

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 rose from 65.0 per cent in 2000 to 69.0 per cent in 2002. Reporting varied markedly between area health services, ranging from 50.6 per cent in the Sydney South West Area to 88.8 per cent in the Greater Western Area in 2002 (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 2002 is estimated to be 3,163, 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 2000–2002[#]

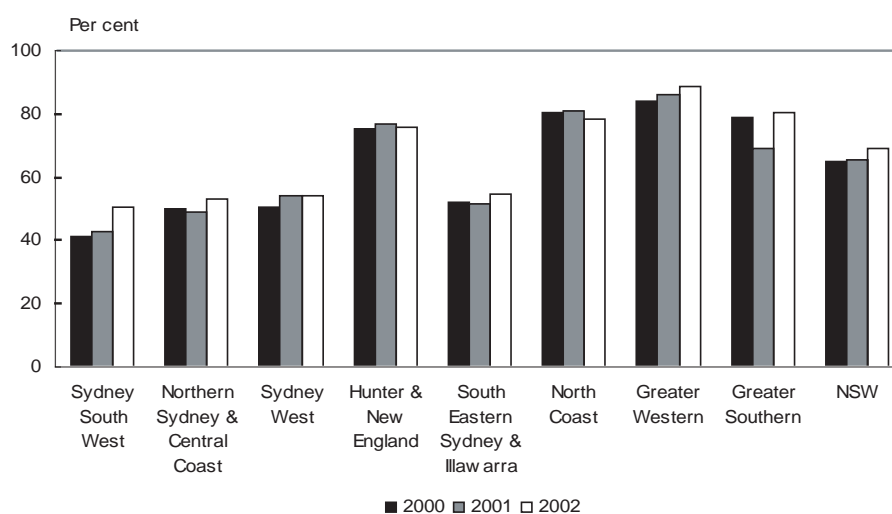
Year– Area Health Service of hospital	MDC births	RBDM births	Births reported to both MDC–RBDM	Total estimated Aboriginal births	Estimated Aboriginal births reported to MDC	95% confidence interval of estimated births reported
	No.	No.	No.	No.	%	
2000						
Sydney South West	185	309	127	449	41.2	36.6–45.7
Northern Sydney & Central Coast	84	94	47	167	50.2	42.7–57.8
Sydney West	224	294	149	442	50.7	46.1–55.4
Hunter & New England	481	424	320	637	75.5	72.2–78.8
South Eastern Sydney & Illawarra	169	202	105	325	52.1	46.6–57.5
North Coast	335	217	174	418	80.2	76.4–84.0
Greater Western	449	312	262	535	84.0	80.9–87.1
Greater Southern	195	143	113	247	79.1	74.0–84.2
NSW	2122	1995	1297	3264	65.0	63.4–66.7
2001						
Sydney South West	192	310	133	447	43.0	38.4–47.5
Northern Sydney & Central Coast	75	100	49	153	49.2	41.2–57.1
Sydney West	223	263	142	413	54.1	49.2–58.9
Hunter & New England	486	426	327	633	76.8	73.5–80.1
South Eastern Sydney & Illawarra	156	190	98	302	51.7	46.0–57.3
North Coast	336	197	159	416	80.8	77.0–84.5
Greater Western	490	303	261	569	86.2	83.3–89.0
Greater Southern	178	141	97	258	68.9	63.2–74.5
NSW	2136	1930	1266	3256	65.6	64.0–67.2
2002						
Sydney South West	166	210	106	328	50.6	45.2–56.0
Northern Sydney & Central Coast	89	104	55	168	53.1	45.5–60.6
Sydney West	224	264	143	413	54.2	49.4–59.0
Hunter & New England	534	414	313	706	75.6	72.5–78.8
South Eastern Sydney & Illawarra	179	192	105	327	54.8	49.4–60.2
North Coast	336	196	154	427	78.6	74.7–82.5
Greater Western	489	313	278	550	88.8	86.2–91.5
Greater Southern	165	118	95	205	80.6	75.2–86.0
NSW	2182	1811	1249	3163	69.0	67.4–70.6

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.

