

# DWER Corporate Research 2023

**Stakeholders, Customer & Community  
Insights**

**March 2023**



**Government of Western Australia**

**Department of Water and  
Environmental Regulation**



# Scope of Engagement



**Stakeholder Survey**

**Online and telephone survey**


n=361 achieved sample



**Customer Survey**

**Online survey**

n=306 achieved sample



**Community Survey**

**Online survey**

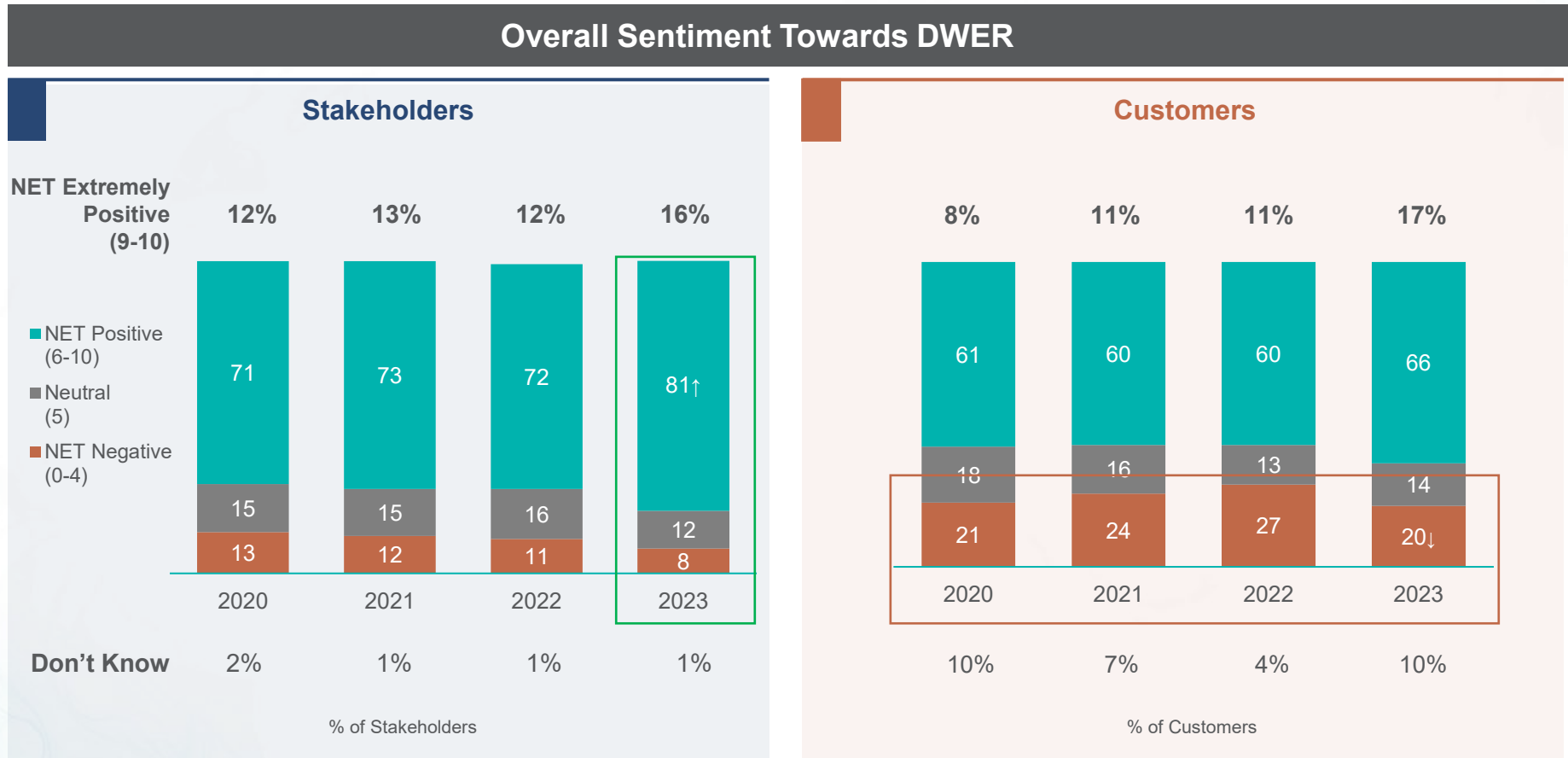
n=600 achieved sample  
(n=400 metro, n=200 regional WA)

Data collection: 13 October to 14 December 2022.

# Overall impressions of DWER



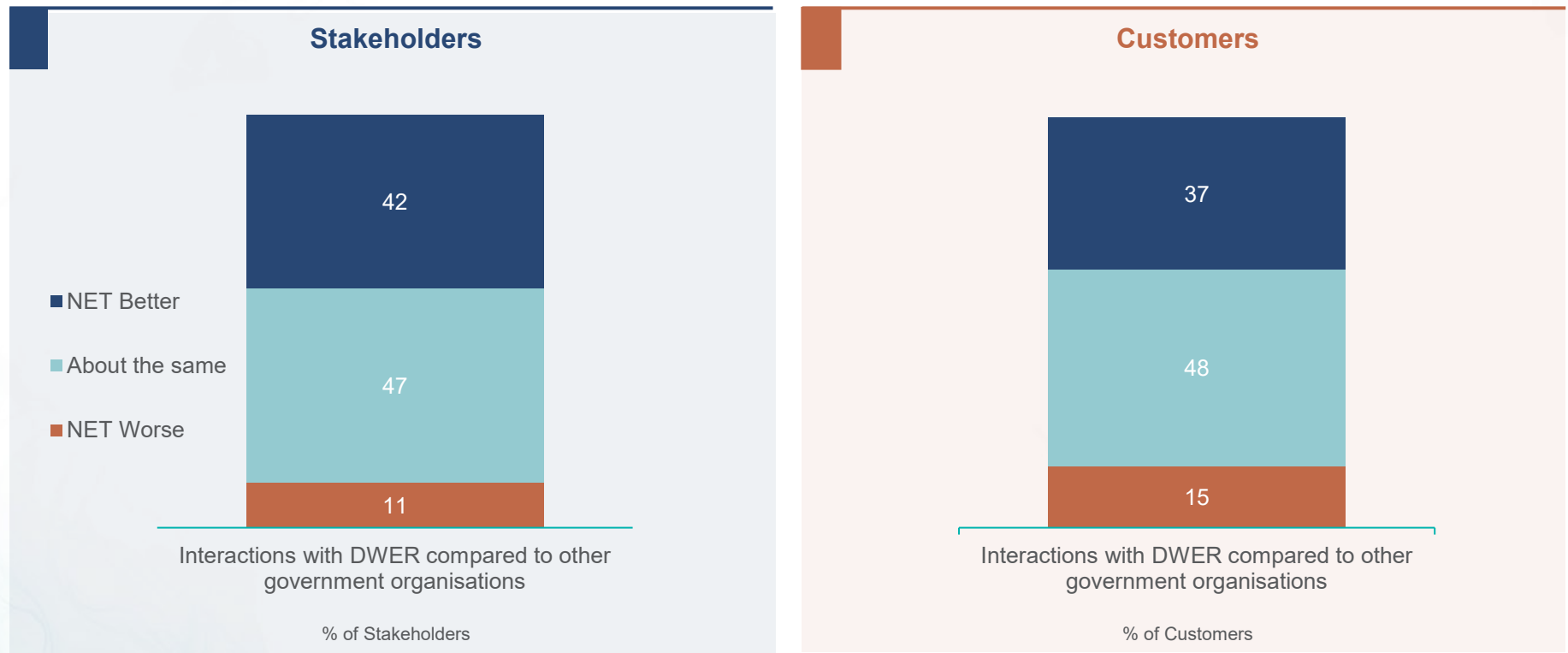
# Overall Stakeholder and Customer sentiment towards DWER was more positive this year



