

CUMMINGS ECONOMICS

38 Grafton St (PO Box 2148) CAIRNS Q 4870

ABN 99 734 489 175

Tel 07 4031 2888 Fax 07 4031 1108

Email cummings@cummings.net.au

Website : www.cummings.net.au



Ref: J2738

December 2013

Statistical Note

LIFE EXPECTANCIES IN THE FAR NORTH

The report in the Cairns Post, Saturday 14 December 2013, entitled, “*Could the Cairns and Far North Queensland Lifestyle Cut Your Lifespan?*” is highly misleading. (See link .)

The figures come from the National Health Performance Authority. They are for the whole of the Far North region including the whole of Cape York and Torres Strait. Some 18% of the region’s population is indigenous.

Unfortunately life expectancy of the indigenous population is much shorter than for the non-indigenous population. Figures for indigenous life expectancy in the region are not readily available. However as an indication, for areas outside of metropolitan and inner regional areas, life expectancy for indigenous males is 12.6 years shorter than national averages and 12.0 years for females.

If the indigenous figures are taken out of the Far North’s figures to give an estimate for non-indigenous population, they compare with regional figures in southern Australia as follows.

Table: Comparative Figures - Life Expectancy at Birth

<u>Region</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
Far North (estimated non-indigenous)	78.8	83.5
Southern NSW	78.8	83.6
Hunter	78.7	83.3
Central Coast NSW	78.6	83.5
Murrumbidgee	78.6	83.6
Darling Downs SW Qld	78.4	83.7
Loddeo Mallee Murray	78.4	83.6
Tasmania	78.3	82.5
North Coast NSW	78.2	84.0
Goulburn Valley	78.1	83.0
Wide Bay	78.1	83.7
New England	78.0	82.9
Grampians	78.0	82.3
Gippsland	77.9	83.1

The above data indicates that non-indigenous life expectancy in the Far North is comparable with and often higher than regional areas in southern Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania.

It is important to note from the National Health Performance Authority statistics that life expectancy in the metropolitan areas is generally higher than the regional areas, especially the high income areas of those cities. Unfortunately the Cairns Post article compared the figures for the Far North with those of the highest income area of Brisbane.

The life expectancy figures for Brisbane's West Moreton/Oxley area are males 78.5 and females 83.0 (ie. below the estimates for the Far North's non-indigenous population). Metro North Brisbane males 80.7 and females 84.6, in turn, compares with Sydney North Shore beaches males 83.2, females 86.2.

The figures highlight the very major task facing Australia and the Far North Queensland region to bring life expectancy for the indigenous population up to normal community levels.

There has been an improvement. The figures for the late 1990s showed a national differential of about 16 years. The latest figures show the differential down to about 12 years.

The figures also highlight the need for an improvement in delivery in health services in regional areas overall but especially those with a high indigenous population.

W S Cummings

16 December 2013

