Australian Government

Inspector-General of Water Compliance

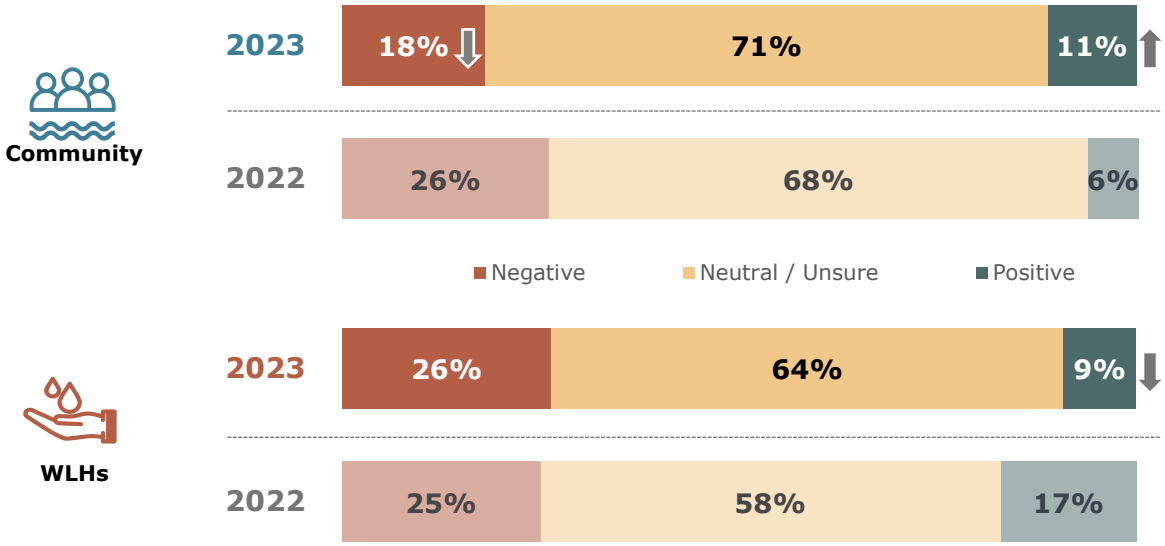
Murray–Darling Basin community perceptions research 2023

Perceptions relating to water management in the Murray—Darling Basin

Perceptions of water management

While perceptions of water management among community respondents have improved slightly from the previous research, water licence holder respondents were significantly less likely to provide a positive rating. Across both audiences, negative perceptions were more commonly reported than positive.

Feelings towards the management of water in the Basin…



Q17. On a scale from 1 to 10, where '1' is extremely negative, and '10' is extremely positive, based on what you know, how would you rate your feelings about the management of water in the Basin…? Negative = 1-3, Neutral = 4-7, Positive = 8-10.
Base: Community (2023: n=800; 2022: n=817), WLH (2023: n=214; 2022: n=200). Note: Arrows indicate results are significantly higher or lower than the previous year (at a 90% Confidence level).

Key perceptions of water management identified in the qualitative research

As found previously, perceptions of water management were influenced by what participants saw and heard…

Key positive perceptions identified in 2023 research included:

- ✓ **More water in the system currently** – which reduced skepticism and concerns about management of water.
- ✓ **A greater focus on water efficiency** in agricultural and irrigation decisions and practices (e.g. drip irrigation, more efficient crops, planting decisions and crop variation).
- ✓ **Environmental flows** having **improved biodiversity** (e.g. flora and fauna) and **water quality**.

Key negative perceptions identified in 2023 research included:

- × **Foreign ownership of water** and **using Australia's water to grow products for export** (e.g. cotton) – which was disadvantaging Australian growers and community.
- × Environmental flows **destroying the environment** (e.g. erosion of banks, flow fluctuations, the Barmah Choke).
- × Water **not being shared fairly** and **inconsistencies in rules and regulations** between States/ Territory.
- × Not enough action taken to **prepare communities and businesses for weather events** (e.g. drought, flooding).
- × **Political motives** driving water management decisions.