Stakeholders - 2023: n=359 | 2022: n=396 | 2021: n=362 | 2020: n=367  
 Customers - 2023: n=276 | 2022: n=294 | 2021: n=408 | 2020: n= 626  
 Q6/Q7: Overall, how do you feel about the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation as an organisation?  
 ↑↓ Significant difference to previous year's results at 95% confidence  
 Don't know responses have been removed from charted data  
 Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

# Most Stakeholders and Customers feel their interactions with DWER are the same, if not better, than their interactions with other government organisations

## Interactions with DWER Compared to Other Government Organisations



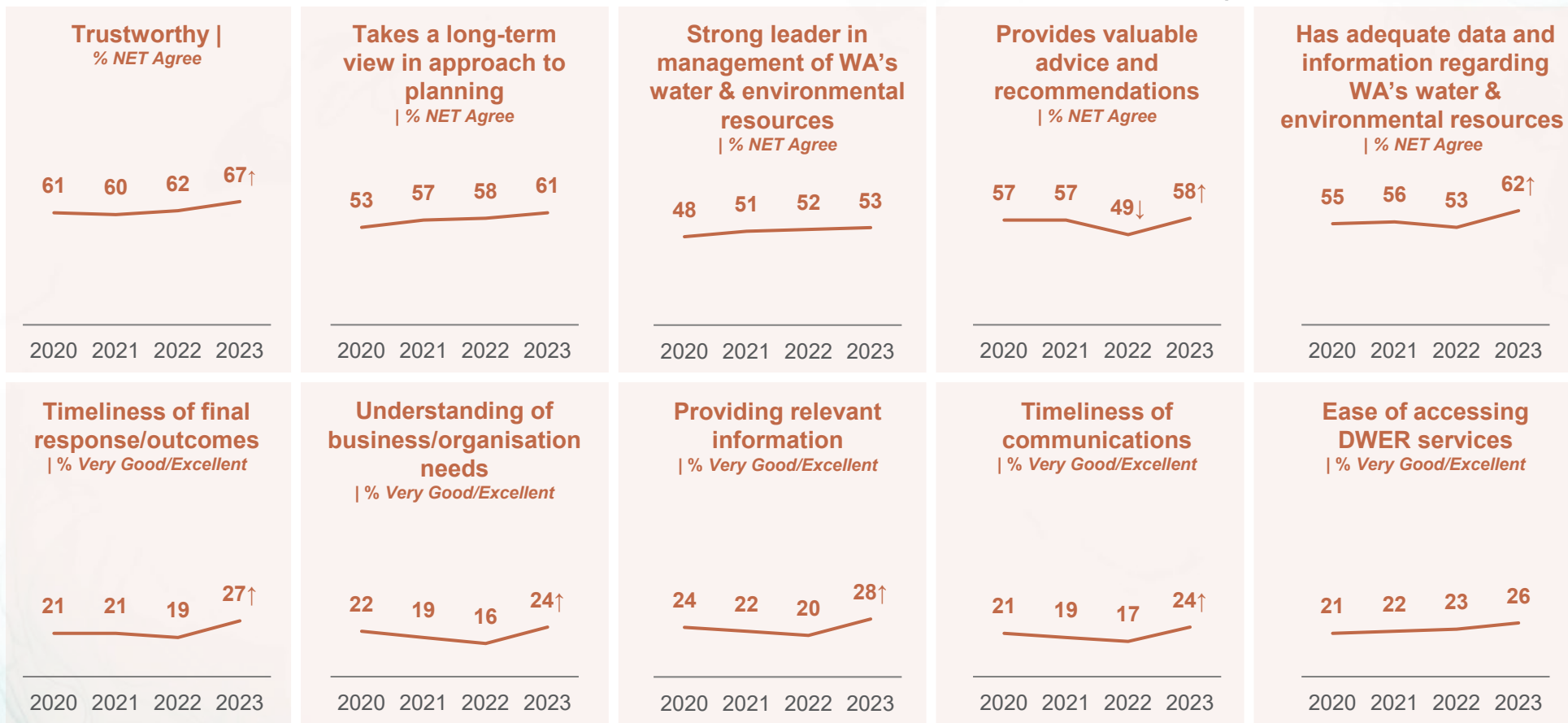
Stakeholders n=354 | Customers n=280

Q18d: Overall, how would you rate your interactions with DWER compared to other government organisations that you deal with? Your interactions with DWER are...

Don't know responses have been removed from the charted data

Note: Q18d was only asked in 2023.

# Improvements in Customer perceptions of DWER’s decision making, timeliness of outcomes and communications have contributed to more positive overall sentiment this year



2023 : n= 264 | 256 | 276 | 266 | 243 | 261 | 256 | 267 | 273 | 274  
 2022 : n= 276 | 253 | 266 | 273 | 239 | 275 | 263 | 259 | 271 | 273  
 2021 : n= 374 | 340 | 363 | 368 | 335 | 378 | 357 | 361 | 378 | 378  
 2020: n= 590 | 508 | 572 | 578 | 518 | 589 | 582 | 580 | 591 | 602

Q17. Based on everything you have seen, heard or experienced, to what extent do you agree or disagree that DWER Q18A. And to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about DWER’s knowledge and expertise in the management of the state’s water resources and environment Q22B. And how would you rate DWER’s performance in managing their relationship with you and your business/organisation, across each of the following areas?

