



Australian Government



Inspector-
General of
Water
Compliance

Murray–Darling Basin community perceptions research 2023

Findings relating to compliance and enforcement



Community concerns relating to the Basin



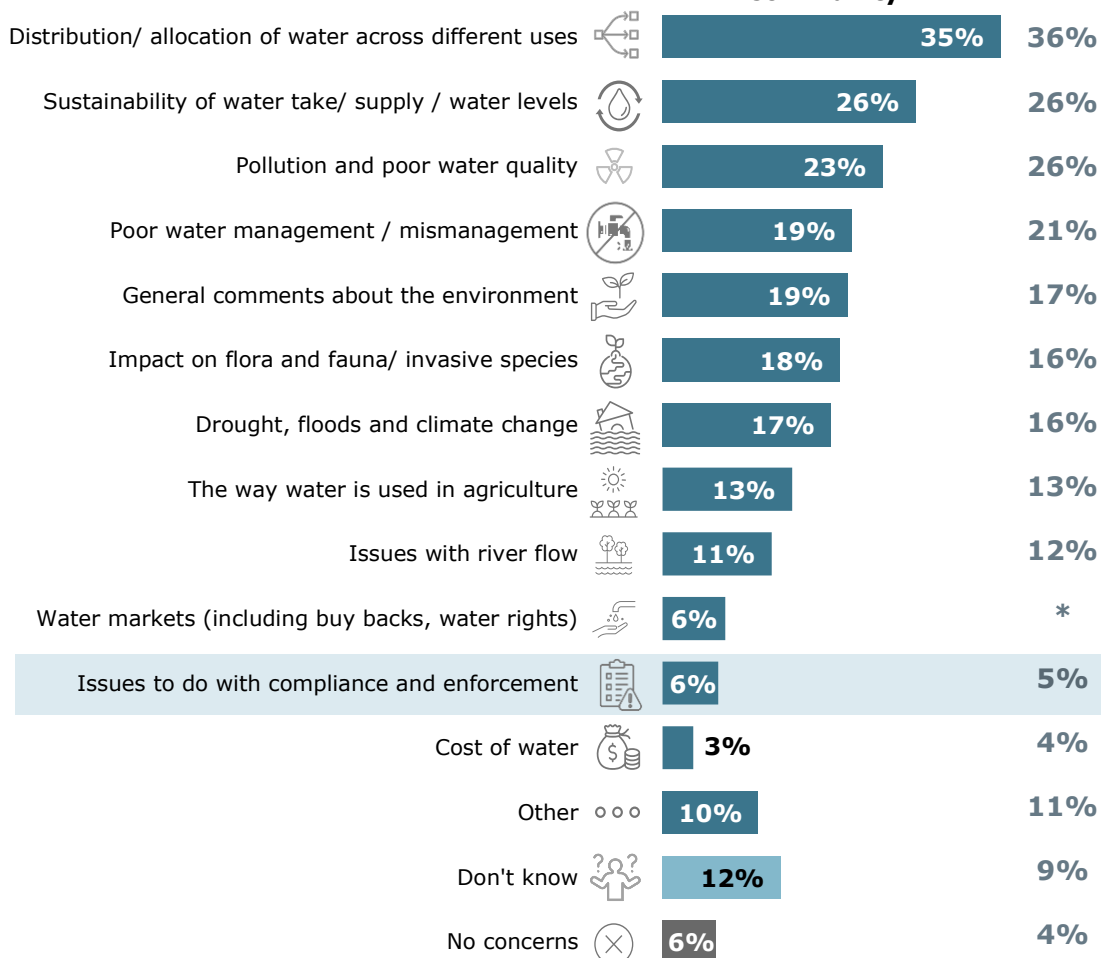
Respondents' key concerns in relation to the Basin have remained largely consistent with the previous research and include: **distribution and allocation of water** across the Basin; **sustainability of the system** for the future; and **quality of water**, including pollution.

Top-of-mind concerns relating to the Murray–Darling Basin

(unprompted responses from community members)



2022



"If water isn't managed properly then we have disasters like the 2010-2011 floods, which were horrific"
– Less engaged community member, Queensland

Consistent with the previous research, **compliance and enforcement were a smaller concern among water management issues across the Basin more broadly**, with only 6% of community respondents considering these to be a key concern. However, the qualitative research indicated that compliance and enforcement **tended to become a more critical issue and had higher priority during drier periods.**

Q19. Based on what you know, what three issues are you most concerned about in relation to the Murray–Darling Basin?
Base: Community (2022: n=817, 2023: n=800).
*Note: Code added in 2023.

