



Government of South Australia

Department for Families  
and Communities



# Indicators of Community Strength

across South Australian Local Government Areas



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## Message from the Minister

Robust, open and diverse communities that extend opportunity to all provide a strong foundation for prosperity and quality of life. Everyone benefits when communities are resilient, active and confident, when they celebrate diversity and when they include and support their most vulnerable members. The 2007 South Australian Strategic Plan has placed the building of communities firmly into the Government's agenda. The Plan seeks to foster sustainable, inclusive and involved communities which proudly embody the diversity of the South Australian population. In particular, the Plan aims to increase civic and political participation, build social networks and foster leadership.

To support this agenda, the Department for Families and Communities commissioned the most comprehensive survey yet conducted of South Australians' relationship to their local community. The 8000 people who participated gave their views on issues ranging from facilities in their local area to involvement in civic life. The result is a new and different picture of communities across our state. The data confirms for us that areas across South Australia are not all alike; that where we live makes a difference; and community is still important. The good news includes the overwhelming majority of South Australians who like living in their local community; the strong community spirit which characterises regional areas; and the networks of support which people can call on in time of need. However, there are also clear challenges – for example, building volunteering and civic leadership and achieving a true equality of social participation across all areas of our state.

I commend this report to you, and trust it will be actively used by governments, community and business to support the growth of strong and vibrant communities across South Australia.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Jay Weatherill". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Jay Weatherill**

Minister for Families and Communities

May 2007

# Introduction

This publication reports on the first comprehensive survey of community strength across South Australia. The information in the report was gathered from interviews with over 8000 people across the State.

Communities matter to people. Communities are where we live, meet, work, connect, learn, relax and shop. They are places where we can contribute and participate, where we build friendships and networks and where our sense of identity is shaped. Increasingly, people belong to multiple communities – communities of work, interest, family, education, history or culture, as well as communities of place. Community connections now occur through a multitude of technologies, as well as through the simple, old fashioned medium of ‘face to face’.

Despite growing diversity in the forms and means of community, the community of place – our local community – is still very significant in our lives. People care about where they live. We usually have networks of friends, family or acquaintances round about us; we are affected by the facilities, services and infrastructure that our community offers; we join groups and attend local events; neighbourliness still makes a difference; and people still band together in times of crisis or disaster. We all want to live in places where we feel safe, where there are good services and facilities, and where we can be included and have a sense of belonging.

There is a growing body of evidence which suggests that the characteristics of communities make a lot of difference to people living there, including their ability to cope with adversity and stress. Communities which are inclusive but diverse, with strong networks and links between people, with good facilities and infrastructure and which encourage their citizens to participate, learn grow and care for each other, where people feel safe and at home – these are strong, enabling communities.

The survey of Indicators of Community Strength in South Australia was concerned with local communities – people’s relationship with where they live. The survey has drawn strongly on the work of the Department for Victorian Communities (DVC) which, since 2001, has provided the lead across Australia in the measurement and assessment of community strength.



The DVC work has demonstrated the value of profiling strength-related attributes of local communities. The information gathered provides a different picture of communities than that which is available through usual socio-economic, census or epidemiological data. It tells us something about relationships, social capital and people's views rather than simply aggregated individual characteristics. This is important information. It can help us understand the links between community characteristics and other social outcomes – for example, where positive attributes, such as strong connections and networks exist within apparently disadvantaged or impoverished communities. It can also assist planners and policy makers develop and implement local, place-based responses that are sensitive and responsive to the characteristics of a local area. Such surveys also provide a base-line for measuring change over time, including the impact of various community strengthening and social inclusion initiatives.

The results of this survey will inform the activities of the Department for Families and Communities as it works to connect individuals and communities to choice and opportunity. It is also intended for use by a wider audience: the information contained here will be of assistance to policy makers, planners and community groups as they consider local and state-wide issues and initiatives.

## The indicators

Fourteen indicators were used in the survey. These were chosen from a range of possible measures primarily developed by the Department for Victorian Communities and refined for use in South Australia in consultation with a range of experts in the field. The indicators are as follows:

### Community attitudes

Like living in local community

Feel safe in neighbourhood or community

Satisfaction with local community environment in terms of planning, open space and lack of pollution

People's friendliness and willingness to help others in the community

Satisfaction with local community facilities and services

Satisfaction with recreation areas such as sports and parks

Satisfaction with the range of community groups

Feel people in the neighbourhood can be trusted

Feel part of local community

### Social Networks

Ability to get help from family, friends or neighbours when needed

### Community participation

Volunteering

Involvement in community issues in the last 12 months

Participation in an organised sport, church or community group in the local area

Participation in a decision-making board or committee

Parental participation in schools

Attendance at local community events



## The survey

The survey was conducted across the entire state of South Australia (with the exception of some small unincorporated areas). The aim was to enable comparisons to be made between separate areas of the state, rather than to describe the state as a whole.

The choice of local areas for survey and comparison was based on Local Government Areas (LGAs). There are 18 LGAs in the metropolitan area, each with substantial populations. In regional areas of SA, however, there are 50 LGAs, with much smaller populations (for example, 27 LGAs with fewer than 5,000 adults). For the purposes of this study, these rural LGAs were amalgamated into five larger regions that correspond closely to the Regional Organisation of Councils defined by the Local Government Association of SA. These combined areas have populations comparable with larger metropolitan LGAs.

In the metropolitan areas, LGAs were assessed separately, with the exception of amalgamating Prospect and Walkerville into a single area (Walkerville is the smallest of the metropolitan Councils.) Some further subdivision was also undertaken of three larger metropolitan LGAs (Port Adelaide - Enfield, Playford, and Salisbury) to provide detail of the differences that can occur between suburbs within areas. These LGAs were chosen for smaller area measurement because of the variance in characteristics within their boundaries and also because they are currently the focus of major urban renewal agendas. The subdivision of these areas increased the number of sampled areas in the metropolitan area to 22.

The survey was thus conducted in 27 distinct areas of South Australia. Each area had a target of 300 interviews (a sample size adequate to give statistical power to results.) Interviews were conducted over the telephone with residents who had their household randomly selected from the telephone directory. Where there were several adults in the household, one was randomly chosen based on the last birthday to have occurred. This permitted a range of views to be heard from all ages.

Results were weighted to the 2004 estimated residential population for SA produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics by age and sex so that the responses were representative of the age and sex composition of each area. Data were analysed using SPSS. Maps were produced using ArcGIS.

The maps in this report show answers in the positive to the survey questions. These positive answers are the proportion of respondents who feel that their community has the qualities that were asked about. Some questions were simple Yes/No answers, and others asked respondents to rate a quality on a scale, where anything 'good' or better was deemed a positive answer.

## The results

The key finding of the survey is that communities across South Australia differ markedly from each other in terms of their strengths and characteristics. The data also shows that every community has strengths – no single area returned low scores on all indicators. For example, whilst Gawler has a very high proportion of residents who feel part of their local community and a very high satisfaction level with local groups, residents reported relatively low satisfaction with facilities and services. This confirms the need to take into account the individual aspects of each area when planning community strengthening initiatives.

Differences between rural and metropolitan areas are also striking. Social networks and community participation are notably high in rural areas, but generally residents are less satisfied with facilities and services.

There were some aspects of the survey in which consistently high results were recorded across the state. The great majority of respondents like living in their local community; can get help when they need it; feel safe in their neighbourhood and have a sense of identification with their local community. This is a very positive result. By contrast, people are far less likely to be involved in community issues, regularly volunteer their time, or be on a decision making board or committee. These indicators also have greater variability across the state, suggesting the need for a focus in particular local areas in order to achieve South Australian Strategic Plan objectives.

A relationship can also be observed between socio-economic profiles and the measures of community strength, particularly in metropolitan areas, with more well-off areas tending to score high across the range of indicators.

In the following pages the maps depicting the survey results are offered without further interpretation.