Q23. Still thinking about your interactions with DWER, how would you rate the following

Don’t know responses have been removed from the charted data

↑↓ Significant difference to previous year data at 95% confidence

# In their own words...

## Stakeholders

*'I've had some good dealings in the past two years and there have been improvements. We regularly meet them and work together on guidelines to help the environment team fulfil their requirements. There have been some good operators.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**



*'They do a good job, especially with the resources available at the moment. My personal experience has been that we've always had timely, professional and polite responses to our queries.'* **Other Stakeholder**

## Customers

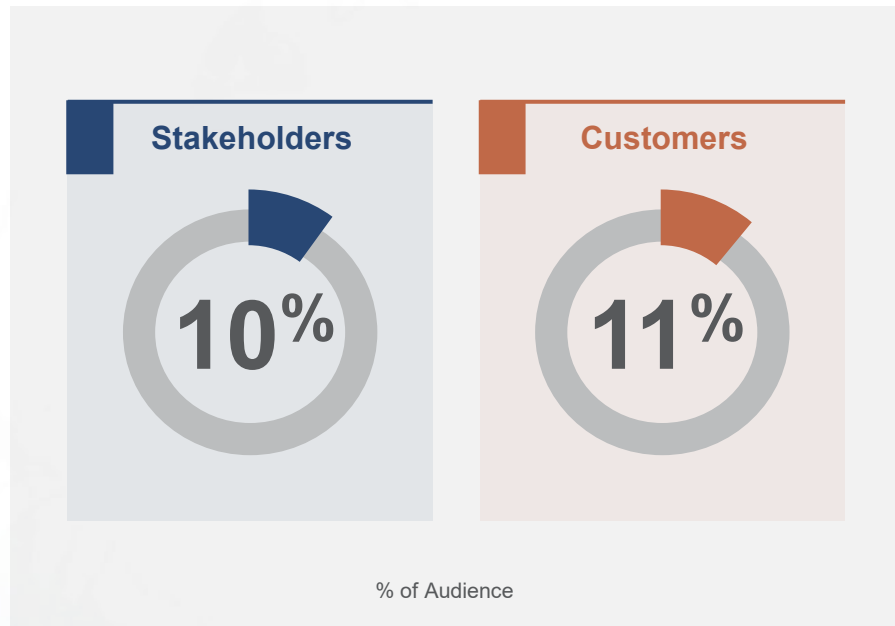
*'The department has become extremely positive to deal with. Their vision and attendance to issues are flawless. Having dealt with many government departments over the years in different fields, we find this department and its direction and implementations above par. In particular, the leadership quality and values are to be noted, appreciated and respected.'* **Water Licensee**



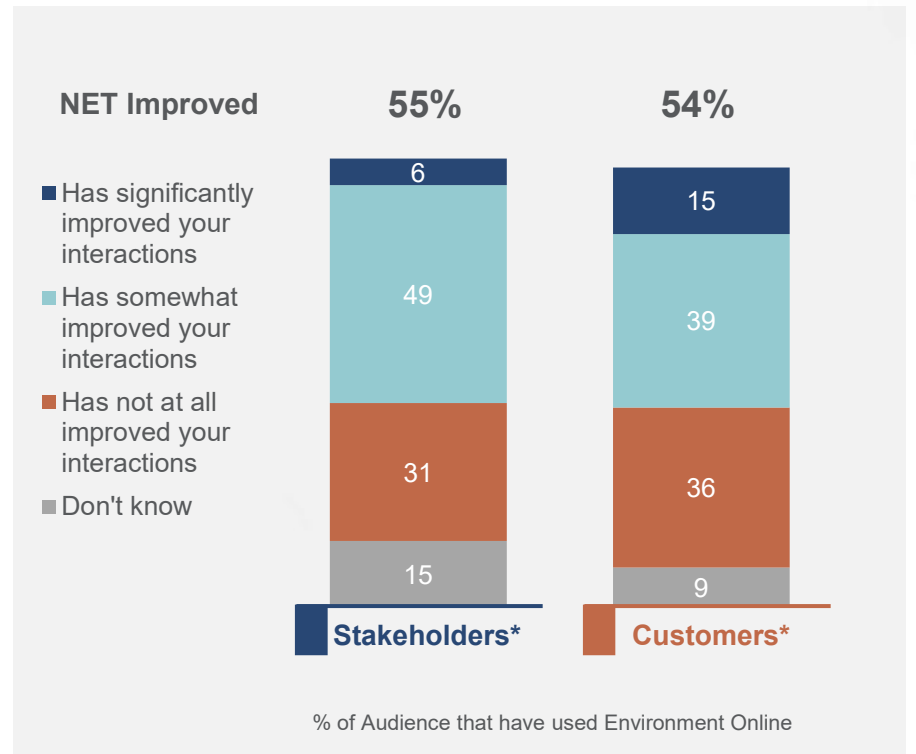
*'Quick response when dealing with level 1 alerts for potable water testing. Good suggestions and advice for remedy actions.'* **Industry Licensing Customer**

# While only a small proportion of Stakeholders and Customers have used *Environment Online*, over half say it has improved their interactions

## % Have used Environment Online



## Perceptions of Environment Online



Stakeholder - 2023 Overall n=361 | Have Used Environment Online n=35\*

Customer - 2023 Overall n=306 | Have Used Environment Online n=33\*

NQ10a: DWER has developed a new digital one-stop-shop for environmental assessments, approvals, and compliance, called Environment Online. Have you used Environment Online yet?

