



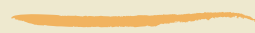
Gender & Disaster Australia

# Yarra Ranges

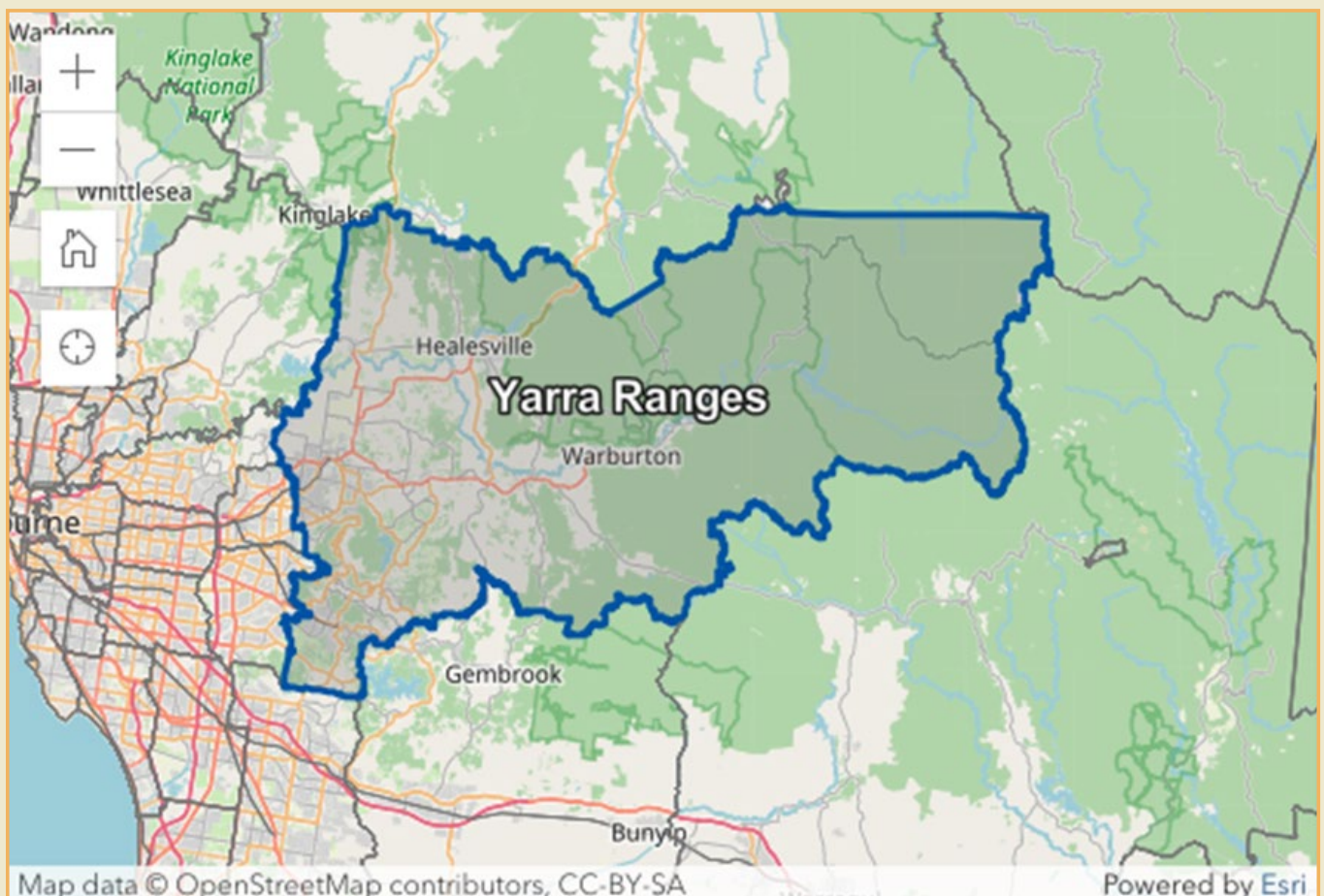
DISASTER CONTEXT

Socio-demographics from  
a gendered perspective





# Yarra Ranges



Map of the Yarra Ranges Local Government Area (LGA).

Source: <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA27450>





## INTRODUCTION

The Local Government Area (LGA) of Yarra Ranges extends east of metropolitan Melbourne into regional Victoria and includes much of the Yarra Ranges National Park and the Dandenong Ranges National Park. The area is mountainous, heavily forested, and bisected by the Yarra River. This topography makes the area susceptible to disasters including bushfires, flooding, heavy storms causing trees and power lines to fall, and landslides.

