

## 6. ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MOTHERS AND BABIES

### Reporting of Aboriginality

Maternal Aboriginality is under-reported on the MDC. One method of assessing the extent of under-reporting and monitoring changes over time is to compare the reporting of maternal Aboriginality to the MDC with reporting of maternal Aboriginality on birth registrations held by the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Using capture–recapture methods, an estimate of the total number of babies born to Aboriginal mothers was obtained and compared with the number of babies born to Aboriginal mothers as reported to the MDC. The method used here is described in Chapter 3 (page 13).

The percentage of births to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers reported to the MDC ranged from 65 to 70 per cent between 2000 and 2003. Reporting varied markedly between area health services, ranging from 37.5 per cent in the Sydney South West Area to 89.4 per cent in the Greater Western Area in 2003 (Table 34, Figure 2).

Under-reporting of Aboriginality on the MDC means that numbers of births presented in this chapter should be interpreted with caution. The total number of babies born to Aboriginal mothers in 2003 is estimated to be 3,282, about one and a half times higher than the number reported to the MDC.

**TABLE 34**

**BIRTHS TO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MOTHERS BY SOURCE OF BIRTH REPORT, YEAR OF BIRTH AND HEALTH AREA OF HOSPITAL, NSW 2000–2003\***

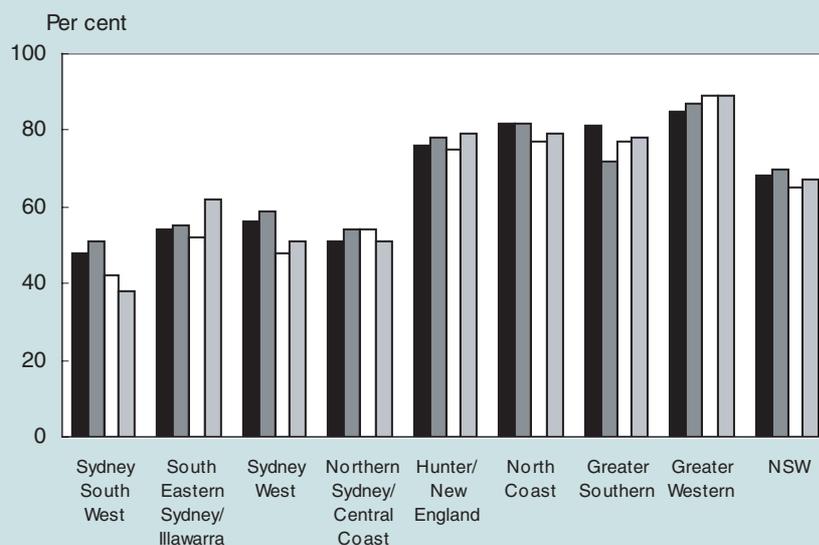
Year– Area health service of hospital	MDC births	RBDM births	Births reported to both MDC–RBDM	Total estimated Aboriginal births	Estimated Aboriginal births reported to MDC %	95% confidence interval of estimated births reported
	No.	No.	No.	No.	%	
<b>2000</b>						
Sydney South West	185	287	137	387	47.8	42.8–52.8
South Eastern Sydney & Illawarra	169	206	112	310	54.4	48.9–60.0
Sydney West	224	279	155	403	55.6	50.8–60.5
Northern Sydney & Central Coast	84	94	48	164	51.3	43.6–58.9
Hunter & New England	481	433	329	633	76.0	72.7–79.3
North Coast	335	217	177	411	81.6	77.9–85.4
Greater Southern	195	145	118	239	81.4	76.5–86.4
Greater Western	449	330	279	531	84.6	81.5–87.6
NSW	2122	1991	1355	3118	68.1	66.4–69.7
<b>2001</b>						
Sydney South West	192	272	138	378	50.8	45.7–55.8
South Eastern Sydney & Illawarra	156	182	100	283	55.0	49.2–60.8
Sydney West	223	253	148	381	58.6	53.6–63.5
Northern Sydney & Central Coast	75	97	52	140	53.8	45.5–62.0
Hunter & New England	486	434	339	622	78.1	74.9–81.4
North Coast	336	197	162	408	82.3	78.6–86.0
Greater Southern	178	140	101	246	72.2	66.6–77.8
Greater Western	490	321	278	566	86.6	83.8–89.4
NSW	2136	1896	1318	3072	69.5	67.9–71.1
<b>2002</b>						
Sydney South West	166	269	113	395	42.1	37.2–46.9
South Eastern Sydney & Illawarra	179	203	106	342	52.3	47.0–57.6
Sydney West	224	299	142	471	47.6	43.0–52.1
Northern Sydney & Central Coast	89	105	56	166	53.5	45.9–61.1
Hunter & New England	534	421	317	709	75.3	72.1–78.5
North Coast	336	197	152	435	77.2	73.3–81.2
Greater Southern	165	117	90	214	77.0	71.4–82.6
Greater Western	489	303	268	553	88.5	85.8–91.1
NSW	2182	1914	1244	3357	65.0	63.4–66.6
<b>2003</b>						
Sydney South West	174	275	103	463	37.5	33.1–42.0
South Eastern Sydney & Illawarra	180	180	111	292	61.7	56.2–67.3
Sydney West	242	276	140	476	50.8	46.3–55.3
Northern Sydney & Central Coast	82	110	56	161	51.0	43.3–58.8
Hunter & New England	535	426	336	678	78.9	75.8–82.0
North Coast	319	181	142	406	78.5	74.5–82.5
Greater Southern	176	115	89	227	77.5	72.1–82.9
Greater Western	482	291	260	539	89.4	86.8–92.0
NSW	2190	1854	1237	3282	66.7	65.1–68.3

