 (5 interviews &amp; 1 written response)</b>	<b>6</b>

## Data Limitations

Data obtained in this impact report is largely direct voices of staff and engaged / employed NCIE community members. Blak Impact reached out to members of the NCIE community who were critically affected by the implications of COVID-19, however were unable to gather their voices despite multiple contacts and paid participation opportunities. This limitation is explored further in later sections of this report.

# Collective Framework for Interpreting Impact

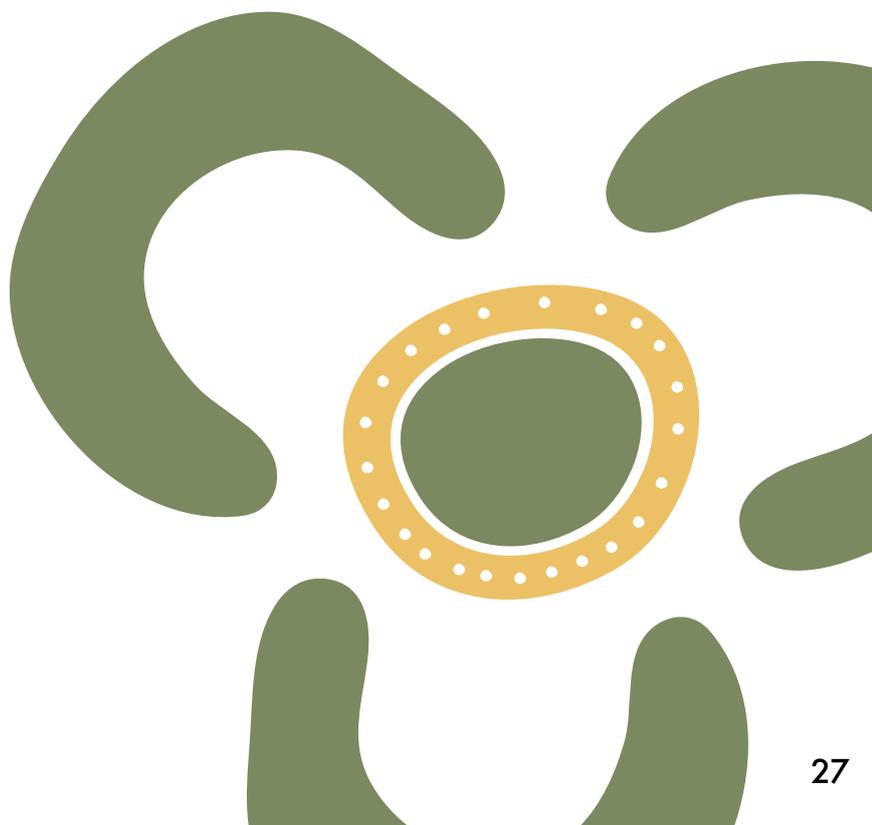


Blak Impact referenced various frameworks for the interpretation of data for this impact report. Relevant frameworks include:

- The Coalition's Indigenous policy framework and related statutory authorities
- The Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC) and subsidiaries
- NCIE

**The Coalition's Indigenous policy framework is defined by three pillars<sup>5</sup>:**

1. Improvement in Indigenous employment outcomes
2. Improvement in the school attendance and educational attainment of Indigenous students
3. Improvement in the safety of Indigenous communities.



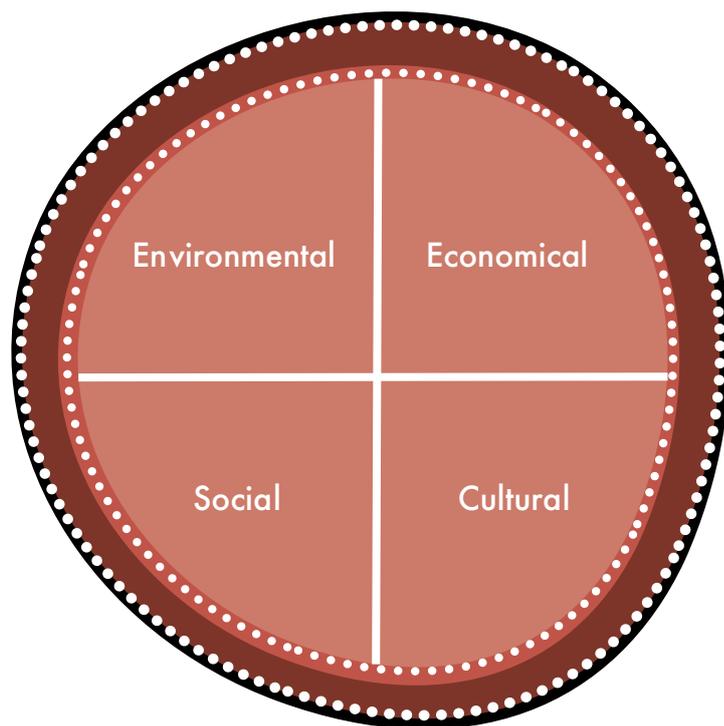
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<sup>5</sup> EY Review of ILSC and IBA (2014)

## Indigenous Land & Sea Corporation

The ILSC was the culmination of decades of action by Indigenous Australians to seek recognition to address their dispossession from traditional lands and seas. The “land promise” is more than a fund but a marker in the history of recognition and land rights for Indigenous Australians.

The ILSC’s purpose is explicitly centred on land acquisition and management. Its legislative basis, including the rationale for the legislation, is to deliver a compensatory outcome for Indigenous people arising from the legacy of dispossession. The legislation requires the ILSC to deliver a program of land acquisition, management and divestment that creates social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits for Indigenous Australians.



## Emergent Impact Narrative

As this work is focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultural impact as a result of COVID-19 is very evident across all domains. The NCIE and Redfern community areas are places where culture is rich within youth, Elders, communities, families and organisations. The impact of cultural practices and healing has been both directly and indirectly affected. The significance of having a safe space, such as the NCIE, to continue to practice connecting with community and culture has been noted throughout. The greatest learning from this report is the need for critical place-based organisations like the NCIE to find creative ways to continue to foster connections with community, culture and place in times of crisis. This can be extrapolated into the opportunity to extend place-based physical connectivity to digital realms, which have value in normal times and heightened value in times of crisis where physical connection may not be feasible.

## Key Findings

The key findings of this impact report are structured against the frameworks referenced for this project. Each section presents evidence for a domain with overall summary findings and examples of the data used to make judgements.

The framework articulated above informed the emergence of four key domains across which impact was assessed:

1. Culture, Community & Country
2. Education & Employment
3. Health & Wellbeing
4. Economic Development

# Impact of COVID-19 on Culture, Community and Country

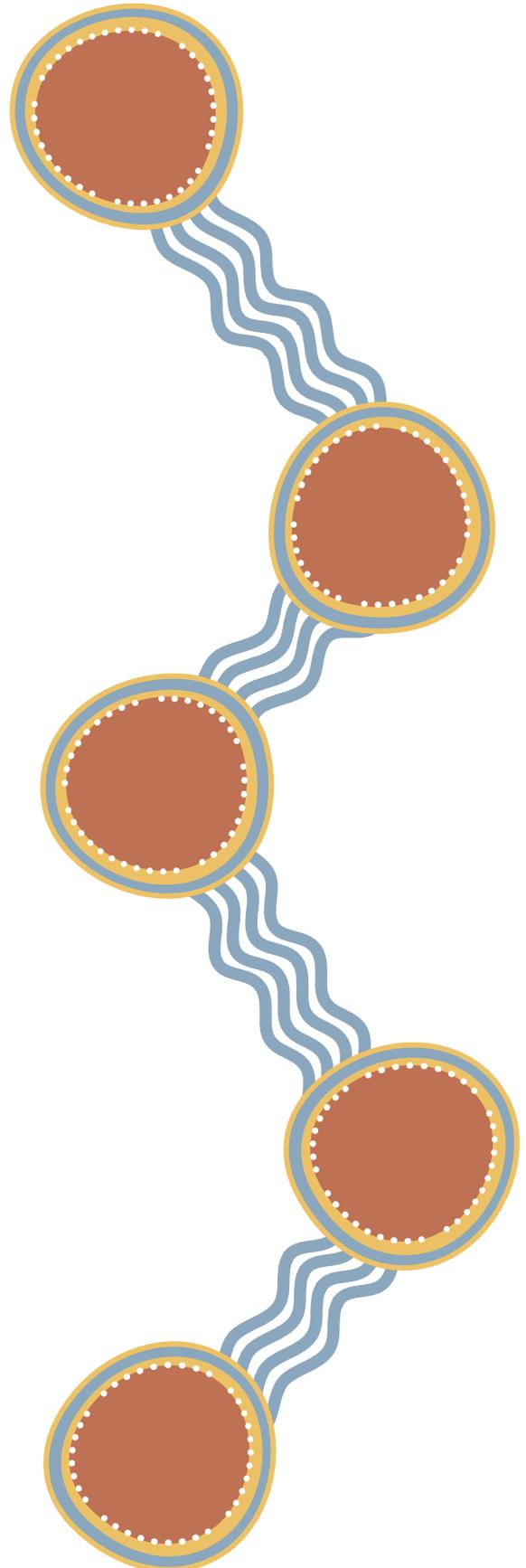
For Indigenous peoples, interactions with and connecting to community, culture and place has traditionally been face-to-face, and for the most part with agency and spontaneity since time immemorial. COVID-19 has created a sudden disconnection which has had wide reaching social and emotional impacts on our Indigenous community.

