

# DWER Corporate Research 2023 Stakeholder Insights

March 2023



Government of Western Australia

Department of **Water and  
Environmental Regulation**



metrix

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# Background and objectives

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The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) undertakes an annual survey of its Stakeholders to monitor their perceptions of DWER, including a KPI measure of the Department's effectiveness at managing the state's water as a resource for sustainable productive use.

Since 2020, the survey has included feedback from three key Stakeholder groups:

- **Stakeholders** – people and organisations with influence on the success of the Department's policy, budget bids and initiatives, and whose acceptance of DWER's proposed changes is often critical to delivering outcomes.
- **Customers** – people who interact with DWER across a range of services and have a mostly transactional relationship with the Department.
- **WA community** – the West Australian general population.

The following report details the findings of the Stakeholder survey.

The core objectives of this year's survey were to monitor:

- overarching perceptions of DWER as an organisation.
- the Key Performance Indicator of effectively managing the state's water resources for sustainable productive use.
- perceived effectiveness of DWER's environmental and waste management.
- Stakeholder experience in relation to specific dealings with DWER.
- perceptions of DWER's knowledge, expertise and decision making.
- ratings of the Department's communications and engagement with Stakeholders.
- attitudes towards water and environmental issues.

# Research approach

## Methodology

Metrix was provided with a total usable sample of 1,191 Stakeholders who were invited to complete the Stakeholder survey either online or by telephone. A final sample of n=361 was achieved and provides results with a maximum sampling accuracy of +/- 4.31% at the 95% confidence level. Fieldwork was conducted from 13 October to 14 December 2022.

## Weighting

To ensure consistency with previous research, the sample for the KPI result has been weighted back in line with the 2016 sample composition, as detailed below:

### 2023 Sample Profile for Water KPI

	2023			2022		2021		2020		2019		2018		2017		2016
	Weight factor used	% unweighted	% weighted	% unweighted	% weighted	% unweighted	% weighted	% unweighted	% weighted	% unweighted	% weighted	% unweighted	% weighted	% unweighted	% weighted	Sample profile
Top Priority/Key Stakeholders	0.41	19%	8%	23%	8%	23%	8%	21%	8%	17%	8%	22%	8%	9%	8%	8%
Large Water Users	1.60	10%	16%	6%	16%	5%	16%	7%	16%	25%	16%	8%	16%	10%	16%	16%
Other Stakeholders	1.08	71%	76%	71%	76%	72%	76%	72%	76%	59%	76%	70%	76%	80%	76%	77%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The sample for the Water KPI is based on those Stakeholders who have had water dealings with DWER. This ensures they were able to adequately rate the Department on its performance. A final sample of n=268 had water dealings with DWER and was used to calculate the Water KPI.

### 2023 Sample Profile for Other Questions

	2023			2022			2021			2020			2019			
	Weight factor Used	Total Profile	% unweighted	% weighted	Total Profile	% unweighted	% weighted	Total Profile	% unweighted	% weighted	Total Profile	% unweighted	% weighted	Total profile	% unweighted	% weighted
Top Priority/Key Stakeholders	1.06	19%	19%	19%	18%	23%	18%	19%	23%	19%	20%	21%	20%	15%	17%	14%
Large Water Users	0.84	7%	10%	7%	7%	6%	7%	7%	5%	7%	7%	7%	7%	20%	25%	20%
Other Stakeholders	1.01	74%	71%	74%	75%	71%	75%	74%	72%	74%	73%	72%	73%	65%	59%	66%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

# Summary of Key Insights - *Stakeholders*



# Summary of Key Insights 2023

## Insight

## Implications

### More positive overall Stakeholder perceptions of DWER

- Overall, Stakeholders rated DWER more positively this year, in terms of how decisions are made and also the timeliness of communications and final outcomes.
- Nine-in-ten rate their interactions with DWER 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 (e.g. 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

- Water sources remain a key priority for Stakeholders, 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 such as climate change, recycling and clearing of land for development are also important to most Stakeholders. However they were slightly less likely to rate DWER's environmental management as effective this year.

**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 your 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 your Stakeholders, as well as Customers and Community.

# Summary of Key Insights 2023

## Insight

## Implications

### 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 will have a key role to play to **re-establish these 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.

### Access and timeliness issues still impact the experience and how Stakeholders 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 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:
  - Water Stakeholders with an application for renewal of historic water allocation are the most positive about their experience with DWER
  - those interacting with DWER for an application of Pt IV Environmental Impact Assessment, application for 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** (eg emails, EDMs) could also help to manage expectations and deliver a more consistent experience.

# Overall Perceptions of DWER

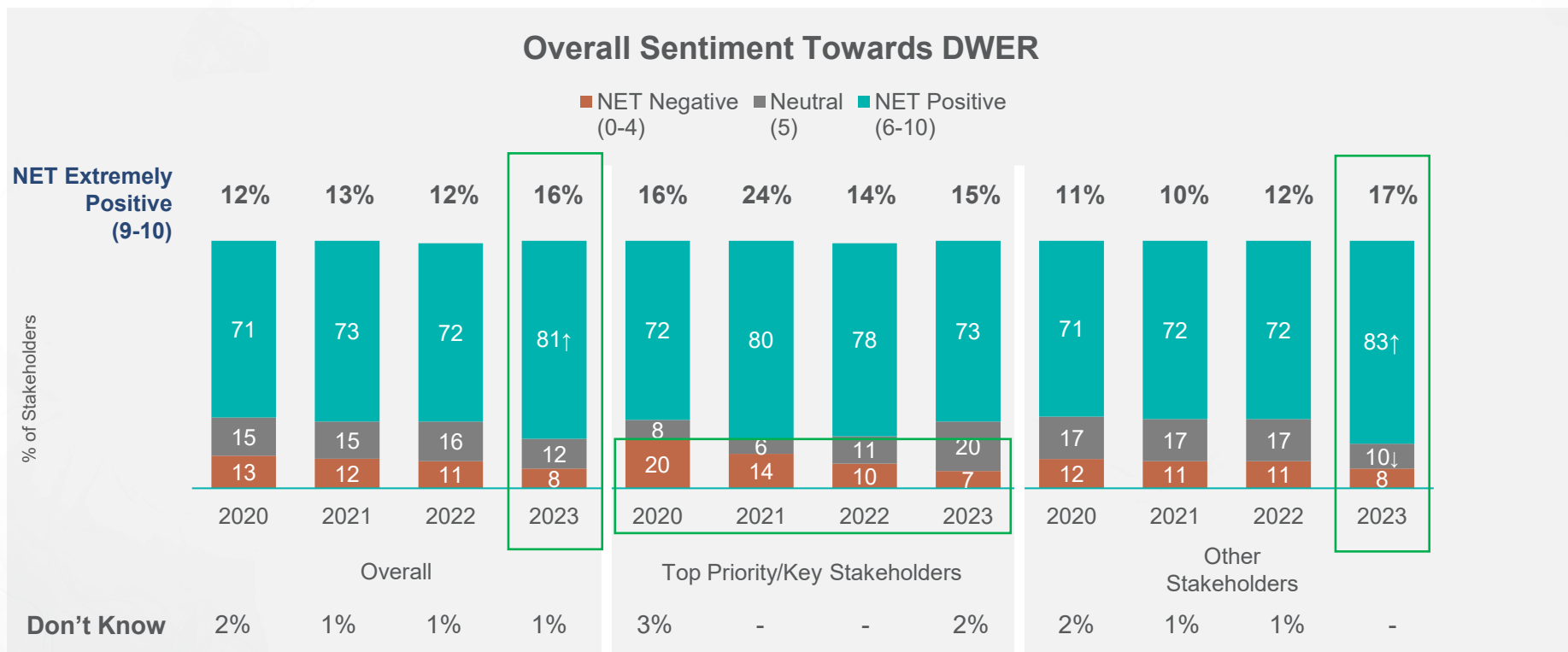




# Stakeholder sentiment towards DWER was more positive this year

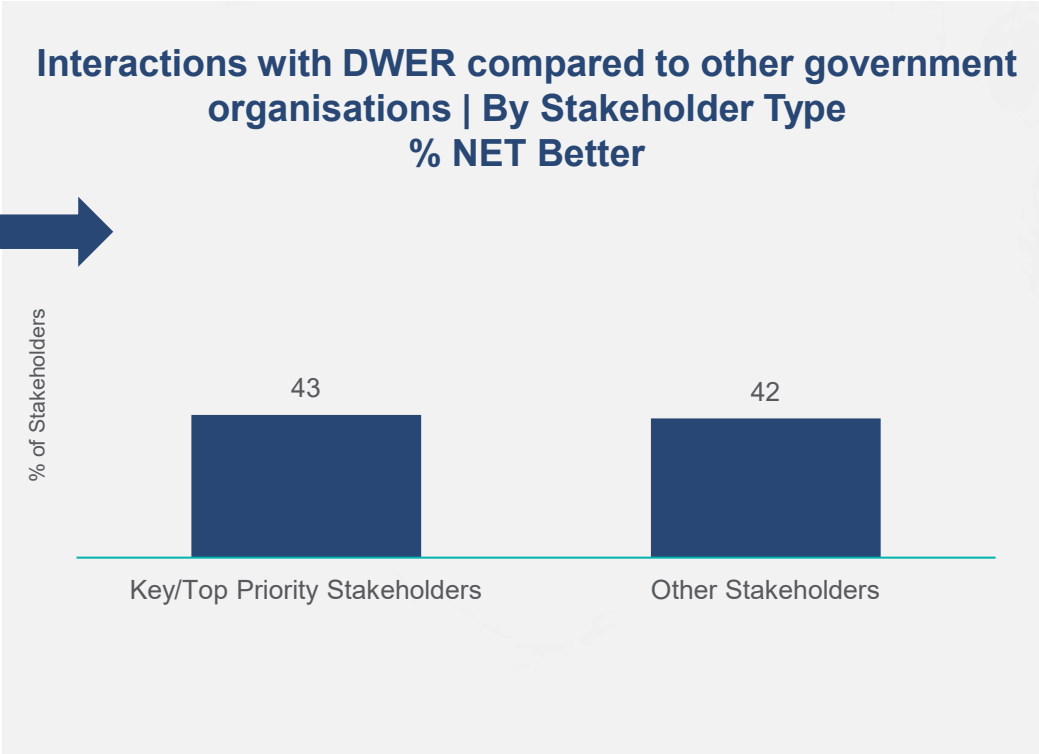
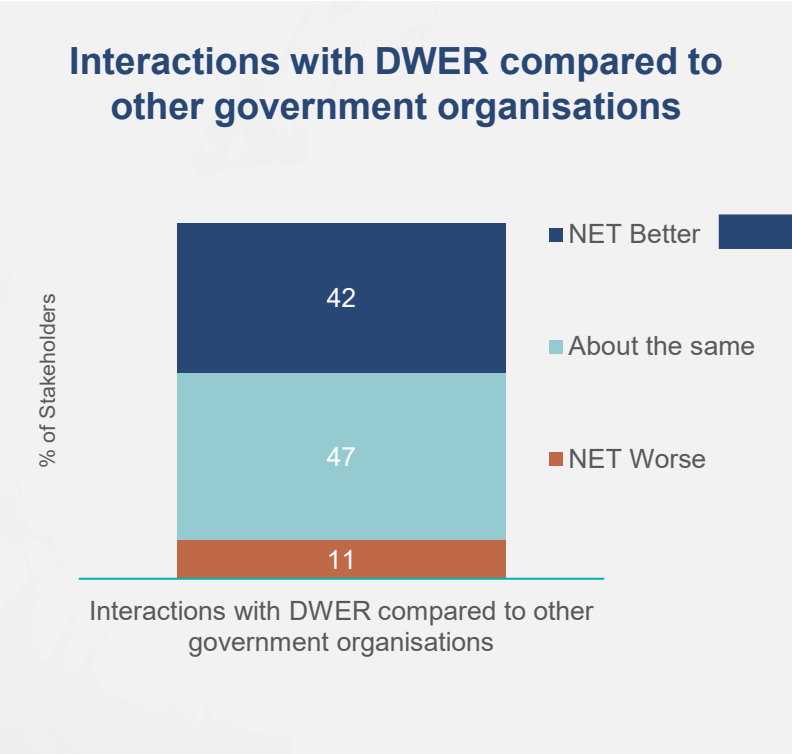


Driven by improvements in the perceptions of Other Stakeholders (Stakeholders who are not Top Priority/Key Stakeholders), over eight in ten now feel positive about DWER, compared to seven in ten last year. Positively, the proportion of Top Priority/Key Stakeholders who feel negative towards DWER continued to trend downwards this year. However, the proportion of positive ratings (73%) is below a peak result of 80% in 2021 for this group. Additionally, *water* Stakeholders are more positive about DWER this year (2022: 72% | 2023: 81%↑), and *waste* Stakeholders' negative ratings have eased (2022:14% | 2023: 5%↓). *Environment-related* Stakeholders have remained stable in their ratings this year.



