



# *Mental Wellness, Mental Illness, and Diversity in Help-Seeking*

Mental Health and Drug & Alcohol Nurses' Forum Program  
Cultural Barriers: Accessing Mental Health and Drug & Alcohol Services

NSW Nurses and Midwives Association

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# Everyone Has Culture

*Culture is a general concept reflecting the thoughts, values, traditions, and actions shared by a group of people brought together by some commonality, such as ethnicity, language, or place of residence.*

*Culture guides our view of society's rules, influences our values, and creates our expectations.*





- Everyone has culture(s). People may be part of several cultures, such as being from an ethnic group and a member of a rural or seaside community
- Culture is dynamic – it is always evolving
- These beliefs and experiences guide how people perceive and describe illness, and also how they participate in treatment



# How culturally diverse is NSW?

- 260+ languages spoken (20% of population)
- In some LGAs between 50 - 67% speak another language
- 275 classifications for people's ancestries
- Half a million annual international student enrolments.
- Annual resettlement of 22,987 refugees and sponsored humanitarian entrants.
- Top 10 COB: England, China, New Zealand, Viet Nam, Philippines, India, Lebanon, Italy, Hong Kong, Greece.
- Top 10 languages: Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Italian, Greek, Vietnamese, Spanish, Hindi, Korean, Tagalog.



# The Changing Face of NSW

## 2006:

- 23.8% of population born overseas (16.8% from NMESC): 7.9% ↑
- Top 5 COB (NMESC): China, Vietnam, Italy, Lebanon, Philippines
- Top 5 languages: Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), Italian, Greek, Vietnamese
- Fastest growing languages: Mandarin, Persian, Hindi, Thai and Tamil

## 2011:

- 27.3% of population born overseas (20.9% from NMESC): 4.1% ↑
- Top 5 COB (NMESC): China, India, Vietnam, Philippines, Lebanon
- Top 5 languages: Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), Chinese (Cantonese), Vietnamese, Greek
- Fastest growing languages: Mandarin, Arabic, Hindi, Vietnamese, Punjabi



# Source Countries of NES immigrants in New South Wales

- China: 156,034
- India: 95,386
- Philippines: 71,840
- Vietnam: 70,387
- Lebanon: 56,295
- Italy: 51,623

( 2011 Census )



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# Top languages spoken in NSW

- Arabic 184,252
- Mandarin 139,825
- Cantonese 136,374
- Vietnamese 87,501
- Greek 86,601
- Italian 83,174
- Spanish 55,627
- Hindi 52,782

( 2011 Census )



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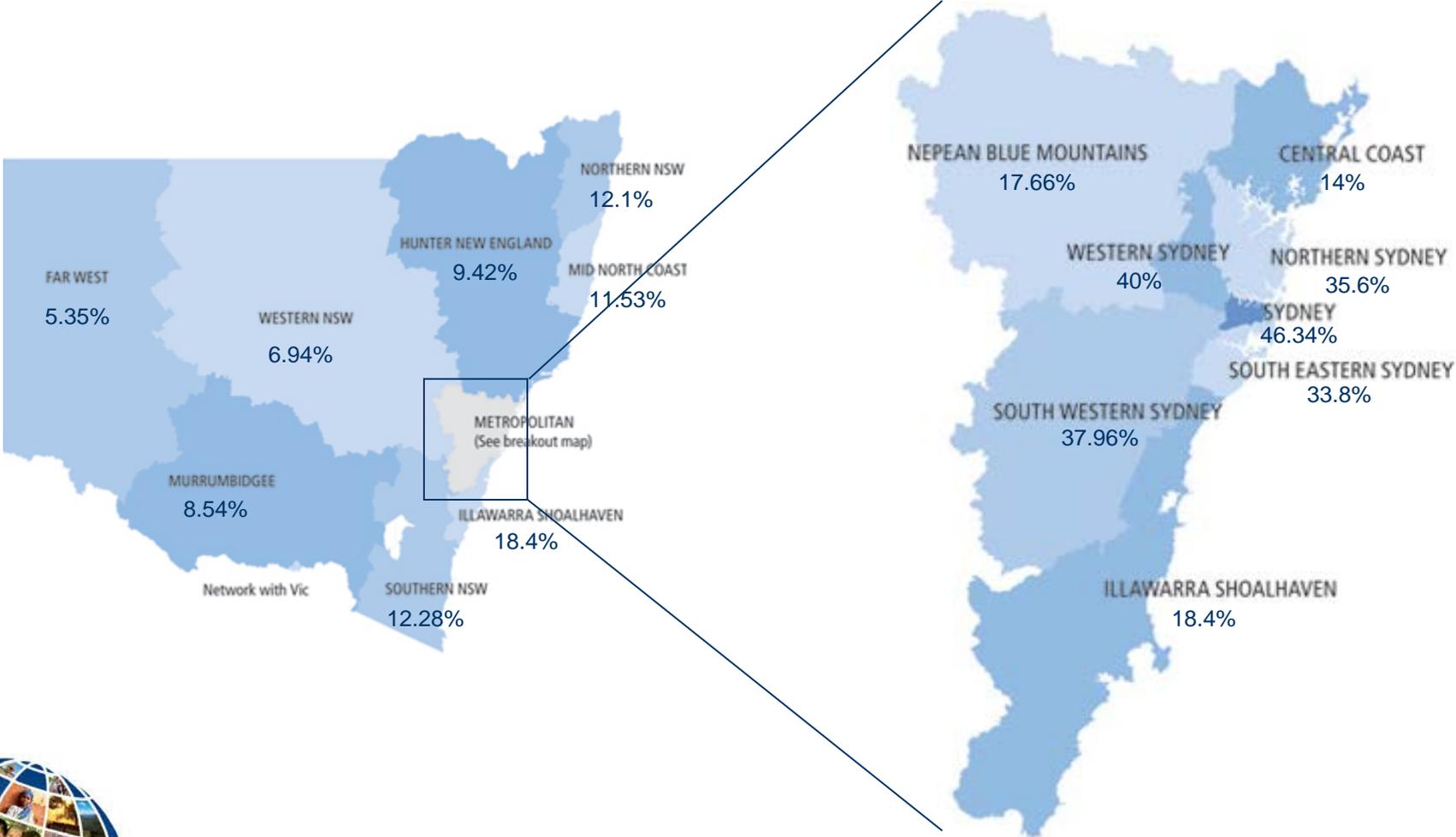
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# % of People born outside of Australia by Local Health District



- Research conducted by the TMHC in NSW, and in other countries, reveals that signs and symptoms of “something wrong” in one community are almost universally recognised as signs and symptoms of “something wrong” in most communities.
- The difference appears in what the community thinks is “wrong”, which guides where help [or treatment] is sought.
- Where do you find the right “help”?





# Cultural variations in help-seeking

- Emotional / psychological problem or something else?
- Who do we consult?
- What do we expect? Immediate or long term relief?
- Seeking consensus or ‘doctor shopping’?
- Chronic illness or being ‘cured’?



- The collaborative, consumer-centred approach may be puzzling to members of many communities.
- Recognise differences in clients' expectations. Depending upon past experiences with health and welfare services, consumers will have different expectations of you and your service.
- Explain who you are, what your role is and what you can offer (this may need to be repeated or explained several times).
- Confidentiality is not understood in many communities. This may need to be explained in several ways and may not be readily appreciated.





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