Elders are particularly impacted by the risks of COVID-19. There was strong evidence from interviewees around the complexity of balancing health risks with Cultural practice, maintaining wellbeing and strengthening understanding.

For Indigenous peoples, physical, social and emotional disruption is often healed by connecting back with community and culture and getting back on Country. Health risks and Government policy has compounded these impacts for Indigenous peoples through the restrictions on traditional healing practices. One interviewee spoke about the causal implication of this loss on identity.

NCIE made a decision to shut the site early in prioritising the health and safety of Community and staff; this was supported by interviewees, alongside critical feedback on the possible uses of our place-based facility for Community during times of system disruption. There was strong evidence calling for the strategic navigation of Government policy to maintain Community support systems during crisis.

In emerging from COVID-19; there is a sense of eagerness to heal and hopefulness for equitable understanding through shared / cross-cultural healing approaches.



## Lost connections to Community and family

The majority of interviewees describe a sudden loss of agency around physical Community and family interactions.

- “I think it is a sense of community not being able to gather, which is a really strong aspect of Aboriginal culture and without Elders, not being necessarily IT savvy”
- “I know that in my culture, as a proud Aboriginal man, I really crave that interaction and that face to face stuff”
- “love coming to work here, they see this as part of family, and we feel as though the family has just been ripped apart through the fault of nobody and it's heartbreaking to see that happen”
- “we all know every Black fella’s got the biggest mob....[loss of] connection to family, that connection to the older people and their stories, and this consistent kind of sharing of knowledge and culture, that COVID-19 has really impacted in a short period of time”
- “mental health is up, suicide rates jumped up, that's quite really alarming. It's scary. It's quite sad”
- “community who really feel unconnected right now. It’s quite bad”

## Interruption to Culture and connecting to Country

There is strong evidence detailing the diverse cultural rituals that have been disrupted by COVID-19 risks and social distancing policy.

- “inability to be able to move between houses and homes”
- “Yeah, well, the whole feeling of not feeling like you are connected. Not seeing my family, me and my family, we're very close and we always meet ,and my parents are coming over a lot and always catching up with my brother, sort of stopped”
- “the importance of the face-to-face interaction, the face-to-face teachings, from a cultural aspect and a community aspect”
- “I want to hurry up and go back to Moree.... going back to home”
- “not being able to be on country and grieve people is a big thing for us”
- “I haven't been able to go back to country”
- “not being able to have your Auntie or Uncle come over for a cuppa and a yarn, like that in the very early stages was a challenge”
- “We're very family-orientated, and we don't need a lot... commercially, we just need each other. And I think we rely on each other for guidance, for respect, for love. I think that's very strong within the Aboriginal community, and I think they're going to lose a lot of that, just being able to go and connect; connect with the land. Just go walkabout, so to speak. Just go get in touch with the land, sit around a campfire, talk with your mob and that. It's pretty harsh not being able to do that”
- “just the limitation of cultural practices, men's group, women's group.... It was serious..., I think identity itself is most important, and then all of the extensions upon that”

## Increased barriers to connecting with Elders

There is some evidence of Elders facing additional technology barriers during COVID-19.

- "That can be quite traumatic for them to be staying at home for these long periods of time"
- Technology as a barrier – gap for our Elders - "some of them that don't know how to use technology"
- "can't communicate with other Elders & young families. They don't have phones, or computers. Society takes this connection for granted, some people don't have access to modern technology"

## Acknowledgement of the critical focus of Elder Care

Some interviewees expressed the importance of prioritising the health and wellbeing of Elders and the traumatic complexity of Government policy.

- "we're pretty much in charge of keeping them safe and keeping them healthy"
- "the pain and the suffering that they went through, a long time ago and it's all been resurfaced because they feel like they're incarcerated and they don't have a choice and they more or less are getting told what they can and can't do and as I said, intergenerational trauma that starts to trickle down along a bit and it's very tough and hard"
- "But, you know, making sure that everyone understood the health concerns of this. So, you know, when Aunties and Uncles did come over, you know, educating them around, they're at risk, this is what's important, this is what you can and can't do, and those very first couple of weeks of the impact of COVID was very – I wouldn't say challenging, it was just more around educating everyone"

## Healing

There is some evidence that individuals are considering how healing might occur through the current situation, and after the pandemic's immediate effects recede.

- "I think there'll be such a great focus on community and impact on community, and such a better understanding across all levels of what impact everyone does"
- "I can't even imagine how the people...that have lost people at the moment and the funeral situation with community... that would be a really big impact for community and dealing with loss"
- "But yeah, definitely family values have been important, so making sure that, you know, we are still connecting in one way or another. Whether it's dropping a home cooked meal off at their front door, and texting them and saying, "there's dinner" and something like that"

## Balancing the health and wellbeing of Community and staff

There was moderate support for the approach taken by NCIE, with suggestions for improvement when facing future system challenges.

- "I feel that we could have used our facilities to assist vulnerable people in the community, a little bit better"
- "opportunity to really demonstrate and lead from the front and show that we can actually make good decisions that not only cater for just the staff members, but for the community members as well"
- "a contained site like NCIE could have been used to really engage and assist the Indigenous communities"
- "I think where we can improve, I think we need to utilise our site here more and have it open some more, sort of open community events and just not really drop-ins"

# Impact of COVID-19 on Education and Employment



Learning is fundamental to Indigenous psyche. Through adversity and challenges we learn to adapt and deliver on our responsibilities.

COVID-19 took the community, and the world, by surprise. Agility and resilience were essential to continuing in education and employment.

People feel great pride in working with and being associated with NCIE. It is very much seen as an Indigenous space that is welcoming.

Interviewees articulated benefits and challenges to working remotely and the mix of family and work responsibilities which can be hard to manage. There was also the feeling of isolation that can hamper motivation and productivity.

A blend of place-based working and at home was perceived as an ideal mix to achieve work-life balance whilst still delivering outcomes.

One of the benefits identified of a fully functional remote working environment is the ability to access a broader Indigenous skillset.

Technology and technical support is essential for all members of the community. For employees, students or customers, COVID-19 was a huge interruption to life. Adequate technology and technical adaptability is the singular most important combatant to this interruption. The lack of suitable technology at NCIE was identified as hampering productivity.

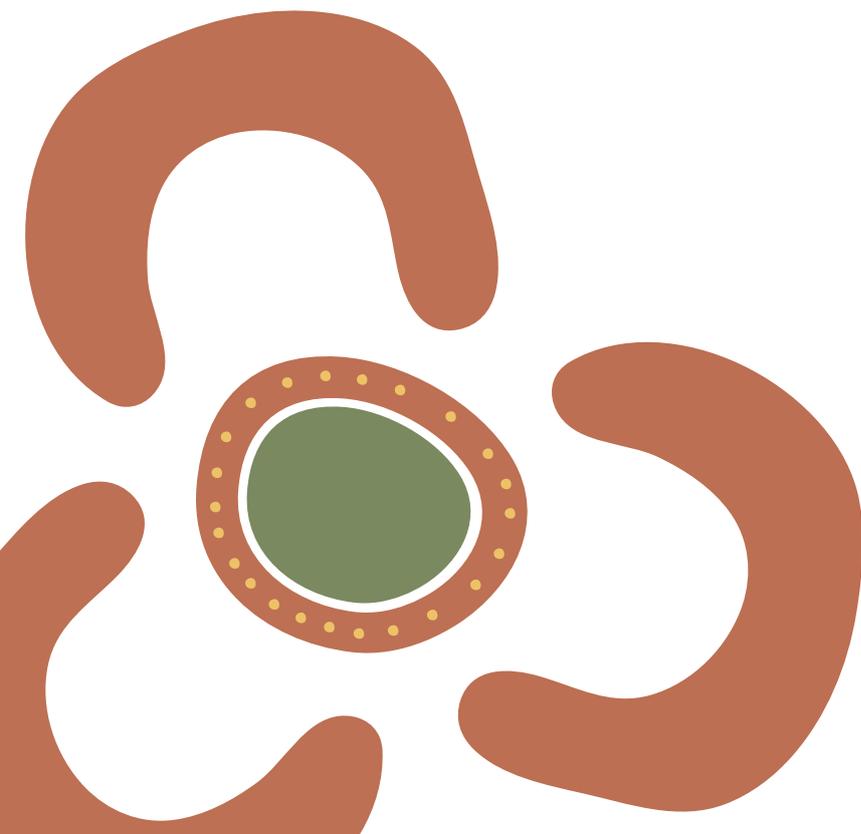
Financial stability was expressed in binary terms. People were either employed or unemployed as a result of COVID-19's impact on their workplace. Those maintaining their income experienced increased stability with spending limited by social restrictions; however, those without income experienced extreme uncertainty and disadvantage.