FIGURE 2

LEVEL OF REPORTING OF ABORIGINITY TO THE NSW MIDWIVES DATA COLLECTION BY YEAR OF BIRTH AND HEALTH AREA OF HOSPITAL, NSW 2000–2002*



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 86,245 births registered for residents of NSW in 2002, 3,337 (3.9 per cent) were reported to have an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mother or father (Table 35). For 1,189 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 2002*

Mother#	Father	No.	%
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	691	0.8
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	Non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1457	1.7
Non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1189	1.4
Non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	Non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	82908	96.1
Total	Total	86245	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 2003, 2, 039 babies were born to Aboriginal mothers, 37 babies were born to Torres Strait Islander mothers and 114 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 1999–2003*

Plurality	Year									
	1999		2000		2001		2002		2003	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Confinements										
Aboriginal	1984	96.4	1990	94.5	1988	94.2	2041	94.7	2014	93.2
Torres Strait Islander	38	1.8	25	1.2	40	1.9	25	1.2	35	1.6
Both Aboriginal and TSI	37	1.8	90	4.3	82	3.9	89	4.1	112	5.2
TOTAL	2059	100.0	2105	100.0	2110	100.0	2155	100.0	2161	100.0
Births										
Aboriginal	2003	96.4	2006	94.5	2014	94.2	2069	94.8	2039	93.1
Torres Strait Islander	38	1.8	25	1.2	42	2.0	25	1.1	37	1.7
Both Aboriginal and TSI	37	1.8	91	4.3	82	3.8	89	4.1	114	5.2
TOTAL	2078	100.0	2122	100.0	2138	100.0	2183	100.0	2190	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.

Plurality

Between 1999 and 2003, the reported number of babies born to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers increased from 2,078 to 2,190 (Table 37), representing 2.4 and 2.5 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 1999–2003*

Plurality	Year									
	1999		2000		2001		2002		2003	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Confinements										
Singleton	2040	99.1	2089	99.2	2082	98.7	2127	98.7	2134	98.8
Twins	18	0.9	16	0.8	28	1.3	28	1.3	26	1.2
Triplets	1	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.0
TOTAL	2059	100.0	2105	100.0	2110	100.0	2155	100.0	2161	100.0
Births										
Singleton	2040	98.2	2089	98.4	2082	97.4	2127	97.4	2134	97.4
Twins	35	1.7	33	1.6	56	2.6	56	2.6	53	2.4
Triplets	3	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	0.1
TOTAL	2078	100.0	2122	100.0	2138	100.0	2183	100.0	2190	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.

Previous pregnancies

In 2003, 31 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers gave birth for the first time. About 61 per cent of mothers reported between 1 and 4 previous births and 8.2 per cent of mothers had given birth to five or more babies. This pattern has not changed substantially since 1999.

TABLE 38

NUMBER OF PREVIOUS PREGNANCIES AMONG ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MOTHERS, NSW 1999–2003[#]

No. previous pregnancies (>20 weeks)	1999		2000		Year 2001		2002		2003	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0	613	29.8	645	30.6	634	30.0	664	30.8	668	30.9
1–4	1301	63.2	1285	61.0	1309	62.0	1302	60.4	1316	60.9
5+	144	7.0	174	8.3	164	7.8	183	8.5	177	8.2
Not stated	1	0.0	1	0.0	3	0.1	6	0.3	0	0.0
TOTAL	2059	100.0	2105	100.0	2110	100.0	2155	100.0	2161	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 five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers were teenagers in 2003.

Following statewide trends, the number of mothers giving birth at 35 years of age or more has increased over the last five years. The proportion of mothers aged 35-plus years increased from 6.0 per cent in 1999 to 7.1 per cent in 2003 (Table 39).