2023: Overall n=354 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=69 | Other Stakeholders n= 189  
 2022: Overall n=396 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=90 | Other Stakeholders n=305  
 2021: Overall n=362 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=85 | Other Stakeholders n=288  
 2020: Overall n=367 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=76 | Other Stakeholders n=296  
 Q6. Overall, how do you feel about the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation as an organisation?  
 ↑↓ Significant difference to 2022 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

# Four in ten Stakeholders feel their interactions with DWER are better than their dealings with other government organisations

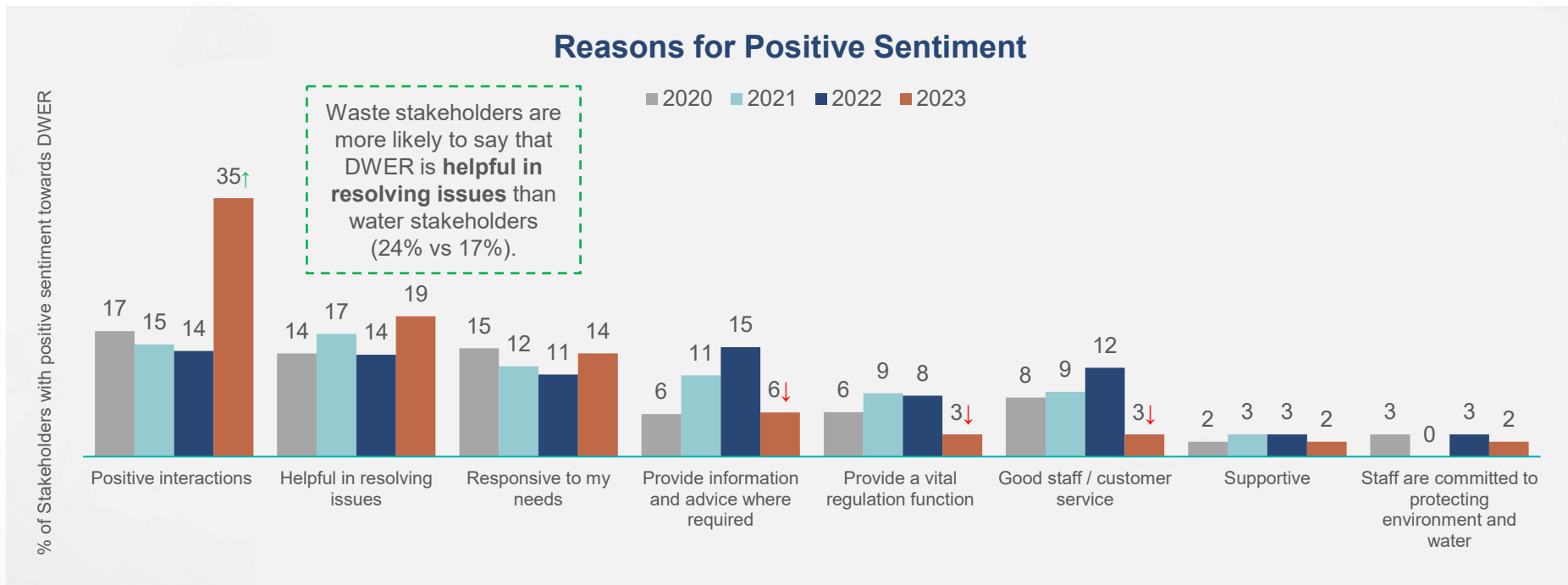


2023: Overall n=361 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholder n=70 | Other Stakeholders n=290  
Q18d: Overall, how would you rate your interactions with DWER compared to other government organisations that you deal with? Your interactions with DWER are...  
Don't know responses have been removed from the charted data  
Note: Q18d was only asked in 2023.

# Positive dealings with helpful and responsive staff drives positive Stakeholder sentiment towards DWER



This year, DWER's ability to provide information and advice and perform a vital regulatory function weren't as top of mind for positive sentiment towards DWER.



2023: n=290 | 2022: n= 289 | 2021: n=266 | 2020: n=262  
 Q7. Why is that?  
 ↑↓ Significant difference to 2020 results at 95% confidence  
 Only top 8 responses are shown

# In their own words...

## Positive interactions

*'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**

## Helpful in resolving issues

*'The Department has a huge remit and there is a significant amount of work on. The team at DWER are committed and helpful. However, there are a range of documents and policy which have not been completed and inhibit the agency's ability to take a strategic approach, for example, Composting Guidelines, Waste Infrastructure Plan.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**



*'The support that we get, I've never been let down by the staff, always helpful and provide information, very supportive and they provide us with other government bodies' information.'* **Other Stakeholder**

## Responsive to my needs

*'They have been very supportive of all the projects we work on. They have assisted us with trialling new initiatives, especially urban developments. They have been an active member on some of our projects and taking on leadership. We've had a positive experience with water allocation, the team is supportive and quick to respond and willing to meet in person. They have some fantastic proactive staff that have passion in the work they do in the waterwise and ground water space.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**



*'DWER is reasonably efficient at responding to matters.'* **Other Stakeholder**

# In their own words...

## Provide information and advice when required

*'Always provide correct information and the staff are helpful.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**

*'The guidance they provide to us is clear, our concerns are about transfer of responsibility from state government to local government, the push to transfer responsibility from state to local.'* **Other Stakeholder**

*'Excellent advisors when seeking the required information.'* **Other Stakeholder**



## Provide a vital regulation function

*'Due to a recent attendance at the annual Danjoo Koorliny Festival where Michelle Andrews Director General of DWER was a keynote speaker, I was most impressed with the leadership and approach to governance outlined in her presentation, of which I am fully supportive, and I believe this to be very beneficial.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**

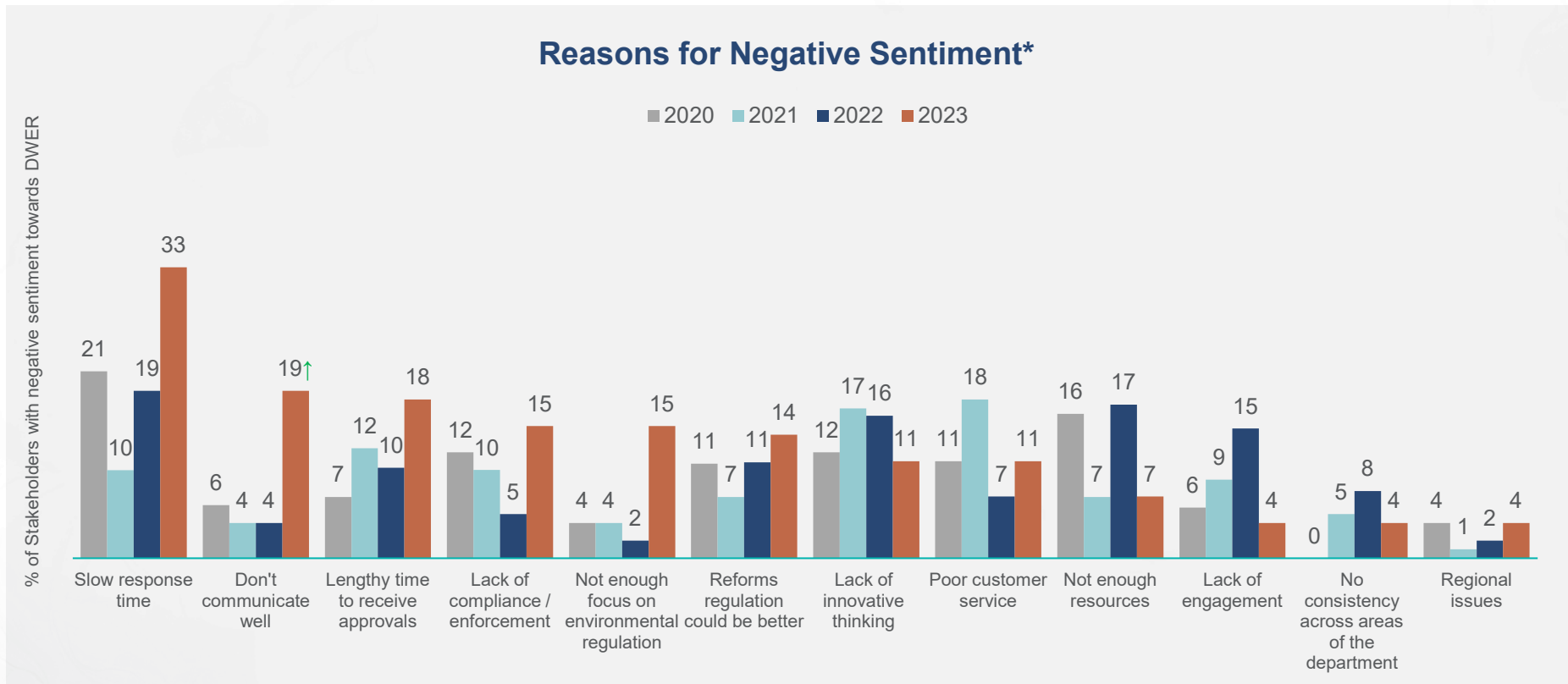
*'Acknowledge the important role DWER perform within the WA community. Look forward to further review and conversation in relation to the department's stand and expectations to the roll out of FO / FOGO, particularly for those organisations with existing contractual obligations to other previously supported landfill reduction strategies.'* **Other Stakeholder**

## Good staff

*'I find the staff of DWER to be reliable, honest, dedicated and engaged in their jobs.'* **Other Stakeholder**



# Slow response and approval times and poor communication are the key reasons for negative overall sentiment towards DWER



2023: n=27\* | 2022: 42\* | 2021: 43\* | 2020: 49\*

Q7. Why is that?

↑↓ Significant difference to 2021 results at 95% confidence

Scores under 8% not shown.

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

# In their own words...

## Slow response time

*'DWER's response to submissions on the Gngangara Groundwater Management Plan was the worst response I have ever received. It was dismissive, didn't address the concerns, provided no scientific basis for major decisions and appeared rushed so that the seawater desalination plant at Alkimos could be announced. This was not just my experience, a number of other people who made serious submissions also felt poorly treated by the process. The plan is potentially flawed because of an inability to seek and respond to feedback. As a result, water resource decision making will be sub-optimal.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholders**



*'Service and response timeframes are inadequate for a government department. Resources seem inadequate to support workload.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholders**

## Don't communicate well

*'DWER has been very difficult to contact and receive timely responses from for a long period of time. This is with the exception of the Noise Branch who were prompt and helpful.'* **Other Stakeholders**



*'Lack of communication on water policy.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholders**

## Lengthy time to receive approvals

*'DWER's reputation continues to suffer due to its sustained inability to meet approval timeframes. This inability has now extended over a number of years and there is considerable concern that this will deteriorate further – potentially putting at risk large scale new energy projects. The messaging from DWER does not indicate a focus, or a plan within the organisation on how these timeframes will be improved. Without a clearly defined and realistic plan, it is difficult to rate DWER highly on the scorecard. For many years, DWER has been slow in publishing its approvals performance. On its website, the latest approvals timeframes are for Q3 2021-22 (there's been two completed quarters since then). It dilutes confidence if DWER is unable to even publish its performance in a timely way.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholders**



# In their own words...

## Lack of compliance / enforcement

*'There are inconsistencies. There is no follow up in relation to compliance. When I deal with people one-on-one, it's fine, but the system is difficult. Sometimes we apply for a clearing permit and it's no problem, other times we have to jump through hoops. Whereas other people are illegally clearing and getting away with it.'* **Other Stakeholder**



## Not enough focus on environmental regulation

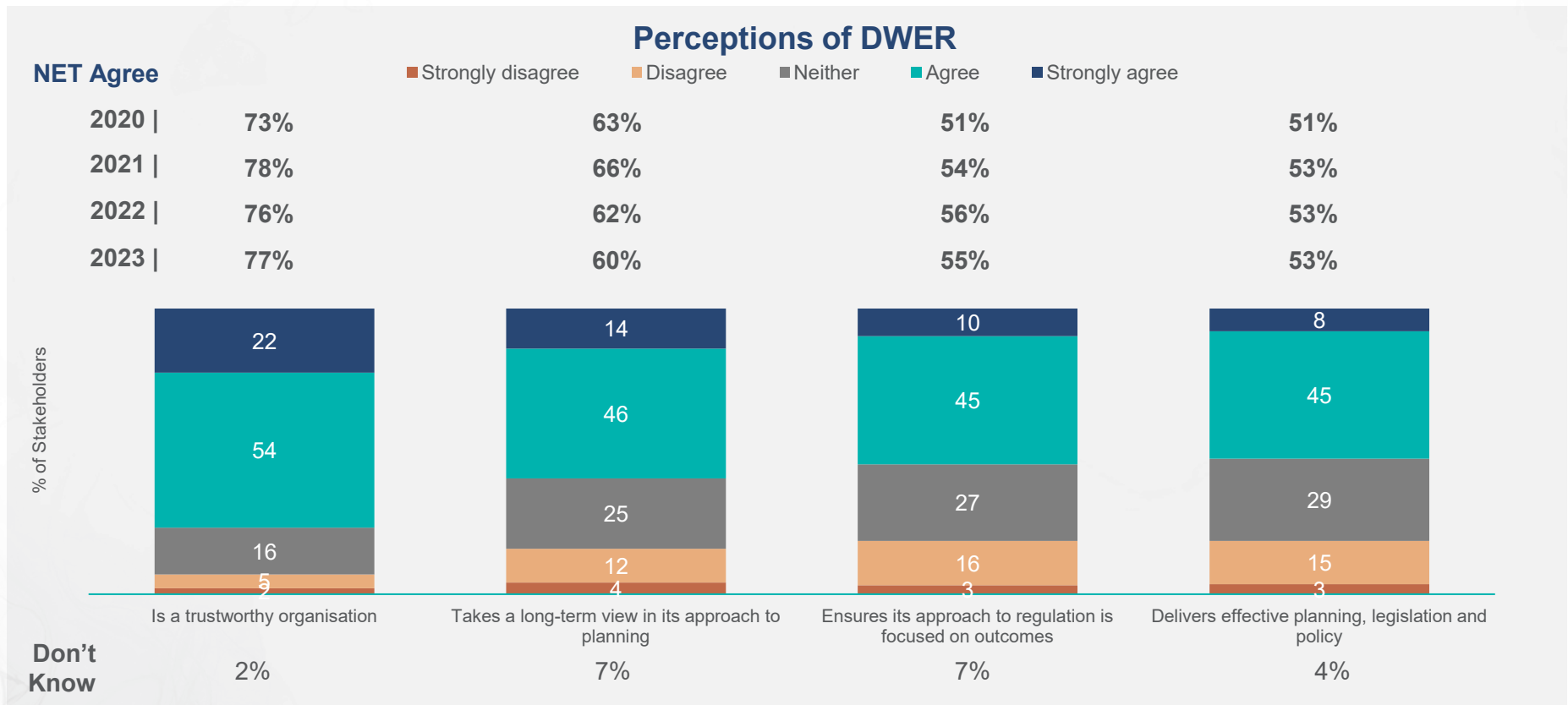
*'The Department is too strongly focussed on permitting activities and insufficiently focussed on compliance and enforcement, policy implementation and environmental protection.'* **Other Stakeholders**