Despite this, there has been very little assessment of the social impact of such disasters on the Yarra Ranges. A small body of research did follow the 1997 Dandenong Ranges bushfires, however. Although now dated, this research shed some light on the nature of community resilience in the aftermath of disaster. The response to the bushfire was characterised by spontaneous and long-term voluntary support that was credited to the “community spirit” of the Dandenongs, where more than 150 volunteers continued their support for a full year after the fires.<sup>1</sup>

The Dandenong Ranges bushfires have also been used as a case study in research that attempts to understand the nature of personal and community ‘vulnerability’ and ‘resilience’ to disasters and emergencies. These studies found that “all vulnerability and resilience is local”, specific to local social and economic circumstances as well as local values and preferences.<sup>2</sup> While researchers deemed trauma to not be an inevitable outcome of bushfire-like disasters, a wide range of psychosocial responses should be expected depending on these local contexts, and an equal range of services must therefore be made available to affected communities.<sup>3</sup>

One study, which focused on how the local government in the Yarra Ranges conducted community consultation regarding significant discovered risk of landslides in the area, showed how property owners could be engaged in disaster preparedness without instilling panic, and evidenced effort on the part of the local government to achieve this kind of community resilience.<sup>4</sup> This may be reflected in more recent research which has identified the Dandenong Ranges (and, by extension, the Yarra Ranges LGA) as one of the only places in Australia where regional strategic planning has taken place to prepare for climate change mitigation.<sup>5</sup>

Since 1997, bushfires have continued to affect the Yarra Ranges, which was one of many regions impacted by the Black Saturday bushfires in 2009. Landslides have also continued periodically (see the graphic insert overleaf for a full history of disasters in the LGA). However, in recent years it has been severe storms that have posed the greatest threat to the area, and the increase in intensity and impact of these storms has been attributed to climate change. Normally, high storm winds in Victoria come from north or north-west, and occasionally the south-west. During the most recent storm in the Dandenong Ranges, highly unusually, the winds came from the south-east. Over time, trees develop root systems to withstand winds that come from typical directions; when the wind comes from an atypical direction, trees are more likely to fall, endangering lives and properties underneath. Melbourne University arboriculture expert Dr Greg Moore has associated these more unpredictable wind directions with climate change.<sup>6</sup>

1 Wositzky, H. (1998). Out of the ashes, a community responds: The Dandenong Ranges bushfires, January 1997. *The Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 13(2), 17-20.

2 Buckle, P., Marsh, G., & Smale, S. (2001). Assessment of personal and community resilience and vulnerability. *Report: EMA Project, 15*, 2000.

3 Buckle, P., Brown, J., & Dickinson, M. (1998). Supporting the Entire Person: A Comprehensive Approach to Supporting People Affected by Emergencies and Disaster. *The Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 13(2), 35-38.

4 Ritchie, L., & Hunt, G. (2000). Landslips-a moving story (a municipality's perspective). *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, The, 15(4), 28-32.