TABLE 39

AGE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MOTHERS, NSW 1999–2003[#]

Maternal age (years)	1999		2000		Year 2001		2002		2003	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
12–19	443	21.5	459	21.8	439	20.8	481	22.3	455	21.1
20–34	1492	72.5	1491	70.8	1515	71.8	1524	70.7	1553	71.9
35+	124	6.0	155	7.4	152	7.2	146	6.8	153	7.1
Not stated	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	0.2	4	0.2	0	0.0
TOTAL	2059	100.0	2105	100.0	2110	100.0	2155	100.0	2161	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 2003 ranged from 82 in the Northern Sydney & Central Coast Area to 493 in the Greater Western Area (Table 40). The proportion of mothers who were teenagers varied from 16.9 per cent in the South Western Sydney Area to 22.2 per cent in the Hunter & New England Area.

TABLE 40

HEALTH AREA OF RESIDENCE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MOTHERS, NSW 1999–2003[#]

Health Area	1999		2000		Year 2001		2002		2003	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sydney South West	152	7.4	168	8.0	174	8.2	165	7.7	160	7.4
Northern Sydney & Central Coast	59	2.9	81	3.8	74	3.5	85	3.9	82	3.8
Sydney West	218	10.6	203	9.6	212	10.0	204	9.5	237	11.0
Hunter & New England	421	20.4	474	22.5	478	22.7	513	23.8	514	23.8
South Eastern Sydney & Illawarra	149	7.2	173	8.2	153	7.3	173	8.0	178	8.2
North Coast	342	16.6	330	15.7	329	15.6	327	15.2	304	14.1
Greater Western	510	24.8	484	23.0	511	24.2	517	24.0	493	22.8
Greater Southern	184	8.9	176	8.4	162	7.7	158	7.3	170	7.9
Other/Not stated	24	1.2	16	0.8	17	0.8	13	0.6	23	1.1
TOTAL	2059	100.0	2105	100.0	2110	100.0	2155	100.0	2161	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 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 2003[#]

Health Area	Maternal age (years)				TOTAL	
	Less than 20		20+		No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%		
Sydney South West	27	16.9	133	83.1	160	100.0
Northern Sydney & Central Coast	17	20.7	65	79.3	82	100.0
Sydney West	52	21.9	185	78.1	237	100.0
Hunter & New England	114	22.2	400	77.8	514	100.0
South Eastern Sydney & Illawarra	32	18.0	146	82.0	178	100.0
North Coast	66	21.7	238	78.3	304	100.0
Greater Western	109	22.1	384	77.9	493	100.0
Greater Southern	34	20.0	136	80.0	170	100.0
Other/Not stated	4	17.4	19	82.6	23	100.0
TOTAL	455	21.1	1706	78.9	2161	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 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 2003, 90.4 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers were booked into the hospital of birth, a rise from 86.4 per cent in 1999. In 2003, 97.6 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 1999 and 2003, the proportion of mothers who commenced antenatal care at less than 20 weeks gestation rose from 65.5 to 70.6 per cent (Table 42). This compares with 87.0 per cent of non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers who commenced antenatal care at less than 20 weeks gestation in 2003.

In 2003, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers who commenced antenatal care at less than 20 weeks gestation varied from 58.1 per cent in the Sydney South West Area to 85.4 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 1999–2003[#]

Duration of pregnancy at first antenatal visit (weeks)	1999		2000		Year 2001		2002		2003	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0–19	1348	65.5	1422	67.6	1365	64.7	1448	67.2	1526	70.6
20–plus	599	29.1	546	25.9	615	29.1	560	26.0	547	25.3
Not stated	112	5.4	137	6.5	130	6.2	147	6.8	88	4.1
TOTAL	2059	100.0	2105	100.0	2110	100.0	2155	100.0	2161	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.