Importance of compliance and enforcement

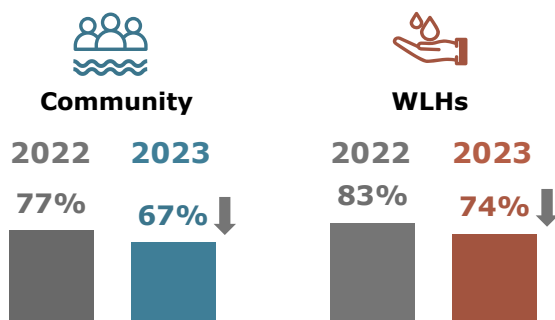
Consistent with the previous research, strong compliance and enforcement was felt to be important to **ensure the effectiveness of water management efforts across the Basin** – though this has reduced since 2022. The benefits it affords remained the same, and most agreed that the whole community benefited when rules and regulations were followed.

There has also been strong agreement over both rounds of the research that **it was important to have an independent federal body overseeing water rules and regulations across the Basin.**

The importance of compliance and enforcement of water rules and regulations for Basin community reduced for both Basin community and water licence holder respondents in 2023...

Importance of compliance and enforcement of water rules and regulations in the Murray–Darling Basin for the Basin community (when prompted)

(% rated 8-10 out of 10)

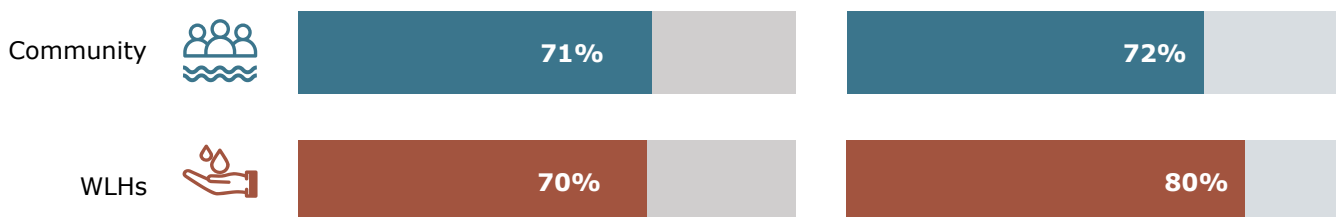


Q26. How important is compliance and enforcement of water rules and regulations in the Murray–Darling Basin for...? People who live in the Basin. Base: Community (2022: n=817, 2023: n=800), WLH (2022: n=200, 2023: n=214). Note: Arrows indicate results are significantly higher or lower than the previous year (at a 90% Confidence level).

The qualitative research found this reduction in sentiment was **likely due to the amount of water currently in the system**, which tended to make compliance and enforcement a lower priority at this point in time.

...It is **important to have an independent federal body overseeing water rules and regulations across the Basin** (% agree)

...The **whole community benefits when water rules and regulations are followed** (% agree)



Q27. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about water rules and regulations in the Murray–Darling Basin. Base: Community (2023: n=800), WLH (2023: n=214).

The qualitative research was consistent with the 2022 results in confirming the **benefits of strong compliance and enforcement** as being to:



Ensure consistency in water regulations – which was felt to be key to effective management and collaboration across the system.



Enable fairness/ equity in water use/ water take – which alleviated negative perceptions/ polarisation of views.