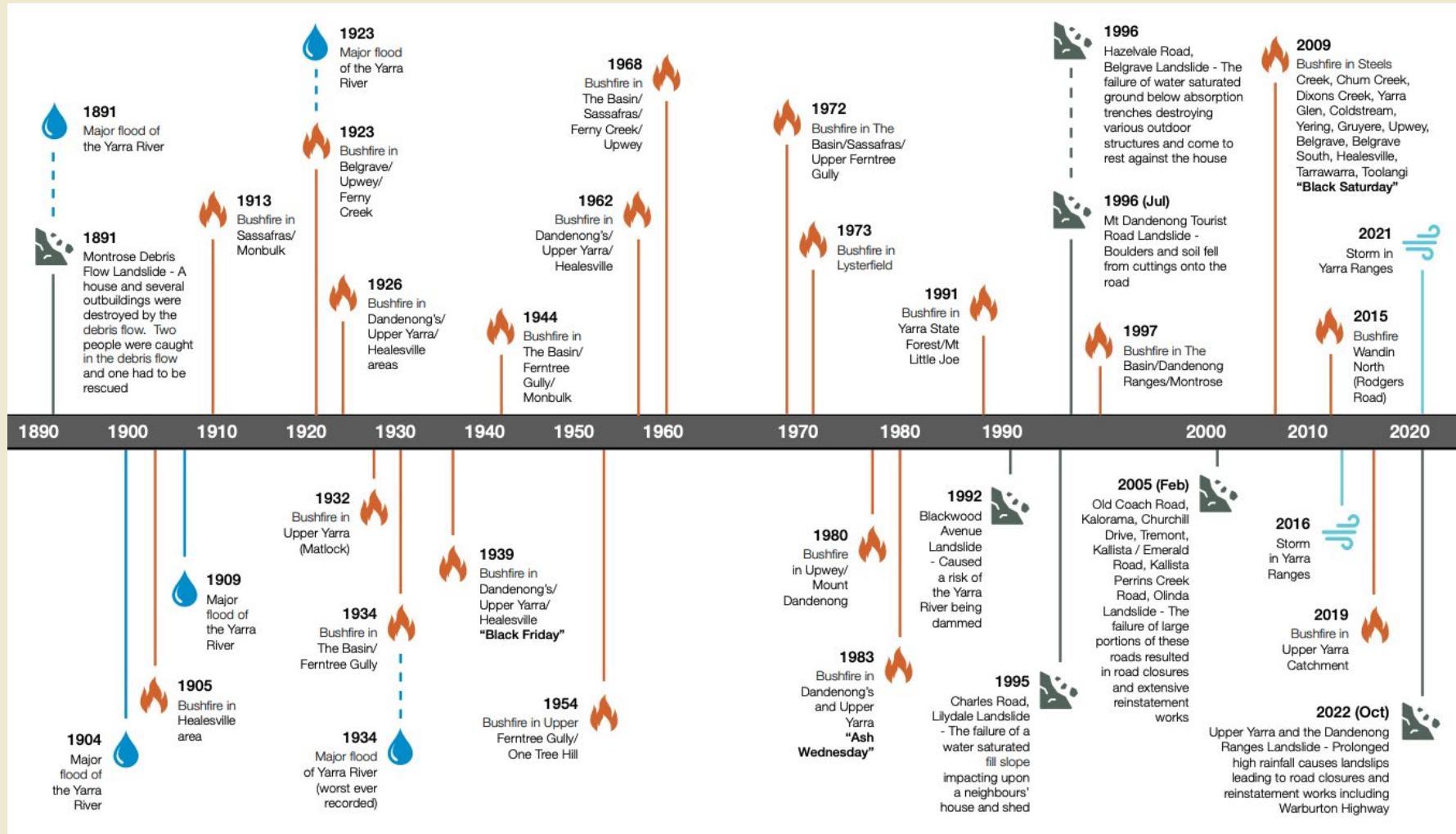
5 Buxton, M., Haynes, R., Mercer, D., & Butt, A. (2011). Vulnerability to bushfire risk at Melbourne's urban fringe: the failure of regulatory land use planning. *Geographical Research*, 49(1), 1-12.

6 <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/like-hell-on-earth-the-night-the-trees-fell-from-the-sky-20210618-p5823c.html>



### DISASTER BACKGROUND

Kind of disasters affecting this region/town: Bushfire, flood, storm, landslide



Source: Yarra Ranges Municipal Emergency Management Plan, 2023-26, pp. 18-19.

Available at: <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Emergency-Management-Portal/Municipal-Emergency-Management-Plan>





Recent major disaster: Yarra Ranges storm, June 2021

- Fatalities: 2 in Victoria connected to larger storm and flooding; 0 in the Yarra Ranges<sup>7</sup>
- People displaced:
  - o 76 homes were deemed uninhabitable immediately after the storm<sup>8</sup>
- Properties and infrastructure affected:<sup>9</sup>
  - o More than 1,000 homes and business extensively impacted by storm debris<sup>10</sup>
  - o Almost 5,000 properties impacted by flood<sup>11</sup>
  - o More than 3,000 homes without power and internet for more than month<sup>12</sup>
  - o Eight schools were closed in the Dandenong Ranges<sup>13</sup>
  - o At 23 June 2021, it was reported that \$523,680 had been paid in emergency relief payments to 449 recipients so far<sup>14</sup>
  - o Significant impacts to tourism businesses in the Dandenong Ranges, where more than 600 kilometres of roads had to be cleared<sup>15</sup>
  - o 34 communities lost NBN/internet service and were unable to call 000 for assistance.<sup>16</sup> The telecommunications outage caused serious problems for residents and CFA/SES volunteers during the storm.<sup>17</sup> A year after the storm, telecommunications connectivity remained unstable in the Dandenong Ranges and the local council was lobbying the state and federal governments and telecommunication providers for action on the issue. Residents reported to council that both the telecommunications and electricity network have deteriorated following the storms, with the frequency of power outages increasing by 41 per cent and internet outages increasing by 31 per cent<sup>18</sup>
- Insurance statistics:<sup>19</sup>
  - o A year after the storm, the ABC reported that the storm had led to 33,000 insurance claims, incurring costs of \$289 million, and of which 3,700 were still ongoing
  - o The ABC also reported that the Australian Financial Complaints Authority has received 89 complaints in relation to the response of insurance companies to claims relating to the storm, and had ordered a total of \$274,000 be paid out