## Pride in workplace and being connected to NCIE

All staff interviewed felt proud to work at NCIE and believe they are well supported by their managers.

- "we've got excellence in our name, when people come to visit us, they want to see an excellence so let's show them that"
- "We have great managers, really good at managing work for our people and understanding circumstances outside of work"
- "..love coming to work here, they see this as part of family, and we feel as though the family has just been ripped apart through the fault of nobody and it's heartbreaking to see that happen"
- "That motivation I used to get from working at home is waning... that lack of interaction with people and community – which is really the soul of why NCIE exists is for the people"



## Opportunity to blend remote and place-based work

Many interviewees enjoyed the flexibility of working from home. However there were also challenges due to technology and home-office limitations. The desire for team interaction combined with the nature of physical service delivery saw many seeking support around how to structure, pivot & focus their productivity. There was an expectation that new, flexible work practices would be considered as an ongoing practice post COVID-19.

- "I think coming into life after COVID, it'd be really good to have some kind of structure around working from home for those who need it"
- "The flexibility to work from home, if needed, should be able to happen" "I think what COVID has...proved that you can work from home and you can be very productive, and you can keep contacts"
- "I do really miss the everyday interaction with people that you really get along with"
- "I think people will be starving for personal interaction and that connection with humans outside of zoom and the online platform"
- "What I'm missing at the moment is having my workspace.... I live in a three-bedroom house with six people, there isn't an office. I've been working from my dining room"
- "more structure in my working day when I return to the office, which I set out to do in the beginning of the year, but really solidifying that"
- "And I think having an understanding of work should be delivered to the highest standard possible but remaining flexible and understanding when to pull away from work and understand our situation and know when we need a break"
- BUT paradox - "I am not motivated, staff are not working to capacity"

## Working remotely will access a broader Indigenous skillset

There were strong views that by implementing a functional, remote work environment NCIE would be able to increase its skilled Indigenous workforce.

- “..because finding, you know, solid, talented, Black, really smart people in that discrete skillset, [you can't] expect to be able to find them all just living in Sydney”
- “..imagine having a team where you didn't necessarily have to be based in Sydney, you could live in Darwin... And the world of possibilities open up”



## Adaptability is key for employment and continued support for community

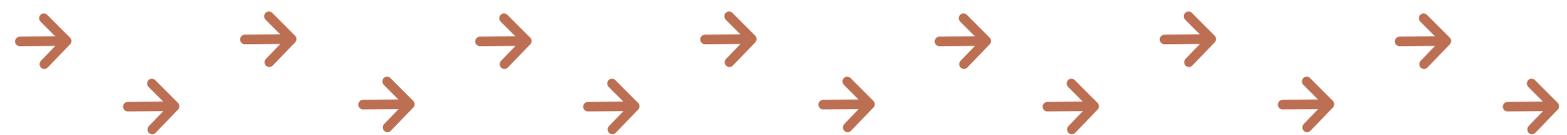
Interviewees were very aware of the necessity to adapt and pivot to ensure services are still delivered to community. There was a positive sentiment around NCIE's adaptability with workforce and service delivery.

- "seeing how the entire workforce has adapted to this difficult time, it's like, have grabbed this with both hands, and turned it around to try and make things work"
- "we're really good at the face to face and, you know, in community stuff, hands on stuff but I think to sort of move all of our curriculum to online and come up with ways of how we stay connected with our communities"
- "the camp I mentioned before, were now running that virtually online. And we've got nearly the same attendees, if not, more because I've actually opened it up to more communities now, because I can"
- "After COVID-19 I expect our programs will be run a little bit differently"

## Interruption to productivity and life due to limited technical capacity

Respondents highlighted the need for better technological capacity and support as fundamental to maintaining productivity and reducing the interruption of COVID-19 to work and life.

- “Working remotely has been difficult, because I don't have full function available because of our various IT issues. And I just don't think that the NCIE IT functions congruent with the technology that's available today”
- “The things that I can't do is facilitate the courses and meet with the students and operate the living skills courses because we just don't have the IT available”
- I'm worried about finishing. [my course] Can access course online but I can't use it. I don't have the right technology and no support”
- “NCIE could've given more personal support. Hub to work from to continue study”



## Financial stability and instability

The financial stability of NCIE Community members was affected in polar ways. People were either left employed or unemployed. Those maintaining their income experienced increased stability with spending limited by social restrictions; however, those without income experienced extreme uncertainty and disadvantage.

- “that we’re not doing all of those extra activities, it’s like time and money, I’m wondering what I was spending all of my time doing now, and all of my money on”
- “...I’m a home owner, you know, I’m entering the homeownership market on the strength of saving and working really hard”
- “It’s been hard. Everything was so uncertain. I’ve only just got jobseeker”

This is in keeping with broader evidence on financial resilience – that only 1 in 10 Indigenous Australians are financially secure and only 2 out of 5 Indigenous people can access \$2,000 in an emergency.<sup>6</sup>



<sup>6</sup> First Nations Foundation (April 2019) Money stories: Financial resilience among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

# Impact of COVID-19 on Health and Wellbeing



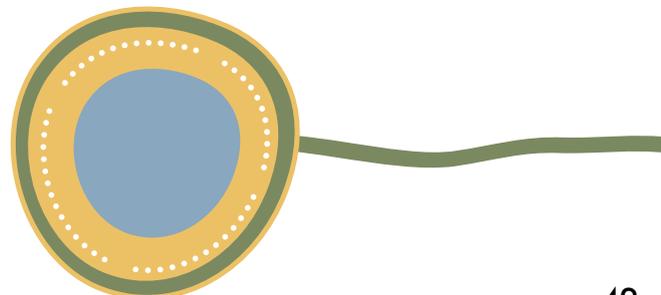
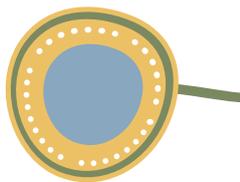
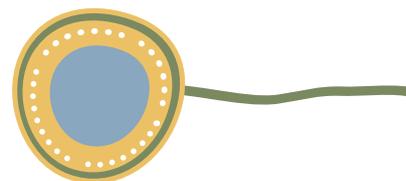
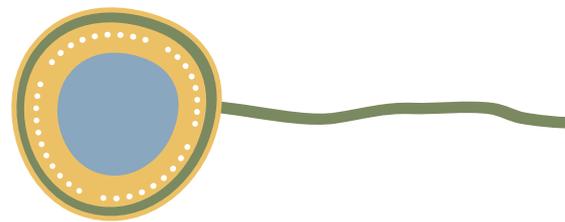
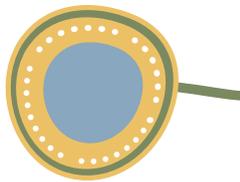
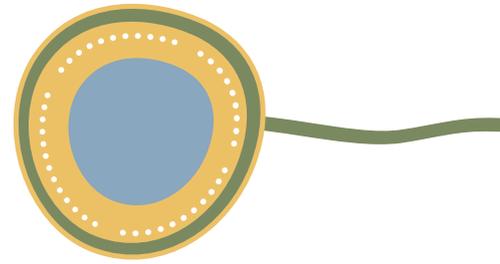
Since the onset of COVID-19, social distancing laws have been enforced that resulted in the temporary closure of NCIE. Health and wellbeing of the community and stakeholders is important to NCIE during uncertain times.

The NCIE offers a safe space where Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians participate in physical activities - like the gym and stadium that improved health and wellbeing. Since the closure of NCIE, there seems to be a loss of connectedness and opportunity for improving health and wellbeing. This includes coming to NCIE as a meeting place for cultural and social interaction to improve health and wellbeing.

The social distancing laws meant that some interviewees had to work from home and the level of resilience required tested their general health and wellbeing. Furthermore, there seemed to be a self-imposed pressure on still delivering services during COVID-19. On the other hand, team work seemed to help build resilience and keep moving forward.

General community interviewee response showed lack of motivation, and energy, and powerlessness during these uncertain times. Unfortunately, there was no way to capture activities and motivations that help keep their health and wellbeing stable.

There is a link between cultural 'health and wellbeing' and connection to NCIE as a meeting place, especially relating to Indigenous Elders, Mums & Bubs and homelessness. Stepping in to fill the gap for those that did not have a place to go to during the pandemic might have been an area NCIE could contribute to. NCIE is seen as a safe space for health and wellbeing, but also connection to culture if not on one's own Country.



## Enjoyment of paring back and being with family (that offers strength)

Some evidence showcases the importance of family to help build resilience and strength during COVID-19.