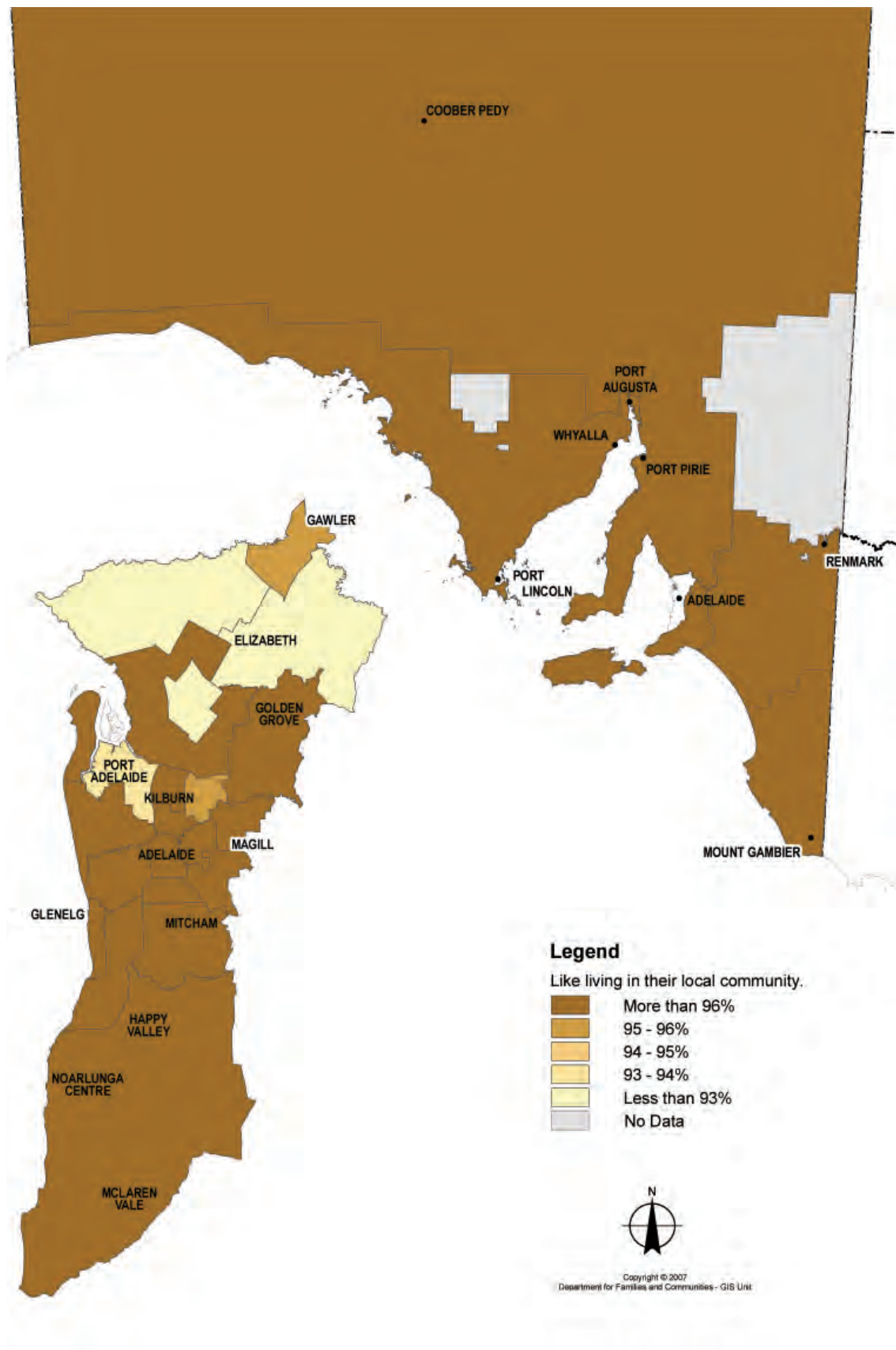


Figure 1 Proportion who like living in their local community

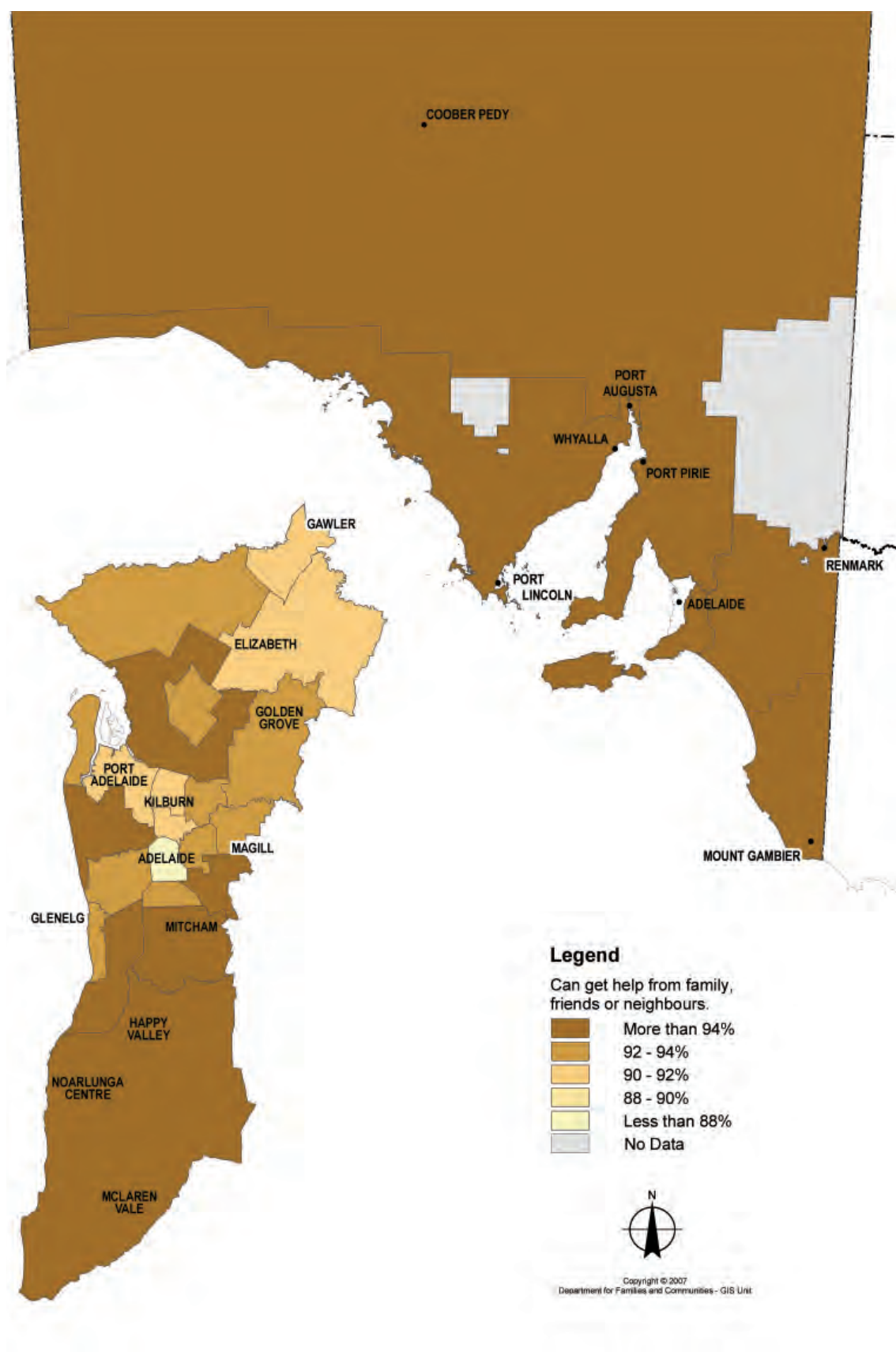


Figure 2 Proportion who can get help from family, friends or neighbours when they need it

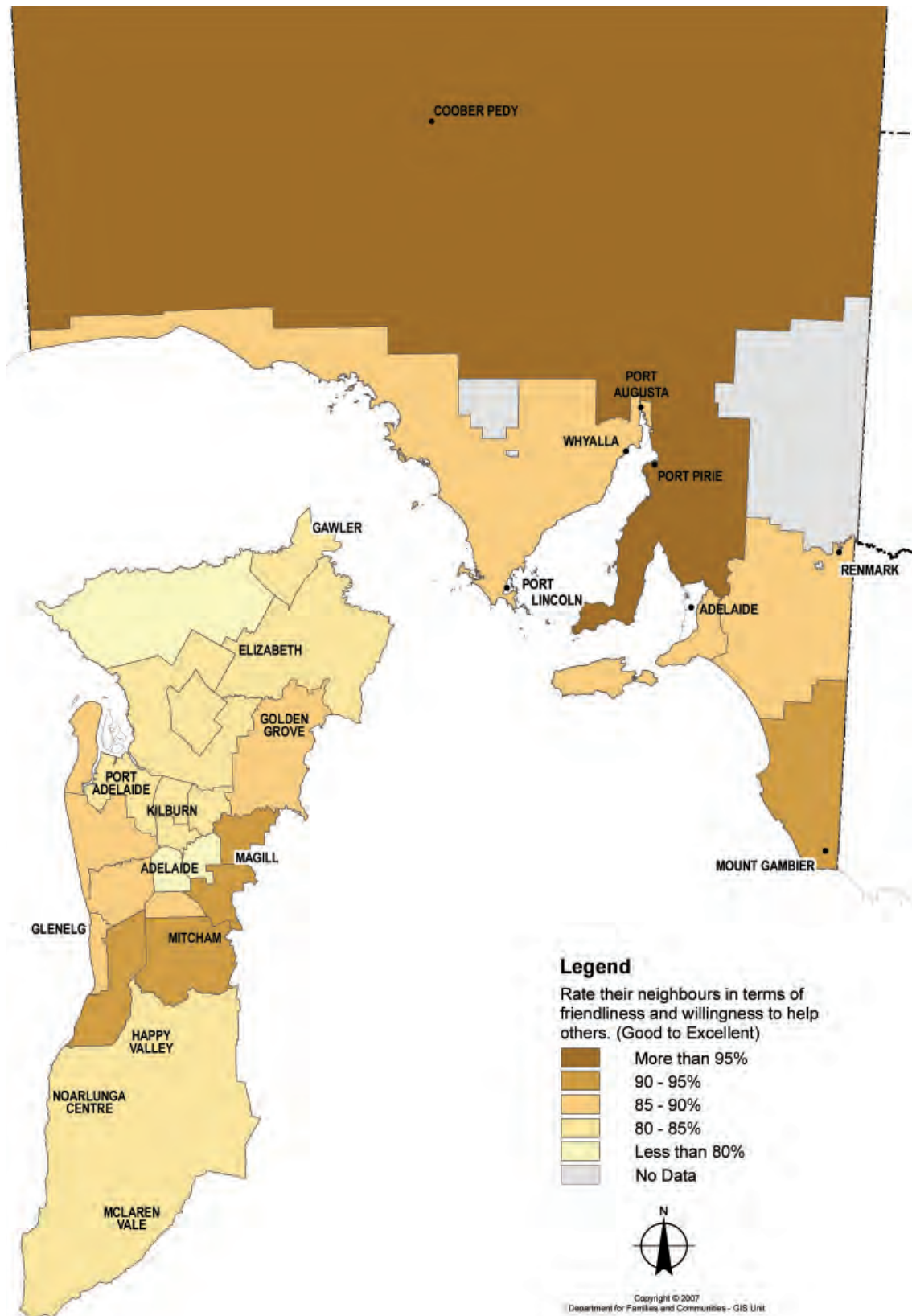


Figure 3 Rating of neighbours in terms of friendliness and willingness to help others