*'The Department's vegetation clearing branch does not seem to uphold/implement protection measures for native vegetation. We have referred multiple clearing infractions, and a warning letter is all that has been issued.'* **Other Stakeholders**



# General perceptions of DWER have largely held ground, with three-quarters agreeing that DWER is trustworthy

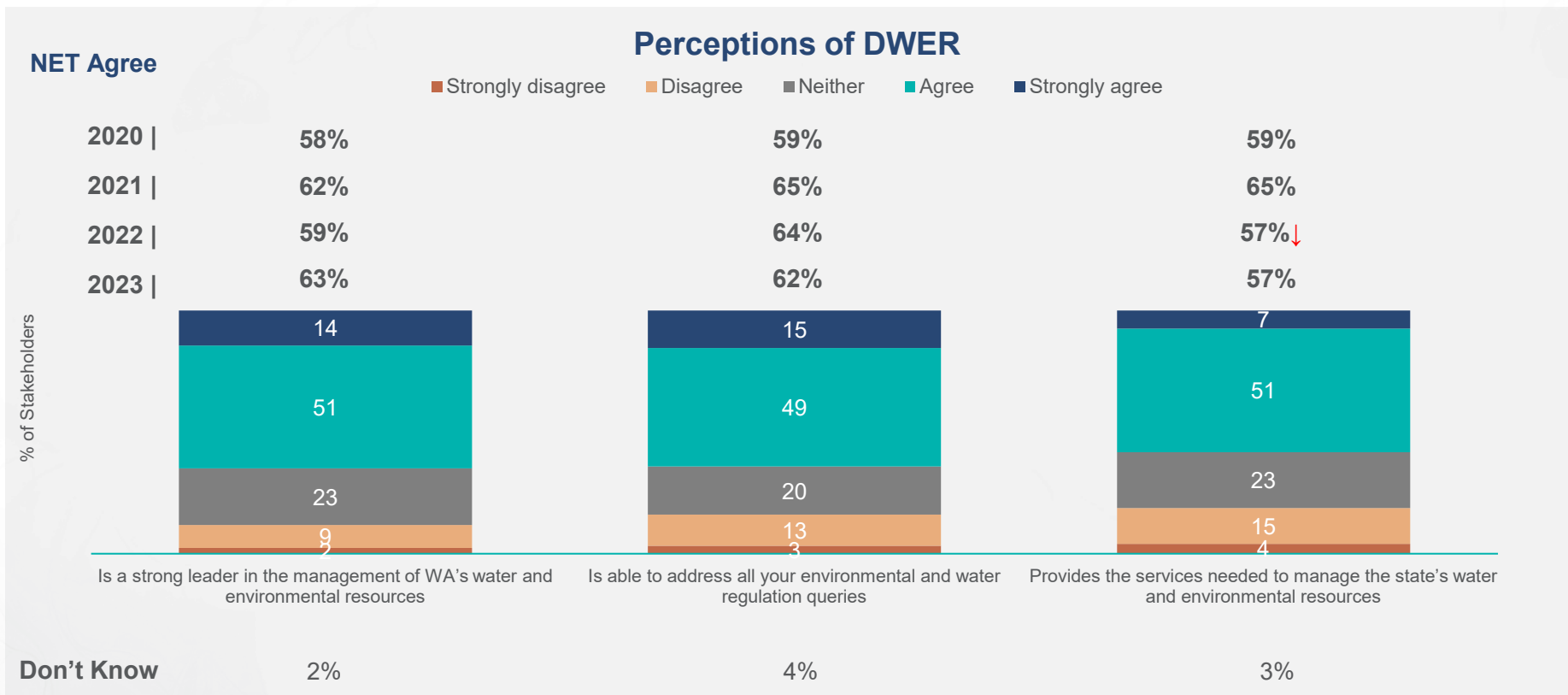
Top Priority/Key Stakeholder perceptions of DWER's ability to deliver effective planning, legislation and policy declined this year (41%, down from 58%). Those who have environmental dealings are less positive than last year about DWER taking a long term approach to planning (2022: 63% | 2023: 54%↓).



2023 n=361 | 2022: n=396 | 2021: n=356 | 2020: n= 374  
 Q17. Based on everything you have seen, heard or experienced, to what extent do you agree or disagree that DWER  
 ↑ Significant difference to 2022 results at 95% confidence  
 Don't know responses have been removed from the charted data  
 Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

# Perceptions of DWER's leadership and services provided have held largely steady this year

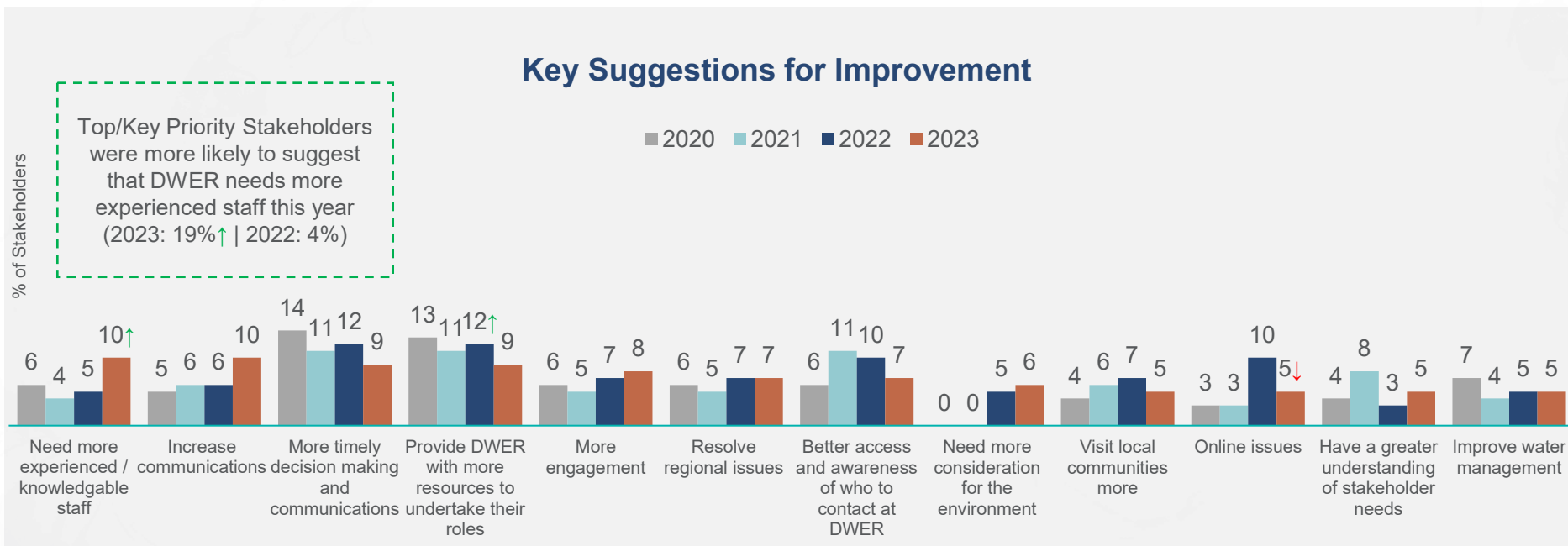
Perceptions have remained consistent among Top Priority/Key and Other Stakeholders.



2023: n=361 | 2022: n=396 | 2021: n=356 | 2020: n= 374  
 Q17. Based on everything you have seen, heard or experienced, to what extent do you agree or disagree that DWER  
 ↑↓ Significant difference to 2022 results at 95% confidence  
 Don't know responses have been removed from the charted data  
 Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

# Stakeholders would like to see more experienced staff and more communications from DWER

Top/Key Priority Stakeholders were more likely than Other Stakeholders to say they wanted more engagement this year (21% vs 5%), which could be reflective of the Department undergoing transition to a new portfolio-based operating model, which has resulted in a number of senior leadership staff changes.



2023: n=282 | 2022: n=245 | 2021: n=262 | 2020: n=255  
 Q24. Please provide any other suggestions for how DWER could improve its services and relationship with you/your organization  
 ↑↓ Significant difference to 2021 results at 95% confidence  
 Don't know responses have been removed  
 Scores under 5% no shown

# In their own words...

## Need more experienced/knowledgeable staff

*'DWER needs resource management changes to be introduced in the Water Resource Management Bill so that it can build a professional well-paid staff which is able to manage complex water issues. It is losing the competition for quality people with time to think strategically. It also needs the funding and in-house skills to do, or contract out, investigations that are scientifically rigorous. Responses are often lacking in forethought and justification because staff don't have the time to do a proper job. This is a false economy in water management. It has progressively deteriorated in the quality of its work in the past 10 or so years.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**

*'Increase the level of expertise in staff members, especially in specific country districts/on-ground staff.'* **Other Stakeholder**



## Increase communication

*'More direct interaction, we have a committee of environmental managers that meets every month. Sometimes, we invite DWER managers to come and talk to us and they usually do, but it's only because we reach out, they don't reach out to us. Some of the managers come from very large industrial companies which are large emitters. We have long-term constructive working relationships with some of the old hands in DWER.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**

*'More communication and understanding about what local government can actually do with limited resources.'* **Other Stakeholder**



## More timely decision making and communication

*'More-timely in responding to queries would be a considerable improvement. They need to be less busy to create the space to engage and collaborate.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**

*'Improving the timeliness of interaction with the Dept would be very beneficial.'* **Other Stakeholder**



# In their own words...

## Provide DWER With More Resources to Undertake Their Roles

*'Lack of resources. The people that are there do the best that they can, they lack a bit of support. Not enough staff. Need field officers on the ground.'* **Other Stakeholder**

*'Main thing would be resourcing and appropriate staff that can deal directly with Local Government as in a stand-alone section a dedicated service to us would be great.'* **Other Stakeholder**

*'They can get rid of the answering thing that sends you to a directory when you ring up. They have some great staff, but they don't have the resources to do what they are trying to do.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**

*'More resources, more people.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**



## More engagement needed

*'With peak bodies and associations and Stakeholders, I'd like to see more regular engagements, such as quarterly or bi yearly or by mutual agreement, not ad hoc.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**

*'We need to have more regular one-to-one dialogue.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**

*'Missing the bigger picture/very siloed approach/often engage with us without engaging with other parts of DWER/not cognisant of other views/better balancing of resources (i.e financial and staff).'* **Other Stakeholder**