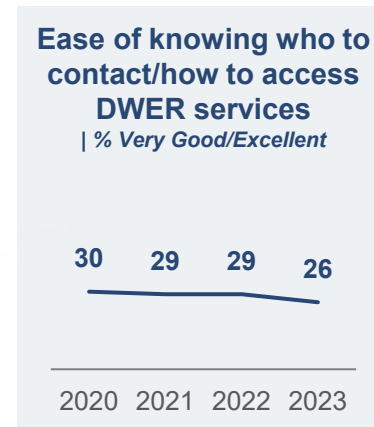
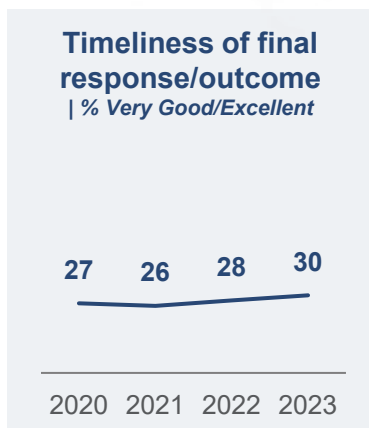
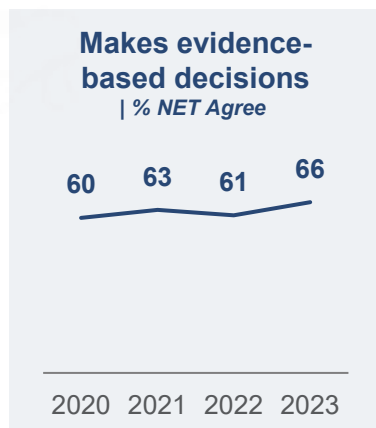
NQ10b: To what extent has Environment Online improved your interactions with DWER and its services?

**\*Caution results indicative due to small sample**



# Stakeholder perceptions of DWER's decision making, timeliness of communications and outcomes have also improved

However, ratings of understanding of Stakeholder business needs and access to DWER services and staff have softened.



2023 : n= 346 | 354 | 356 | 351 | 356 | 354 | 353  
 2022 : n= 366 | 390 | 384 | 385 | 388 | 382 | 382  
 2021 : n= 332 | 355 | 343 | 350 | 353 | 353 | 345  
 2020: n= 334 | 357 | 347 | 352 | 357 | 350 | 352

Q17. Based on everything you have seen, heard or experienced, to what extent do you agree or disagree that DWER  
 Q18A. And to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about DWER's knowledge and expertise in the management of the state's water resources and environment  
 Q22B. And how would you rate DWER's performance in managing their relationship with you and your business/organisation, across each of the following areas?  
 Q23. Still thinking about your interactions with DWER, how would you rate the following

↑↓ Significant difference to previous year data at 95% confidence

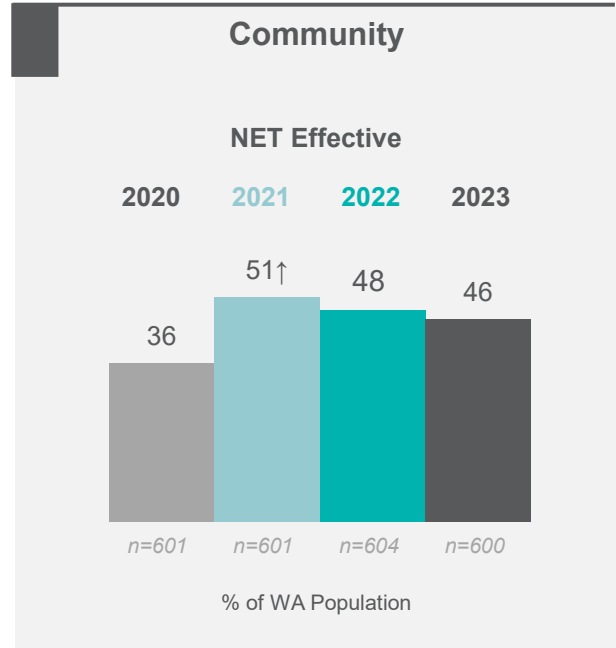
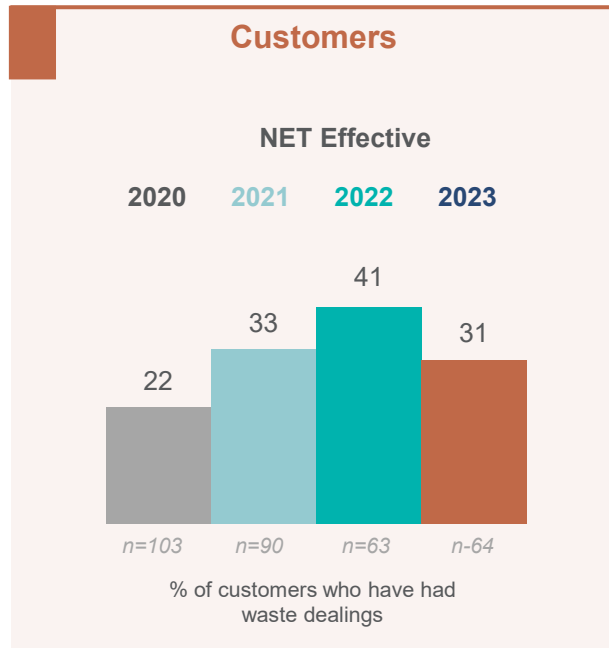
# Perceived Effectiveness



# Stakeholder perceptions of effective **waste management** have continued to strengthen whereas Customer and Community ratings have lost some ground



## Perceived Effectiveness of DWER At Managing Waste | % NET Effective



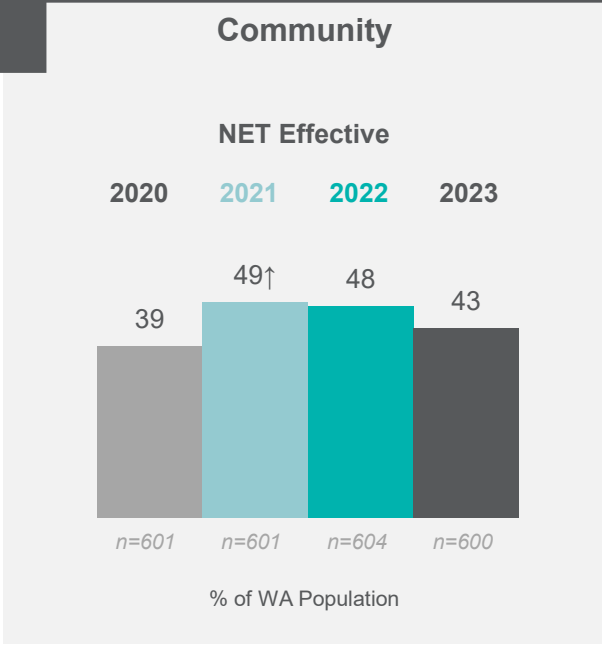
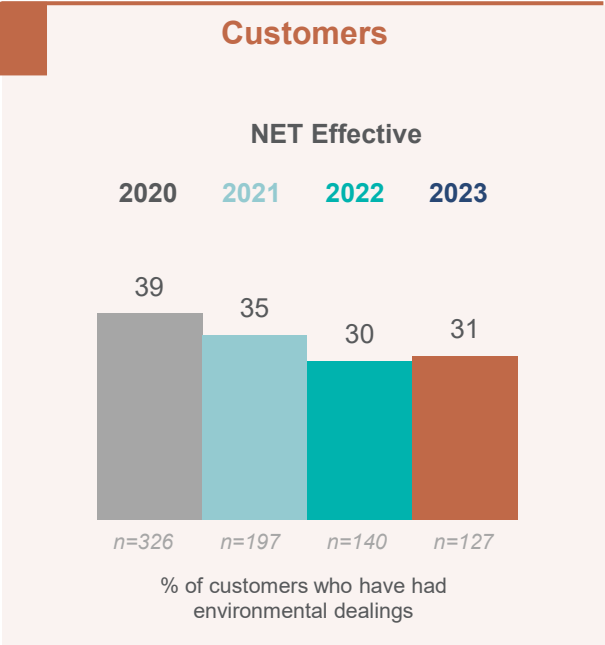
The reasons for perceived ineffectiveness are mostly related to **recycling**, with all three audiences wanting to see better guidelines, policies and support for improved recycling practices.