Source: Linked NSW Midwives Data Collection and Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages birth registration data.

\* Births where the hospital of birth was not reported, or where the birth occurred other than in hospital, were excluded. Information for 2000 to 2002 for RBDM births have been updated since previous reports to take into account late registrations of births.

**FIGURE 2**

**LEVEL OF REPORTING OF ABORIGINALITY TO THE NSW MIDWIVES DATA COLLECTION BY YEAR OF BIRTH AND HEALTH AREA OF HOSPITAL, NSW 2000–2003#**



Source: Linked NSW Midwives Data Collection and Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages birth registration data.  
# Births where the hospital of birth was not reported or where the birth occurred other than in hospital were excluded.

Information on paternal Aboriginality is not collected by the MDC, but is reported to the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Of the 85,946 births registered for residents of NSW in 2003, 3,253 (3.8 per cent) were reported to have an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mother or father (Table 35). For 1,177 babies, the mother was reported to be non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and the father was reported to be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. There are therefore a substantial number of babies with non-indigenous mothers and indigenous fathers who are not represented in the numbers reported in this chapter.

**TABLE 35**

**BIRTH REGISTRATIONS BY MATERNAL AND PATERNAL INDIGENOUS STATUS, NSW 2003#**

Mother#	Father	No.	%
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	678	0.8
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	Non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1398	1.6
Non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1177	1.4
Non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	Non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	82693	96.2
TOTAL	TOTAL	85946	100.0

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics birth registration data (HOIST), Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.  
# Births registered among NSW residents. Births where indigenous status was not stated were classified as non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

## Trends in births

In 2004, 2,184 babies were born to Aboriginal mothers, 48 babies were born to Torres Strait Islander mothers and 101 babies were born to mothers of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background (Table 36).

**TABLE 36**

**ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MOTHERS AND BABIES BY INDIGENOUS STATUS, NSW 2000–2004#**

Plurality	2000		2001		Year 2002		2003		2004	
	No.	%								
<b>Pregnancies</b>										
Aboriginal	1990	94.5	1988	94.2	2041	94.7	2014	93.2	2161	93.6
Torres Strait Islander	25	1.2	40	1.9	25	1.2	35	1.6	48	2.1
Both Aboriginal and TSI	90	4.3	82	3.9	89	4.1	112	5.2	99	4.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2105</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2110</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2155</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2161</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2308</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Births</b>										
Aboriginal	2006	94.5	2014	94.2	2069	94.8	2039	93.1	2184	93.6
Torres Strait Islander	25	1.2	42	2.0	25	1.1	37	1.7	48	2.1
Both Aboriginal and TSI	91	4.3	82	3.8	89	4.1	114	5.2	101	4.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2122</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2138</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2183</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2190</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2333</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: NSW Midwives Data Collection (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.

