

## Census data informs targeted delivery of health services in regional and remote communities

For the Queensland Department of Health, accurate population data from the Census is critical to promoting and protecting the health of local communities.

In Central Queensland, investigating and mitigating disease outbreaks, and maintaining and improving immunisation coverage, are two important aspects for the Public Health Unit.

It uses Census data to understand the population, including the proportion of people who identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, South Sea Islander, or are from migrant backgrounds.

It also uses Census data to calculate how many people have a disability or are in groups known to have poorer than average health. It also analyses disease incidences and prevalence rates to inform preventative action.

Public Health Physician Dr Gulam Khandaker said this information enables Department of Health to better target its services and estimate resources required to deliver them.

“We rely heavily on Census data to estimate the number of people in the local catchment with certain demographic characteristics, such as income, eligibility for Family Tax Benefit A, who has a disability, and who identifies as Indigenous,” Dr Khandaker said.

“This supports high-quality, timely, efficient and effective health service delivery.

“For example, it helps us identify the number of children eligible for childhood vaccinations and then work out who is missing out.”

Dr Khandaker said this is particularly important in local Indigenous communities such as the Woorabinda Shire, about a two-hour drive inland from Rockhampton. Data from the 2016 Census shows Woorabinda has a population of approximately 962 and knowing this helps health authorities understand what services are needed there.

“We can estimate how many people in Woorabinda are eligible for a vaccination, such as the flu vaccine, and then take the appropriate number of vaccine vials out there to conduct a vaccination clinic.

“This has been very effective in cutting the rates of communicable diseases like mumps.

“It’s crucial that everybody participates in the Census so that health authorities have the most-up-to-date data for their work to keep the community healthy.”