- "My connection to my family particularly I think is something that gives me strength and resilience"
- "I think family for me has always given me resilience and strength"
- "there's a lot of self-reflection happening during this time. And a lot of time to look inwards and to stop and to notice the small things in the world around us, which is really, it's quite nice to have that slow down time, to be able to do that"

## Loss of connectedness and opportunities for improving wellbeing

The evidence showed a strong link between loss of connectedness and closure of NCIE for physical health and wellbeing.

- "That was really great for me, considering I don't have time. I think I wouldn't be going to the gym if it wasn't so convenient"
- "Just having the facilities there for you to use, whenever you'd like, perhaps in your lunch breaks if you want to go to the gym or do a class or even just shoot around, have a swim"
- "...the lack of structured exercise, the lack of easy access to the rest of the team at the NCIE, the chit chat, the jokes, the spontaneity, we've lost all of that"
- "I've got all my family in Queensland... I just couldn't go to"

## Work team is like family / interconnectedness

There was some evidence to support the value of colleagues and work life balance that provided resilience in times of COVID-19.

- "(Team Support) Speaking to them and even their help, helping me be at the capacity that I need to be for my job. It does give me strength to get through some days where I just don't really want to work"
- "That lack of interaction with people and community and the –which is really the soul of why NCIE exists is for the people"
- "resilience part has definitely come from the team, the workplace"
- "We are like a family. So yeah, you're here more than you are at home. I really enjoy that time. And so just have that taken away, it was a bit hard"
- "...the lack of structured exercise, the lack of easy access to the rest of the team at the NCIE, the chit chat, the jokes, the spontaneity, we've lost all of that"



## Powerlessness - loss of agency

Emotional struggle resulting in powerlessness and loss of energy is very evident within Community.

- "I am craving contact with the world"
- "But yeah, things like that, I think post-COVID, I will be adding more structure back into how I do my work, because I feel I've lost that"
- "Some of the elders, I'm hearing stories like, they're sort of having flash backs like the old days where they were sort of incarcerated in their own home, in their own community"

## Emotional rollercoaster / reflection

There was a sense of emotional volatility from some of the interviewees; that it was harder to maintain equilibrium during the lockdown.

- "I'm finding myself a lot more tired. Feel like I'm lacking routine"
- "I've found myself probably having a lot more lower points than high"
- "I don't want to say it's been depressing, but it's been a little bit of an up and down rollercoaster"

## Self-imposed pressure of the responsibility to deliver

Some of the evidence shows that whilst at times it seems that there was very little to do, it presented with self-imposed responsibility to do more work in order to do well.

- "the pressure's on"
- "the real way it's affected me is probably increased pressure"
- "I feel like there's a lot of pressure"
- "So you know, I feel pressure"
- "People are struggling in isolation, people are struggling with everything"

## NCIE is a place of connection

- "Elders are disconnected... Some don't have families, they rely on community for services and NCIE services"
- "Young Mums - disconnected without Mums & Bubs"

# Impact of COVID-19 on Economic Development



This report looks at economic development from the perspectives of enterprise sustainability and customer demand. Respondents included managers responsible for revenue streams, customer experience and staff engagement, as well as customers and community organisations

There was a strong sense of identity intertwined with economic empowerment. Interviewees showed awareness of the collective economic power of identity; that operating as a collective with mutual loyalties will keep business strong and people connected.

It was identified that economic resilience required building an agile workforce that is open to developing new skills.

Digital transformation is difficult and requires a coordinated enterprise-wide approach. People found it difficult to find the right platforms from which to operate, however eventually adjusted within their own teams and delivery model.

Excellence and the ability to build stronger and more resilient enterprises and workforce comes through innovation, as was articulated by interviewees.

Interviewees questioned if their business model was sustainable. Ideas for improved sustainability included partnerships and working across divisions to deliver both economic return and community service.

COVID-19 drastically affected supply and distribution channels resulting in limited access to resources , product and customers. To maximize staff productivity and customer engagement most respondents articulated the need to pivot engagement models.

Digital transformation facilitates wider reach and supports scalability. There are clear cost and efficiency benefits for an enterprise. However often the customer has demanded a more physical or bespoke delivery. COVID-19 has forced both enterprise and customers to embrace technology in order to meet their needs.

Financial stability is key to economic development. As identified in the previous section people were either employed or unemployed. Those maintaining their income experienced increased stability with spending opportunities limited by social restrictions; however, those without income experienced extreme uncertainty and disadvantage.



## Sense of identity intertwined with economic empowerment

Interviewees showed awareness of the collective economic power of identity; operating as a collective with mutual loyalties will keep business strong and people connected.

- “we’re all working together, keeping Black money in Black communities”

## Adaptation to the new processes & platforms to develop skills for agile workforce

COVID-19 resulted in a sharp and sudden inability to work face-to-face and physically deliver NCIE’s services. It also removed traditional methods of communication. In order for businesses to survive they have to adapt quickly and at minimal cost.

- “As a whole team, and as individual teams across site, we’ve done that well, we’ve adapted our services to respond to the environment around us, which is really great”
- “I think this is like a great big learning curve. People are developing new skills, people are emerging”
- “it’s made us a bit more agile”

## Upskilled in tech for the future through the chaos

People found it difficult to find the right platforms from which to operate. With minimum resources for an enterprise wide solution, they eventually adjusted within their own teams and delivery models.

- "I think using all these alternate platforms in order to communicate with people has been really mind boggling. For me, even as a millennial"
- "I think I've learned how to communicate more on a basis of email or slack or whatever it might be, so formal communication"
- "I think we've pivoted really well. Yeah, I think as a...yeah. As a whole team, and as individual teams across site, we've done that well, we've adapted our services to respond to the environment around us"

## Excellence development through innovation

There was clear evidence of drive and motivation to build a stronger and more resilient enterprises and workforce.

- "make postCOVID-19 a better version of NCIE"
- "People are starting to think and innovate differently"
- "It's being innovative, engaging, we have to come up with stuff"

## Economic Sustainability

Interviewees questioned if their business model was sustainable. Sources of improved sustainability included partnerships and building on interconnectedness between services to deliver both economic return and community service.

- "it raises questions around sustainable economics"
- "[we will] start looking at key partnerships"
- "we've sort of looked at systematic changes in how we do business"
- "if NCIE Fitness loses, TATU loses. If hospitality loses, NCIE Fitness loses. And it's about understanding all of these levers"
- "It looks like, TATU programs running in conjunction with beautiful food from hospitality, run with a health focus with fitness, and you know, an IDX component of videoing and drones"

The world economy will sharply contract over the next few years because of COVID-19. Job losses and social restrictions resulted in drastic drops in spending, affecting the revenue of most businesses. To remain viable all enterprises have had to look at how to become more efficient.

- "I guess it's made us look at how we operate as an organisation and how we can be more effective in this time"
- "it's made us a bit more agile, probably before we weren't as agile."

## Changing customer engagement models

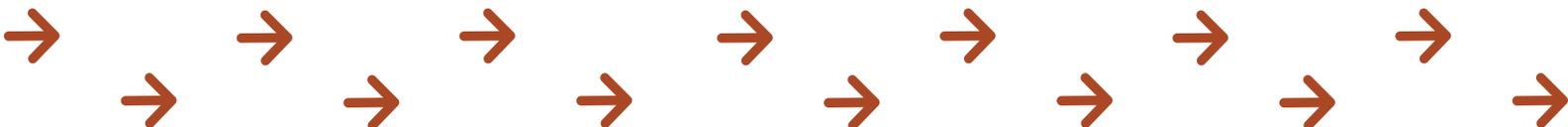
Most respondents articulated the need to pivot engagement models. COVID-19 resulted in limited access to resources, product and customers. This affected staff and customer engagement.

- "It's understanding people's strength in this new environment as well, and understanding how to give them roles"
- "So normally we would go into each of our schools, connect with our students face-to-face, run cultural leadership and scholarship lessons. We've now been able to move that online to an engaging and interactive kind of platform for the students to use"
- "a big part is actually meeting and going out on country...So that's definitely a big change for us, in a way - that interaction with people"

## Behavioral change from customers as well as enterprise

Digital transformation facilitates wider reach and supports scalability. There are clear cost and efficiency benefits for an enterprise however often the customer demands a more physical or bespoke delivery. COVID-19 has forced both enterprises and customers to embrace technology in order to meet supply and demand.