Q16/Q8. Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in setting the framework for better management of waste including improving the reuse and recycling of waste products?  
 ↑↓ Significant difference to previous year scores at 95% confidence

# The proportion of Stakeholders, Customers and Community who rate DWER’s **environmental management** as effective held steady this year (but all down on previous years)



## Perceived Effectiveness of DWER At Managing the Environment | % NET Effective



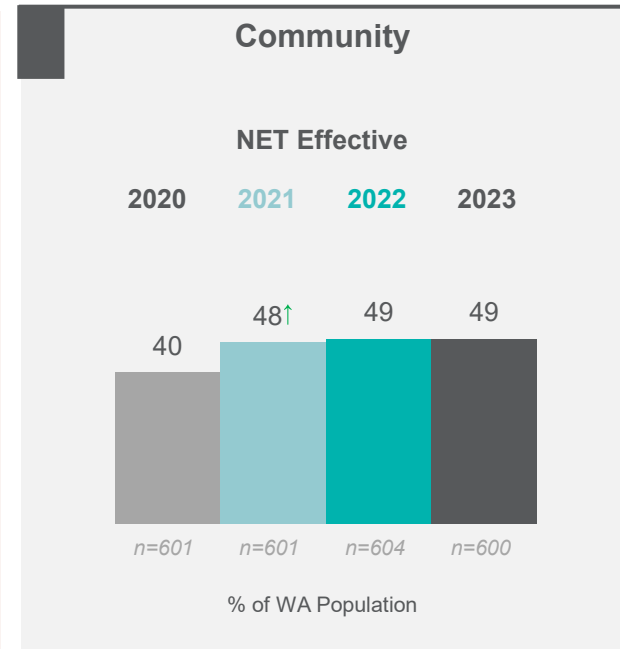
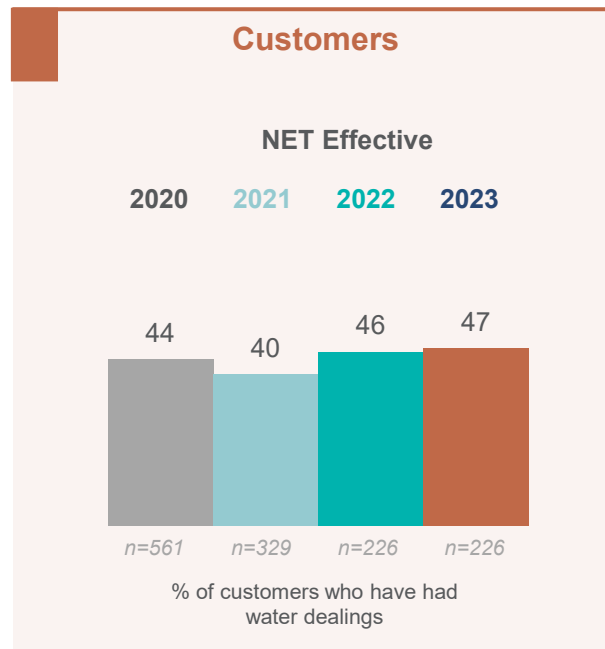
The main reasons for perceived ineffectiveness included feedback that DWER is **too development focused** / not sufficiently protecting the environment and that **regulations are not being adequately enforced**.

Q14/Q7a. Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in managing the state’s environment for sustainable productive use?  
 ↑↓ Significant difference to previous year scores at 95% confidence

# Perceptions of effective **water management** have held mostly steady across all three audiences



## Perceived Effectiveness of DWER At Managing Water | % NET Effective



The most common reasons for perceived ineffectiveness include a perceived **lack of long-term planning** of water sources, **inadequate enforcement** of regulations and **inequitable allocation of water**.

Q11/Q6a. Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in managing the state's water as a resource for sustainable productive use?  
 ↑↓ Significant difference to previous year scores at 95% confidence

# Water-related issues are still the key priorities

Rubbish/litter polluting our waterways, oceans, land and environment are also strong concerns at a community level.

	Stakeholders	Customers	Community
	% High Priority		% Very Concerned
	2023	2023	2023
Investing in water projects to address the drying climate	67%	50%	39%
Management of the state's ground water resources	66%	57%	36%
Protection of drinking water sources	66%	58%	54%
Contamination of water (water quality)	66%	61%	54%↑
Climate change	55%↓	47%	48%
Facilitate recycling of waste	53%	48%	35%
Clearing of land and the environment for development	52%	41%	45%
Rubbish/litter polluting our waterways and ocean	49%	50%	56%
Rubbish/litter polluting our land and environment	46%	49%	62%↑
Ensuring waste wise alternatives are available to consumer	46%	44%	32%↓
Volume of waste generation by the WA community	43%	42%	40%
Air pollution	32%	36%	34%↓

Despite some improvements, ease of access to services, timeliness of communications and outcomes are still pain points for many and impact their overall perceptions of DWER

	% Very Good + Excellent Ratings   2023	
	Stakeholders	Customers
Ease of knowing <b>who to contact/how to access services</b>	26%	22%
<b>Understanding</b> of your business needs	23%↓	24%↑
Timeliness of <b>communications</b>	32%	24%↑
Providing <b>information</b> that is easy to understand	31%	27%
<b>Timeliness</b> of final response/outcomes	30%	27%↑
Providing <b>information that is relevant</b> to your business	32%	28%↑
Accessibility to the <b>appropriate people</b> at DWER	36%	28%

The perceived experience of dealing with DWER also differs greatly depending on the reason for the interaction. For example, those interacting with DWER for an application of Pt IV Environmental Impact Assessment, application for a clearing permit or environmental-related policy development, rated their experience less positively than others.