# Due to under-reporting of Aboriginality to the MDC, it is likely that the true numbers are about one and a half times higher than shown.

## Plurality

Between 2000 and 2004, the reported number of babies born to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers increased from 2,122 to 2,333 (Table 37), representing 2.4 and 2.7 per cent respectively of all babies born in NSW. Multiple pregnancies (twins, triplets etc.) were reported for about one per cent of mothers.

**TABLE 37**

**ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MOTHERS AND BABIES BY PLURALITY, NSW 2000–2004#**

Plurality	2000		2001		Year 2002		2003		2004	
	No.	%								
<b>Pregnancies</b>										
Singleton	2089	99.2	2082	98.7	2127	98.7	2134	98.8	2283	98.9
Twins	16	0.8	28	1.3	28	1.3	26	1.2	25	1.1
Triplets	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.0	0	0.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2105</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2110</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2155</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2161</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2308</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Births</b>										
Singleton	2089	98.4	2082	97.4	2127	97.4	2134	97.4	2283	97.9
Twins	33	1.6	56	2.6	56	2.6	53	2.4	50	2.1
Triplets	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	0.1	0	0.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2122</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2138</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2183</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2190</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2333</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: NSW Midwives Data Collection (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.

# Due to under-reporting of Aboriginality to the MDC, it is likely that the true numbers are about one and a half times higher than shown.

## Previous pregnancies

In 2004, one-third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers gave birth for the first time (Table 38). About 58 per cent of mothers reported between one and 4 previous births and 9.6 per cent of mothers had given birth to 5 or more babies. This pattern has not changed substantially since 2000.

**TABLE 38**

**NUMBER OF PREVIOUS PREGNANCIES AMONG ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MOTHERS, NSW 2000–2004#**

No. previous pregnancies (>20 weeks)	2000		2001		Year 2002		2003		2004	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0	645	30.6	634	30.0	664	30.8	668	30.9	759	32.9
1–4	1285	61.0	1309	62.0	1302	60.4	1316	60.9	1327	57.5
5+	174	8.3	164	7.8	183	8.5	177	8.2	221	9.6
Not stated	1	0.0	3	0.1	6	0.3	0	0.0	1	0.0
TOTAL	2105	100.0	2110	100.0	2155	100.0	2161	100.0	2308	100.0

Source: NSW Midwives Data Collection (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.

# Due to under-reporting of Aboriginality to the MDC, it is likely that the true numbers are about one and a half times higher than shown.

## Maternal age

The reported number of babies born to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers has increased at all ages. About one in 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers were teenagers in 2004.

Following statewide trends, the number of mothers giving birth at 35 years of age or more has increased over the last 5 years. The proportion of mothers aged 35-plus years increased from 7.4 per cent in 2000 to 9.6 per cent in 2004 (Table 39).

**TABLE 39**

**AGE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MOTHERS, NSW 2000–2004#**

Maternal age (years)	2000		2001		Year 2002		2003		2004	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
12–19	459	21.8	439	20.8	481	22.3	455	21.1	493	21.4
20–34	1491	70.8	1515	71.8	1524	70.7	1553	71.9	1594	69.1
35+	155	7.4	152	7.2	146	6.8	153	7.1	221	9.6
Not stated	0	0.0	4	0.2	4	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL	2105	100.0	2110	100.0	2155	100.0	2161	100.0	2308	100.0

Source: NSW Midwives Data Collection (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.

# Due to under-reporting of Aboriginality to the MDC, it is likely that the true numbers are about one and a half times higher than shown.

## Health area of residence

The reported number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers who gave birth in 2004 ranged from 93 in the Northern Sydney and Central Coast Area to 508 in the Greater Western Area (Table 40). The proportion of mothers who were teenagers varied from 11.8 per cent in the Northern Sydney and Central Coast Area to 26.9 per cent in the Sydney West Area (Table 41).