- "we understand that not only we're going to be needing change but our partners and stakeholders are going to have to change their approach, given the outcome of what's going on"
- "I think we'll definitely have some changes within the organisation and how we do business"



# Missing Voices



A noticeable voice that is missing from this report is that of staff and stakeholders who have become immediately disconnected from NCIE. It is challenging to articulate why this may be, however our sense is that in times of crisis, Indigenous peoples naturally connect back with community, culture and place as a form for healing. NCIE provides the environment that nurtures this healing. NCIE's response to COVID, the organisation disconnected from members of its community. It appears that there is a resistance to reconnecting. Blak Impact have considered the following reasons for this:

- A natural flight or fight response during crisis
- A time of increased individual and family crisis and vulnerability that sees the need to prioritise survival over sharing part of yourself

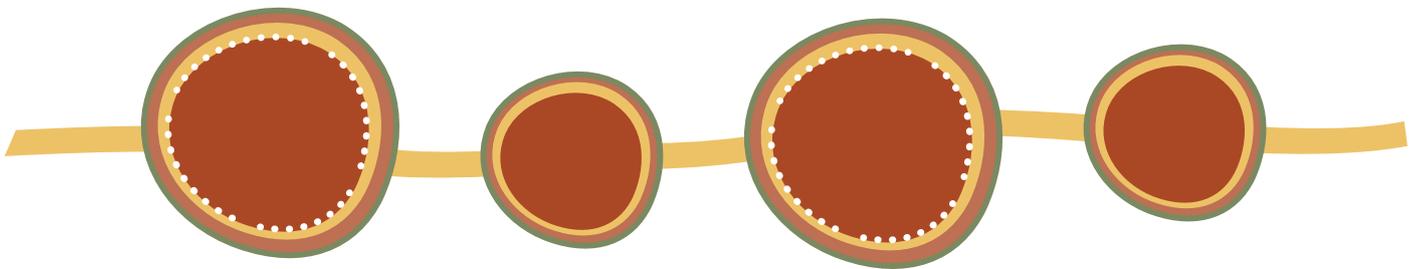
# Conclusion



This report sought to understand the impact of COVID-19 on NCIE and its community. The framework within which the analysis was undertaken referenced a broad government policy approach, the foundations of the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (NCIE’s parent body), and NCIE’s own place-based approach and strategy.

22 interviews – 82% with Indigenous stakeholders - were held with key stakeholder groups including management, staff whose employment was impacted by COVID-19, community organisations, and customers.

Impact was assessed across four domains informed by the above framework.



## Culture, Community and Country

COVID-19 has created a sudden and deeply disruptive disconnection with community, culture and place for the Indigenous community. These connections have traditionally occurred with spontaneity and very much face-to-face. The restrictions on mobility have not only disrupted family and community interactions, but have also removed the connectedness that stems from the NCIE site as a place to meet and work. An additional layer of loss stems from the inability of people to travel and return to Country. The isolation from people, culture, work and place is therefore reinforced.

The effect of COVID-19 on Elders was a recurrent theme. This presented in two distinct themes – that the lack of technology engagement by Elders made them more vulnerable through isolation, and that critical Elder care by members of the community was interrupted.

There was a desire expressed to return to a stronger sense of community and healing from the effect of the pandemic, post COVID-19.

Critical feedback related to various alternate uses of the NCIE site to serve community need during crises, balanced with an understanding of why the NCIE closed its site for community and visitor safety.

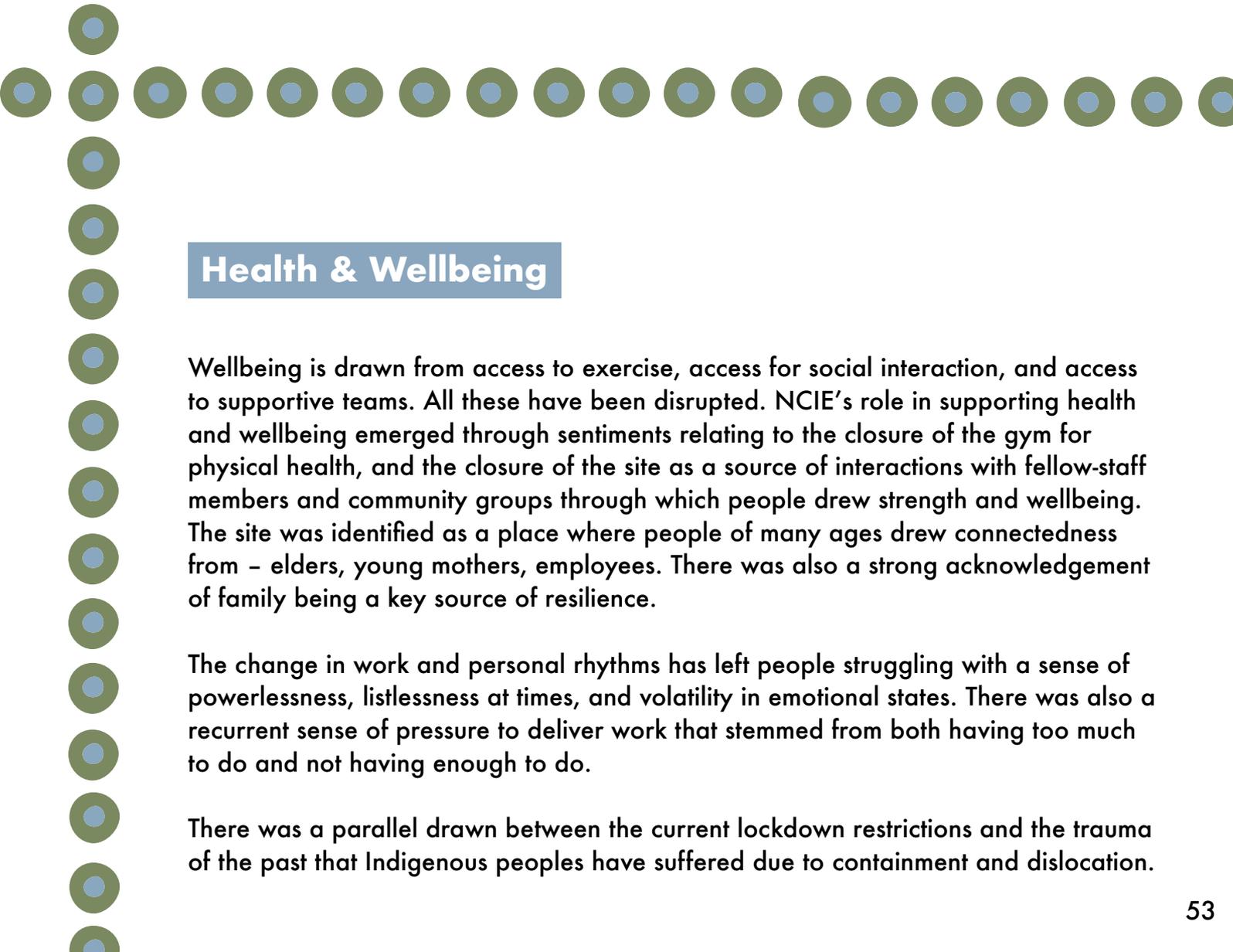
## Education & Employment

Learning, surviving and thriving is fundamental to Indigenous psyche. The interviews suggested great pride in association with the NCIE, as a welcoming Indigenous space with a family-like atmosphere.

The significant shift in workplace culture to working remotely has enabled greater flexibility, and the desire to maintain this flexibility post COVID-19. It has also opened dialogue on the value of this model for engaging skilled Indigenous people who are physically dispersed. However, the lack of suitable technology at NCIE to optimise productivity was highlighted as a source of stress both for delivering work and ongoing learning.

From a service perspective, there was positive sentiment around NCIE's adaptability of workforce and service delivery, and an excitement about how services could adapt to improve connectedness with their stakeholders post-COVID-19.

Employment has naturally impacted financial stability or instability, and financial impact was polar. Interviewees expressed either a strengthening position due to restricted movements or significant uncertainty about their future if their employment was affected.



## Health & Wellbeing

Wellbeing is drawn from access to exercise, access for social interaction, and access to supportive teams. All these have been disrupted. NCIE's role in supporting health and wellbeing emerged through sentiments relating to the closure of the gym for physical health, and the closure of the site as a source of interactions with fellow-staff members and community groups through which people drew strength and wellbeing. The site was identified as a place where people of many ages drew connectedness from – elders, young mothers, employees. There was also a strong acknowledgement of family being a key source of resilience.

The change in work and personal rhythms has left people struggling with a sense of powerlessness, listlessness at times, and volatility in emotional states. There was also a recurrent sense of pressure to deliver work that stemmed from both having too much to do and not having enough to do.

There was a parallel drawn between the current lockdown restrictions and the trauma of the past that Indigenous peoples have suffered due to containment and dislocation.