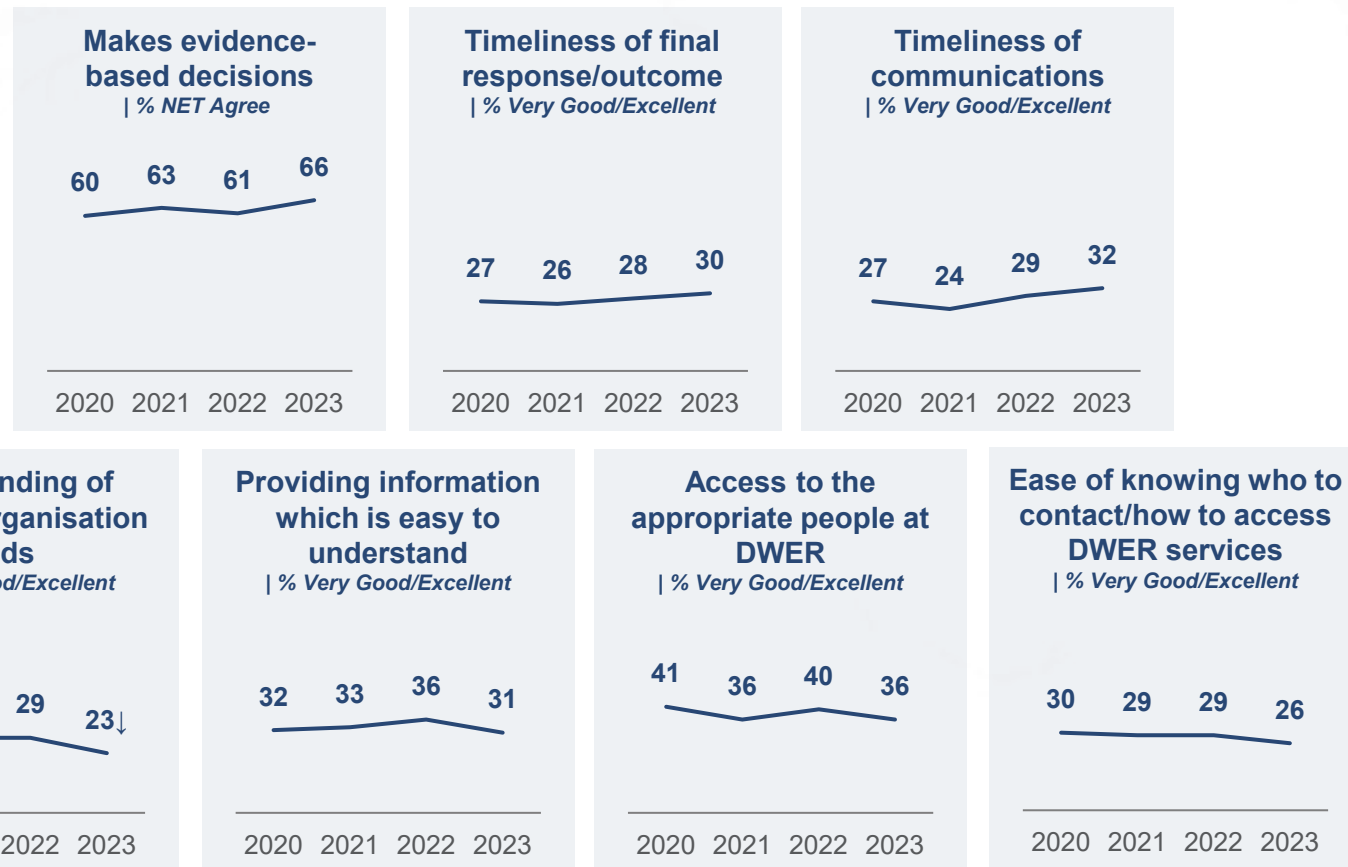


# Stakeholder Experience



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

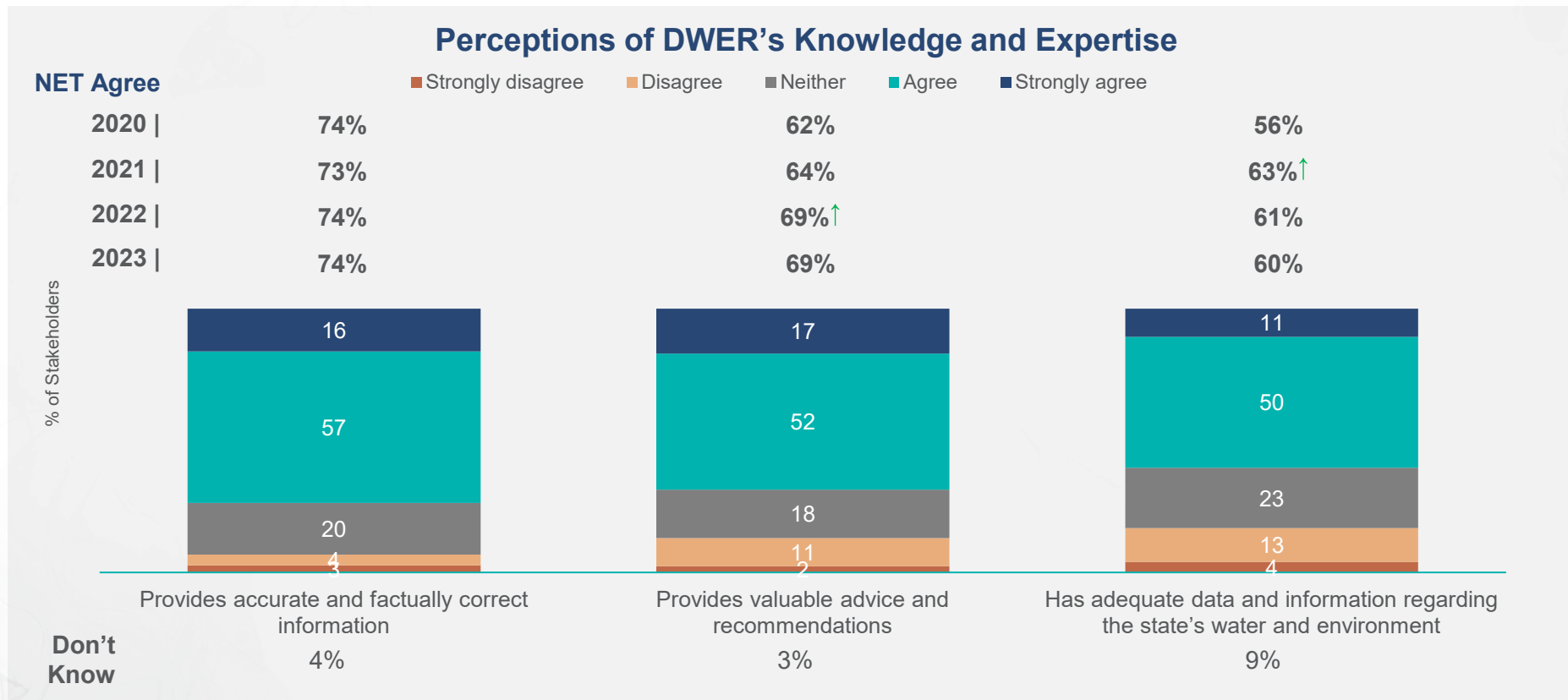
% of Stakeholders

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

# Most Stakeholders agree that DWER provides accurate information and valuable advice



However, they don't rate DWER as strongly in terms of having adequate data and information. Those Stakeholders who interact with DWER for waste-related dealings are more positive about DWER providing accurate and factually correct information, than Stakeholders with environmental and water-related dealings (NET Agree Waste: 69% | Environment: 58% | Water: 58%).

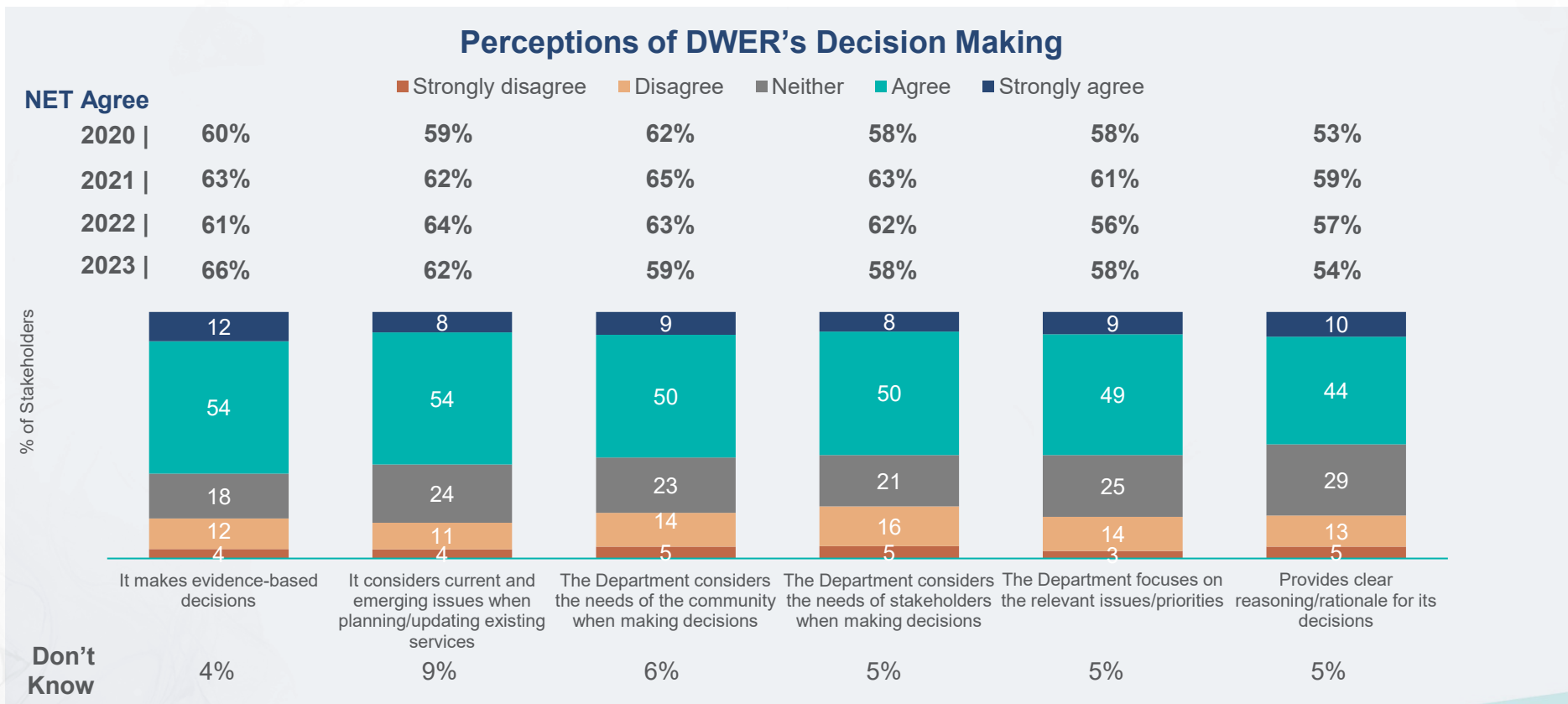


2023: n=361 | 2022: 396 | 2021: 365 | 2020: n=347  
 Q18A. And to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about DWER's knowledge and expertise in the management of the state's water resources and environment  
 ↑↓ Significant difference to 2020 scores at 95% confidence  
 Don't know responses have been removed from the charted data  
 Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding



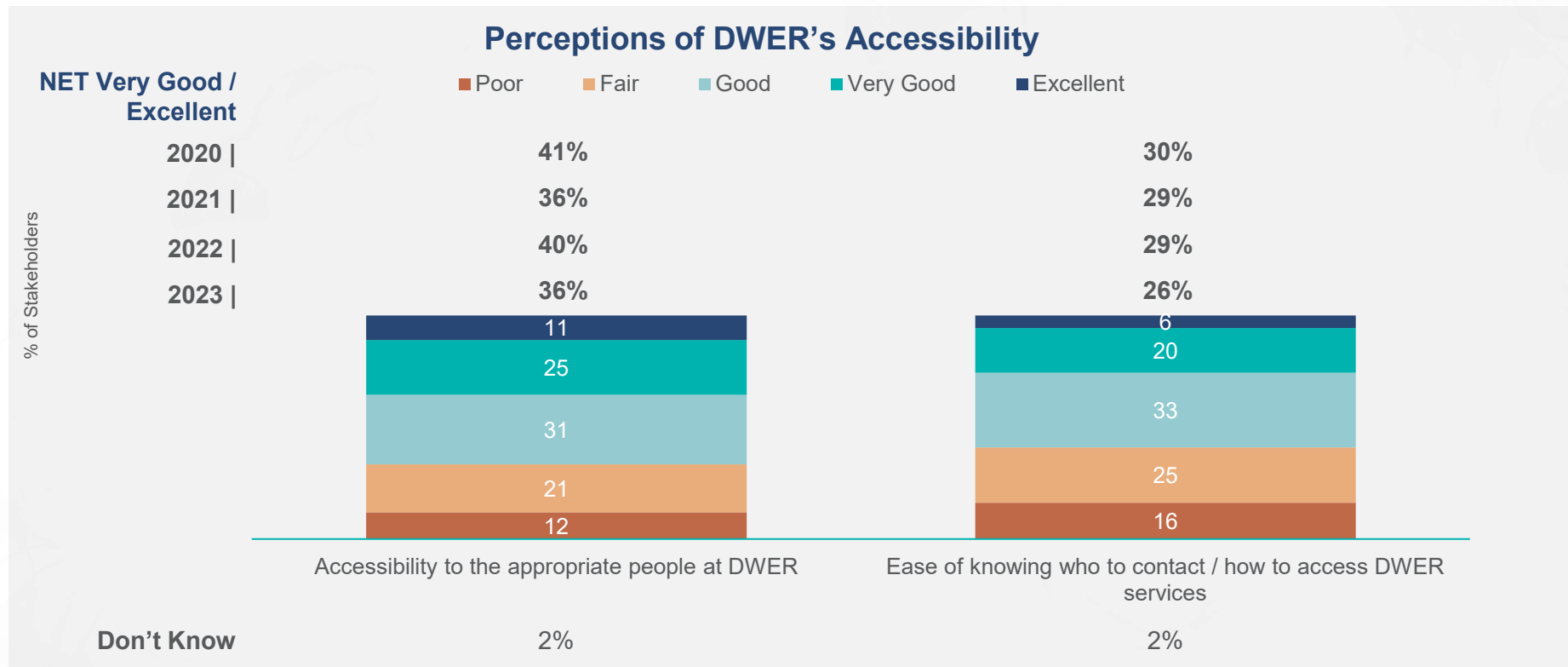
# Stakeholders are more likely to agree that DWER makes evidence based decisions

There is still an opportunity for DWER to provide Stakeholders with a clearer rationale for its decisions, which was also identified in the recent ACR Review.