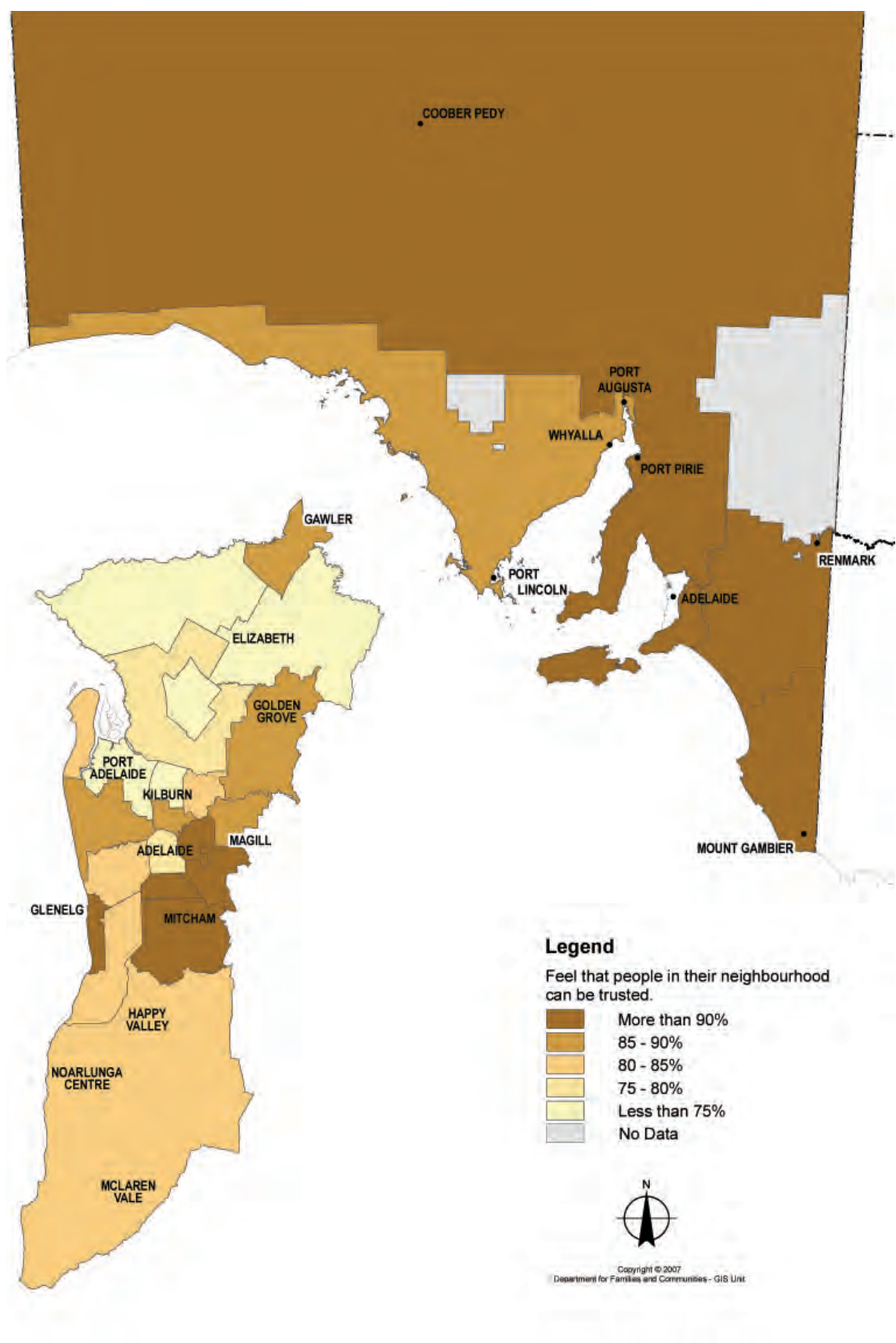


Figure 4 Proportion who feel that people in their neighbourhood can be trusted

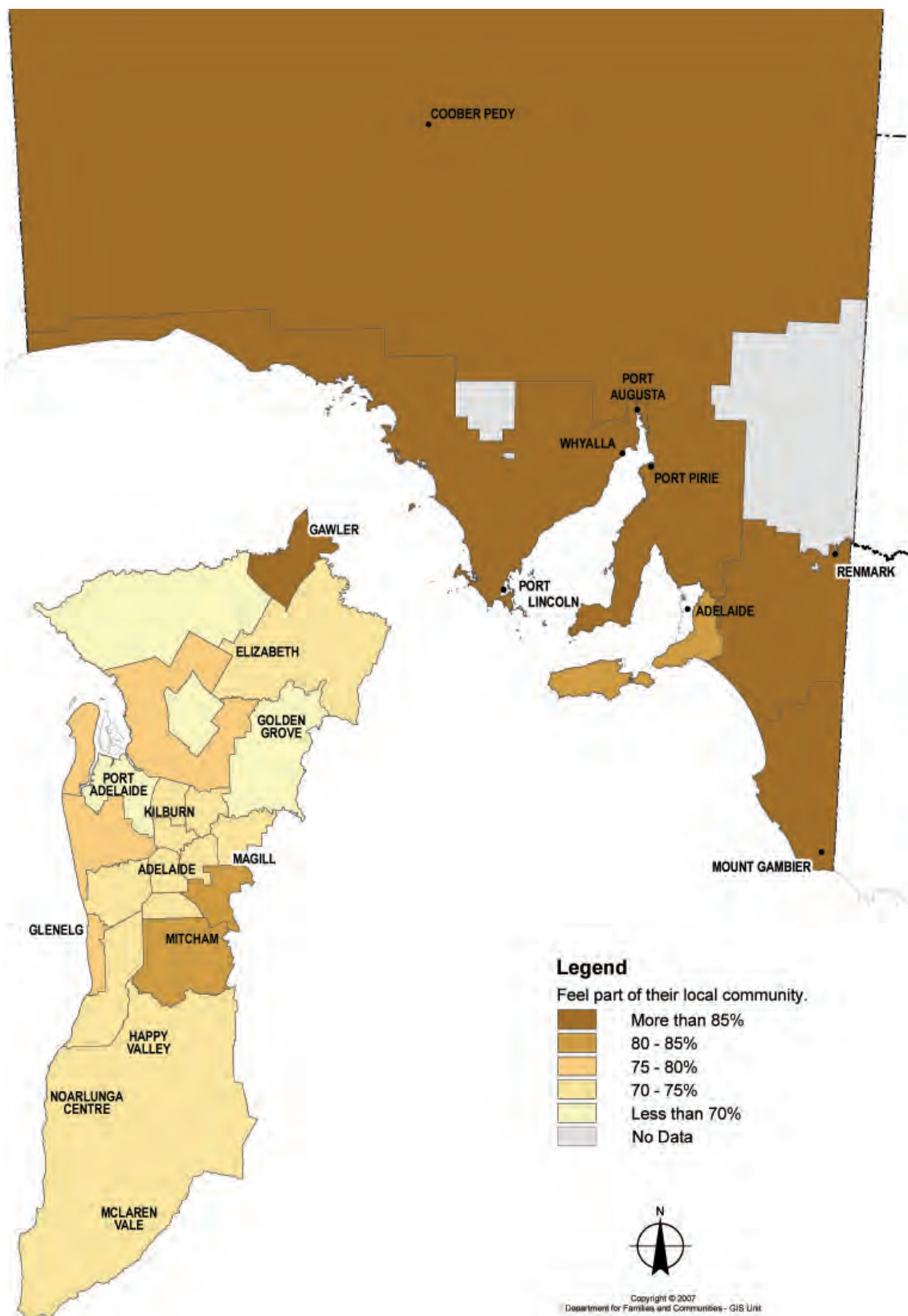


Figure 5 Proportion who feel a part of their local community



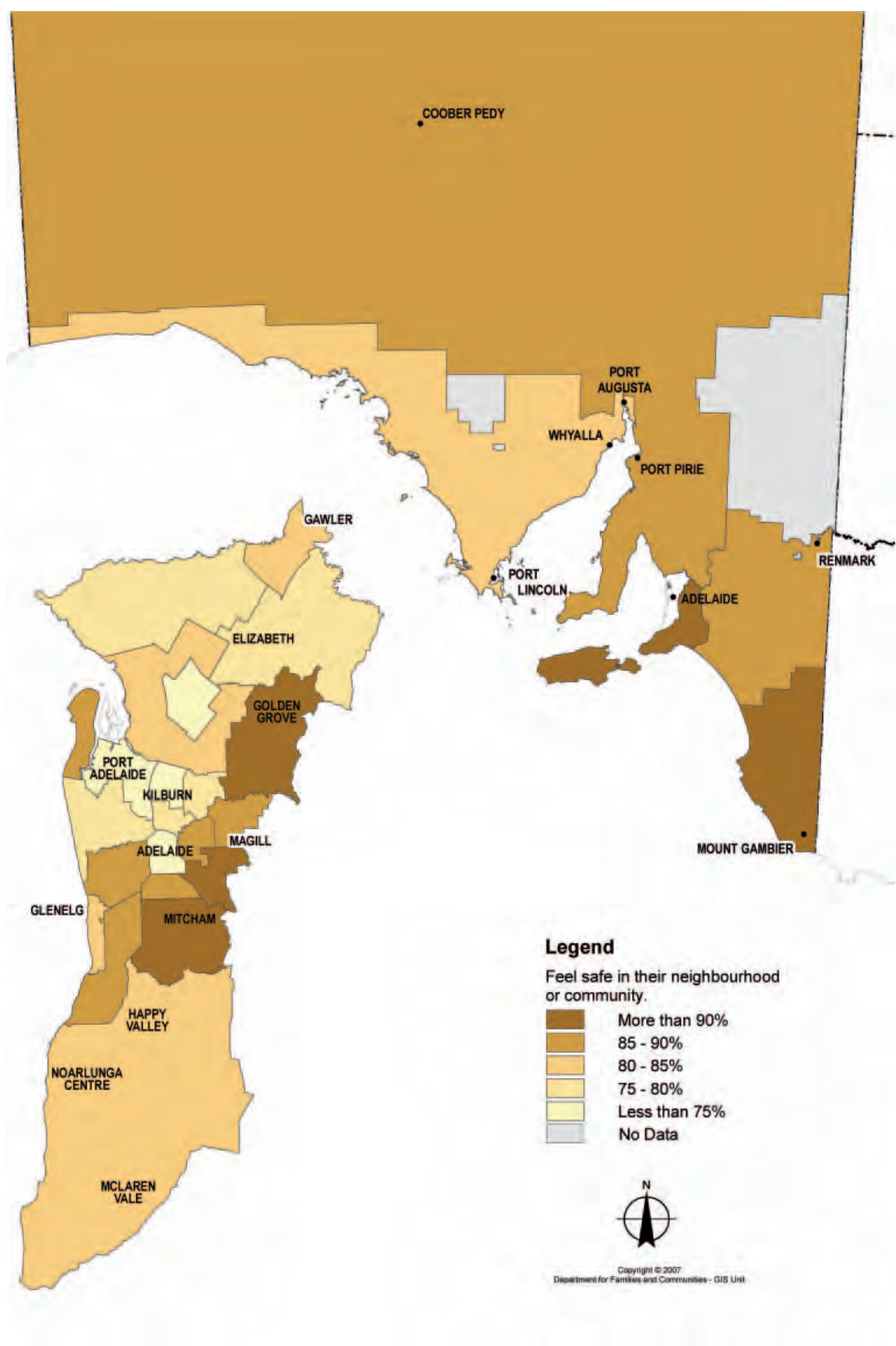


Figure 6 Proportion who feel safe in their neighbourhood or community

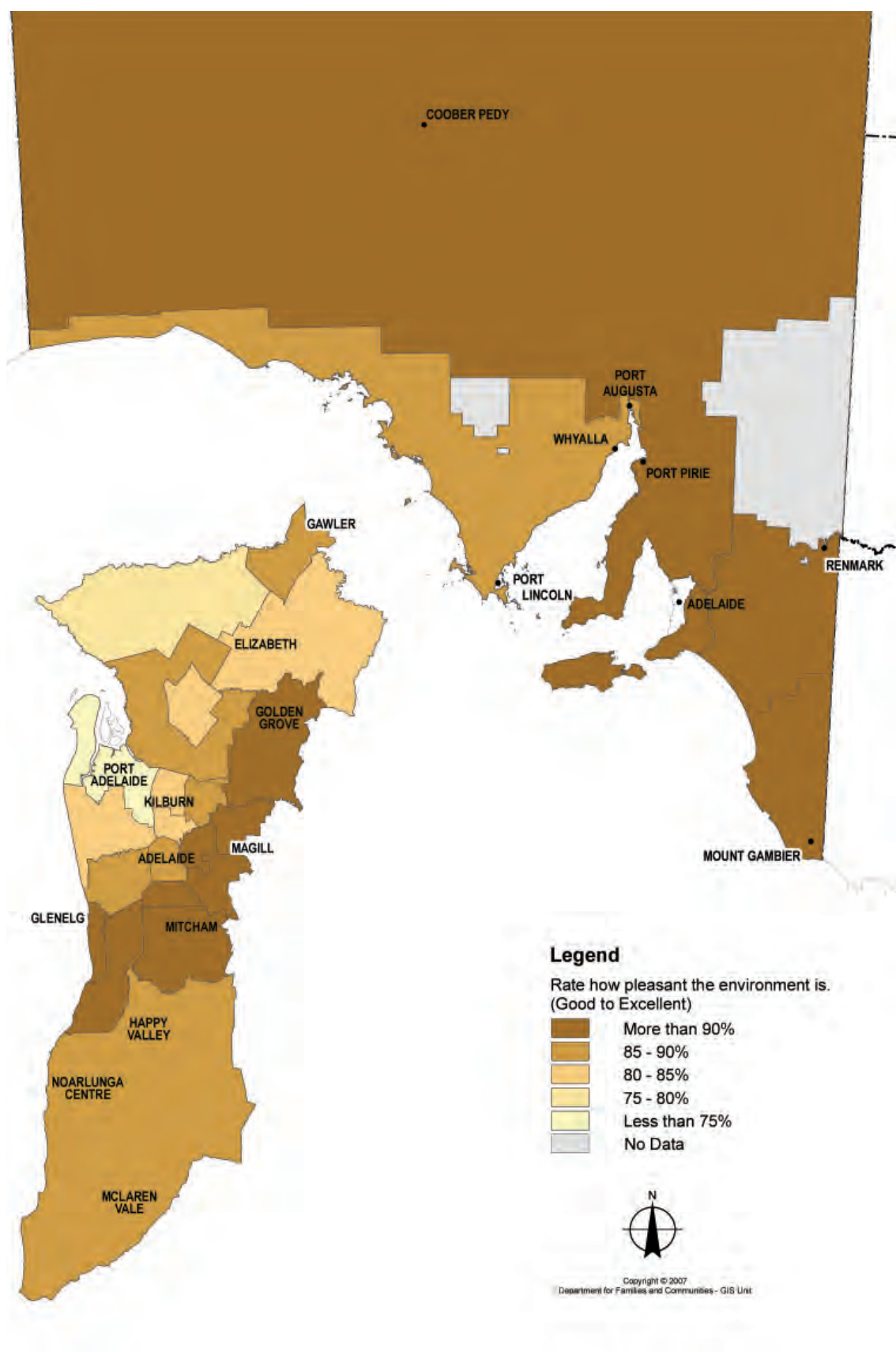


Figure 7 Proportion who positively rate the environment in terms of planning, open space and lack of pollution