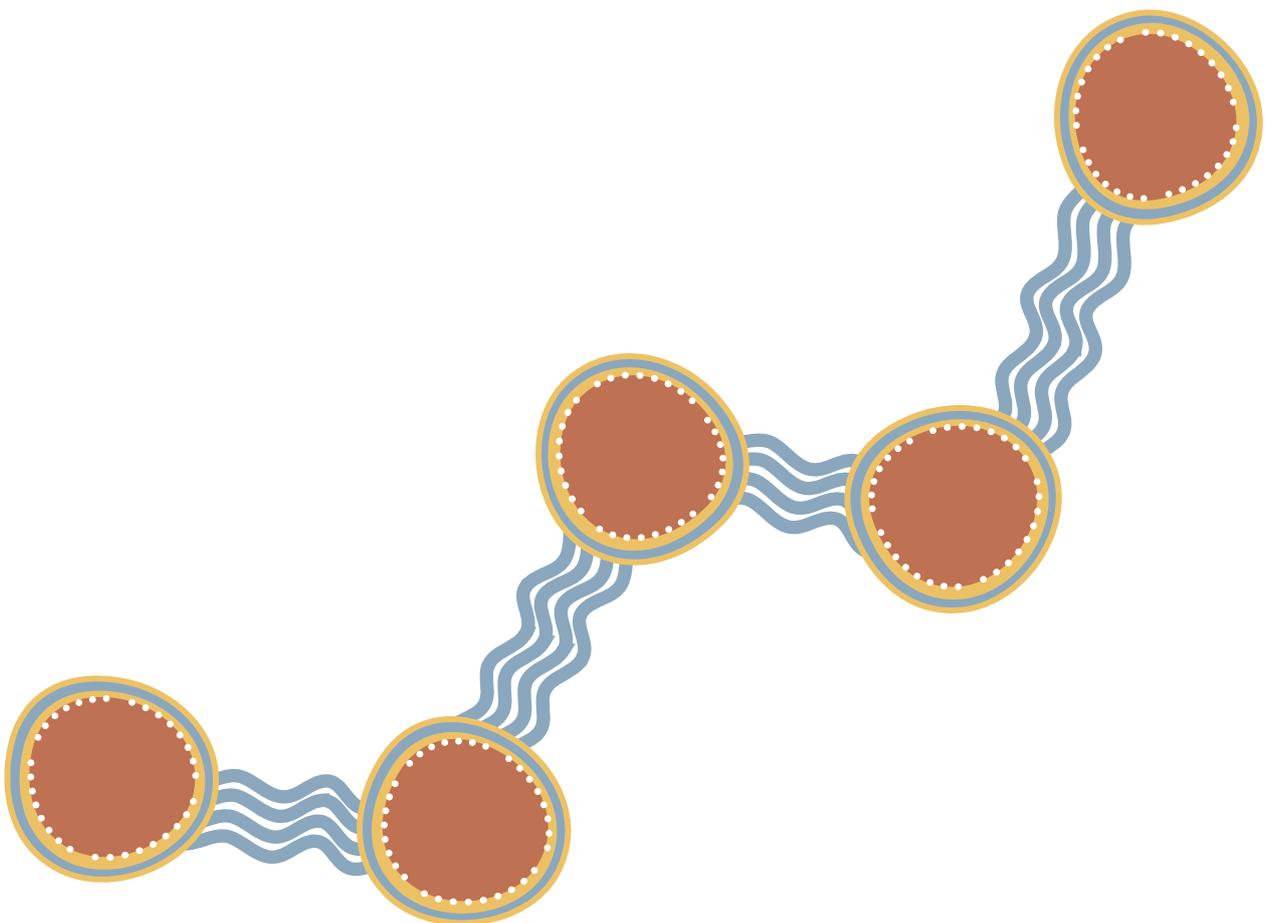
## Economic Development

The evidence collected indicates awareness and valuing of collective identity. Reference was made to the related economic power of black communities working together to advance their economic empowerment.

The interviewees identified NCIE's employees' adaptability to new processes, technologies and platforms as an agile workforce suited to the future. There was also the recognition that the digital environment within which they operate is not simple and requires determination to navigate successfully.

The driver for adaptability and digital capability was identified as building a 'better version of the NCIE', that would be more economically viable and draw on synergies between services. Improvements to customer engagement and expectations, digital reach and financial resilience were seen as important for the NCIE to contribute to ongoing economic development of its stakeholders.

The financial instability of employees whose jobs were impacted have ripple effects on families and communities, and is a significant consideration for the link between place, work and economic wellbeing and the importance of connectedness between these elements for Indigenous communities.



## Connectedness & a Way Ahead

The key emergent theme was the loss of connectedness due to the closure of NCIE's site, remote working arrangements, particularly given the history and rhythm of how Indigenous communities interact closely with physical place and people. This loss of connectedness and place has an impact on physical and mental wellness. It has also challenged how economic strength and workforce agility can sustain after COVID-19.

This theme informs suggestions for the future on how NCIE and its related ecosystem might adapt.

The use of NCIE's site and facilities for community needs in times of crisis could be incorporated into future planning.

The interconnectedness of place, community and culture is a significant factor in employment for Indigenous peoples and should be a strong consideration in employment initiatives

The loss of connectedness would also be useful for policy-makers to consider novel approaches to balancing policy and cultural practice. This will support community connectedness when physical connectivity is interrupted for Indigenous communities that rely on physical community, country and culture for wellbeing.

There is a need for investment in robust and up to date online collaboration platforms, remote working technologies and digital service models. If NCIE were equipped in this area, we may have been better placed to support community socially, economically and culturally in the way we want to.

# Appendix 1: Vulnerability Maps



## Financial vulnerability map

### Industries of Employment

#### People Employed in Vulnerable Industries



The number of people employed in the industries of Accommodation and food services, Arts and recreation services and Retail trade.

Data Source: 2016 Census of Population and Housing, General Community Profiles Table G53 (ABS)

Time Period: 2016

#### Percent Employed in Vulnerable Industries

### Types of Employment

Small Business

Mortgage or rental stress

Welfare support

Homelessness

Socio-Economic Index For Areas (SEIFA)



# Financial vulnerability map

Industries of Employment +

Types of Employment -

Employed persons working Part Time



The number of people working less than 35 hours per week.

Data Source: 2016 Census of Population and Housing, General Community Profiles Table G43 (ABS)

Time Period: 2016

Percent working Part Time

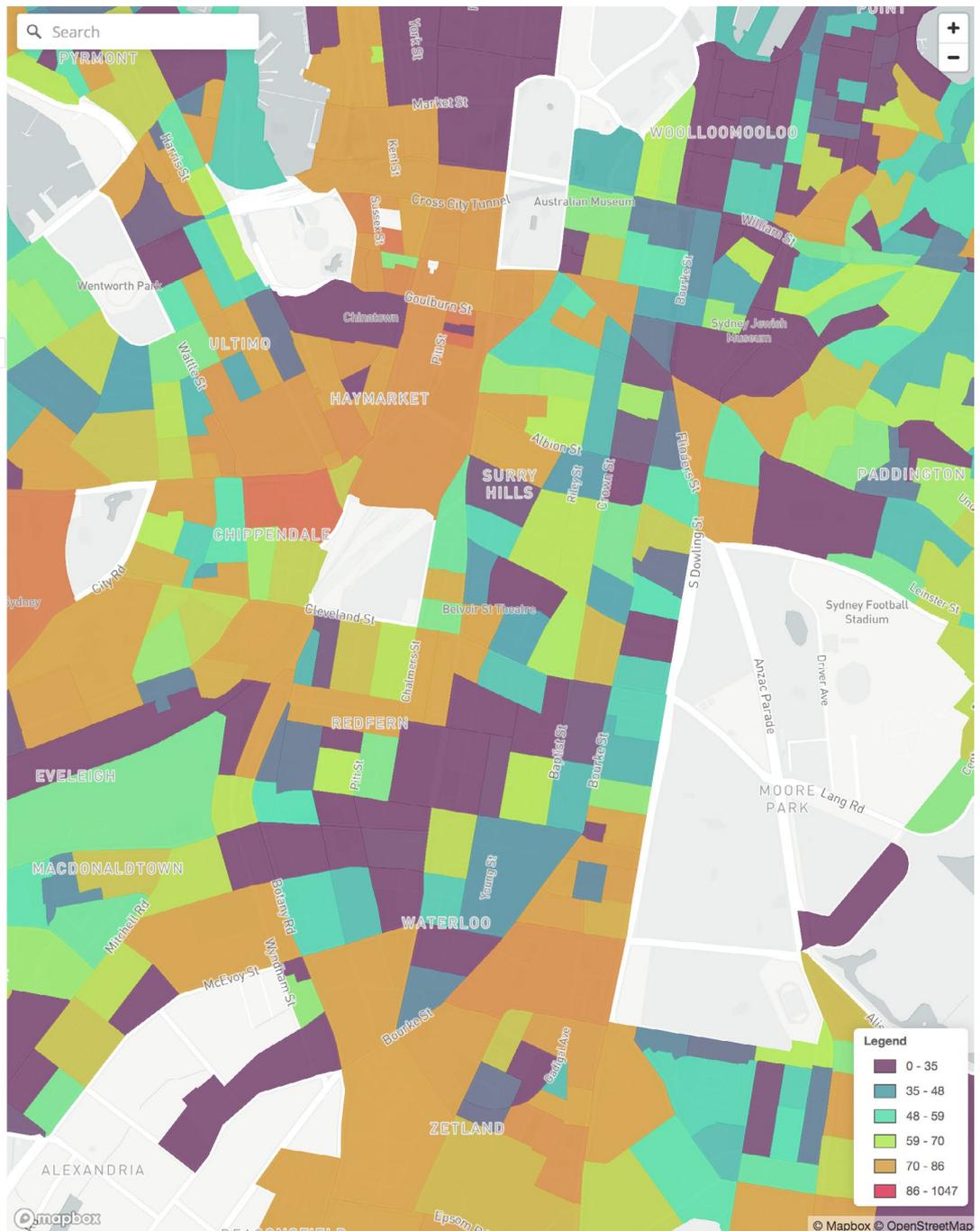
Small Business +

Mortgage or rental stress +

Welfare support +

Homelessness +

Socio-Economic Index For Areas (SEIFA) +



# Financial vulnerability map

Industries of Employment +

Types of Employment +

Small Business +

Mortgage or rental stress +

Welfare support -

Number of welfare recipients

0.00 31562.00

Number recipients of a range of welfare support payments.