2023 n=361 | 2022: n=396 | 2021: n= 365 | 2020: n= 374  
 Q18B. Thinking now about how DWER makes its decisions, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements  
 Don't know responses have been removed from the charted data  
 ↑↓ Significant difference to 2022 results at 95% confidence  
 Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

# However, ease of knowing who to contact and how to access DWER services has declined



2023: Overall n=354 | 353  
 2022: Overall n=382 | 382  
 2021: Overall n=353 | 345  
 2020: Overall n=350 | 352

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

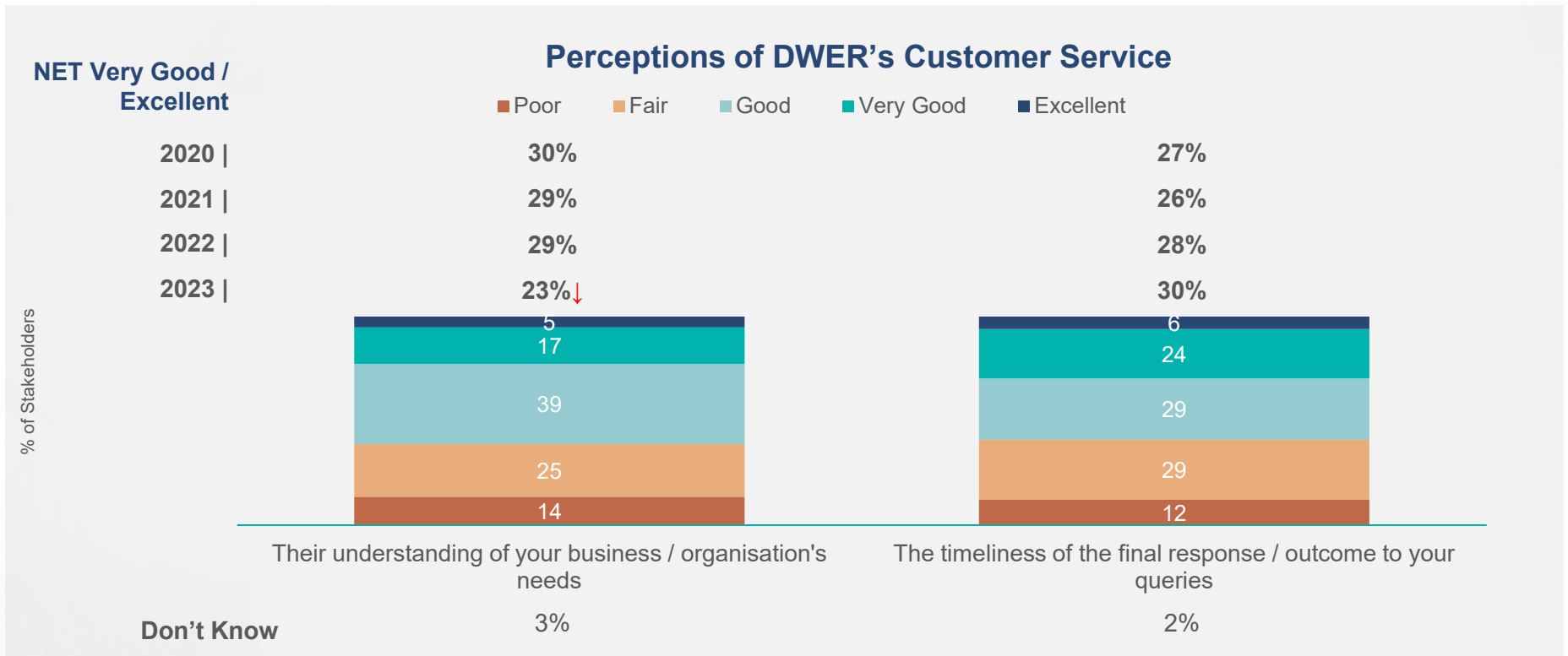
↑ Significant difference to previous years results at 95% confidence

Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding



# Fewer Stakeholders feel DWER understands their business needs

Specifically, those Stakeholders with environmental dealings were less positive about DWER’s understanding of their organisation’s needs this year (2022: 29% | 2023: 19%↓). They are also less positive about this than Stakeholders with water and waste dealings (Water: 25% | Waste: 24% | Environment: 17%↓) .



2023: Overall n=351 | 356  
 2022: Overall n=373 | 384  
 2021: Overall n=339 | 343  
 2020: Overall n=337 | 347

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?

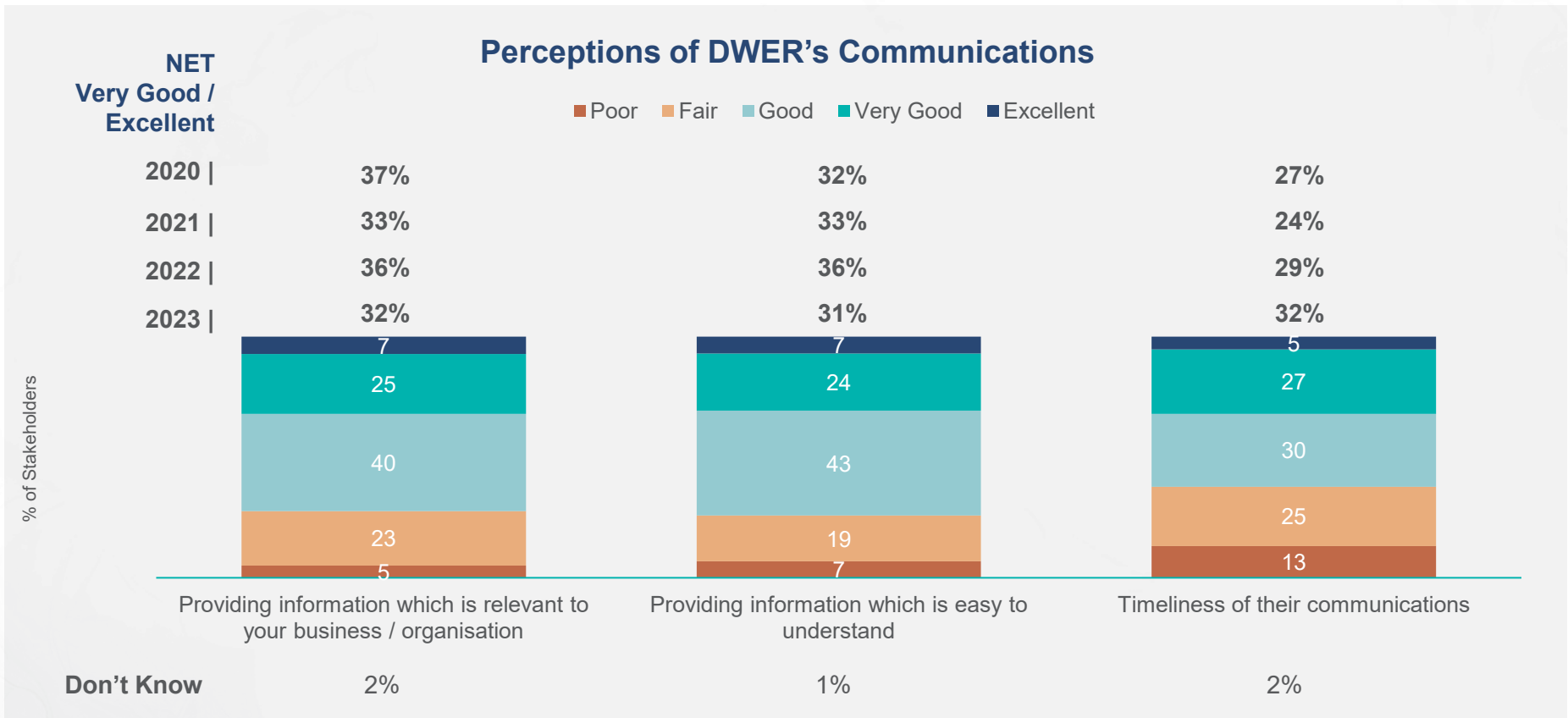
Q23. Still thinking about your interactions with DWER, how would you rate the following?

↑↓Significant difference to 2022 results at 95% confidence

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

Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

# Overall perceptions of DWER's communications are largely on par with historic results; a positive given the softer approach to relationship management this year



2023: Overall n= 356 | 355 | 354  
 2022: Overall n= 383 | 388 | 390  
 2021: Overall n= 346 | 353 | 355  
 2020: Overall n= 353 | 357 | 357

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?

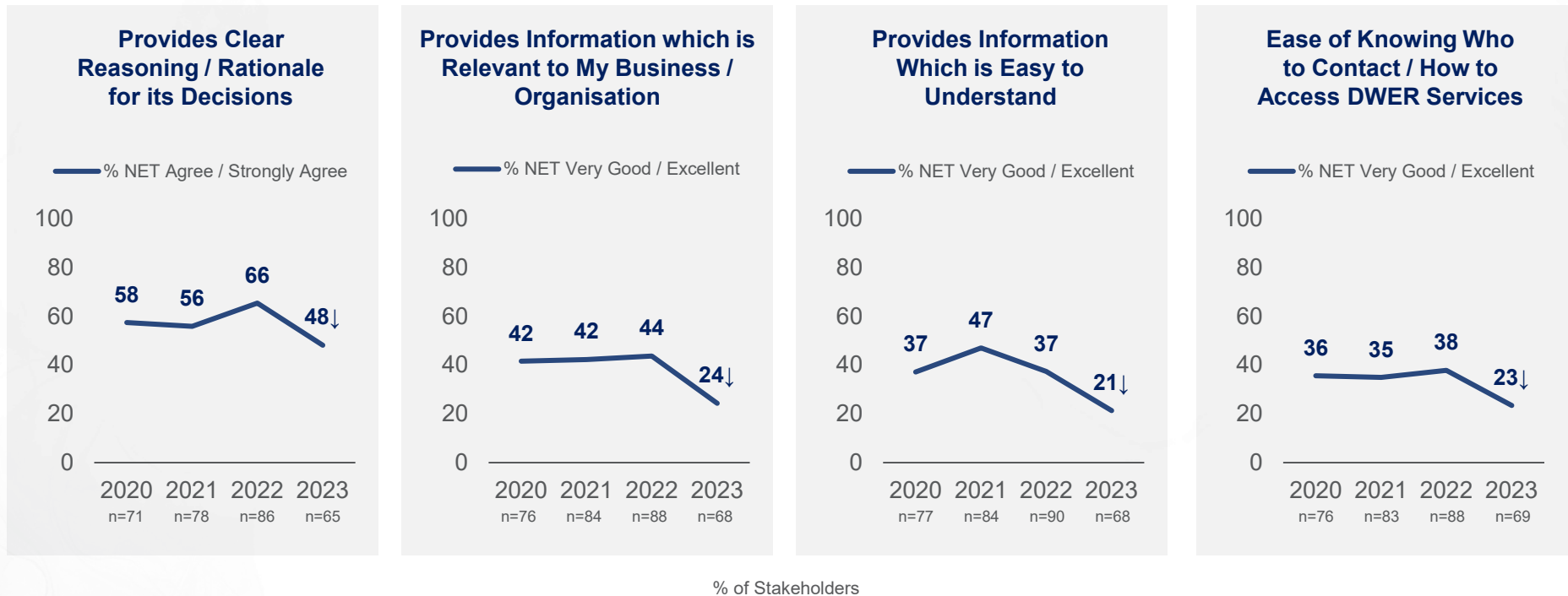
↑ Significant difference to 2022 results at 95% confidence

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

Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

However, Top Priority/Key Stakeholders were less positive about the information they received from DWER this year and felt unclear about who to contact or how to access services, compared to previous years.

This has likely contributed to a softer KPI result from this group. The planned review of Stakeholder Management and implementation of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system should help to address this.



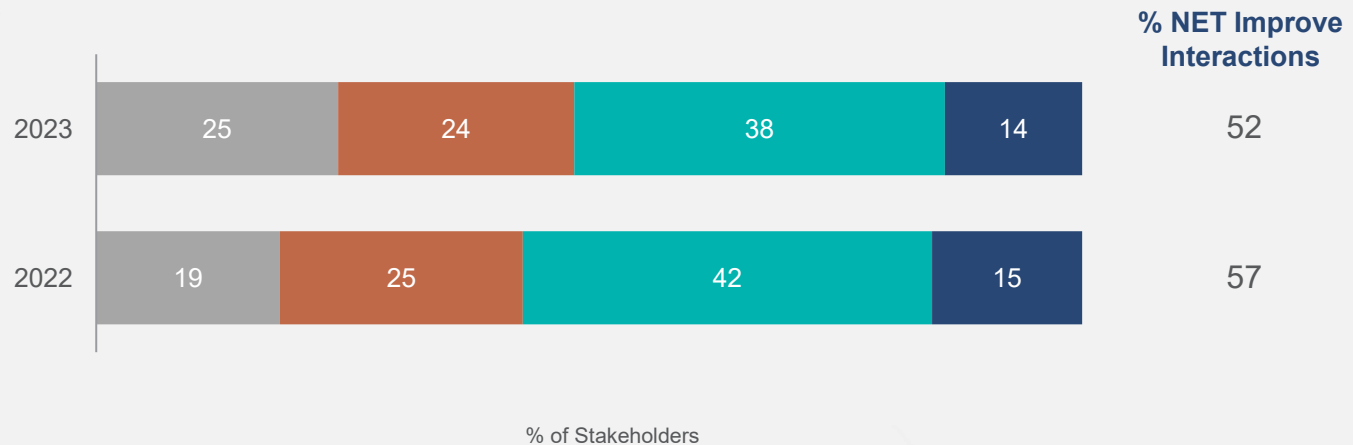
Q18b. Thinking now about how DWER makes its decisions, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements  
 Q22B. And, how would you rate DWER's performance in managing their relationship with you and your business/organisation, across each of the following areas  
 Don't Know responses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

# Similar to last year, over half of all Stakeholders believe an online portal will improve their interactions with DWER



## Expected Impact of Environment Online

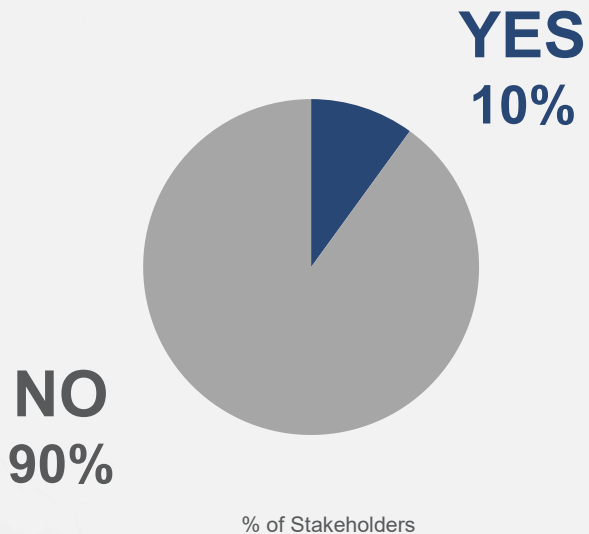
■ Don't know ■ Not at all improve your interactions ■ Somewhat improve your interactions ■ Significantly improve your interactions



2023: n=326 | 2022 n=396  
NQ10. To what extent do you think an online portal will improve your interactions with DWER and its services?