7 [https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/media/8975/aidr\\_major-incidents-report\\_2020-21.pdf](https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/media/8975/aidr_major-incidents-report_2020-21.pdf), pp. 38-39.

8 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-06-07/dandenong-ranges-melbourne-storm-recovery-homes-power-reception/101128940>

9 <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Council/Advocacy/State-Election-2022/Storm-Recovery>

10 <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Council/Advocacy/State-Election-2022/Storm-Recovery>

11 <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Council/Advocacy/State-Election-2022/Storm-Recovery>

12 <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Council/Advocacy/State-Election-2022/Storm-Recovery>

13 [https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/media/8975/aidr\\_major-incidents-report\\_2020-21.pdf](https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/media/8975/aidr_major-incidents-report_2020-21.pdf), pp. 38-39.

14 <https://www.theage.com.au/politics/victoria/massive-financial-hit-dandenong-ranges-businesses-smashed-by-storms-20210623-p583lc.html>

15 <https://www.theage.com.au/politics/victoria/massive-financial-hit-dandenong-ranges-businesses-smashed-by-storms-20210623-p583lc.html>

16 <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Council/Advocacy/State-Election-2022/Storm-Recovery>

17 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-06-07/dandenong-ranges-melbourne-storm-recovery-homes-power-reception/101128940>

18 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-06-07/dandenong-ranges-melbourne-storm-recovery-homes-power-reception/101128940>

19 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-06-07/dandenong-ranges-melbourne-storm-recovery-homes-power-reception/101128940>



- Other notable facts:
  - o The Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission recommended that powerlines be put underground in the areas like the Dandenong Ranges where there is fire and storm risk as well as large trees and dense populations. However, it is estimated that this would cost \$40 billion, and there has been little political appetite to implement this recommendation<sup>20</sup>

## ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE

- Yarra Ranges LGA is ranked:<sup>21</sup>
  - o 473 out of 544 LGAs in Australia (where 544 is most advantaged)
  - o in the 9th decile (out of 10, where 10 is most advantaged)
  - o In the 87th percentile (out of 100, where 100 is most advantaged)

## HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND HOMELESSNESS

- Housing affordability in the Yarra Ranges:
  - o Median rent: \$380/week (Vic: \$370/week | Aus: \$375)<sup>22</sup>
  - o Renter households where rent payments are greater than 30% of household income: 33.9% (Vic: 30.9% | Aus: 32.3%)<sup>23</sup>
  - o According to the Rental Affordability Index, for households on the median income in the Yarra Ranges (approx. \$100,000), rental affordability in most postcodes is deemed 'Acceptable.' Only postcode 3116, representing the suburb of Chirnside Park, is deemed 'Moderately unaffordable'.<sup>24</sup>
- Homelessness<sup>25</sup>
  - o In 2021-22, 2,175 people accessed Specialist Homelessness Services in the LGA of Yarra Ranges, equating to 1.4% of the population, or 139 per 10,000
  - o 790 of these were men (102 per 10,000) and 1,385 were women (176 per 10,000)

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/like-hell-on-earth-the-night-the-trees-fell-from-the-sky-20210618-p5823c.html>

<sup>21</sup> This ranking comes from the ABS Local Government Area Indexes, available here: <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/2033.0.55.0012016?OpenDocument>

<sup>22</sup> <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA27450>

<sup>23</sup> <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA27450>

<sup>24</sup> <https://sgsep.com.au/projects/rental-affordability-index>

<sup>25</sup> Data cube: SHSC geographical location of client—LGA. Available here: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/shsc-data-cubes/contents/specialist-homelessness-services-collection-shsc-data-cubes>