Q22b. And how would you rate DWER's performance in managing their relationship with you and your business/organisation, across each of the following areas?

Q23. Still thinking about your interactions with DWER, how would you rate the following?

↑↓ Significant difference to 2022 results at 95% confidence

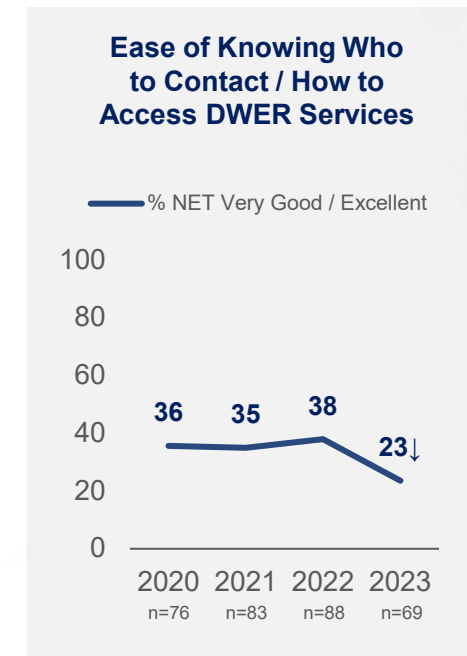
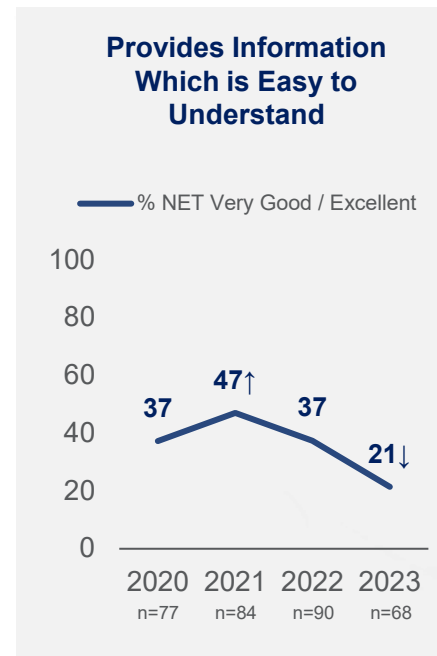
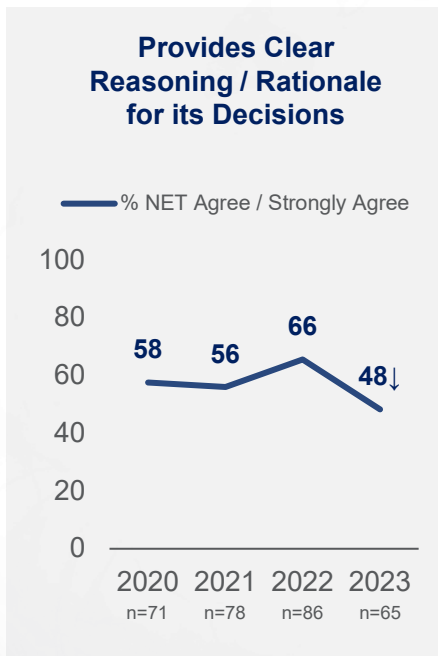
# Top Priority/Key Stakeholders





# Top Priority/Key Stakeholders were less positive about the information they received this year, and fewer knew who to contact or how to access services, compared to previous years

The Department's transition to a new portfolio based operating model has resulted in several senior leadership staff changes, which is likely to have had an impact on these ratings.

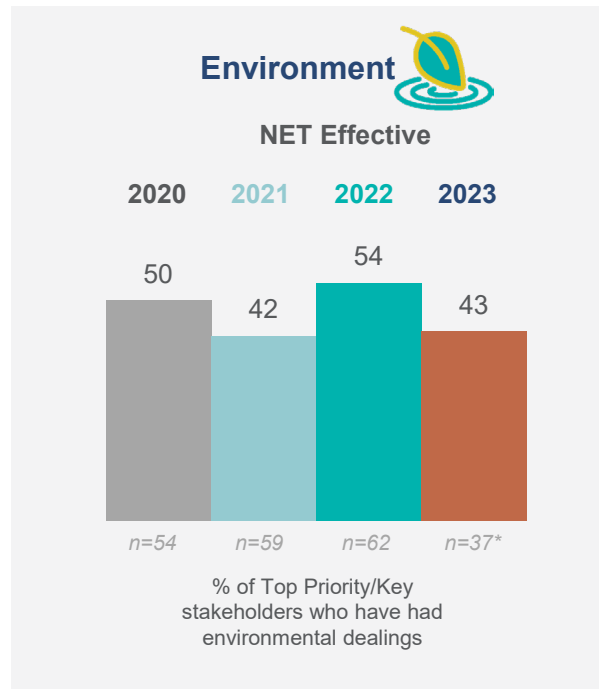
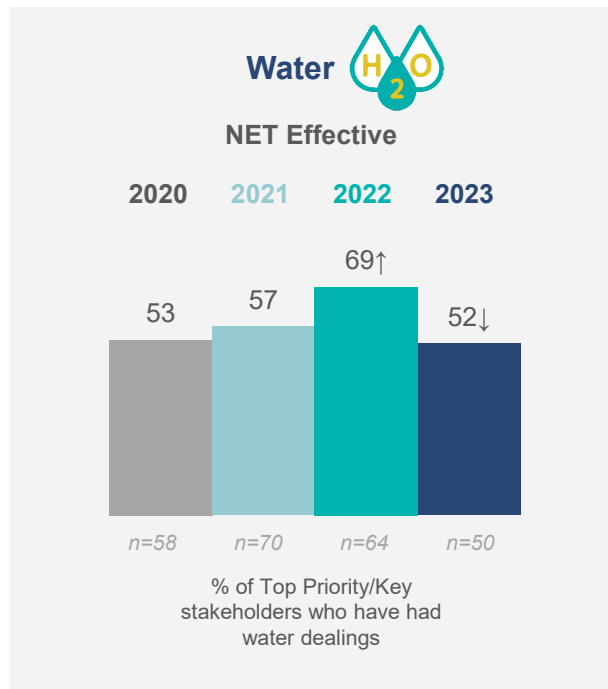


Q18b. Thinking now about how DWER makes its decisions, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements  
 Q22B. And how would you rate DWER's performance in managing their relationship with you and your business/organisation, across each of the following areas  
 Q23. Still thinking about your interactions with DWER, how would you rate the following?  
 Don't Know responses have been removed  
 ↑↓ Significant differences to previous year at 95% confidence.