**TABLE 40**

**HEALTH AREA OF RESIDENCE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MOTHERS, NSW 2000–2004<sup>#</sup>**

Health Area	2000		2001		Year 2002		2003		2004	
	No.	%								
Sydney South West	168	8.0	174	8.2	165	7.7	160	7.4	164	7.1
South Eastern Sydney & Illawarra	173	8.2	153	7.3	173	8.0	178	8.2	221	9.6
Sydney West	203	9.6	213	10.1	204	9.5	237	11.0	238	10.3
Northern Sydney & Central Coast	81	3.8	74	3.5	85	3.9	82	3.8	93	4.0
Hunter & New England	474	22.5	477	22.6	513	23.8	514	23.8	508	22.0
North Coast	330	15.7	329	15.6	327	15.2	304	14.1	390	16.9
Greater Southern	176	8.4	162	7.7	158	7.3	170	7.9	173	7.5
Greater Western	484	23.0	511	24.2	517	24.0	493	22.8	505	21.9
Other–Not stated	16	0.8	17	0.8	13	0.6	23	1.1	16	0.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2105</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2110</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2155</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2161</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2308</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: NSW Midwives Data Collection (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.

<sup>#</sup> Due to under-reporting of Aboriginality to the MDC, it is likely that the true numbers for the total are about one and a half times higher than shown. The level of under-reporting varies between area health services (Table 34).

**TABLE 41**

**HEALTH AREA OF RESIDENCE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MOTHERS BY AGE, NSW 2004<sup>#</sup>**

Health Area	Maternal age (years)				TOTAL	
	Less than 20		20+			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sydney South West	33	20.1	131	79.9	164	100.0
South Eastern Sydney & Illawarra	38	17.2	183	82.8	221	100.0
Sydney West	64	26.9	174	73.1	238	100.0
Northern Sydney & Central Coast	11	11.8	82	88.2	93	100.0
Hunter & New England	115	22.6	393	77.4	508	100.0
North Coast	70	17.9	320	82.1	390	100.0
Greater Southern	37	21.4	136	78.6	173	100.0
Greater Western	120	23.8	385	76.2	505	100.0
Other–Not stated	5	31.3	11	68.8	16	100.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>21.4</b>	<b>1815</b>	<b>78.6</b>	<b>2308</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: NSW Midwives Data Collection (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.

<sup>#</sup> Due to under-reporting of Aboriginality to the MDC, it is likely that the true numbers for the total are about one and a half times higher than shown. The level of under-reporting varies between area health services (Table 34).

## Booking status

In 2004, 89.9 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers were booked into the hospital of birth, a slight rise from 87.5 per cent in 2000. In 2004, 97.5 per cent of non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers were booked into the hospital of birth.

## Duration of pregnancy at first antenatal visit

Between 2000 and 2004, the proportion of mothers who commenced antenatal care at less than 20 weeks gestation rose from 67.6 to 70.1 per cent (Table 42). This compares with 88.0 per cent of non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers who commenced antenatal care at less than 20 weeks gestation in 2004.

In 2004, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers who commenced antenatal care at less than 20 weeks gestation varied from 58.0 per cent in the Sydney West Area to 81.7 per cent in the Northern Sydney & Central Coast Area (Table 43).

**TABLE 42**

### DURATION OF PREGNANCY AT FIRST ANTENATAL VISIT AMONG ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MOTHERS, NSW 2000–2004<sup>#</sup>

Duration of pregnancy at first antenatal visit (weeks)	2000		2001		Year 2002		2003		2004	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0–19	1422	67.6	1365	64.7	1448	67.2	1526	70.6	1618	70.1
20–plus	546	25.9	615	29.1	560	26.0	547	25.3	573	24.8
Not stated	137	6.5	130	6.2	147	6.8	88	4.1	117	5.1
TOTAL	2105	100.0	2110	100.0	2155	100.0	2161	100.0	2308	100.0

Source: NSW Midwives Data Collection (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.

<sup>#</sup> Due to under-reporting of Aboriginality to the MDC, it is likely that the true numbers are about one and a half times higher than shown.