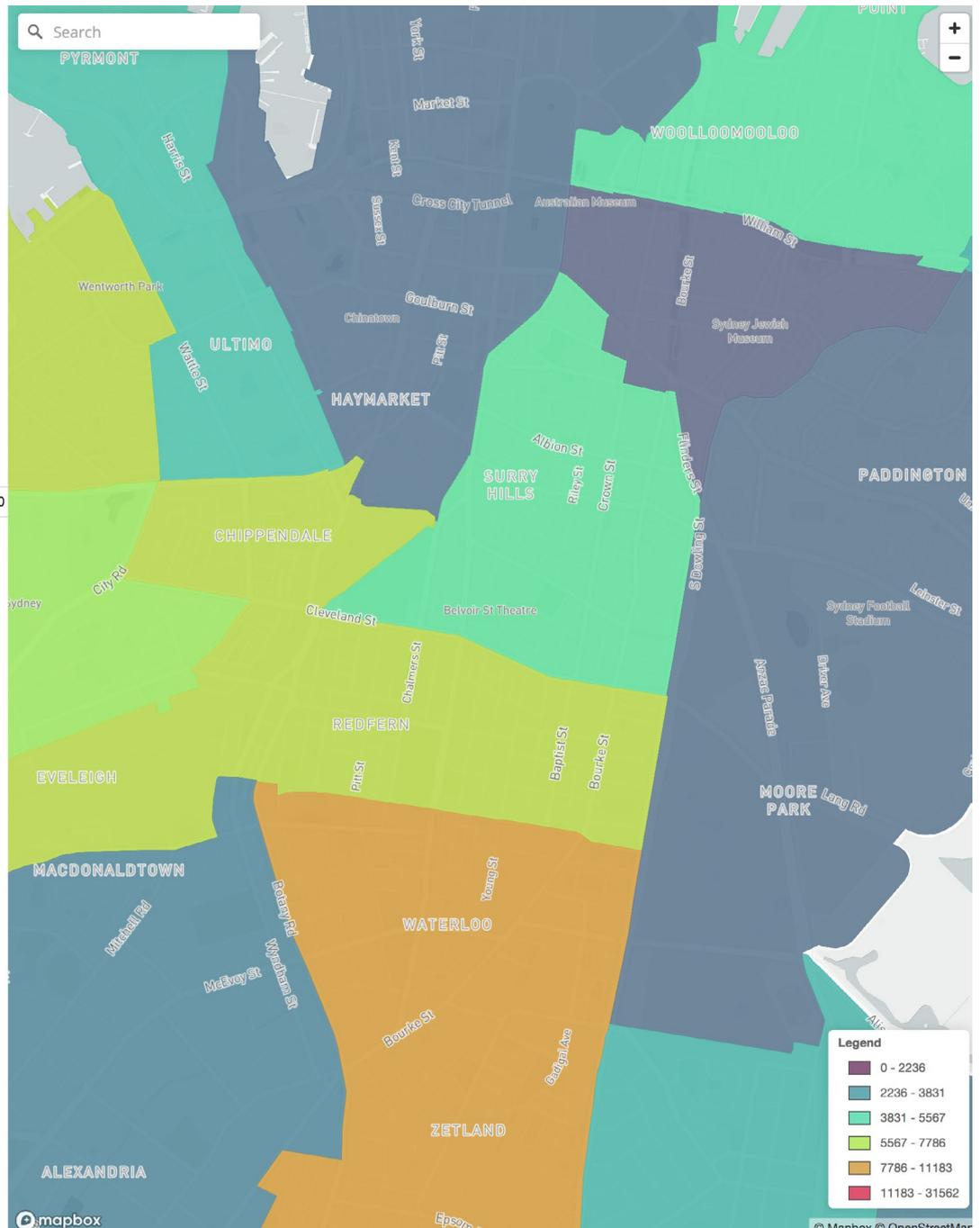
Data Source: Department of Social Services (DSS) Payment Demographic Data

Time Period: July-September 2019

Estimated number of welfare recipients per 10,000 population

Homelessness +

Socio-Economic Index For Areas (SEIFA) +



# Financial vulnerability map

Industries of Employment +

Types of Employment +

Small Business +

Mortgage or rental stress +

Welfare support +

Homelessness -

Homelessness rate per 10,000 persons

0.00 4651.80

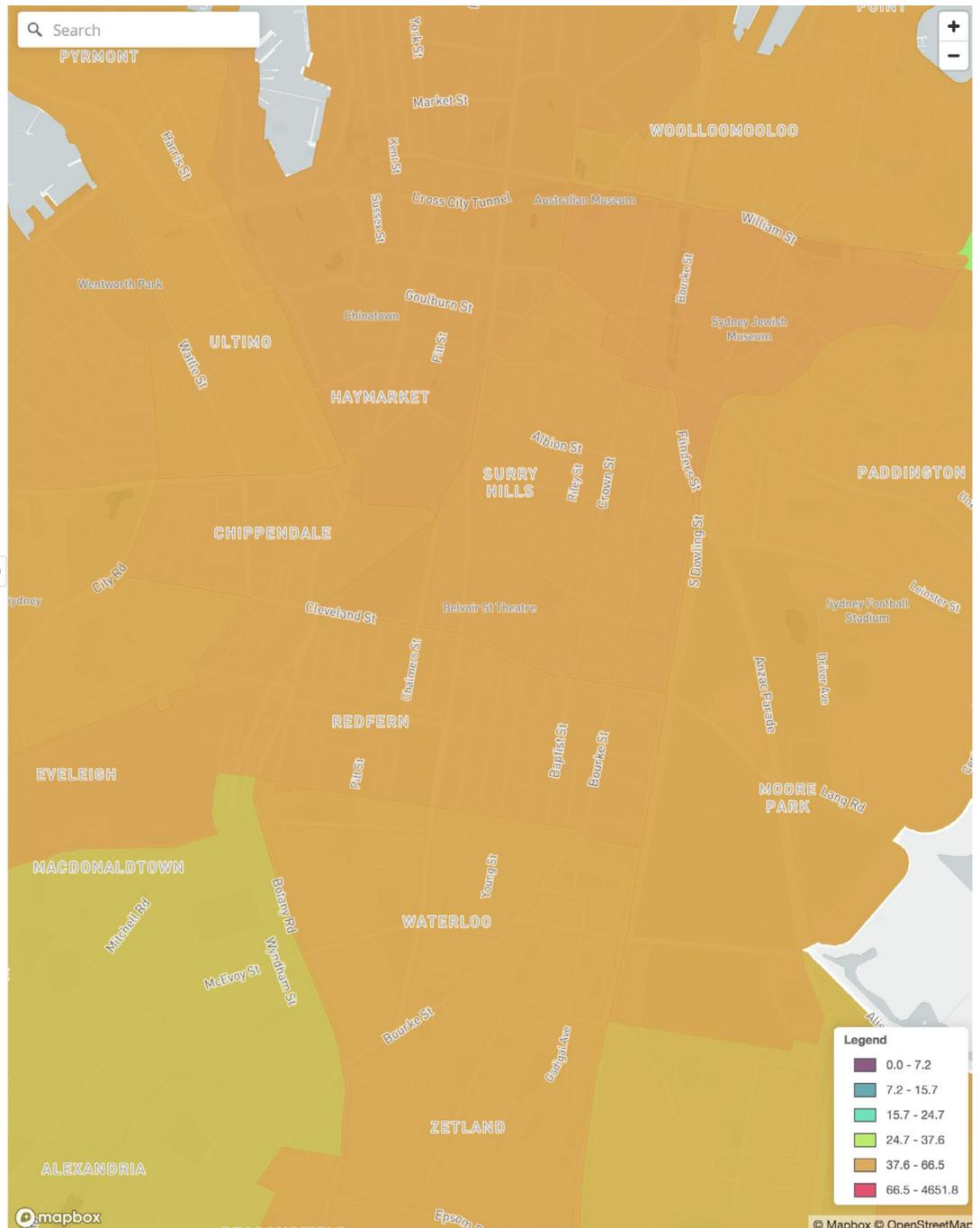


Homelessness rate per 10,000 persons

Data Source: Data by Region (ABS)

Time Period: 2016

Socio-Economic Index For Areas (SEIFA) +



# Financial vulnerability map

- Industries of Employment +
- Types of Employment +
- Small Business +
- Mortgage or rental stress +
- Welfare support +
- Homelessness +
- Socio-Economic Index For Areas (SEIFA) -

