

AGEING IN PRISON LONGITUDINAL STUDY (A-PLUS) NEWSLETTER



UNSW
SYDNEY

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NEWSLETTER**

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MESSAGE FROM LEAD INVESTIGATOR



Message from the Lead Investigator Professor Tony Butler



Professor Tony Butler

"It's great to finally be forging ahead with A-PLUS and our impressive team of interviewers. Undertaking research in prison can be challenging but the team has risen to the challenge and is doing a great job. Engaging with the Aboriginal community started in Campbelltown and Minto under the leadership of Uncle Dave Bell and has grown to include other areas in the state."

ABOUT THE STUDY



The Ageing in Prison Longitudinal Study (A-PLUS)

A-PLUS is an NHMHC funded longitudinal study collecting health and frailty data from 650 older adults in prison and a comparison group of 400 adults in the community aged 45 years and above.

Study Aims



Determine the prevalence of frailty and key indicators of age-related health status of older adults in prison compared to older adults in the general population.



Examine the extent of age-related health decline or improvement occurring in older adults in prison over time compared to older adults in the general population.



Identify whether there are distinct subgroups of people in prison in terms of frailty trajectories, based on individual health factors, social determinants, and broader systemic factors.

PRISON COHORT

Prison Sites

The prison cohort includes 26 correctional centres across NSW. The sites are operationally organised into 6 clusters: Mid North Coast, Hunter, Metropolitan, South Coast, Western and Central West of NSW.

A-PLUS study sites

 Numbers in brackets indicate eligible participants



PRISON COHORT



Prison Cohort Progress

Data collection commenced in February 2026. As of August 31, 255 interviews have been completed across 19 NSW correctional centres. The majority of these interviews were conducted in-person.

The graph below shows the percentage of completed interviews relative to the number of eligible participants at each correctional centre. Completion rates across centres range from 8% to 90.9%.