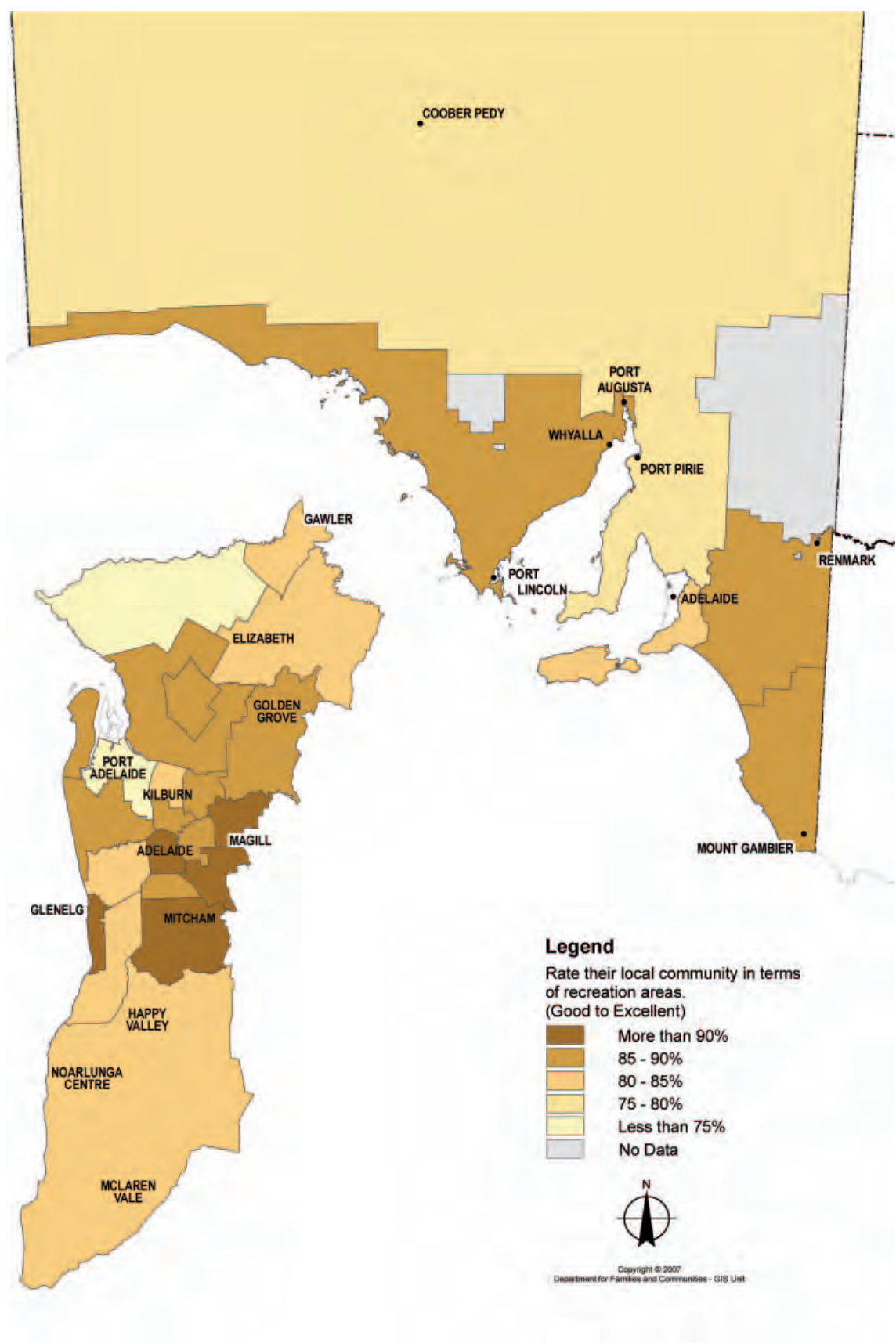


Figure 8 Proportion who rate recreation areas as good to excellent

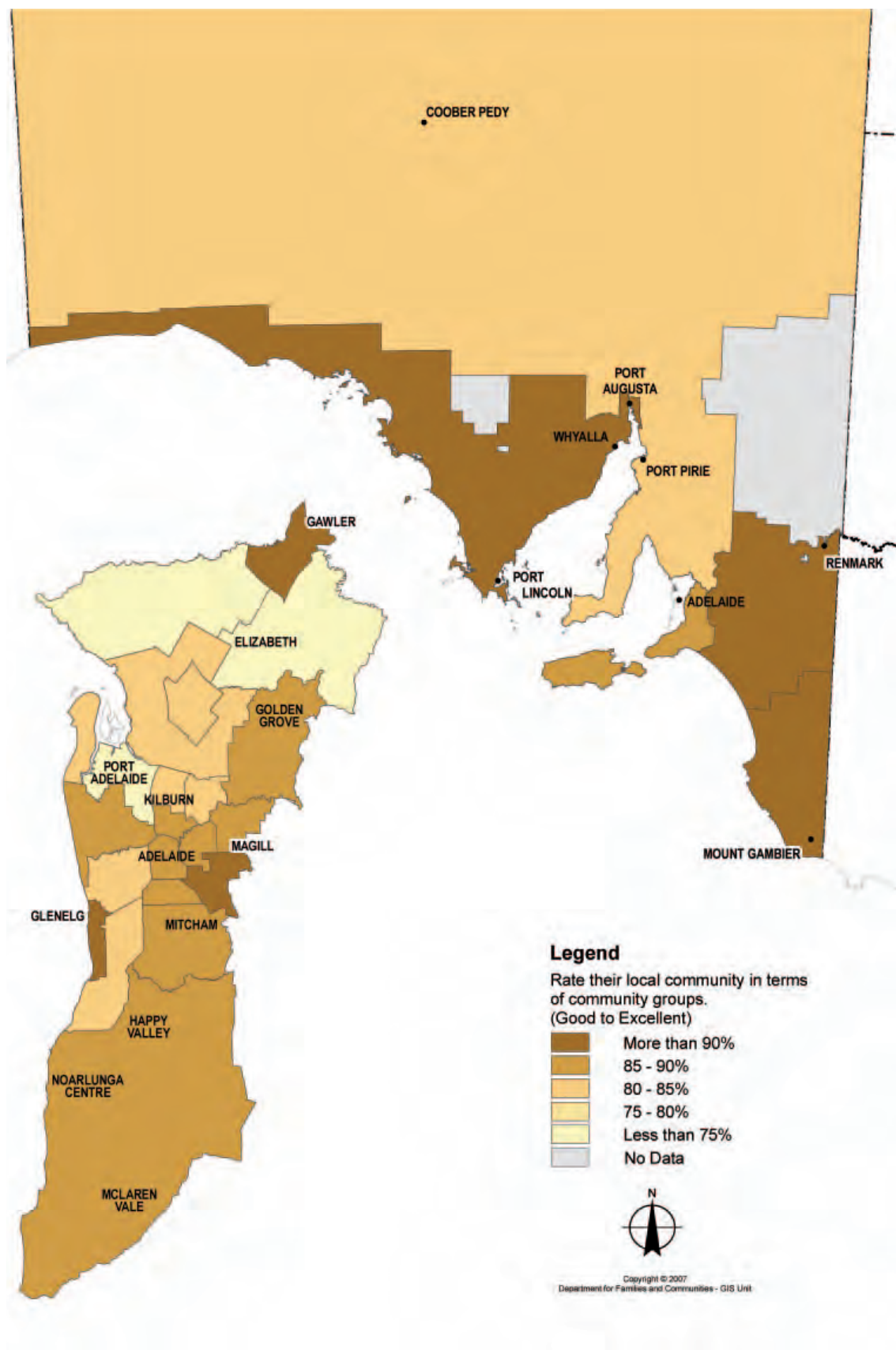


Figure 9 Proportion who rate the range of community groups as good to excellent



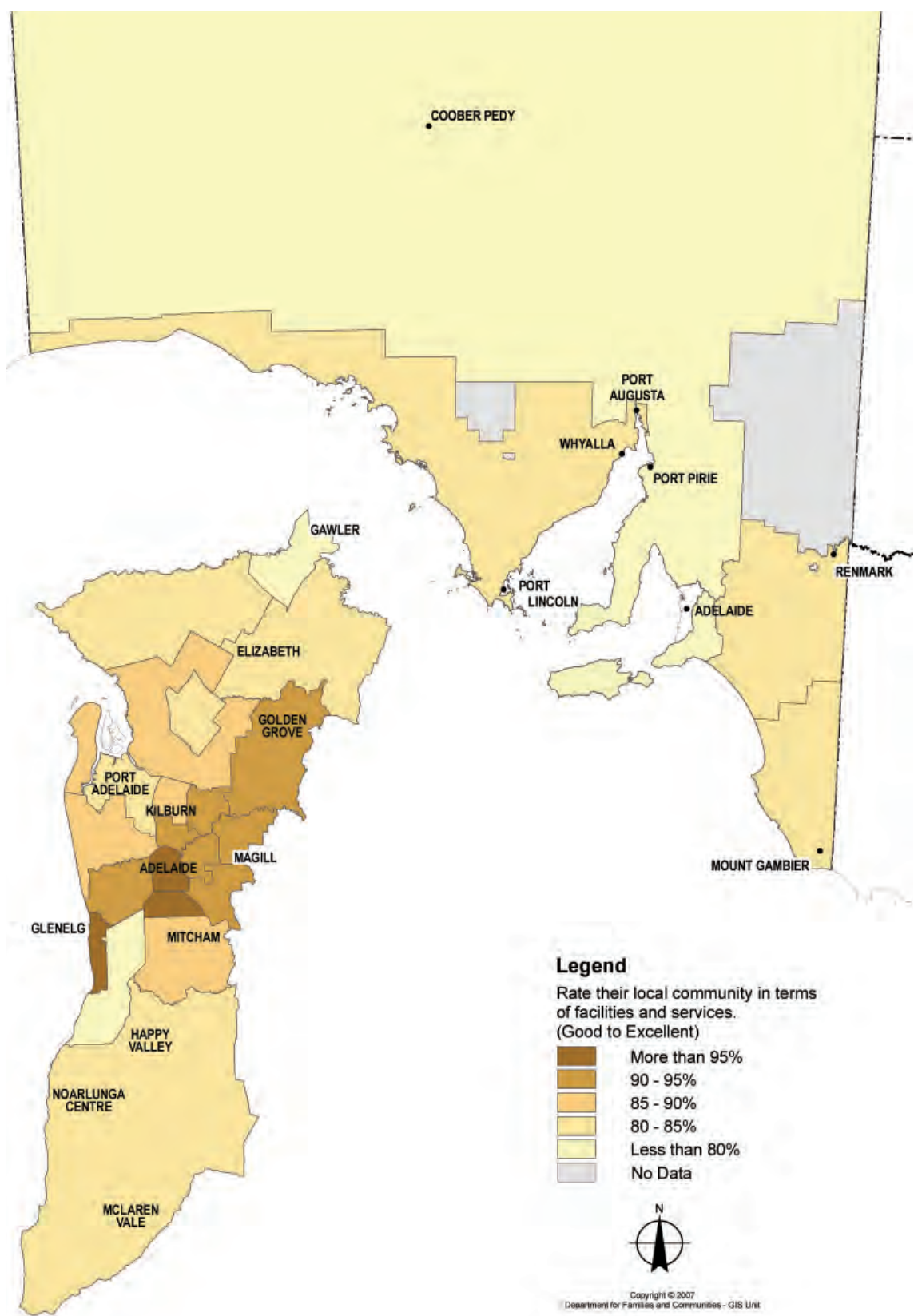