TABLE 43

DURATION OF PREGNANCY AT FIRST ANTENATAL VISIT AMONG ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MOTHERS BY HEALTH AREA OF RESIDENCE, NSW 2003[#]

Health Area	Duration of pregnancy at first antenatal visit (weeks)						TOTAL	
	0–19		20+		Not stated		No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sydney South West	93	58.1	62	38.8	5	3.1	160	100.0
Northern Sydney & Central Coast	70	85.4	12	14.6	0	0.0	82	100.0
Sydney West	135	57.0	89	37.6	13	5.5	237	100.0
Hunter & New England	387	75.3	108	21.0	19	3.7	514	100.0
South Eastern Sydney & Illawarra	129	72.5	41	23.0	8	4.5	178	100.0
North Coast	212	69.7	75	24.7	17	5.6	304	100.0
Greater Western	362	73.4	110	22.3	21	4.3	493	100.0
Greater Southern	121	71.2	44	25.9	5	2.9	170	100.0
Other/Not stated	17	73.9	6	26.1	0	0.0	23	100.0
TOTAL	1526	70.6	547	25.3	88	4.1	2161	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 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).

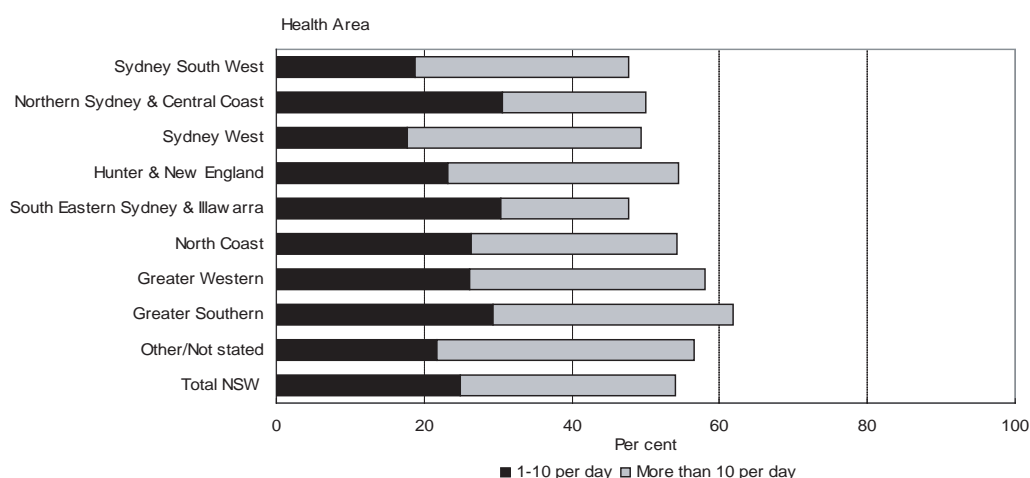
Smoking in pregnancy

In 2003, 56.8 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers reported smoking at some time during pregnancy, compared to 58.9 per cent in 1999. This compares with 14.1 per cent of non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers who reported smoking at some time during pregnancy in 2003.

Smoking in the second half of pregnancy poses the greatest risk to the health of both mother and baby. In 2003, 54.1 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers reported smoking in the second half of pregnancy. This percentage varied from 47.6 per cent in the South Western Sydney Area to 61.8 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 2003*



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

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 2003, there were slightly lower rates of gestational diabetes and pre-eclampsia 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 very 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 2003*

Condition	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander		Non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander		Aboriginality Not stated		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Diabetes mellitus	29	1.3	476	0.6	0	0.0	505
Gestational diabetes	74	3.4	3717	4.5	1	2.5	3792	4.5
Essential hypertension	22	1.0	857	1.0	0	0.0	879	1.0
Pre-eclampsia	102	4.7	4542	5.5	1	2.5	4645	5.5
TOTAL CONFINEMENTS	2161	100.0	82831	100.0	40	100.0	85032	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.

Labour and delivery

The rate of induction of labour among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers varied from about 18 to 21 per cent between 1999 and 2003. The rate of spontaneous onset of labour fell from 73.4 per cent in 1999 to 68.0 per cent in 2003 (Table 45). The rate of induction of labour among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers was lower than the rate of 24.6 per cent reported among non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers in 2003.