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

## Use of Environment Online

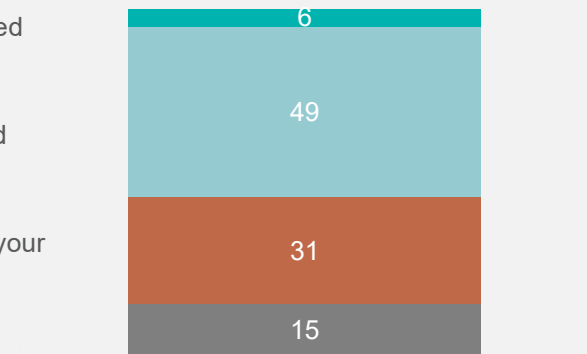


## Perceptions of Environment Online

### NET Improved Interactions

55%

- Has significantly improved your interactions
- Has somewhat improved your interactions
- Has not at all improved your interactions
- Don't know



Perceptions of Environment Online

% of Stakeholders that have used Environment Online

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

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?

↑↓ Significant difference to 2022 scores at 95% confidence

\*Caution: Results indicative only due to small sample

# There is considerable variation in the Stakeholder experience depending on the reason for dealing with DWER

% Very Good + Excellent Ratings in Dealings with DWER   2023					
Water Dealings		Environment Dealings		Waste Dealings	
Application for renewal of historic water allocation (no change request)	62%	Application to transport/receive controlled waste	56%	Waste-related policy development	58%
Provision of data or water information	44%	Reporting/seeking advice on a contaminated site	54%	Seeking advice on a waste-related planning or development issue	50%
Seeking advice on planning or development issue	42%	Reporting pollution	37%	Providing comment on public consultations	39%
Application for new/extended water allocation	41%	Seeking advice on a planning or development issue	36%		
Direct involvement in water research	40%	Application for licence/works approval	34%		
Water-related policy development	31%	Providing comment on public consultations	29%		
Submissions over water resource policies	22%	Environmental-related policy development	17%		
		Application for clearing permit	16%		
		Application of Pt IV Environmental Impact Assessment process	11%		

% of Stakeholders

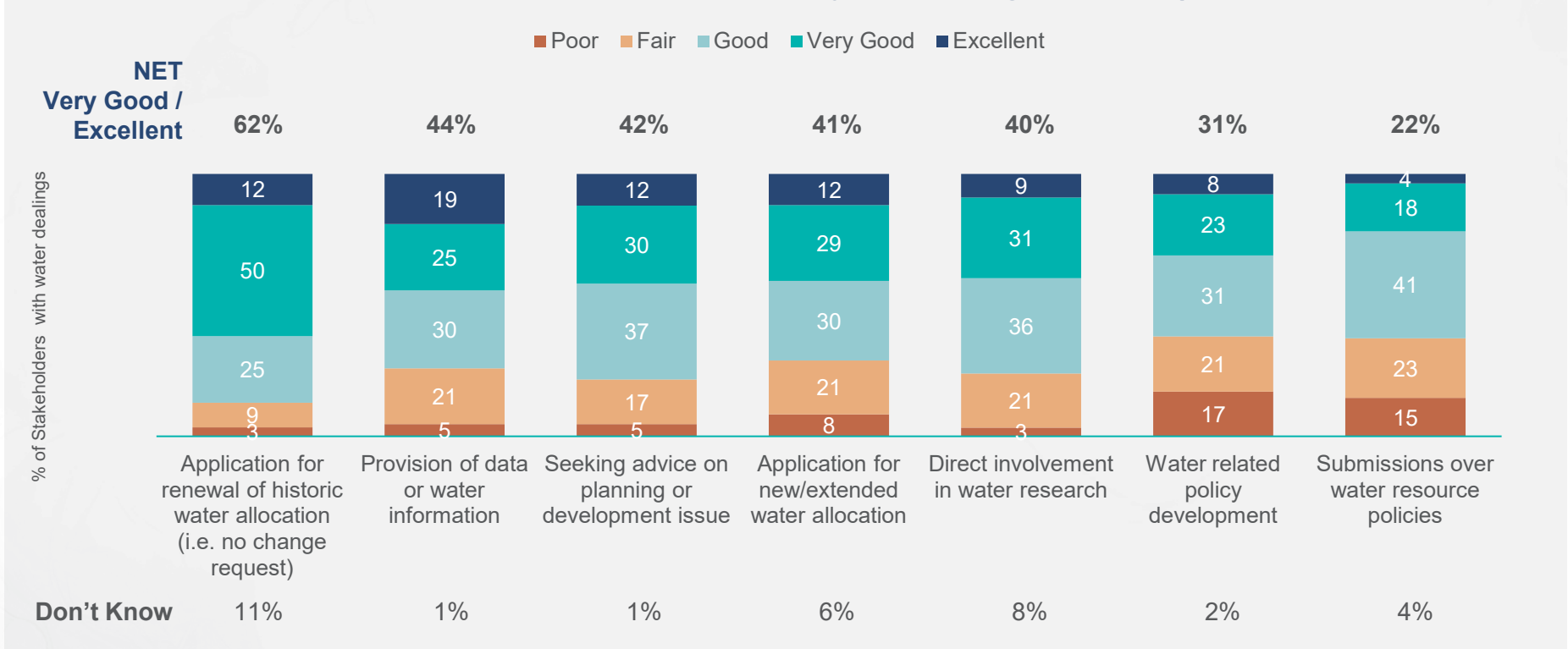
n= 32\* | 67 | 68 | 49 | 33\*| 48 | 27\* | 9\* | 37\* | 46 | 49 | 47 | 31\* | 10\* | 41\* | 61 | 28\* | 47 | 7\*  
 Q18c: How would you rate your experience with DWER specifically in relation to your dealings about...?  
 Don't know responses have been removed from charted data  
**\*Caution: Results indicative only due to small sample**



# Water Stakeholders with an application for renewal of historic water allocation are the most positive about their experience with DWER

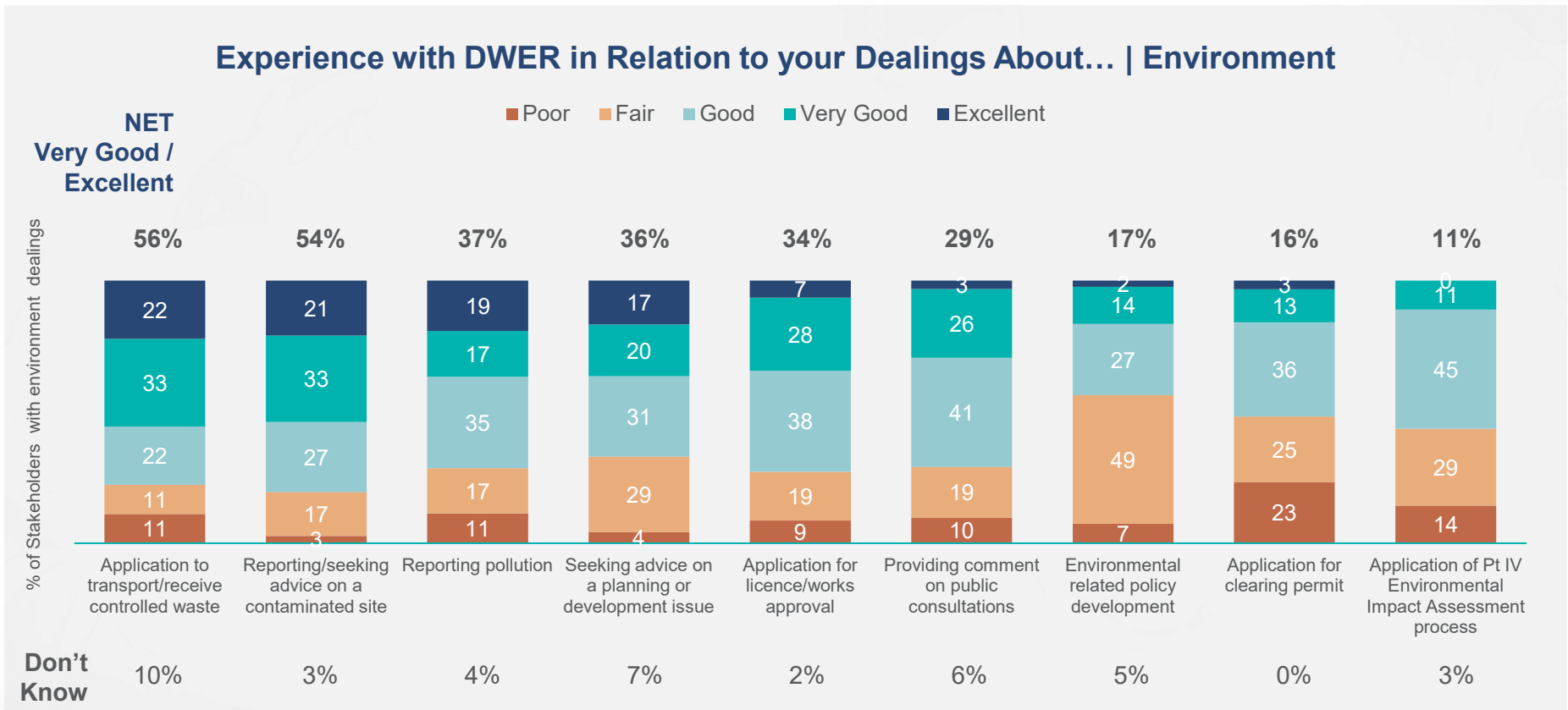


Experience with DWER in Relation to your Dealings About... | Water



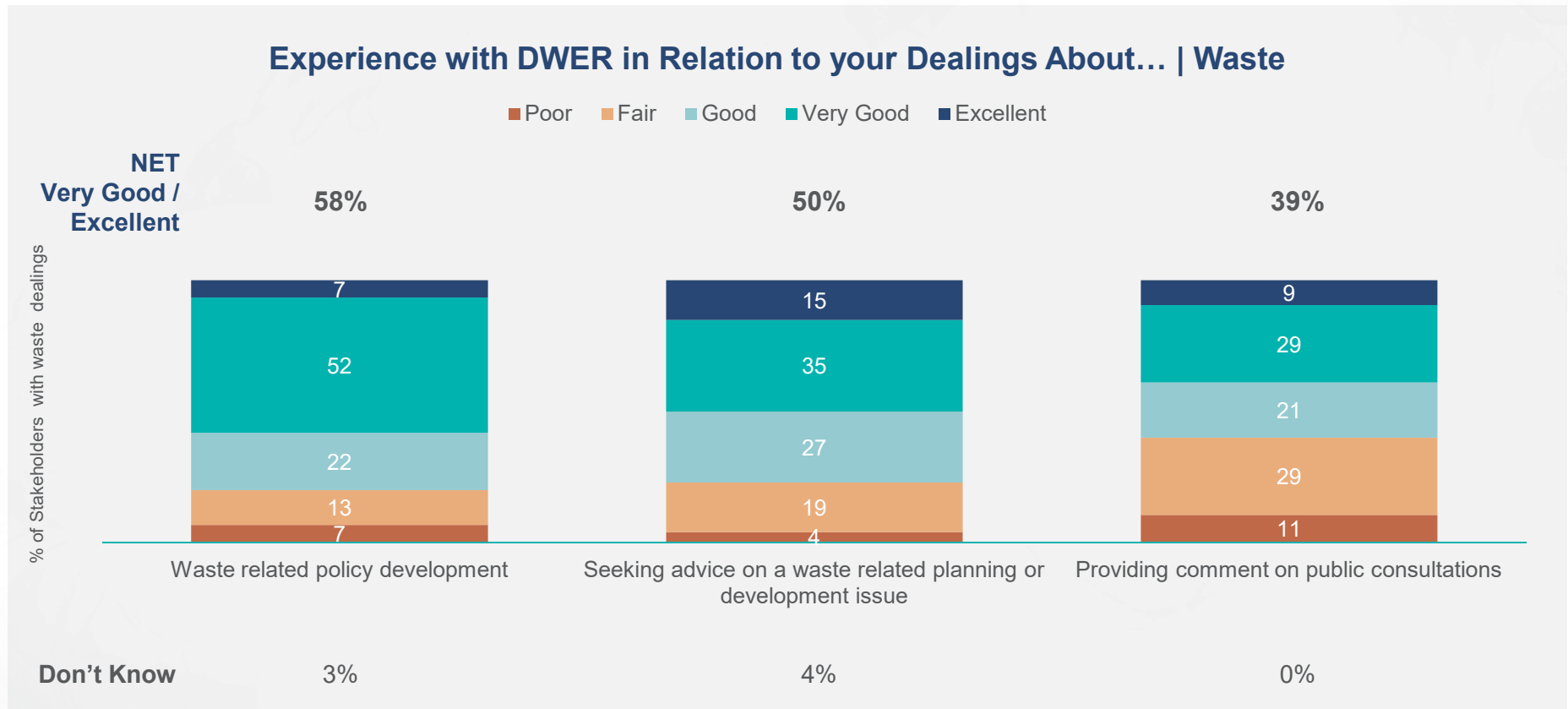
n= 36\* | 68 | 69 | 52 | 36\* | 49\* | 28\*  
 Q18c: How would you rate your experience with DWER specifically in relation to your dealings about  
 Don't know responses have been removed from charted data  
**\*Caution: Results indicative only due to small sample**

# The Stakeholder experience of dealing with DWER differs depending on the reason for environmental dealings



n= 10\* | 38 | 48 | 53 | 48 | 33 | 43 | 61 | 29  
 Q18c: How would you rate your experience with DWER specifically in relation to your dealings about  
 Don't know responses have been removed from charted data  
 \*Caution: Results indicative only due to small sample

# Providing comment on public consultation is rated slightly lower than the experience with other waste-related dealings



n= 29 | 49 | 10\*

Q18c: How would you rate your experience with DWER specifically in relation to your dealings about Don't know responses have been removed from charted data