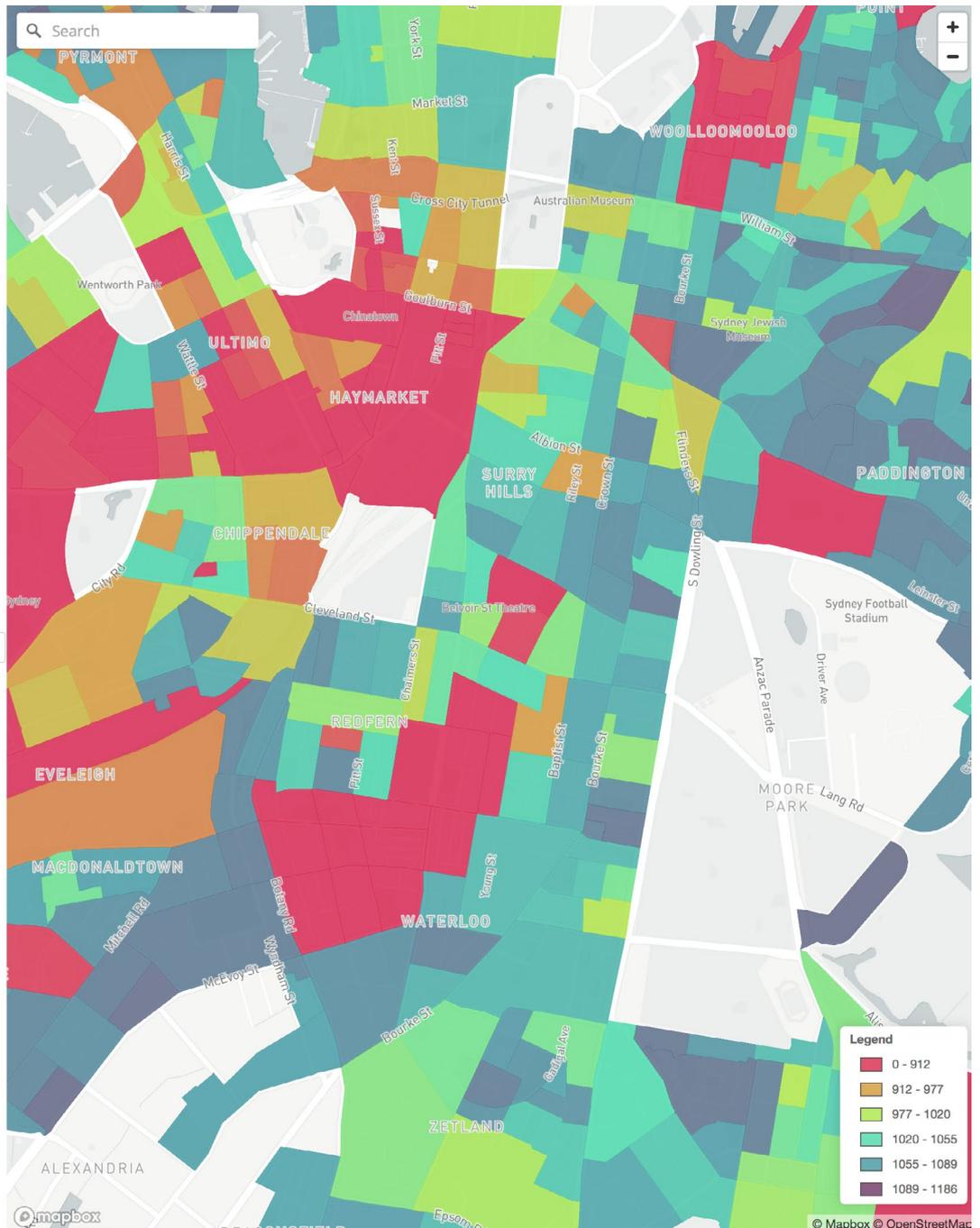


Score depicting the greatest disadvantage (lowest scores) relative to areas with a lack of disadvantage (highest scores).

Data Source: 2016 Census of Population and Housing, Socio-Economic Index For Areas (SEIFA, ABS)

Time Period: 2016

- Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage
- Index of Economic Resources
- Index of Education and Occupation



# Financial vulnerability map

- Industries of Employment +
- Types of Employment +
- Small Business +
- Mortgage or rental stress +
- Welfare support +
- Homelessness +
- Socio-Economic Index For Areas (SEIFA) -
  - Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage
  - Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage
  - Index of Economic Resources

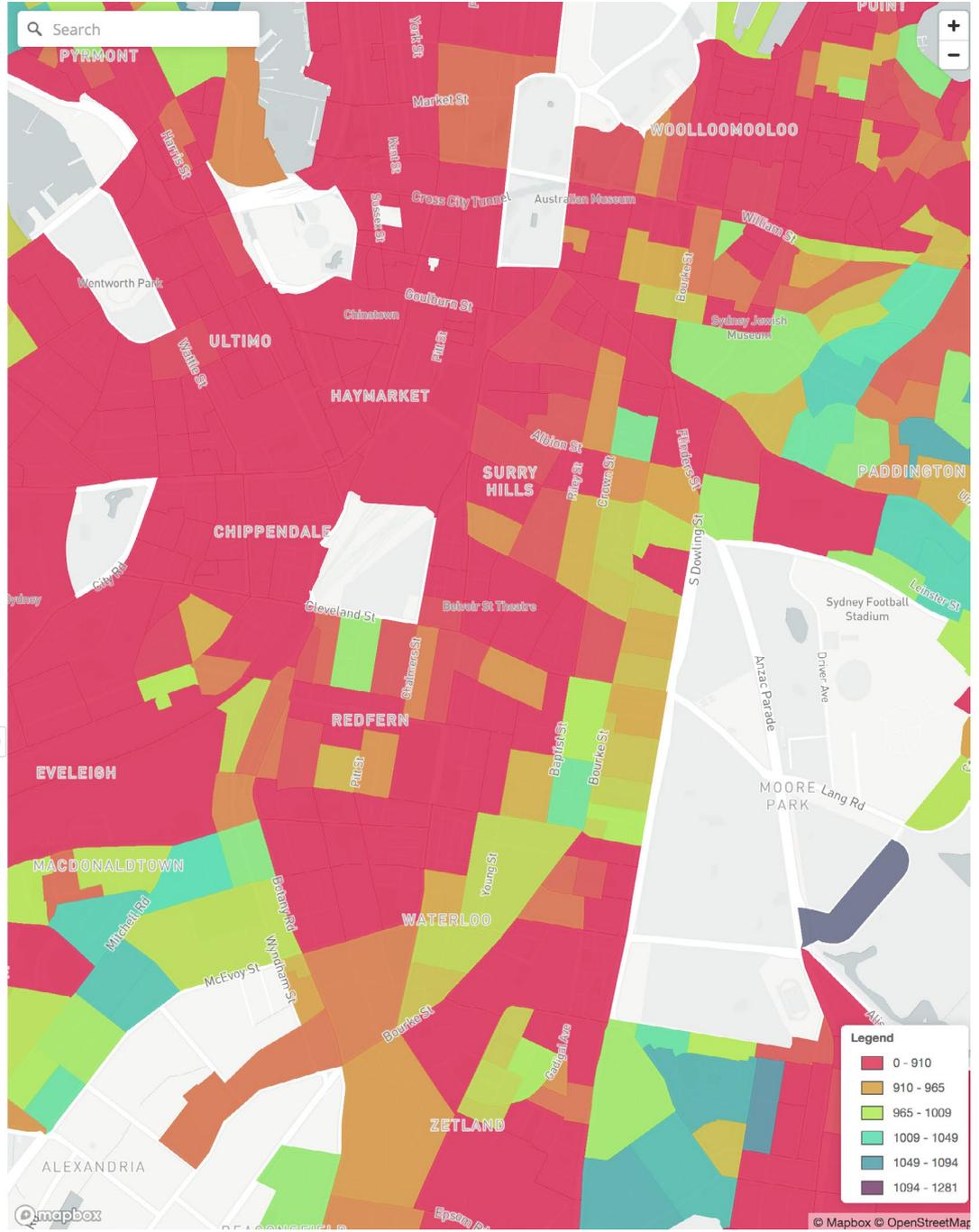


Score depicting a relative lack of economic resources (lowest scores) compared to areas with greater economic resources (highest scores).

**Data Source:** 2016 Census of Population and Housing, Socio-Economic Index For Areas (SEIFA, ABS)

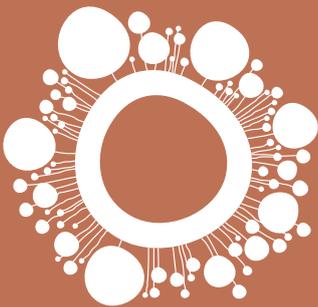
**Time Period:** 2016

- Index of Education and Occupation



*Blak*  
**IMPACT**

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