# Their perceptions of DWER’s effectiveness in water and environmental management were also less positive this year

This coincides with a decline in the proportion of Top Priority/Key Stakeholders who say that DWER tends towards water resource protection (rather than industry growth/development) and an increase in those who feel DWER tends towards development over environmental protection.

## Perceived Effectiveness of DWER At Managing Resources | % NET Effective



Q11. From your experience with and understanding of the Department, would you say that overall it ...?

Q14. Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in managing the state’s environment for sustainable productive use?

Q16. Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in setting the framework for better management of waste including improving the reuse and recycling of waste products?

↑↓ Significant difference to previous year scores at 95% confidence

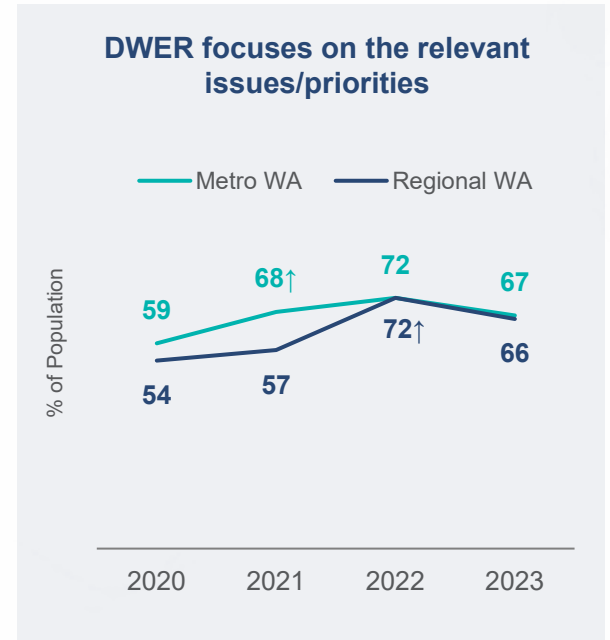
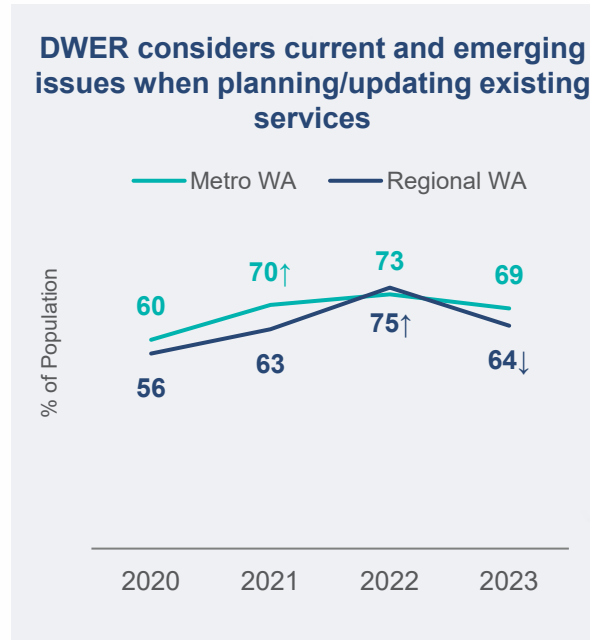
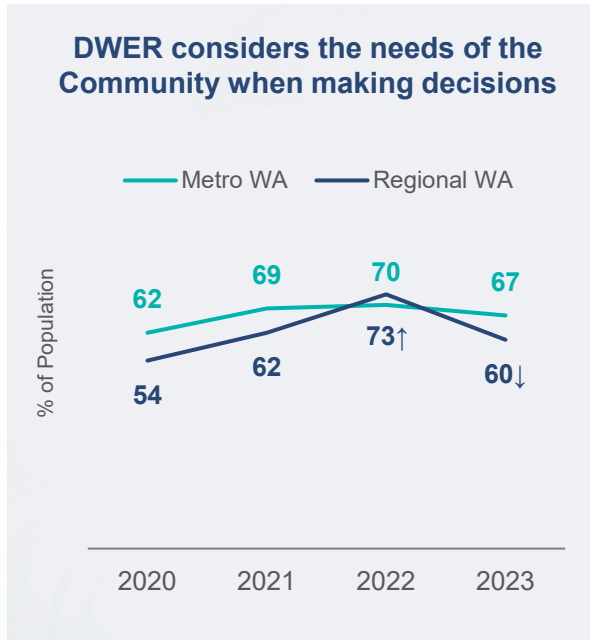
\*Caution: results indicative only due to small sample size

# Regional WA Community



# People living in regional WA rated DWER’s approach to decision making less positively this year

## Perceptions of DWER Decision Making | % NET Agree



Considers needs of Community - 2023: Metro n=338 | Regional n=162; 2022: Metro n=335 | Regional n=168; 2021: Metro n=344 | Regional n=161; 2020: Metro n=318 | Regional n=167  
 Considers current/emerging issues - 2023: Metro n=330 | Regional n=153; 2022: Metro n=325 | Regional n=157; 2021: Metro n=342 | Regional n=148; 2020: Metro n=297 | Regional n=157  
 Focuses on relevant issues - 2023: Metro n=337 | Regional n=155; 2022: Metro n=320 | Regional n=167; 2021: Metro n=338 | Regional n=157; 2020: Metro n=311 | Regional n=157  
 Q10. Thinking now about how DWER makes its decisions, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the follow statements?  
 ↑↓ Significant difference to previous years scores at 95% confidence  
 Don't know responses have been removed from the charted data

# They were less aware of a number of programs this year

Awareness of *Be Groundwater Wise*, *Waste Wise Schools*, *WasteSorted – Be a Great Sort*, *Waterwise Perth Action Plan* and *Murujuga Rock Art* has declined, mostly in regional WA.