Between 1999 and 2003, the rate of normal vaginal birth fell slightly from 77.0 to 73.3 per cent. The caesarean section rate rose from 16.0 to 21.5 per cent (Table 46). The rate of forceps delivery fell from 3.1 to 1.6 per cent, vaginal breech delivery fell from 1.2 to 0.4 per cent, and vacuum extraction rose from 2.6 to 3.1 per cent.

TABLE 45

LABOUR ONSET FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MOTHERS, NSW 1999–2003*

Labour onset	1999		2000		Year 2001		2002		2003	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Spontaneous	1512	73.4	1527	72.5	1486	70.4	1507	69.9	1469	68.0
No labour##	172	8.4	206	9.8	207	9.8	223	10.3	250	11.6
Induced	375	18.2	372	17.7	417	19.8	423	19.6	442	20.5
Not stated	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.1	0	0.0
TOTAL	2059	100.0	2105	100.0	2110	100.0	2155	100.0	2161	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.

No labour indicates elective caesarean section.

TABLE 46

TYPE OF DELIVERY AMONG ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MOTHERS, NSW 1999–2003*

Type of delivery	1999		2000		Year 2001		2002		2003	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Normal vaginal	1586	77.0	1573	74.7	1562	74.0	1598	74.2	1585	73.3
Forceps	64	3.1	51	2.4	39	1.8	30	1.4	35	1.6
Vacuum extraction	54	2.6	67	3.2	66	3.1	68	3.2	67	3.1
Vaginal breech	25	1.2	31	1.5	16	0.8	14	0.6	9	0.4
Elective caesarean section	172	8.4	206	9.8	207	9.8	223	10.3	250	11.6
Emergency caesarean section##	158	7.7	177	8.4	220	10.4	222	10.3	215	9.9
TOTAL	2059	100.0	2105	100.0	2110	100.0	2155	100.0	2161	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.

Emergency caesarean section includes caesarean section where the onset of labour was not stated.

Birthweight

Since 1999, the rate of low birthweight (less than 2,500 grams) in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies has been over 10 per cent and was 12.4 per cent in 2003 (Table 47). This is twice the rate for babies born to non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers, which was 6.1 per cent in 2003. In 2003, the largest number of low birthweight babies were born in the Hunter & New England Area (Table 48).

TABLE 47

WEIGHT OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BABIES, NSW 1999–2003[#]

Birthweight (grams)	1999		2000		Year 2001		2002		2003	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Less than 1,000	20	1.0	33	1.6	27	1.3	21	1.0	31	1.4
1,000–1,499	24	1.2	20	0.9	33	1.5	28	1.3	19	0.9
1,500–2,499	217	10.4	199	9.4	228	10.7	230	10.5	221	10.1
2,500+	1816	87.4	1866	87.9	1848	86.4	1900	87.0	1917	87.5
Not stated	1	0.0	4	0.2	2	0.1	4	0.2	2	0.1
TOTAL	2078	100.0	2122	100.0	2138	100.0	2183	100.0	2190	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.

TABLE 48

WEIGHT OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BABIES BY HEALTH AREA OF RESIDENCE, NSW 2003[#]

Health Area	Less than 2,500		Birthweight (grams) 2,500+		Not stated		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sydney South West	18	11.2	142	88.2	1	0.6	161	100.0
Northern Sydney & Central Coast	8	9.6	75	90.4	0	0.0	83	100.0
Sydney West	28	11.7	212	88.3	0	0.0	240	100.0
Hunter & New England	68	13.0	453	86.8	1	0.2	522	100.0
South Eastern Sydney & Illawarra	22	12.2	158	87.8	0	0.0	180	100.0
North Coast	47	15.1	264	84.9	0	0.0	311	100.0
Greater Western	53	10.7	443	89.3	0	0.0	496	100.0
Greater Southern	21	12.1	153	87.9	0	0.0	174	100.0
Other/Not stated	6	26.1	17	73.9	0	0.0	23	100.0
TOTAL	271	12.4	1917	87.5	2	0.1	2190	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 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 1999, the rate of prematurity (less than 37 weeks gestation) in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies has been over 10 per cent. The rate was 12.1 per cent in 2003 (Table 49)—compared with a rate of 6.9 per cent for babies born to non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers. In 2003, the largest number of premature babies were born in the Hunter & New England Area (Table 50).