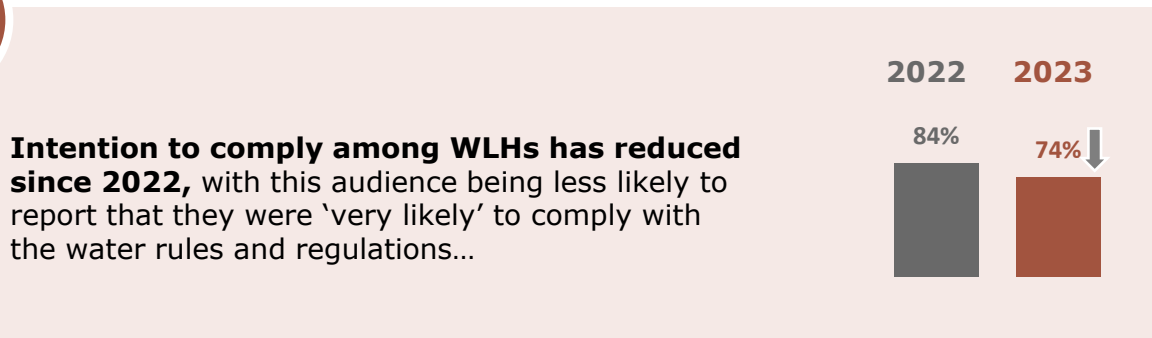
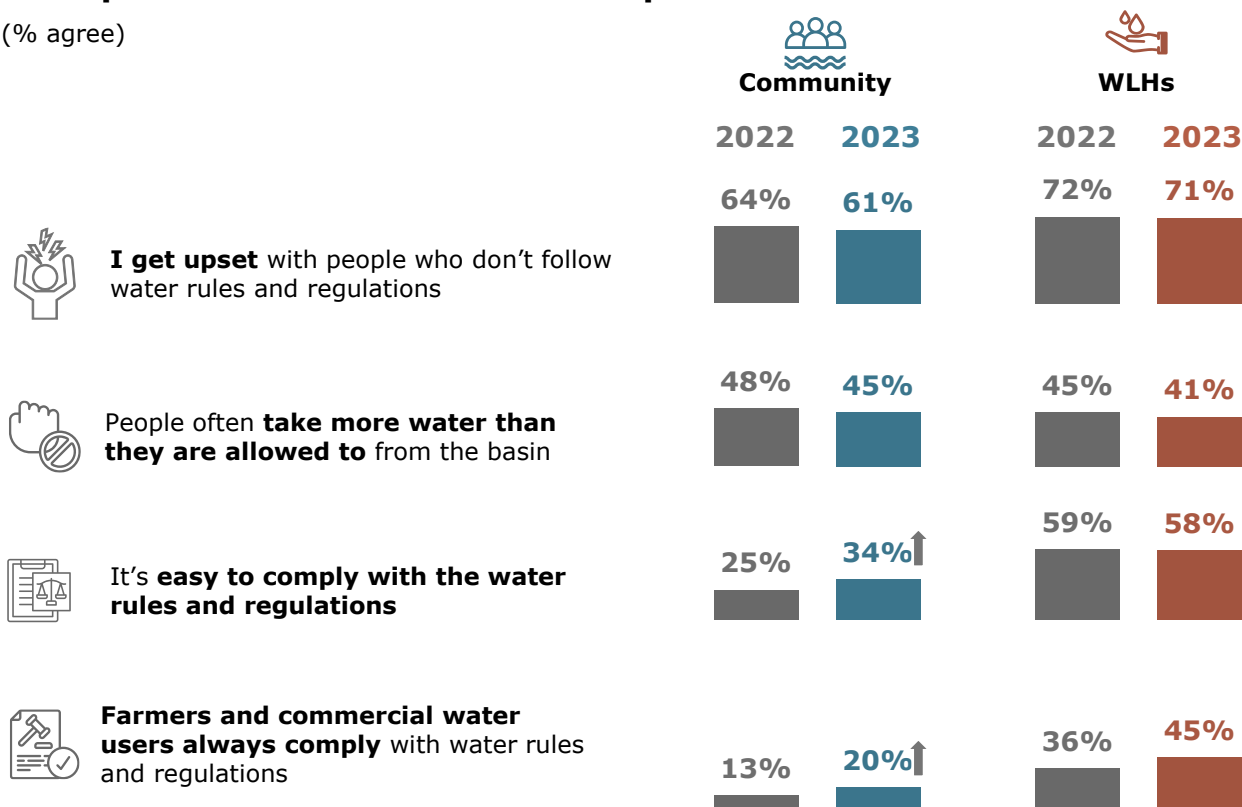
Ensure the sustainability of the system – which was essential for the sustenance of the system and survival of Basin communities.

Perceptions and attitudes towards compliance

The perception that it is easy to comply with water rules and regulations – and that **farmers and commercial water users always complied** with them – increased among community members in 2023. However, the proportion of **water licence holders indicating that they were 'very likely' to comply with the water rules and regulations reduced** from 84% to 74%.

Perceptions of and attitudes to compliance

(% agree)



Q27. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about water rules and regulations in the Murray–Darling Basin.
 Q28. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Murray–Darling Basin.
 Base: Community (2022: n=817, 2023: n=800), WLH (2022: n=200, 2023: n=214).
 Q32. How likely are you to...? Base: WLH (2022: n=200, 2023: n=214).
 Note: Arrows indicate results are significantly higher or lower than the previous year (at a 90% Confidence level).

Monitoring and enforcement

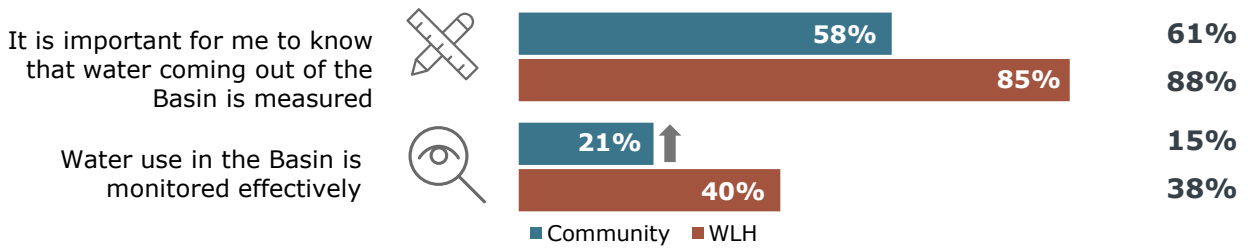


Positively, more community members believed that **rules and regulations were consistently enforced**, and that water was being monitored effectively across the Basin, compared with the 2022 results (important aspects of the IGWC’s role). They were also more likely to feel that **penalties for water theft in the Basin were appropriate**. However, awareness of water users being punished dropped among water licence holders.