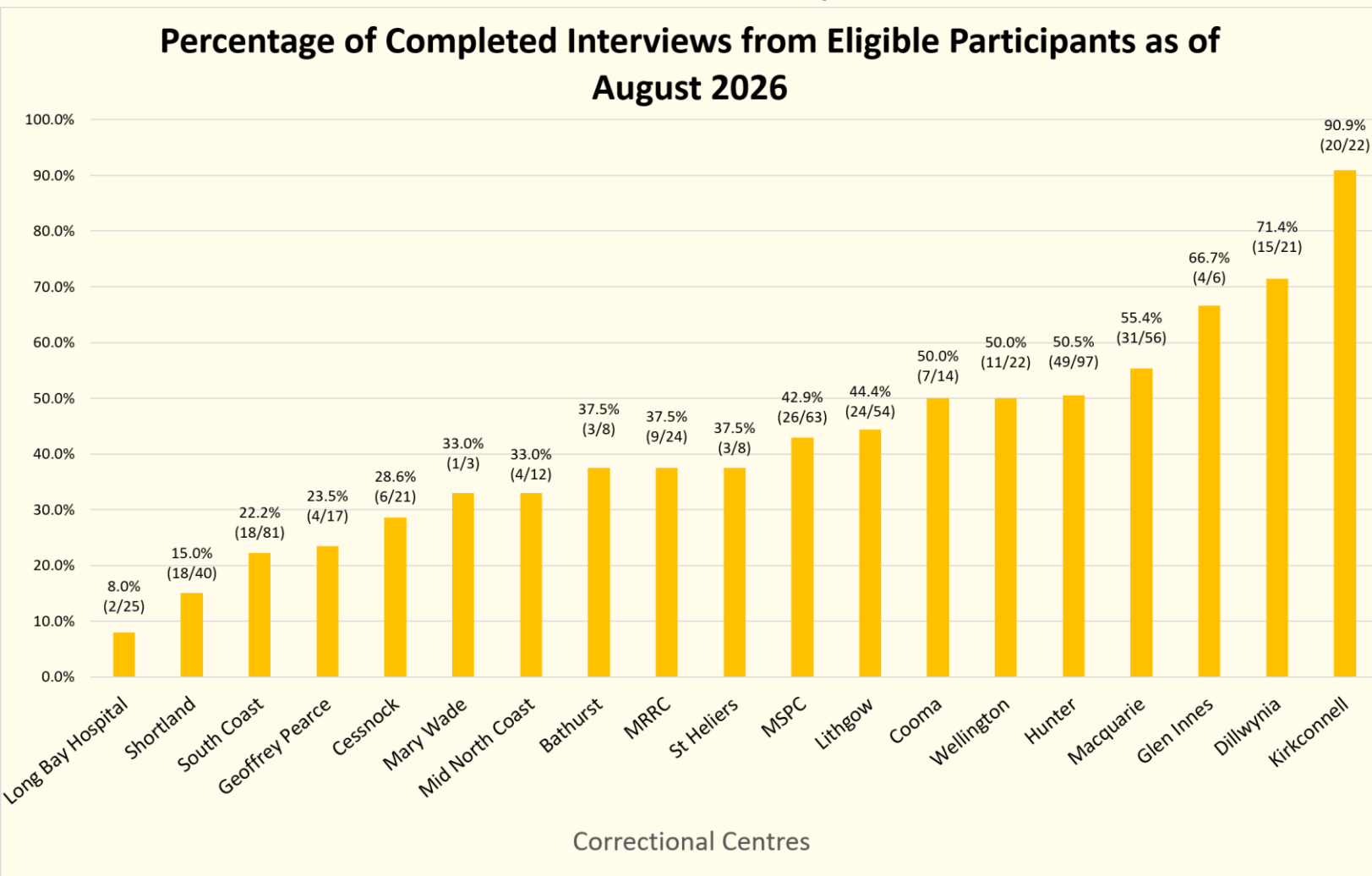


Figure 1. Graph displaying the percentage of completed interviews relative to the number of eligible interviews from each correctional centre.

PRISON COHORT



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Prison Cohort Insights and Challenges

Feedback

Feedback on the A-PLUS team's work has been *overwhelmingly positive*. Correctional staff and inmates alike recognise the importance of researching this topic and their assistance and cooperation has been greatly appreciated.

Operational Challenges

A-PLUS team members have faced challenges such as *lock-ins, limited inmate access, and availability of Audio-Visual Link* for conducting interviews. The team recognises these challenges are often unavoidable in a carceral setting and appreciates Corrective Services NSW flexibility in helping complete as many interviews as possible.

Increasing Participation Rates

Low participation rate has been the main challenge for the study. The project has been working closely with Corrective Services NSW on strategies *to increase participation*, such as in-person meetings with inmates to provide more information about the study, answer questions, and obtain verbal consent. This approach has been successful in one metropolitan correctional centre increasing *completed interviews by 35 percentage points (from 8% to 43%)* and is being adopted to other centres with low participation rate.