**TABLE 43**

### DURATION OF PREGNANCY AT FIRST ANTENATAL VISIT AMONG ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MOTHERS BY HEALTH AREA OF RESIDENCE, NSW 2004<sup>#</sup>

Health Area	Duration of pregnancy at first antenatal visit (weeks)						TOTAL	
	0–19		20+		Not stated		No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sydney South West	97	59.1	61	37.2	6	3.7	164	100.0
South Eastern Sydney & Illawarra	172	77.8	46	20.8	3	1.4	221	100.0
Sydney West	138	58.0	90	37.8	10	4.2	238	100.0
Northern Sydney & Central Coast	76	81.7	15	16.1	2	2.2	93	100.0
Hunter & New England	345	67.9	125	24.6	38	7.5	508	100.0
North Coast	291	74.6	73	18.7	26	6.7	390	100.0
Greater Southern	129	74.6	39	22.5	5	2.9	173	100.0
Greater Western	356	70.5	122	24.2	27	5.3	505	100.0
Other–Not stated	14	87.5	2	12.5	0	0.0	16	100.0
TOTAL	1618	70.1	573	24.8	117	5.1	2308	100.0

Source: NSW Midwives Data Collection (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.

<sup>#</sup> Due to under-reporting of Aboriginality to the MDC, it is likely that the true numbers for the total are about one and a half times higher than shown. The level of under-reporting varies between area health services (Table 34).

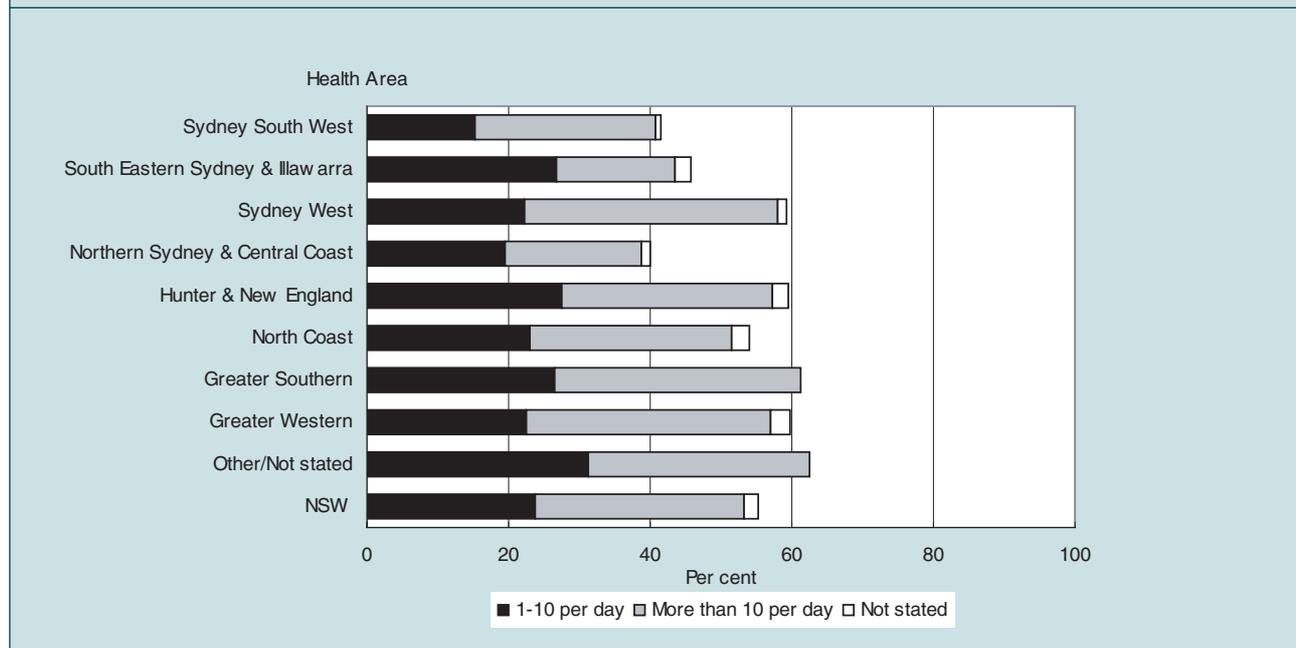
## Smoking in pregnancy

In 2004, 56.6 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers reported smoking at some time during pregnancy, compared to 55.9 per cent in 2000. This compares with 13.6 per cent of non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers who reported smoking at some time during pregnancy in 2004.