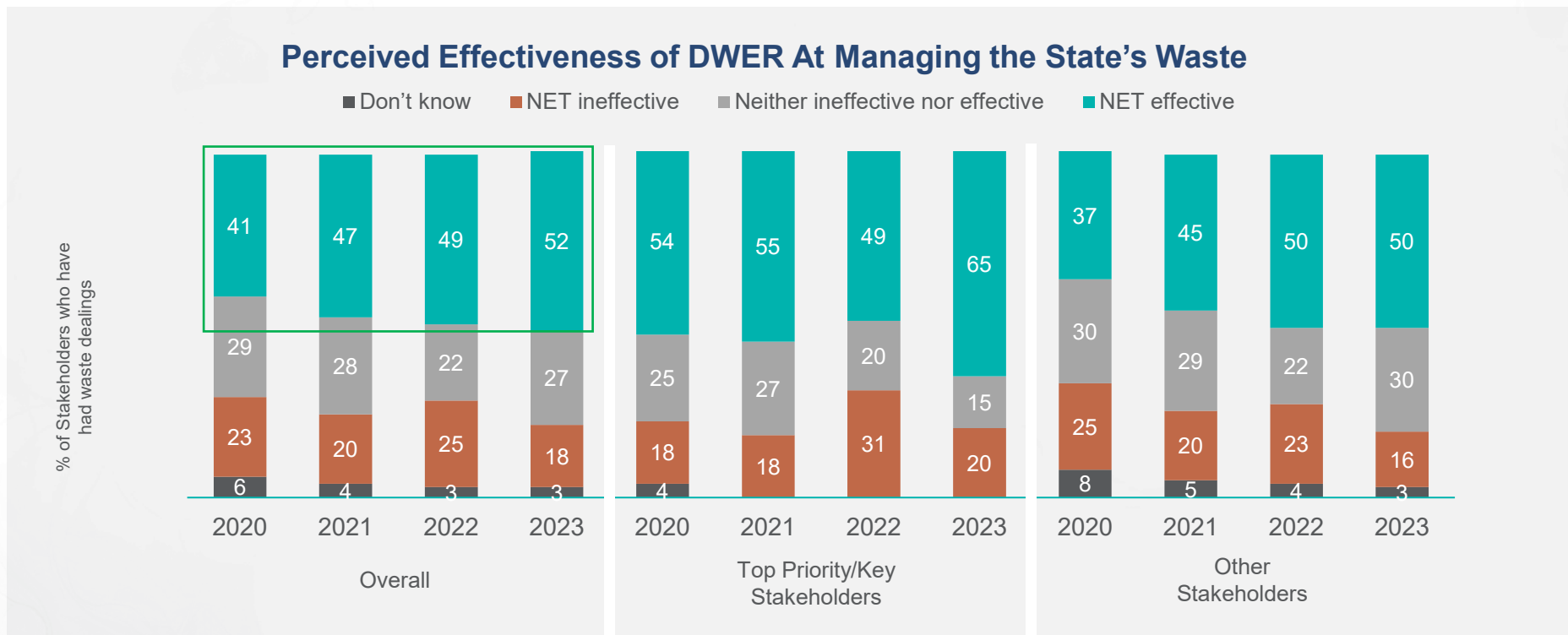
\*Caution: Results indicative only due to small sample

# Perceived Effectiveness – Waste Management



# The impression that DWER effectively manages WA's waste has steadily improved

Top Priority/Key Stakeholders were more likely to rate the Department as effective in waste management this year. The perceptions of Other Stakeholders held steady this year but has improved over time. The recent release of strategies and activities relating to the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy and waste-specific elements of DWER's 2020-26 Strategic Plan likely had a positive impact this year.



2023: Overall n=144 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=25\* | Other Stakeholders n=117  
 2022: Overall n=134 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=35\* | Other Stakeholders n=103  
 2021: Overall n=162 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=33\* | Other Stakeholders n=134  
 2020: Overall n=116 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=28\* | Other Stakeholders n=89

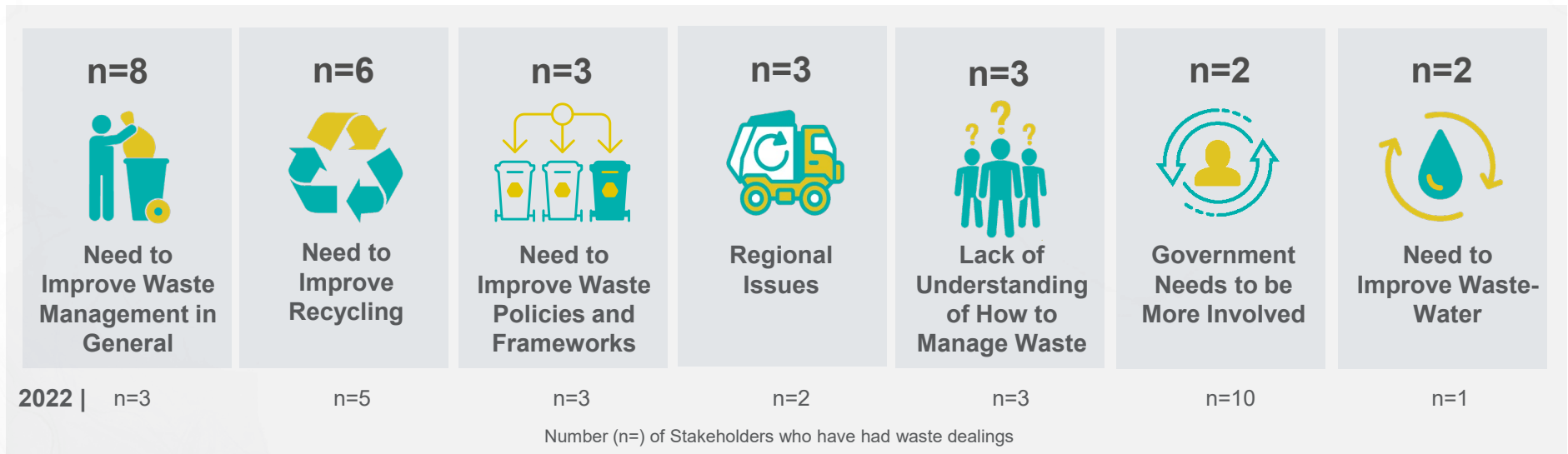
Q16. Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in setting the framework for better management of waste including improving the reuse and recycling of waste products?

\*Caution: results indicative only due to small sample  
 Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

# Improvements in recycling, waste policies and frameworks are suggestions to address the perceived ineffectiveness of DWER's waste management



## Reasons for Perceived Ineffectiveness of DWER's Management of the State's Waste | Top 7



Waste Stakeholders who provided ineffective rating 2023: n=26\* | 2022: n=33\*  
 Q16B. Why do you rate DWER's setting of the framework for better management of waste as ineffective?  
 \*Caution: results indicative only due to small sample

# In their own words...

## Needs to improve waste management in general

*'They, and us, need a better understanding of the waste management issues, like what is happening to waste, where is it going and what are DWER going to do about it.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**



*'There doesn't seem to be much happening as far as waste management goes, I've sat at several meetings discussing waste management, they generally don't give you much in respect to recycling solutions, it's all about regulation and regulating waste sites.'* **Other Stakeholder**

## Need to improve recycling in general

*'The waste is being collected but it's not being reused or recycled locally in WA.'* **Other Stakeholder**

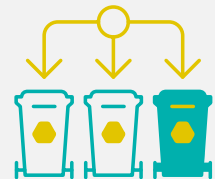


*'The state needs to recycle and reuse more as we head to a circular economy, that is, we need to treat waste as a resource.'* **Other Stakeholder**

*'They don't have any significant recycling improvements.'* **Other Stakeholder**

## Need to improve policies and frameworks

*'There would be far less industrial waste being sent to landfill where it could be reused as a by-product input into another process but for the bureaucratic strength of various regulations. The regulatory framework for waste is a disincentive for use.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**



# In their own words...

## Regional issues

*'The current cost of developing landfill in accordance with current guidelines, far, far exceeds the financial capabilities of small, regional, local government. It very strongly appears that the Department is taking a metro centric, once-size-fits-all approach to landfill and waste management, with zero flexibility or change to fit alternate solutions or budget of small, local government areas. As the State regulates Local Government essential services, significant funding for these essential services absolutely should be provided for State-mandated aspirational regulation.'* **Other Stakeholder**



## Lack of understanding of how to manage waste

*'Better industry engagement. Less wish cycling and more evidence-led priority development, for example, FOGO: very low understanding of industry or how to set the framework for WA.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**



## Government needs to be more involved

*'I believe there should be a more assistance to local govt especially technical assistance. There should be more engagement with the people that know something about the area.'* **Other Stakeholder**



## Need to improve Waste Water project

*'I disagree with what they are doing in Broome - the sewerage waste water project.'* **Other Stakeholder**





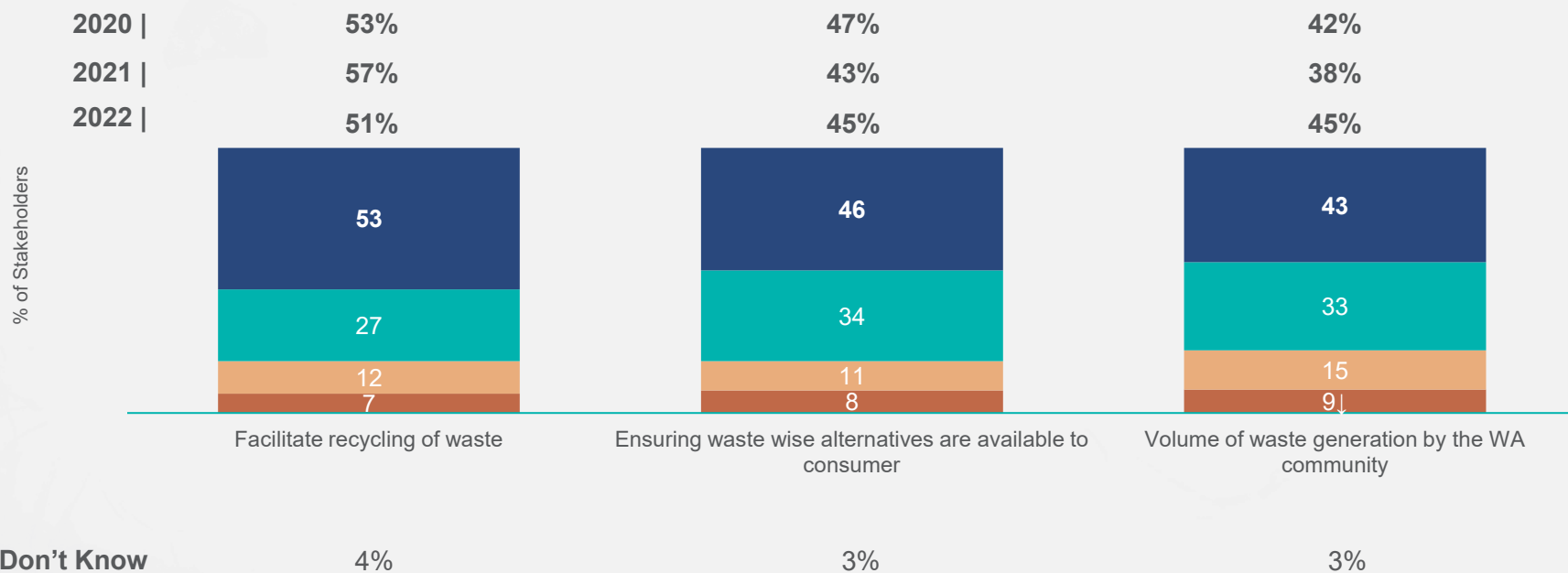
# Recycling remains a key waste priority among Stakeholders



## Waste Related Stakeholder Priority Areas

### High Priority

1- Low priority for my business / organisation   2   3   4 - High priority for my business / organisation



2023: n= 348 | 349 | 350  
 2022: n= 378 | 375 | 378  
 2021: n= 345 | 344 | 345  
 2020: n= 349 | 353 | 351

Q26. And to what extent are each of the following considered a priority by your business/organisation for DWER to focus on regarding the management of our state's water and environmental issues

↑ Significant difference to 2022 results at 95% confidence  
 Don't know responses have been removed from the charted data  
 Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

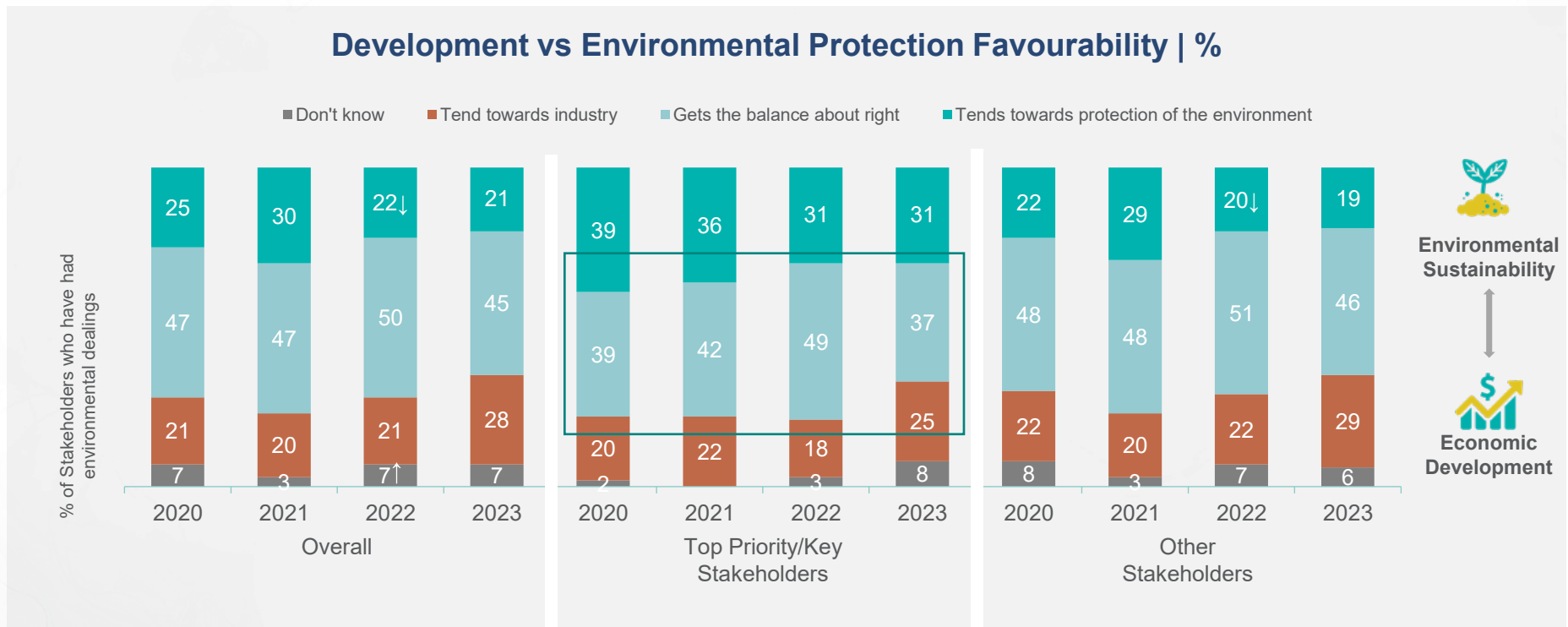
'Rubbish/litter polluting our land and environment' was not asked in 2020.