% of Stakeholders

2023: Metro n=400 | Regional n=200; 2022: Metro n=403 | Regional n=201; 2021: Metro n=400 | Regional n=201; 2020: Metro n=401 | Regional n=200

Q11r: Which of the following programs have you seen or heard about before today, specifically in WA

↑↓ Significant difference to previous waves scores at 95% confidence

Note: WasteSorted – Be a Great Sort was added in 2021. Plan for Plastics was added in 2022

# Therefore, they were less likely to rate DWER as effective in managing WA’s water, environment and waste

Most of the decline in effective ratings at a regional level was accompanied by an increase in the proportion of ‘don’t know’ rather than ineffective ratings. This indicates that people are not necessarily more negative but feel less informed about DWER’s management of the state’s water, waste and environmental resources.

## Perceived Effectiveness of DWER At Managing the State’s Resources | % NET Effective



2023: Metro n=400 | Regional n=200; 2022: Metro n=403 | Regional n=201; 2021: Metro n=400 | Regional n=201; 2020: Metro n=401 | Regional n=200  
 Q6a: Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in managing the state’s water as a resource for sustainable productive use?  
 Q7a: Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in managing the state’s environment for sustainable productive use?  
 Q8: Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in setting the framework for better management of waste including improving the reuse and recycling of waste products?  
 ↑↓ Significant difference to previous years scores at 95% confidence  
 Don't know responses have been removed from the charted data

# Summary of key insights 2023

## Insight

## Implications

### More positive overall Stakeholder & Customer perceptions of DWER

- Both groups rated DWER more positively this year, in terms of how decisions are made and the timeliness of communications and final outcomes.
- Over eight in ten feel their interactions with DWER are the same, if not better, than their interactions with other government organisations.
- Among the small proportion who have used *Environment Online*, over half say it has improved their interactions with DWER.
- The proportion of Stakeholders who rate DWER's waste management as effective has continued to improve.

An increased focus on **Relationship Management** and **simplifying Customer interactions** with DWER (such as Environment Online project as part of Streamline WA, Reduced Reporting Burden Pilot) are having a positive impact on overall perceptions. These should remain a focus for the Department under its new operating model.

The planned migration of more data to **Environment Online** and appointment of a Program Director should help to increase uptake and continue to improve the experience of dealing with DWER.

### Water priorities continue to dominate what is important to Stakeholders and Customers

- Future water sources remain a key priority for Stakeholders and Customers, both planning and investing in new sources as well as protecting and managing existing groundwater and drinking water sources.
- Specific environment and waste-related issues are also a priority for most Stakeholders and Customers but secondary in terms of overall tiers of priority. Both groups were less likely to rate DWER as effective in environmental and waste management.
- Rubbish/litter polluting our waterways, oceans, land and environment are strong priorities at a community level.

**Align any communications** about current and planned strategies and programs with how they address specific environmental, waste and water issues of concern. For example, how the strategy to *develop and implement new water resource legislation to provide for sustainable water management in the face of climate change* will help to address water security into the future, and how *banning e-waste disposal to landfill by 2024* will facilitate the recycling of waste.

Consider the **strategic role of water** as part of DWER's business planning. Despite the Department shifting more of its focus towards climate change, waste and other environmental issues, water-related priorities are still important to a large proportion of Stakeholders, Customers and Community.

# Summary of key Insights 2023

## Insight

## Implications

### Regional West Australians are feeling less informed about DWER's purpose and activities

Community perceptions of DWER have been improving since 2020, with regional WA contributing the most to these improvements. However, this year saw most measures return to pre 2021 levels across regional WA, specifically for the following:

- The community doesn't feel as informed about DWER's purpose as it has in the last two years.
- The proportion who agree that DWER considers community needs and current and emerging issues in its decision making, has declined.
- A decline in effective ratings and an increase in the proportion of *don't know* ratings in relation to water, environment and waste management indicates that people are not necessarily more negative about DWER's operations, rather, they don't feel informed enough to comment. This reflects a lack of visibility of DWER and its specific activities.
- Awareness of *Be Groundwater Wise*, *Waste Sorted*, *Waterwise Perth Action Plan* and *Murujuga Rock Art* has declined in regional WA.

Continue to **build the DWER brand** and strengthen how DWER communicates and connects with each of its key audiences, as per the priorities of the Reform Roadmap.

Focus on **targeted metro and regional specific messages** where possible to improve community understanding of DWER's remit and strategic goals. Also, demonstrate the strategies and initiatives in place to achieve them such as:

- Improved regulatory capacity
- Better management of the environment
- Strategic solutions to big environmental challenges

Consider the role that **regional managers and teams** can play to increase engagement with their local communities and stakeholders.

### Top Priority/Key Stakeholders were less positive this year

- Fewer Top Priority/Key Stakeholders rated DWER's water and environmental management as effective this year.
- They were also less positive about the information they received from DWER and were not as clear about who to contact or how to access services, compared to previous years.
- The Department's transition to a new portfolio-based operating model has resulted in several senior leadership staff changes, which is likely to have had an impact on these ratings.

The planned **review of Stakeholder Management** across the agency, which is one of the initiatives in the DWER Reform Roadmap, should remain a priority, to help improve and deliver a more consistent experience.

Senior executives and leaders have a key role to play to **re-establish relationships** with Top Priority/Key Stakeholders once these appointments have been finalised.

- Consider opportunities to showcase different levels of Executive engagement, as appropriate.
- Re-introduce regular Relationship Management forums at Exec level to inform a consistent DWER approach.

In the interim, provide Stakeholders with **contact lists** to ensure they understand who to contact in relation to specific matters.



# Summary of key Insights 2023

## Insight

## Implications

**Access and timeliness issues still impact the experience and how people feel about DWER**

- Despite recent improvements, the ease of accessing DWER services, timeliness of communications, relevance of information provided, and timeliness of outcomes still receive relatively low ratings (less than one in three stakeholders and customers rate these as excellent or very good) and contribute to negative overall perceptions of DWER.
- The perceived experience of dealing with DWER differs greatly depending on the reason for the interaction. For example, those interacting with DWER for an application of Pt IV Environmental Impact Assessment, application for a clearing permit or environmental-related policy development rated their experience less positively than others.

Continue to **prioritise the implementation of key strategies in the 2022-26 Strategic Plan** which can improve the customer journey. For example, *Engage and lead in the development and implementation of Streamline WA initiatives* and *Focus on improving the approval processes and timelines for industries that promote sustainable development*.

A **Customer Relationship Management (CRM)** system would help to deliver a more consistent experience and help to address the challenges faced by Stakeholders and Customers in terms of understanding their needs and timeliness of response and approvals.

A review of **communication templates** (for example, emails, EDMs) could also help to manage expectations and deliver a more consistent experience.

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