Smoking in the second half of pregnancy poses the greatest risk to the health of both mother and baby. In 2004, 55.2 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers reported smoking in the second half of pregnancy. This percentage varied from 39.9 per cent in the Northern Sydney and Central Coast Area to 61.3 per cent in the Greater Southern Area (Figure 3).

**FIGURE 3**

### SMOKING IN THE SECOND HALF OF PREGNANCY AMONG ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MOTHERS BY AMOUNT SMOKED AND HEALTH AREA OF RESIDENCE, NSW 2004<sup>#</sup>



Source: NSW Midwives Data Collection (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.

<sup>#</sup> Information not shown for health areas where the number of mothers is less than five in a group. Due to under-reporting of Aboriginality to the MDC, it is likely that the true numbers are about one and a half times higher than shown.

## Medical conditions and obstetric complications

In 2004, there was a slightly lower rate of gestational diabetes reported among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers compared with non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers (Table 44). The number

of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers with medical conditions and obstetric complications reported to the MDC is low, even after taking into account under-reporting of maternal Aboriginality. This is particularly the case for diabetes. The low numbers may be due to under-detection and/or under-reporting.

**TABLE 44**

### MATERNAL MEDICAL CONDITIONS AND OBSTETRIC COMPLICATIONS BY ABORIGINALITY, NSW 2004<sup>#</sup>

Condition	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander		Non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander		Aboriginality Not stated		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Diabetes mellitus	24	1.0	440	0.5	0	0.0	464	0.6
Gestational diabetes	74	3.2	3518	4.3	0	0.0	3592	4.3
Essential hypertension	22	1.0	918	1.1	0	0.0	940	1.1
Pre-eclampsia	123	5.3	4483	5.5	0	0.0	4606	5.5
TOTAL	2308	100.0	81948	100.0	32	100.0	84288	100.0

Source: NSW Midwives Data Collection (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.

<sup>#</sup> Due to under-reporting of Aboriginality to the MDC, it is likely that the true numbers are about one and a half times higher than shown.

## Labour and delivery

The rate of spontaneous onset of labour fell from 72.5 per cent in 2000 to 68.5 per cent in 2004 (Table 45). The rate of induction of labour among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers varied from about 18 to 21 per cent between 2000 and 2004. The rate of induction of labour among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers was lower than the rate of 24.5 per cent reported among non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers in 2004.

Between 2000 and 2004, the rate of normal vaginal birth fell slightly from 74.7 to 71.4 per cent. The caesarean section rate rose from 18.2 to 22.1 per cent (Table 46). The rate of forceps delivery remained stable at about 2.5 per cent, and vaginal breech delivery fell from 1.5 to 0.7 per cent.

**TABLE 45**

### LABOUR ONSET FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MOTHERS, NSW 2000–2004<sup>#</sup>

Labour onset	2000		2001		Year 2002		2003		2004	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Spontaneous	1527	72.5	1486	70.4	1507	69.9	1469	68.0	1581	68.5
No labour <sup>##</sup>	206	9.8	207	9.8	223	10.3	250	11.6	260	11.3
Induced	372	17.7	417	19.8	423	19.6	442	20.5	467	20.2
Not stated	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL	2105	100.0	2110	100.0	2155	100.0	2161	100.0	2308	100.0

Source: NSW Midwives Data Collection (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.

<sup>#</sup> Due to under-reporting of Aboriginality to the MDC, it is likely that the true numbers are about one and a half times higher than shown.

<sup>##</sup> No labour indicates elective caesarean section.

**TABLE 46**

### TYPE OF DELIVERY AMONG ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MOTHERS, NSW 2000–2004<sup>#</sup>

Type of delivery	2000		2001		Year 2002		2003		2004	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Normal vaginal	1573	74.7	1562	74.0	1598	74.2	1585	73.3	1647	71.4
Forceps	51	2.4	39	1.8	30	1.4	35	1.6	60	2.6
Vacuum extraction	67	3.2	66	3.1	68	3.2	67	3.1	74	3.2
Vaginal breech	31	1.5	16	0.8	14	0.6	9	0.4	16	0.7
Elective caesarean section	206	9.8	207	9.8	223	10.3	250	11.6	260	11.3
Emergency caesarean section <sup>##</sup>	177	8.4	220	10.4	222	10.3	215	9.9	251	10.9
TOTAL	2105	100.0	2110	100.0	2155	100.0	2161	100.0	2308	100.0

Source: NSW Midwives Data Collection (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.