Figure 10 Proportion who rate facilities and services as good to excellent

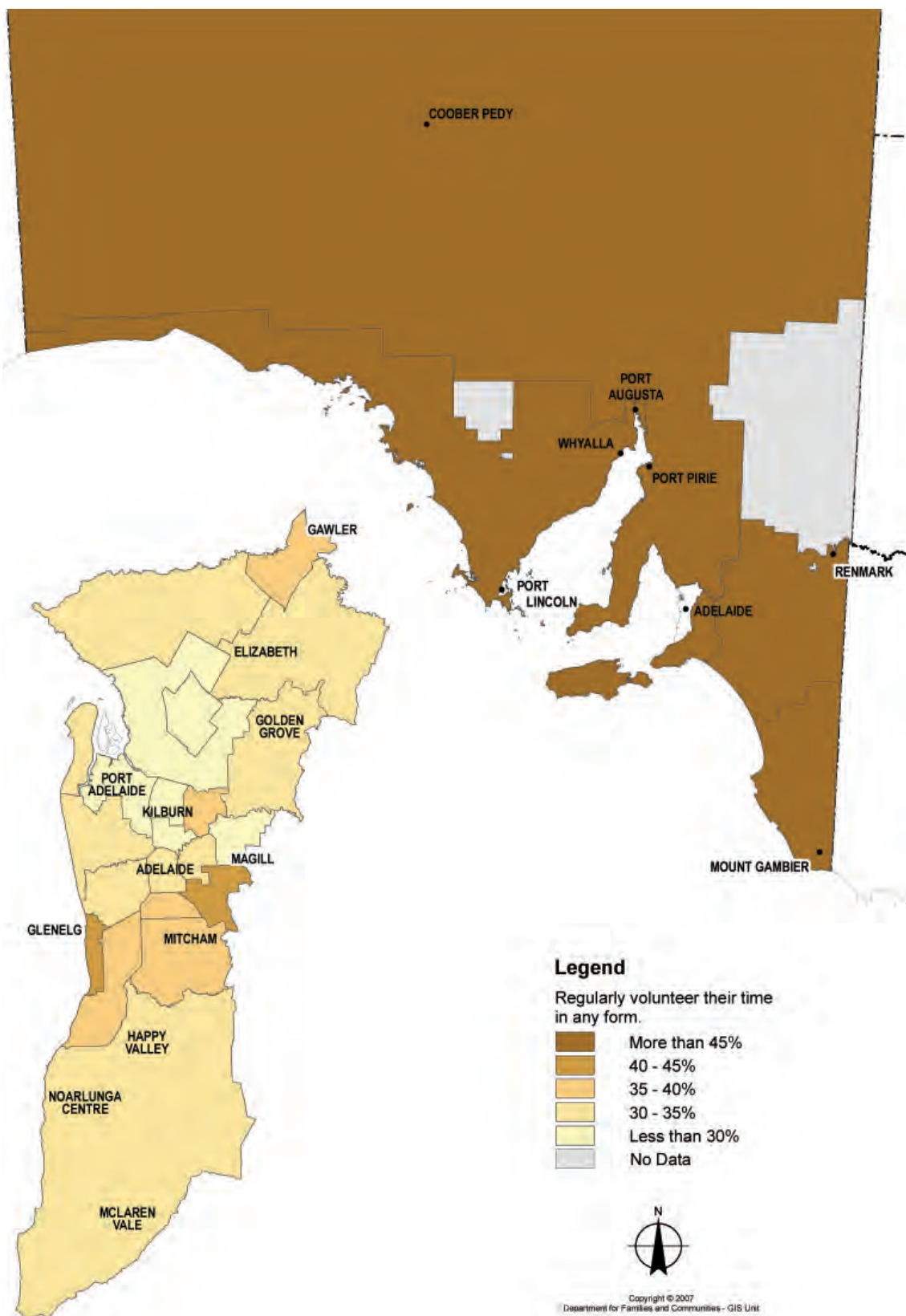


Figure 11 Proportion who regularly volunteer their time in any form

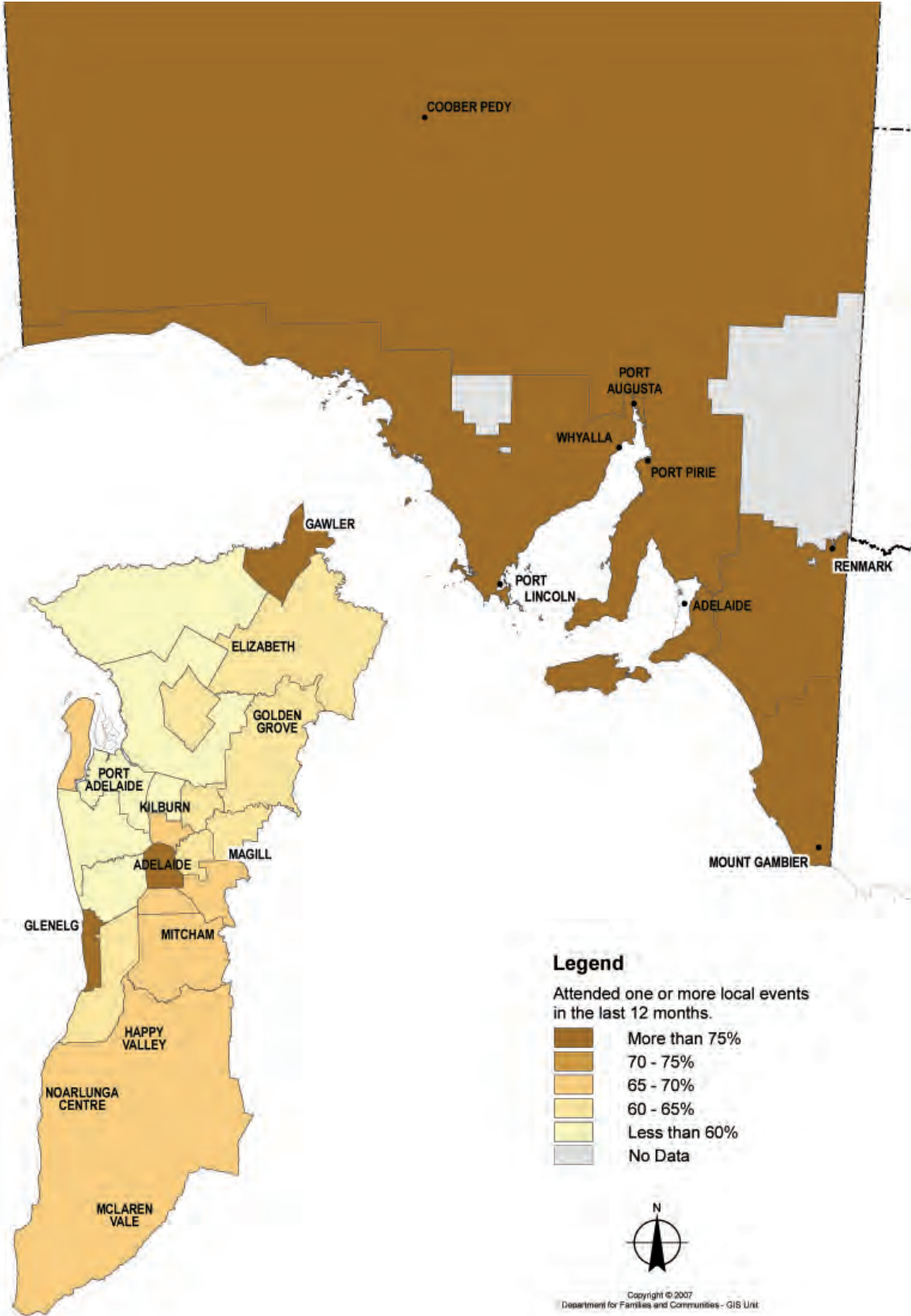


Figure 12 Proportion who attended any local community event in the last 12 months