TABLE 49

GESTATIONAL AGE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BABIES, NSW 1999–2003#

Gestational age (weeks)	1999		2000		Year 2001		2002		2003	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
20–27	18	0.9	33	1.6	26	1.2	21	1.0	29	1.3
28–31	29	1.4	29	1.4	38	1.8	34	1.6	30	1.4
32–36	209	10.1	185	8.7	201	9.4	212	9.7	206	9.4
37–41	1780	85.7	1839	86.7	1824	85.3	1868	85.6	1878	85.8
42 +	42	2.0	36	1.7	48	2.2	45	2.1	47	2.1
Not stated	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.0	3	0.1	0	0.0
TOTAL	2078	100.0	2122	100.0	2138	100.0	2183	100.0	2190	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.

TABLE 50

GESTATIONAL AGE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BABIES BY HEALTH AREA OF RESIDENCE, NSW 2003#

Health Area	Less than 37		Gestational age (weeks) 37+		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sydney South West	24	14.9	137	85.1	161	100.0
Northern Sydney & Central Coast	8	9.6	75	90.4	83	100.0
Western Sydney	28	11.7	212	88.3	240	100.0
Hunter & New England	70	13.4	452	86.6	522	100.0
South Eastern Sydney & Illawarra	19	10.6	161	89.4	180	100.0
North Coast	47	15.1	264	84.9	311	100.0
Greater Western	47	9.5	449	90.5	496	100.0
Greater Southern	17	9.8	157	90.2	174	100.0
Other/Not stated	5	21.7	18	78.3	23	100.0
TOTAL	265	12.1	1925	87.9	2190	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 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 2003, 3.3 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 1999–2003[#]

Apgar score at 5 minutes	1999		2000		Year 2001		2002		2003	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0–4	36	1.7	41	1.9	49	2.3	38	1.7	42	1.9
5–6	24	1.2	26	1.2	29	1.4	31	1.4	30	1.4
7+	2003	96.4	2045	96.4	2048	95.8	2104	96.4	2109	96.3
Not stated	15	0.7	10	0.5	12	0.6	10	0.5	9	0.4
TOTAL	2078	100.0	2122	100.0	2138	100.0	2183	100.0	2190	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.

Special care and neonatal intensive care

In 2003, 20.5 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies were admitted to special care units and 3.8 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 14.8 per cent were admitted to special care units and 2.6 per cent were admitted to neonatal intensive care units in 2003.

TABLE 52

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BABIES ADMITTED TO SPECIAL CARE AND NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNITS, NSW 1999–2003[#]

Unit of admission	1999		2000		Year 2001		2002		2003	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Special care unit	438	21.1	405	19.1	442	20.7	431	19.7	450	20.5
Neonatal intensive care unit	69	3.3	86	4.1	82	3.8	71	3.3	83	3.8
TOTAL BIRTHS	2078	100.0	2122	100.0	2138	100.0	2183	100.0	2190	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.

Perinatal mortality

Since 1999, 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 11.0 per

1,000 in 2002 was the lowest reported for 10 years. The rate of 15.1 per 1,000 in 2003 is higher than the rate of 8.4 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 1999–2003[#]

Perinatal deaths	1999		2000		Year 2001		2002		2003	
	No.	Rate/1,000	No.	Rate/1,000	No.	Rate/1,000	No.	Rate/1,000	No.	Rate/1,000
Stillbirth	21	10.1	24	11.3	29	13.6	18	8.2	24	11.0
Neonatal death	8	3.8	13	6.1	10	4.7	6	2.7	9	4.1
TOTAL PERINATAL DEATHS	29	14.0	37	17.4	39	18.2	24	11.0	33	15.1

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

[#] 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.