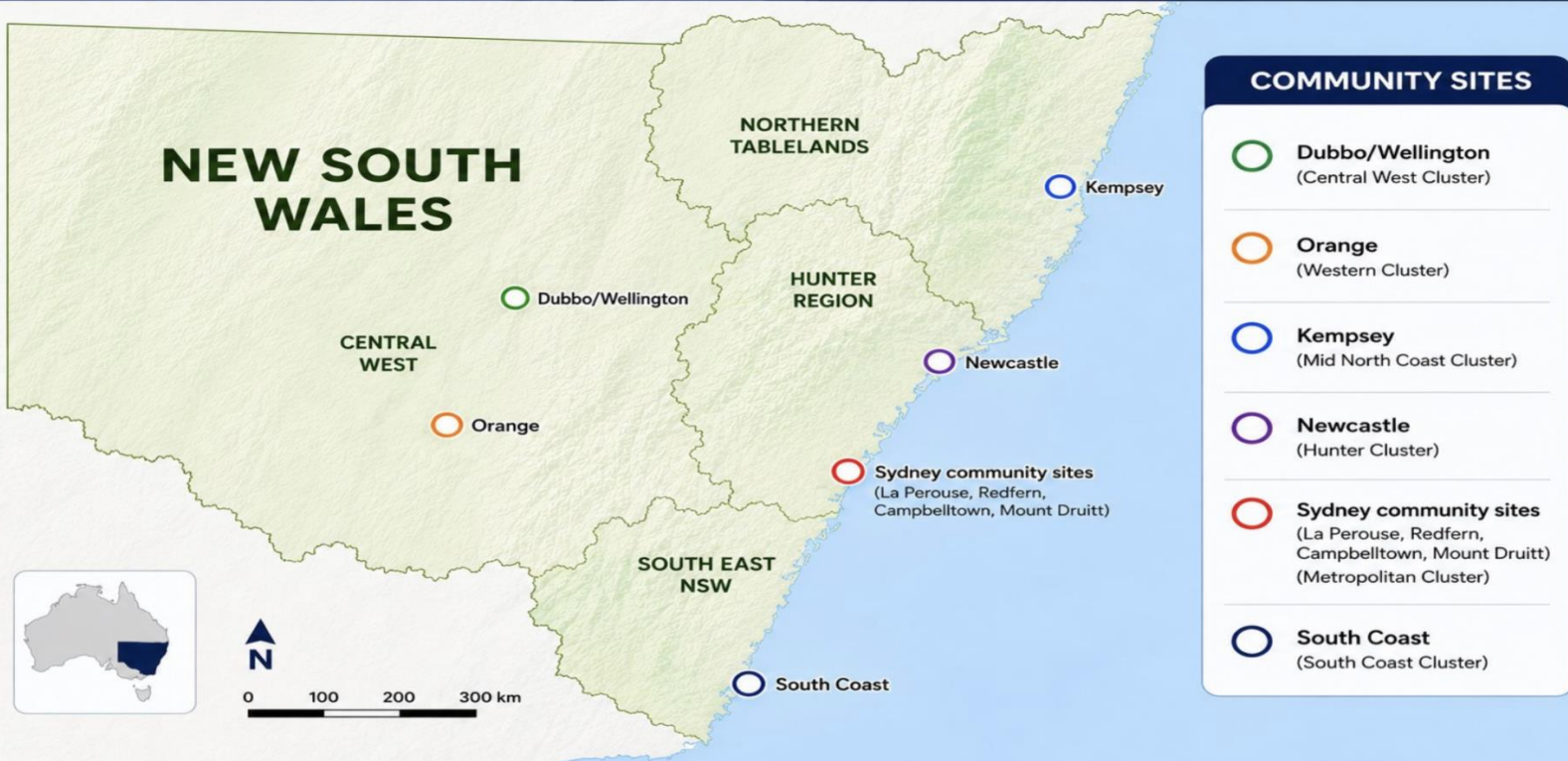
COMMUNITY COHORT



Community Cohort Sites

The map below shows the community cohort sites for the study. Six sites have been identified including Dubbo/Wellington, Orange, Kempsey, Newcastle, Sydney area (La Perouse, Campbelltown, Mount Drutt) and South Coast.

A-PLUS community study sites



COMMUNITY COHORT

Community Cohort Recruitment

The purpose of the community cohort is to provide a dataset that can be directly compared with the prison cohort. Recruitment involves intentional oversampling of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and women.

Recruitment for the community cohort was led by Aboriginal Elders (Uncle Dave, Uncle Des, Uncle Chris, and Aunty Amanda) and the Southwest Sydney Community Centre (Aunty Mal).



Figure 2. Aboriginal Elders, Southwest Sydney Community Centre staff and A-PLUS team member, Minto, NSW.

COMMUNITY COHORT



Community Cohort Progress

Data collection for the community cohort *began in early May 2026*, in the Campbelltown-Minto area. By 31 August 2026, *59 interviews (50% Indigenous) have been completed* face-to-face.

In July and August of 2026, community cohort recruitment has expanded to the Kempsey area of NSW.



Figure 3. Southwest Sydney Community Centre, Minto, NSW (Interview site).

MEET THE TEAM



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WHAT'S COMING UP?



Prison Cohort

Additional recruitment: Prison cohort interviews continue to be conducted at centres that have consenting participants. To complete "Wave 1" of data collection, A-PLUS team members will be re-visiting some centres to include eligible inmates who may have been missed during the initial eligibility screening.



Community Cohort

Site expansion: The project is scoping for expansion of the community cohort into Penrith and Redfern areas of NSW.



New Collaboration

Tavener Research Group has recently joined the study with plans to recruit and conduct most of the non-Indigenous community cohort interviews.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



The A-PLUS team would like to thank the following people.

1. Corrective Services NSW staff at each correctional centre for their invaluable support to the study.
2. Study participants for their respectfulness, cooperation and patience during interviews.
3. Aboriginal Elders and the Southwest Sydney Community Centre for leading the recruitment of community cohort participants.