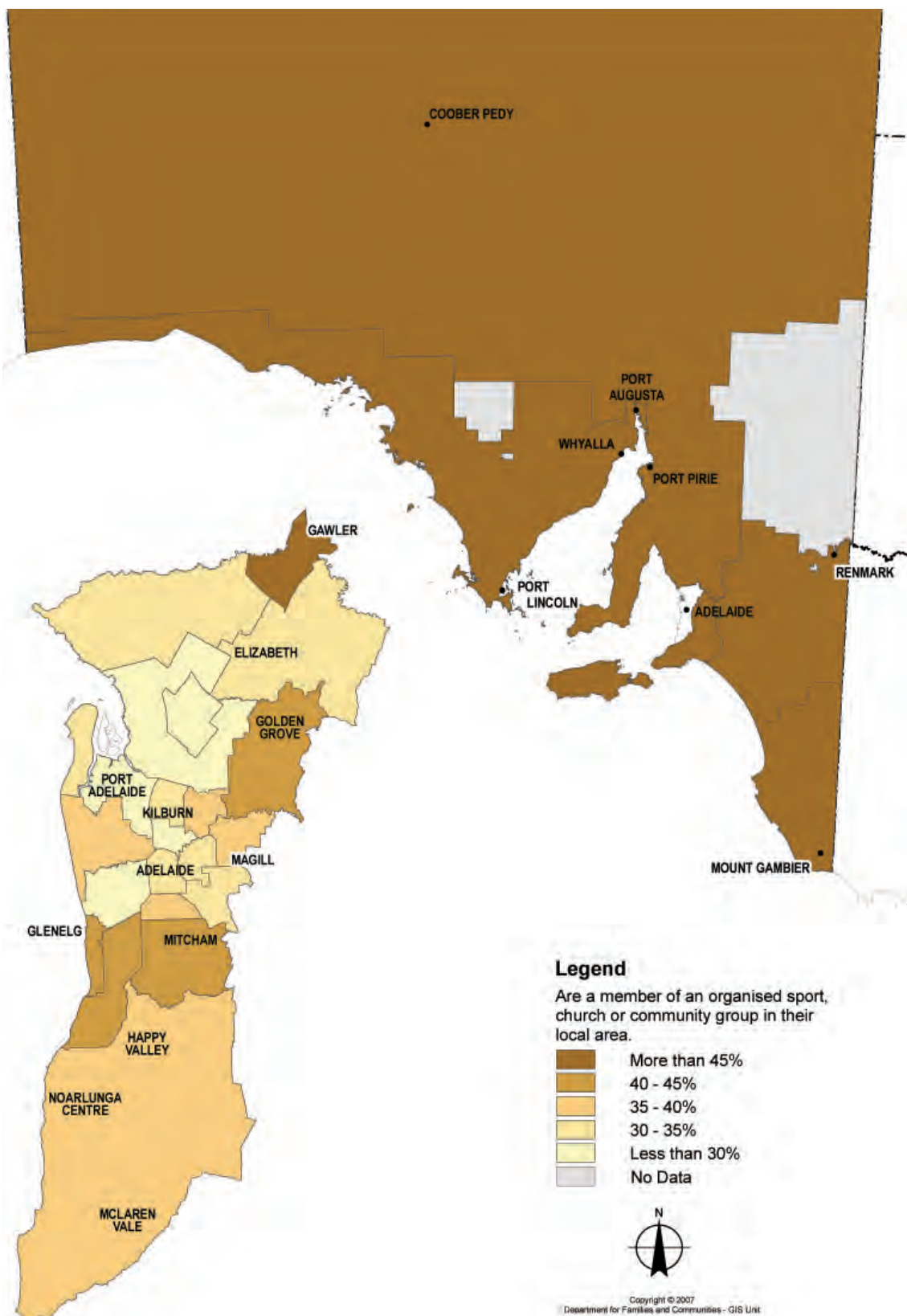


Figure 13 Proportion who are a member of an organised sport, church or community group in their local area

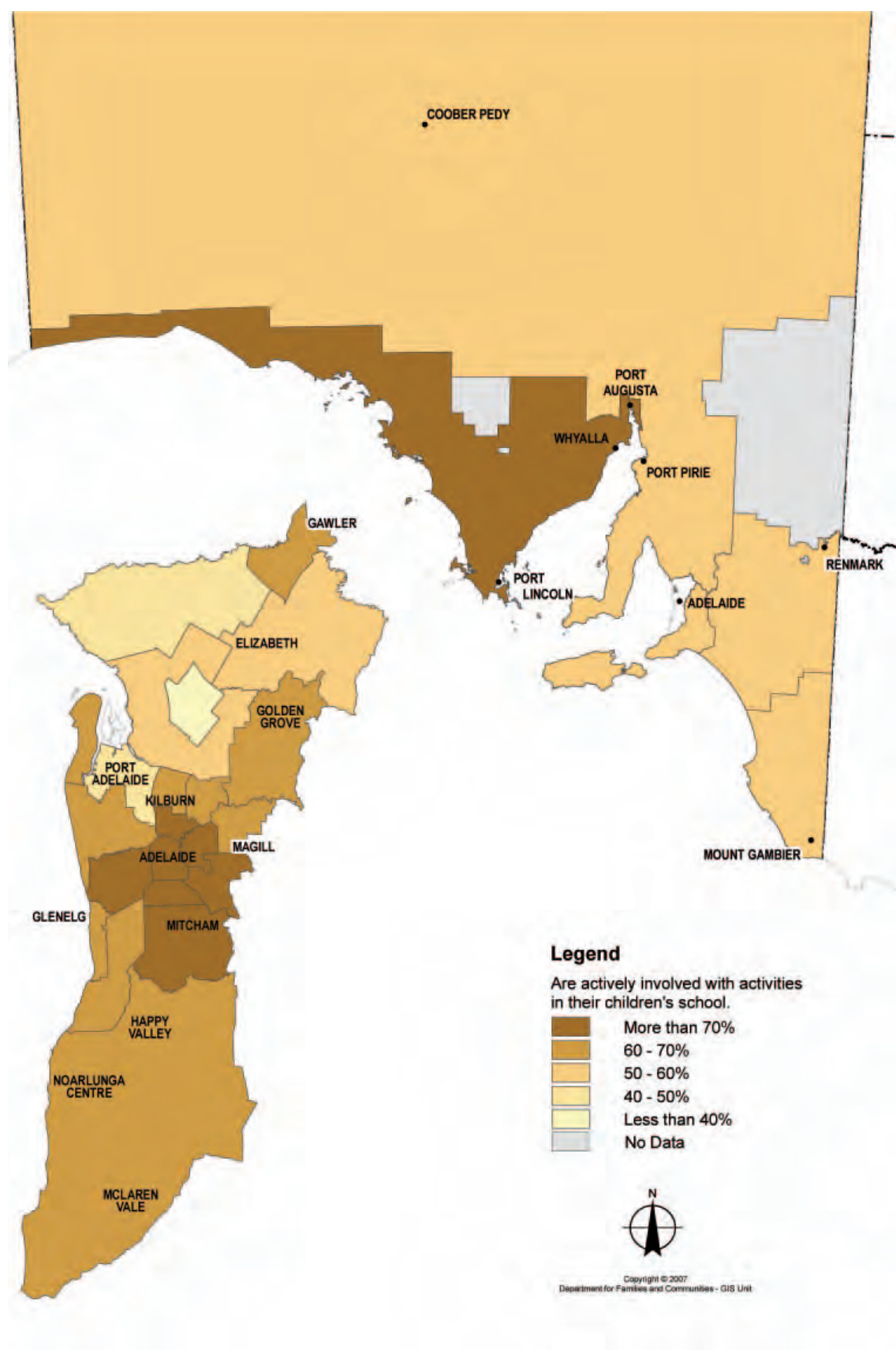


Figure 14 Proportion who are actively involved with activities in their children's school