<sup>#</sup> Due to under-reporting of Aboriginality to the MDC, it is likely that the true numbers are about one and a half times higher than shown.

<sup>##</sup> Emergency caesarean section includes caesarean section where the onset of labour was not stated.

## Birth weight

Since 2000, the rate of low birth weight (less than 2,500 grams) in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies has been over 10 per cent and was 12.9 per cent in 2004 (Table 47). This is over twice the rate for babies born to non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers, which was 6.2 per cent in 2004. In 2004, the largest number of low birth weight babies were born in the Hunter and New England Area (Table 48).

**TABLE 47**

**WEIGHT OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BABIES, NSW 2000–2004<sup>#</sup>**

Birth weight (grams)	2000		2001		Year 2002		2003		2004	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Less than 1,000	33	1.6	27	1.3	21	1.0	31	1.4	23	1.0
1,000–1,499	20	0.9	33	1.5	28	1.3	19	0.9	34	1.5
1,500–2,499	199	9.4	228	10.7	230	10.5	221	10.1	244	10.5
2,500+	1866	87.9	1848	86.4	1900	87.0	1917	87.5	2032	87.1
Not stated	4	0.2	2	0.1	4	0.2	2	0.1	0	0.0
TOTAL	2122	100.0	2138	100.0	2183	100.0	2190	100.0	2333	100.0

Source: NSW Midwives Data Collection (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.

<sup>#</sup> Due to under-reporting of Aboriginality to the MDC, it is likely that the true numbers are about one and a half times higher than shown

**TABLE 48**

**WEIGHT OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BABIES BY HEALTH AREA OF RESIDENCE, NSW 2004<sup>#</sup>**

Health Area	Birth weight (grams)					
	Less than 2,500		2,500+		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sydney South West	14	8.5	150	91.5	164	100.0
South Eastern Sydney & Illawarra	21	9.4	203	90.6	224	100.0
Sydney West	37	15.3	205	84.7	242	100.0
Northern Sydney & Central Coast	14	14.9	80	85.1	94	100.0
Hunter & New England	69	13.4	445	86.6	514	100.0
North Coast	59	14.8	339	85.2	398	100.0
Greater Southern	24	13.7	151	86.3	175	100.0
Greater Western	62	12.3	444	87.7	506	100.0
Other–Not stated	1	6.3	15	93.8	16	100.0
TOTAL	301	12.9	2032	87.1	2333	100.0

Source: NSW Midwives Data Collection (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.

<sup>#</sup> Due to under-reporting of Aboriginality to the MDC, it is likely that the true numbers for the total are about one and a half times higher than shown. The level of under-reporting varies between area health services (Table 34).

## Gestational age

Since 2000, the over 10 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies have been premature (less than 37 weeks gestation) (Table 49). The rate was 11.7 per cent in 2004—compared with a rate of 7.2 per cent for babies born to non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers. In 2004, the largest number of premature babies were born in the Hunter and New England Area (Table 50).

**TABLE 49**

**GESTATIONAL AGE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BABIES, NSW 2000–2004<sup>#</sup>**

Gestational age (weeks)	2000		2001		Year 2002		2003		2004	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
20–27	33	1.6	26	1.2	21	1.0	29	1.3	31	1.3
28–31	29	1.4	38	1.8	34	1.6	30	1.4	29	1.2
32–36	185	8.7	201	9.4	212	9.7	206	9.4	212	9.1
37–41	1839	86.7	1824	85.3	1868	85.6	1878	85.8	2038	87.4
42 +	36	1.7	48	2.2	45	2.1	47	2.1	23	1.0
Not stated	0	0.0	1	0.0	3	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL	2122	100.0	2138	100.0	2183	100.0	2190	100.0	2333	100.0

Source: NSW Midwives Data Collection (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.

<sup>#</sup> Due to under-reporting of Aboriginality to the MDC, it is likely that the true numbers are about one and a half times higher than shown.