## MENTAL HEALTH

- Mental health conditions (any): Yarra Ranges LGA: 10.3% | VIC: 8.8% | Aus: 8.8%<sup>26</sup>
- Suicide rates in Statistical Area 4 (SA4) Melbourne - Outer East, in which the Yarra Ranges LGA sits (2017-2021):<sup>27</sup>

Area	SA4 Melbourne - Outer East	VIC	Australia
Age-standardised suicide rate per 100,000 population	11.2	10.5	12.6
Rate for males	17.2	16	19.2
Rate for females	5.5	5.3	6.1



## GENDER EQUALITY

- Lone parent status
  - 14.7% one-parent families (VIC: 15.2%), of which 78.3% are female-led (VIC: 80.9)<sup>28</sup>
- Mothers' Index<sup>29</sup>
  - Yarra Ranges LGA ranked 21 out of 79 LGAs, where 1 is the best place in Victoria for a mother to live
- Unpaid work<sup>30</sup>
  - Unpaid domestic work: 41,286 women did more than 5 hours of unpaid domestic work per week, compared to 27,602 men
  - Unpaid care: 11,441 women provided unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, health condition, or due to old age, compared to 7,269 men
  - Unpaid childcare: 22,030 women provided unpaid childcare, compared to 16,587 men

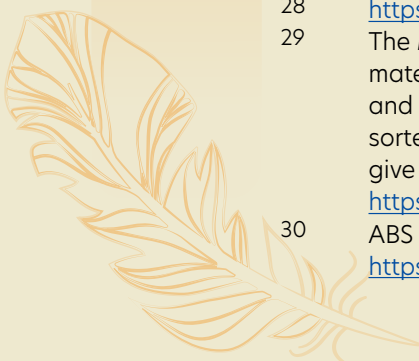
<sup>26</sup> <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA27450>

<sup>27</sup> All suicide rate stats come from Data table: 2021 National Mortality Database - Suicide, Table NMD S10, available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/data-downloads>

<sup>28</sup> <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA27450>

<sup>29</sup> The Mothers' Index consists of composite scores from five different indicators relating to maternal wellbeing (maternal health, children's wellbeing, educational status, economic status and socio-economic disadvantage), with each indicator given equal weighting. Scores were sorted from low to high and ranked from 1 to 79 (1 being the best place for a mother to live) to give the overall Mothers Index rank for each LGA in Victoria. Full table available at <https://apo.org.au/node/63692>, p. 31.

<sup>30</sup> ABS General Community Profile for LGA Yarra Ranges, Tables G24-G26, available here: <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/community-profiles/2021/LGA27450>





- Violence against women
  - o Breaching a family violence order was the most common offence (1,158 recorded) in the LGA of Yarra Ranges in 2022<sup>31</sup>
  - o In 2022 there were 2,018 male alleged offenders and 567 female alleged offenders recorded; by contrast, there were 1,392 female victim reports and 1,265 male victim reports<sup>32</sup>
  - o Total family violence incidents were up 13.7% in 2022 in the Yarra Ranges from the previous year<sup>33</sup>



## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

	LGA Yarra Ranges <sup>34</sup>	Victoria	Australia
Median age	40	38	38
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	1.1%	1%	3.2%
Both parents born in Australia	57.4%	42.4%	45.9%
Non-English language used in household	10.4%	30.2%	24.8%
With university education	21.4%	29.2%	26.3%
Year 10 as highest qualification	8.7%	7.3%	10.0%
Labour force participation	65.2%	62.4%	61.1%
Working part-time	34%	32.3%	31.2%
Unemployment	3.6%	5%	5.1%
Median weekly personal income	\$808	\$803	\$805
Median weekly household income	\$1881	\$1759	\$1746
Rate of people on Disability Support Pension per 10,000 population (measured at LGA and state level) <sup>35</sup>	272	281	296

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/crime-statistics/latest-crime-data-by-area>, Offences Recorded Dashboard

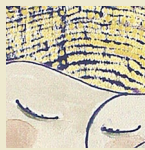
<sup>32</sup> <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/crime-statistics/latest-crime-data-by-area>, Alleged Offender Incidents Dashboard, Victim Reports Dashboard

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/crime-statistics/latest-crime-data-by-area>, Family Violence Dashboard

<sup>34</sup> <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA27450>

<sup>35</sup> <https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/dss-payment-demographic-data>; calculated by dividing number of DSP recipients listed in March 2021 spreadsheet by population of LGA (<https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA27450>) and state (<https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/2>), multiplied by 10,000





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