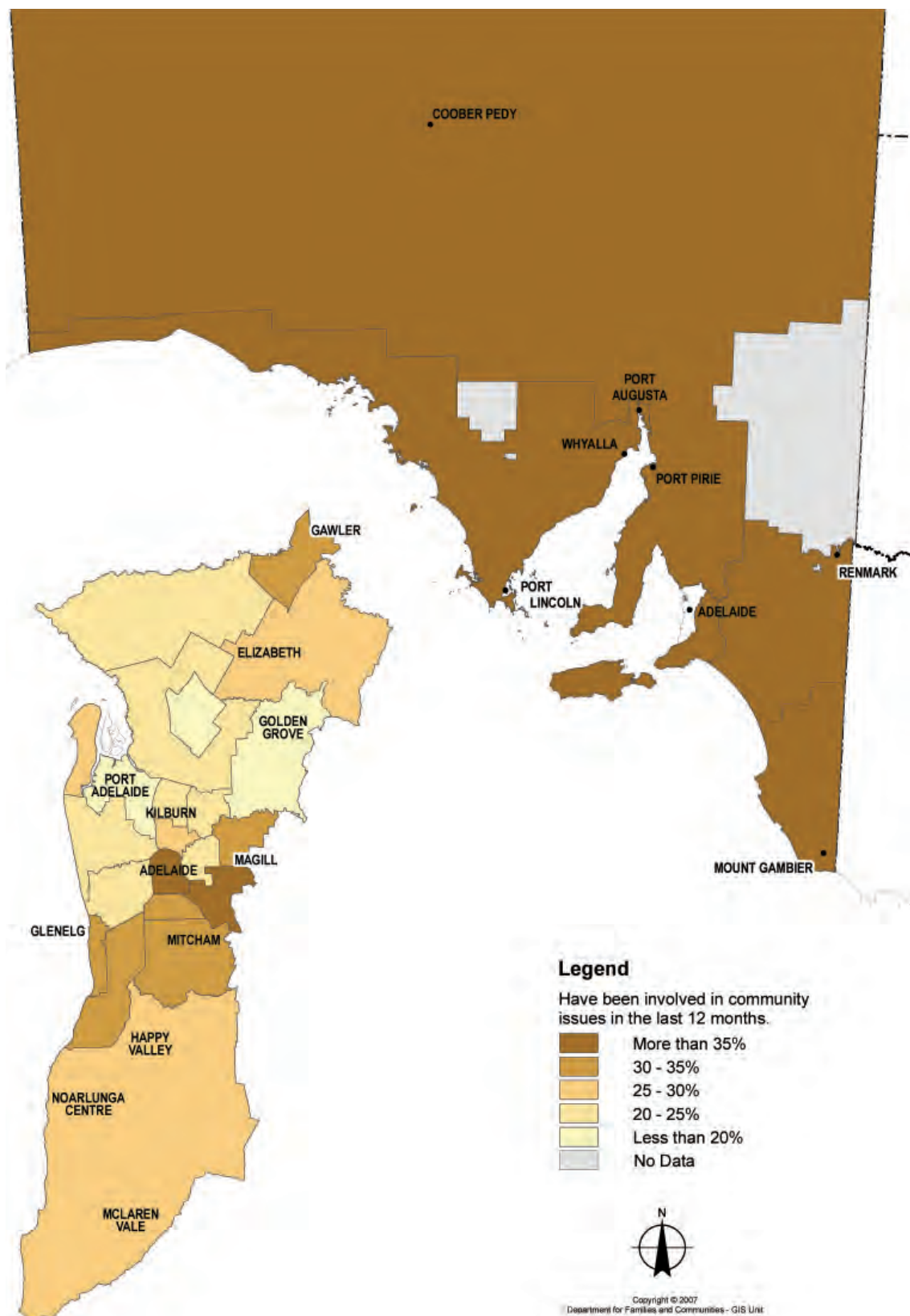


Figure 15 Proportion who have been involved in community issues in the last 12 months

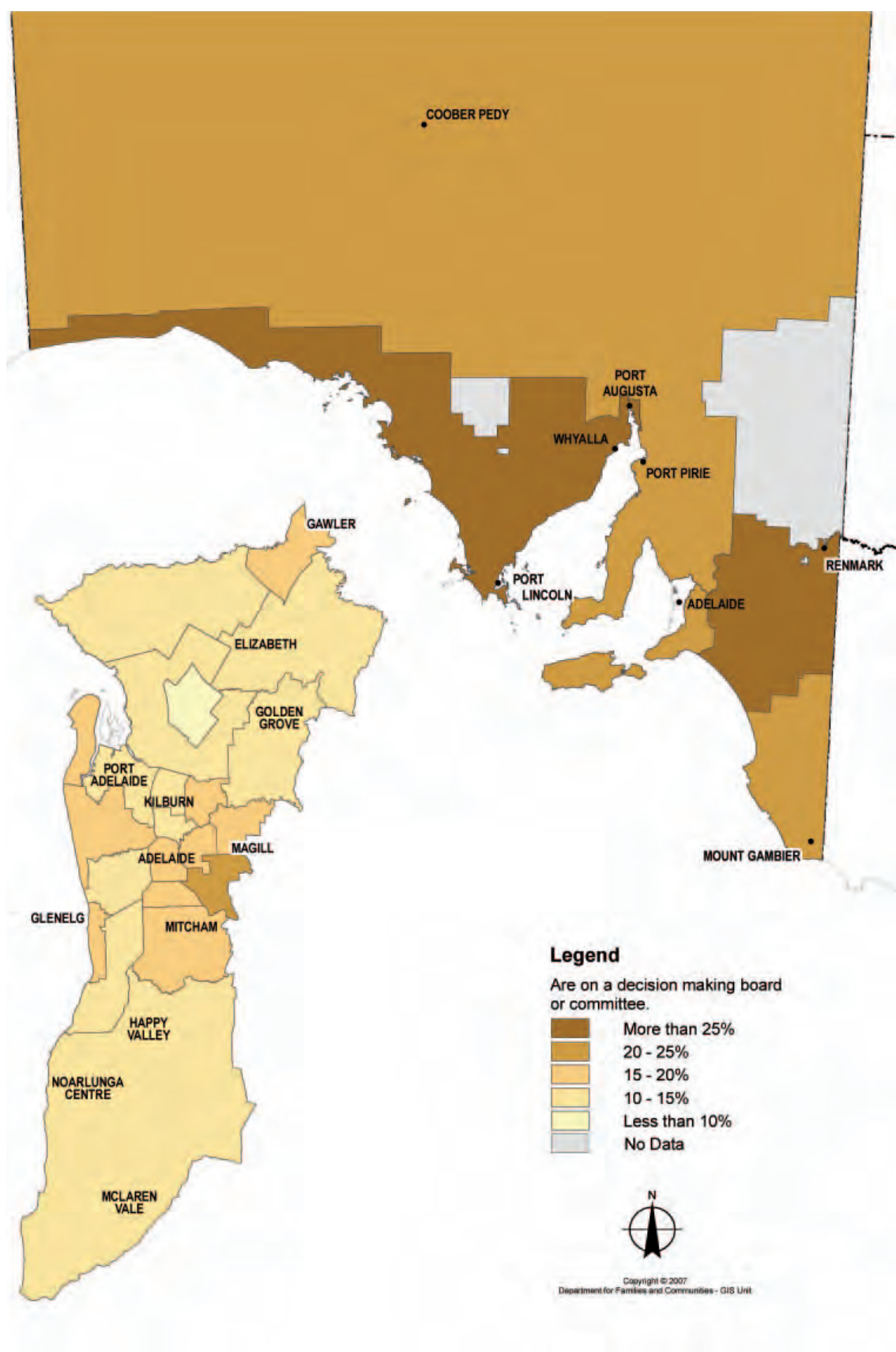


Figure 16 Proportion who are on a decision-making board or committee

# Appendices

## Questionnaire

1. Do you like living in your local community?
2. Can you get help from family, friends or neighbours when you need it?

*Questions 1 and 2 are answered Yes or No*

3. Do you feel safe in your neighbourhood or community?

*Question 3 is answered Yes definitely, Sometimes, or No, not at all*

4. Now we want you to rate aspects of your local community. How would you rate how pleasant the environment is in terms of planning, open space and lack of pollution?
5. How would you rate your neighbours in terms of friendliness and willingness to help others?
6. How would you rate your local community facilities and services (such as shops, childcare, schools, libraries)?
7. How would you rate recreation areas such as sports areas and parks?
8. How would you rate the range of community groups, for example sports clubs?

*Questions 4 to 8 are answered Excellent, Very good, Good, Fair, or Poor*

9. Do you regularly volunteer your time in any form?

10. Do you feel that people in your neighbourhood can be trusted?

11. Do you feel that you are a part of your local community?

*Questions 9 to 11 are answered Yes or No*

12. If you have become involved in community issues, could you please tell me what you have done in the last 12 months?

13. Are you a member of an organised sport or church or community group in your local area?

14. Are you on a decision-making board or committee such as a school council, sports club committee, church committee or resident action group?

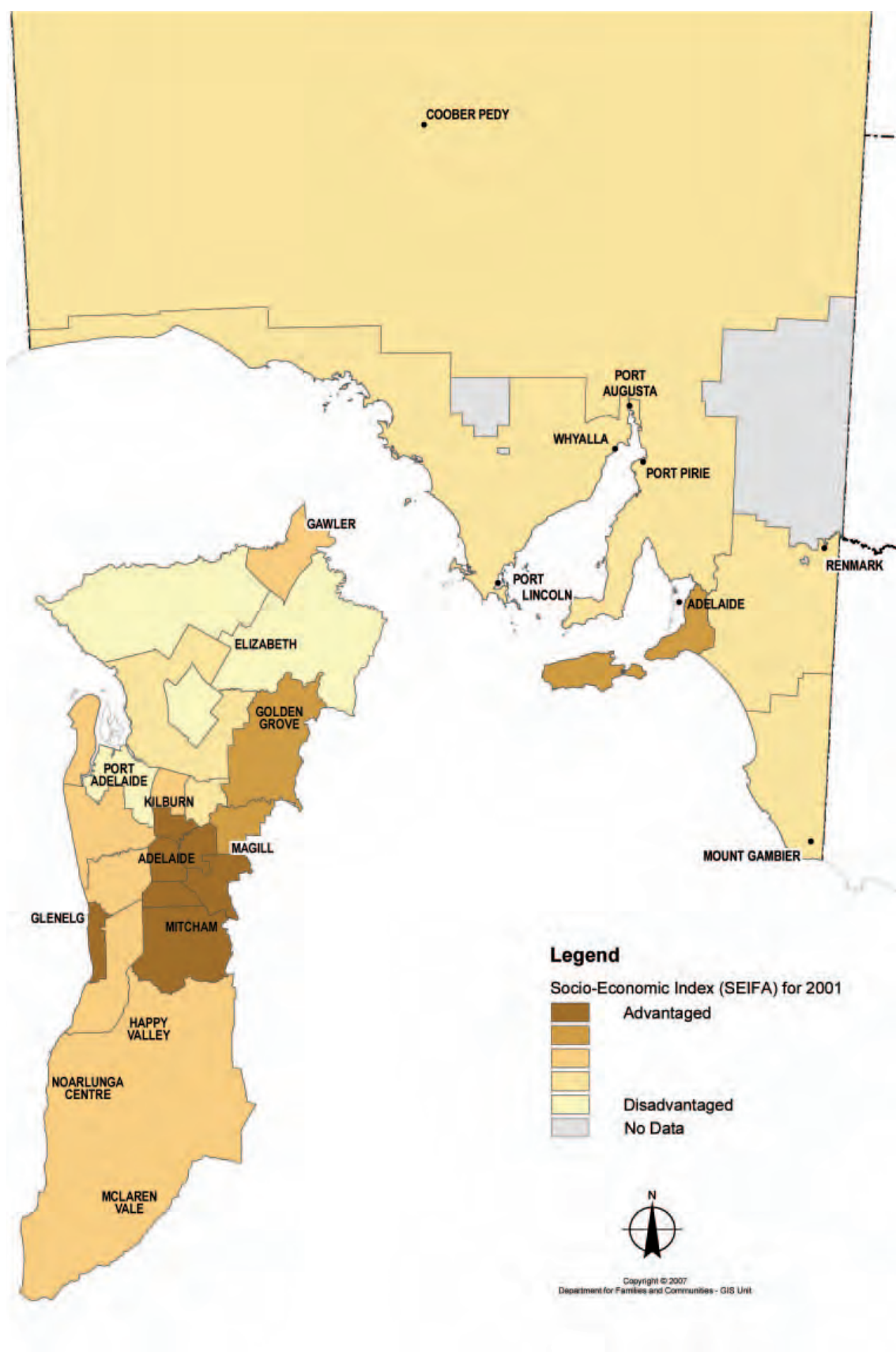
15. Do you have school aged children?