**TABLE 50**

**GESTATIONAL AGE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BABIES BY HEALTH AREA OF RESIDENCE, NSW 2004<sup>#</sup>**

Health Area	Gestational age (weeks)					
	Less than 37		37+		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sydney South West	15	9.1	149	90.9	164	100.0
South Eastern Sydney & Illawarra	26	11.6	198	88.4	224	100.0
Sydney West	26	10.7	216	89.3	242	100.0
Northern Sydney & Central Coast	15	16.0	79	84.0	94	100.0
Hunter & New England	64	12.5	450	87.5	514	100.0
North Coast	56	14.1	342	85.9	398	100.0
Greater Southern	23	13.1	152	86.9	175	100.0
Greater Western	45	8.9	461	91.1	506	100.0
Other–Not stated	2	12.5	14	87.5	16	100.0
TOTAL	272	11.7	2061	88.3	2333	100.0

Source: NSW Midwives Data Collection (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.

<sup>#</sup> Due to under-reporting of Aboriginality to the MDC, it is likely that the true numbers for the total are about one and a half times higher than shown. The level of under-reporting varies between area health services (Table 34).

## Apgar score

In 2004, 2.9 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies had an Apgar score less than seven (Table 51), higher than the rate of 2.0 per cent for babies born to non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers.

**TABLE 51**

**APGAR SCORE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BABIES, NSW 2000–2004<sup>#</sup>**

Apgar score at 5 minutes	2000		2001		Year 2002		2003		2004	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0–4	41	1.9	49	2.3	38	1.7	42	1.9	34	1.5
5–6	26	1.2	29	1.4	31	1.4	30	1.4	34	1.5
7+	2045	96.4	2048	95.8	2104	96.4	2109	96.3	2256	96.7
Not stated	10	0.5	12	0.6	10	0.5	9	0.4	9	0.4
TOTAL	2122	100.0	2138	100.0	2183	100.0	2190	100.0	2333	100.0

Source: NSW Midwives Data Collection (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.

<sup>#</sup> Due to under-reporting of Aboriginality to the MDC, it is likely that the true numbers are about one and a half times higher than shown.

## Special care and neonatal intensive care

In 2004, 19.6 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies were admitted to special care units and 4.8 per cent were admitted to neonatal intensive care units (Table 52). This compares with babies born to non-

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers, of whom 14.4 per cent were admitted to special care units and 2.8 per cent were admitted to neonatal intensive care units in 2004.

**TABLE 52**

**ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BABIES ADMITTED TO SPECIAL CARE AND NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNITS, NSW 2000–2004<sup>#</sup>**

Unit of admission	2000		2001		Year 2002		2003		2004	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Special care unit	405	19.1	442	20.7	431	19.7	450	20.5	457	19.6
Neonatal intensive care unit	86	4.1	82	3.8	71	3.3	83	3.8	113	4.8
TOTAL	2122	100.0	2138	100.0	2183	100.0	2190	100.0	2333	100.0

Source: NSW Midwives Data Collection (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.

<sup>#</sup> Due to under-reporting of Aboriginality to the MDC, it is likely that the true numbers are about one and a half times higher than shown.

## Perinatal mortality

Since 2000, the perinatal mortality rate among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies has varied from 11.0 to 18.2 per 1,000 births (Table 53). The rate of 11.6 per 1,000

in 2004 is higher than the rate of 9.0 per 1,000 experienced by babies born to non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers.

**TABLE 53**

**PERINATAL DEATHS AMONG ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BABIES, NSW 2000–2004<sup>#</sup>**

Perinatal deaths	2000		2001		Year 2002		2003		2004	
	No.	Rate/1,000	No.	Rate/1,000	No.	Rate/1,000	No.	Rate/1,000	No.	Rate/1,000
Stillbirth	24	11.3	29	13.6	18	8.2	24	11.0	20	8.6
Neonatal death	13	6.1	10	4.7	6	2.7	9	4.1	7	3.0
TOTAL	37	17.4	39	18.2	24	11.0	33	15.1	27	11.6

Source: NSW Midwives Data Collection (HOIST). Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.

<sup>#</sup> Perinatal deaths include deaths reported to the MDC only. As the MDC form is completed at discharge or transfer of the baby, deaths occurring after this time may not be reported to the MDC. Due to under-reporting of Aboriginality to the MDC, it is likely that the true numbers are about one and a half times higher than shown.