Perceptions of, and attitudes to, monitoring

(% agree)

2022



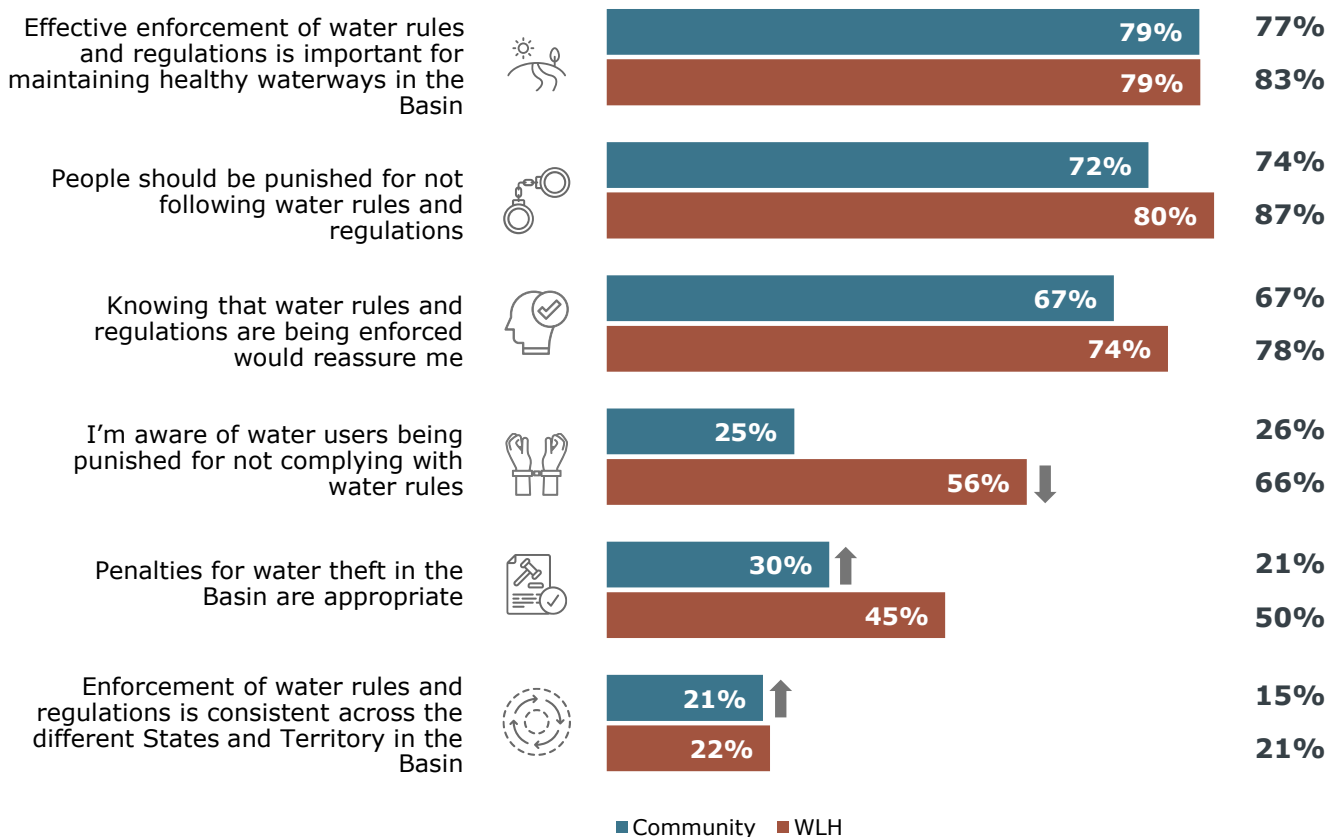
Q27. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about water rules and regulations in the Murray–Darling Basin. Q28. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Murray–Darling Basin. Base: Community (2022: n=817, 2023: n=800), WLH (2022: n=200, 2023: n=214). Note: Arrows indicate results are significantly higher or lower than the previous year (at a 90% Confidence level).

Perceptions of, and attitudes to, enforcement

There was strong support among both community member and water licence holder participants for the enforcement of rules and regulations – with the view that this was important for the health of waterways.

(% agree)

2022



Q27. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about water rules and regulations in the Murray–Darling Basin. Q28. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Murray–Darling Basin. Base: Community (2022: n=817, 2023: n=800), WLH (2022: n=200, 2023: n=214). Note: Arrows indicate results are significantly higher or lower than the previous year (at a 90% Confidence level).