16. Are you actively involved with activities in their school?

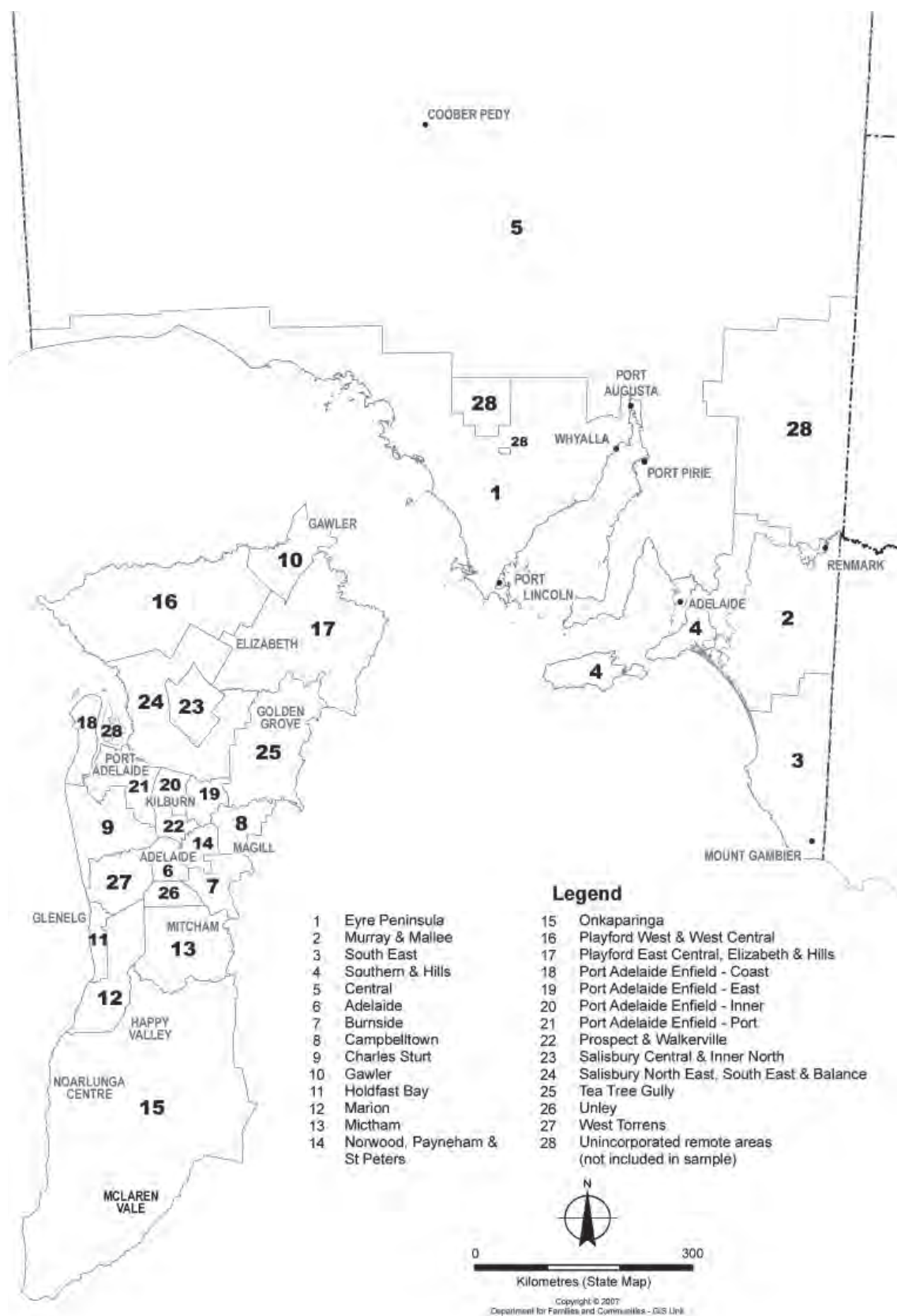
*Questions 13 to 16 are answered Yes or No*

17. How many times have you attended a local community event such as a fête, festival or school concert in the last 12 months?





Socio-economic indicators for areas (SEIFA)



Key to geographic areas in maps



## Data table

	Like living in their local community	Can get help from family, friends, or neighbours	Feel safe in their neighbourhood or community	Rate how pleasant the environment is (Good to Excellent)	Rate their neighbours in terms of friendliness and willingness to help others (Good to Excellent)	Rate their local community in terms of facilities and services (Good to Excellent)	Rate their local community in terms of recreation areas (Good to Excellent)	Rate their local community in terms of community groups (Good to Excellent)
<b>State Average</b>	<b>97.8</b>	<b>94.3</b>	<b>85.0</b>	<b>88.7</b>	<b>87.3</b>	<b>86.1</b>	<b>85.2</b>	<b>86.4</b>
Eyre Peninsula	98.3	97.1	81.7	88.5	87.9	84.4	86.6	93.3
Murray & Mallee	96.4	94.2	85.5	94.2	89.0	81.0	88.0	91.2
South East	98.4	94.6	93.5	90.4	91.3	82.8	88.3	93.7
Southern & Hills	97.7	94.9	92.2	94.0	87.4	76.0	80.9	90.0
Central	99.4	97.2	88.1	92.0	95.1	77.3	75.3	84.0
Adelaide	97.9	87.6	74.6	87.1	77.6	95.0	93.2	86.1
Burnside	99.1	95.9	91.1	95.1	90.5	94.5	94.0	90.1
Campbelltown	96.5	92.3	86.1	91.6	91.7	93.6	91.8	87.0
Charles Sturt	98.6	94.5	78.7	82.5	87.1	88.5	86.8	85.1
Gawler	95.4	91.9	83.1	86.7	84.1	79.6	82.0	92.5
Holdfast Bay	98.4	93.2	84.1	91.3	89.4	95.5	92.3	91.2
Marion	99.1	94.5	86.3	93.0	91.3	80.0	83.9	80.0
Mitcham	99.6	94.1	90.7	93.7	90.6	90.0	91.7	89.2
Norwood Payneham St Peters	98.2	93.3	87.7	91.0	79.9	94.1	86.0	89.7
Onkaparinga	98.2	97.3	83.4	87.5	83.8	85.0	82.6	87.5
Playford West & West Central	92.8	92.8	77.6	77.5	79.9	81.1	66.4	64.3
Playford East Central, Elizabeth and Hills	92.9	90.9	79.4	84.3	82.5	83.4	81.8	74.5
Port Adelaide Enfield - Coast	96.1	93.0	87.3	66.4	89.0	86.7	85.1	82.5
Port Adelaide Enfield - East	95.8	92.5	79.4	85.4	82.3	91.6	86.6	81.2
Port Adelaide Enfield - Inner	96.6	91.7	68.8	80.3	83.2	88.4	82.0	82.1
Port Adelaide Enfield - Port	93.2	90.1	70.4	70.7	82.2	81.6	70.9	67.3
Prospect and Walkerville	99.7	91.2	78.7	82.6	84.1	91.8	85.9	87.0
Salisbury Central and Inner North	92.2	93.1	74.1	83.8	83.0	84.8	87.3	83.8
Salisbury North East, South East and Balance	98.2	95.0	84.0	89.9	82.3	89.7	87.6	84.6
Tea Tree Gully	98.8	92.9	90.8	93.0	88.6	93.6	89.8	88.7
Unley	99.2	93.8	89.9	90.0	85.6	96.0	89.1	89.2
West Torrens	98.3	92.4	86.1	85.4	87.2	90.0	84.4	83.0

	Regularly volunteer their time in any form	Feel people in their neighbourhood can be trusted	Feel part of their local community	Have been involved in community issues in last 12 months	Member of organised group in their local community	On a decision making board or committee	Actively involved with activities in their children's school	Attended 1 or more local event in last 12 months
<b>State Average</b>	<b>37.2</b>	<b>86.0</b>	<b>78.4</b>	<b>29.8</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>17.8</b>	<b>63.3</b>	<b>67.7</b>
Eyre Peninsula	54.0	86.6	89.9	36.4	60.7	29.6	74.7	79.1
Murray & Mallee	48.4	91.4	91.1	37.9	57.7	28.2	52.9	85.5
South East	49.6	93.1	89.1	45.1	56.8	24.6	59.0	78.2
Southern & Hills	47.1	92.3	84.1	37.5	51.0	24.8	55.2	81.0
Central	50.1	93.8	89.1	39.7	56.3	25.0	59.1	77.8
Adelaide	30.5	79.8	72.6	38.8	35.0	19.5	89.7	77.8
Burnside	44.3	94.1	83.3	35.5	33.5	21.5	81.7	68.2
Campbelltown	28.6	86.4	74.1	32.9	36.7	16.6	67.3	60.3
Charles Sturt	31.7	85.2	76.6	22.9	39.1	16.7	63.3	55.9
Gawler	39.6	86.2	85.7	33.7	47.1	18.8	64.1	77.6
Holdfast Bay	40.1	91.7	79.6	33.5	43.3	16.8	68.5	76.9
Marion	37.3	83.2	74.9	30.5	40.3	14.3	69.0	64.8
Mitcham	39.4	94.6	82.0	32.9	43.9	17.2	80.2	69.3
Norwood Payneham St Peters	33.0	91.2	74.2	22.6	30.5	15.3	76.5	64.7
Onkaparinga	31.1	81.0	73.8	28.8	37.5	13.4	67.5	66.5
Playford West & West Central	31.5	69.2	67.9	24.6	34.4	11.9	49.0	58.6
Playford East Central, Elizabeth and Hills	32.0	73.5	73.6	25.1	31.7	13.9	51.2	62.0
Port Adelaide Enfield - Coast	32.4	80.9	78.5	29.8	31.0	18.5	65.9	66.8
Port Adelaide Enfield - East	37.1	85.0	72.0	21.3	35.0	16.2	68.0	61.0
Port Adelaide Enfield - Inner	25.7	74.3	72.7	22.3	33.2	14.5	67.3	51.5
Port Adelaide Enfield - Port	23.8	71.6	65.6	18.5	24.4	13.7	49.9	53.9
Prospect and Walkerville	28.2	85.3	71.0	28.6	29.9	11.4	80.7	68.7
Salisbury Central and Inner North	23.5	72.2	67.6	16.9	29.9	10.3	37.0	60.2
Salisbury North East, South East and Balance	26.5	79.0	77.8	24.2	27.5	10.6	54.7	52.1
Tea Tree Gully	31.1	89.3	69.7	16.4	41.2	11.3	66.3	63.0
Unley	35.1	90.2	74.2	31.3	36.5	16.5	70.9	68.2
West Torrens	31.6	82.1	72.8	21.9	29.1	12.2	70.3	54.6

**For more information please contact:**

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