# Perceived Effectiveness – Environmental Management



# The proportion of Stakeholders who feel DWER tend towards industry/development over environmental protection has incrementally increased

This shift in perceptions over time is apparent among both Stakeholder groups, Top Priority/Key and Other. An increasing proportion of Top Priority/Key Stakeholders who felt that DWER was getting the balance right in the last couple of years has arrested this year.

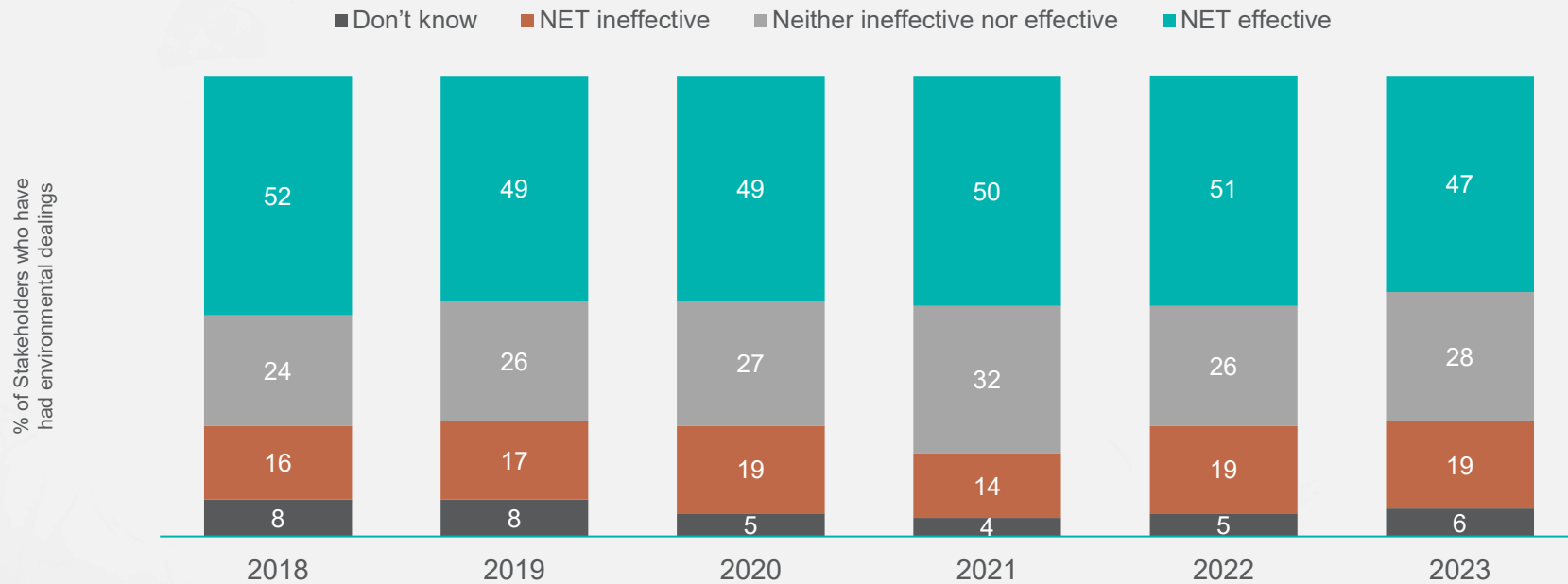


2023: Overall n=231 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=37\* | Other Stakeholders n=196  
 2022: Overall n=255 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=62 | Other Stakeholders n=194  
 2021: Overall n=252 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=59 | Other Stakeholders n=200  
 2020: Overall n=240 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=54 | Other Stakeholders n=191  
 Q13. From your experience with and understanding of the Department, would you say that overall it...?  
 ↑↓ Significant difference to 2021 scores at 95% confidence  
 Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding  
 \*Caution: Results indicative only due to small sample

# Just under half of Stakeholders rate DWER's environmental management as effective, which is marginally lower than in recent years



**Perceived Effectiveness of DWER At Managing the State's Environment | Year on Year**



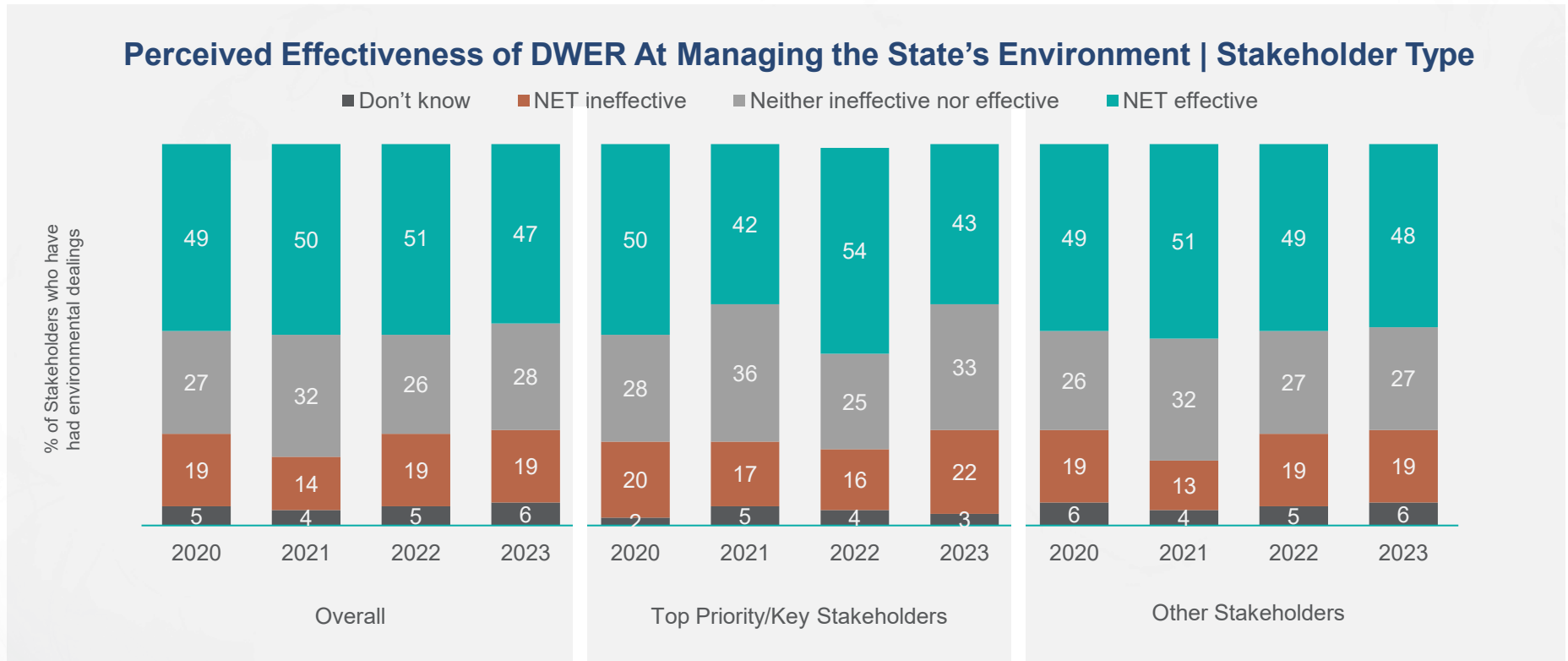
2023: n=231 | 2022 n=255 | 2021 n=252 | 2020 n=240 | 2019 n=189 | 2018 n=214

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

\*Caution: results indicative only due to small sample

Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

# Top Priority/Key Stakeholder opinions of DWER's environmental management reverted to 2021 levels, after strengthening last year



2023: Overall n=231 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=37 | Other Stakeholders n=196  
 2022: Overall n=255 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=62 | Other Stakeholders n=194  
 2021: Overall n=252 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=59 | Other Stakeholders n=200  
 2020: Overall n=240 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=54 | Other Stakeholders n=191

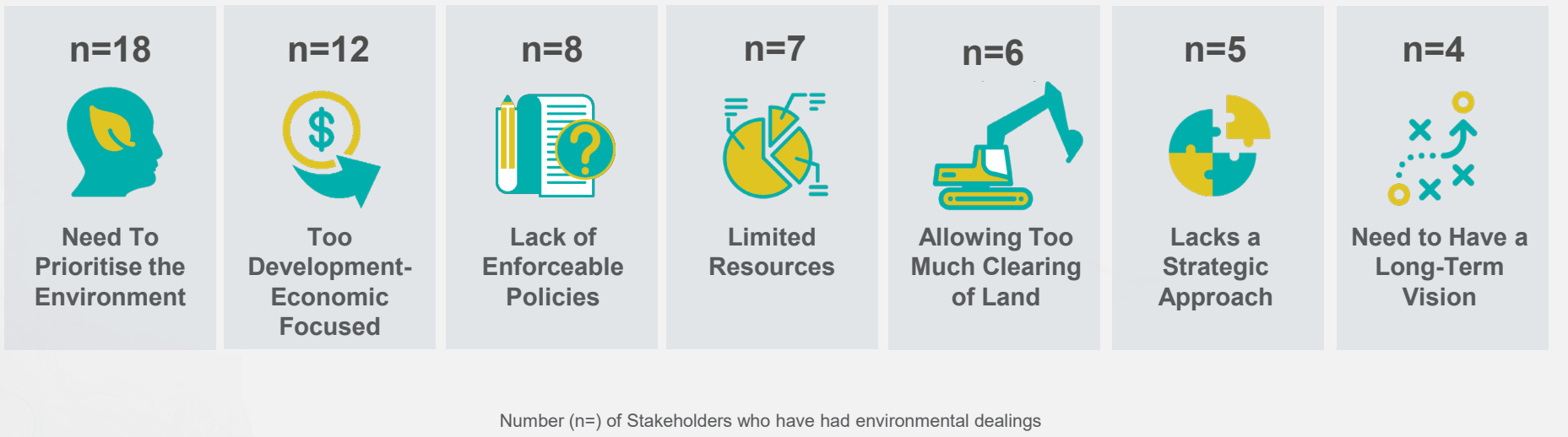
Q14. Overall, how effective do you think DWER is in managing the state's environment for sustainable productive use?  
 Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

# Those who rate DWER's environmental management as ineffective want to see more prioritisation of the environment over development



Enforcement of policies and more resources were also suggested as opportunities to improve DWER's environmental management.

## Reasons for Perceived Ineffectiveness of DWER's Management of the State's Environment | Top 7



# In their own words...

## Need To prioritise the environment

*'Much more investment is needed in protecting and enhancing our environment.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**



*'I would like to see stronger and more consistent frameworks in planning to trigger an assessment of environmental impacts, and stronger frameworks to equip land managers to effectively assess environmental impacts.'* **Other Stakeholder**

## Too development/economic focussed

*'What environment? There is no idea what is happening on the ground. Habitat is being lost daily, fragmentation. Business wins every time.'* **Other Stakeholder**



*'They need to look at cumulative impact with some of the developments happening and they should not be looking at individual applications. Should be looking at it holistically.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**

## Lack of enforceable policies

*'They have cases which are waiting to be sorted out which are five years old, to do with clearing. It's taking too long to go through the court system, for example, there is a farmer in our area who has cleared a lot of road reserves, he's waiting to be prosecuted but he should be higher up and the delays are letting him do more clearing.'* **Other Stakeholder**



*'They do not have enough enforcement officers. They only have one or two for the whole state. They don't prosecute anyone.'* **Other Stakeholder**

# In their own words...

## Limited resources

*'They are under resourced, only the big stuff gets done, the little stuff gets missed. My team is involved with unauthorised discharge from industry, we rely on advice from DWER and if they can't support us, we can only do what we can.'* **Other Stakeholder**



*'With the clearing and the wetlands, we don't have enough support for our estuaries and rivers, they are declining in health. The funding that does come is ad hoc rather than consistent. I would like to see more resources and consistency. In the same way that roads are considered critical infrastructure, the rivers should be considered that as well and maintained appropriately.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**

## Allow too much clearing of land

*'DWER tends to support clearing of native vegetation, which is not in the long-term interests of the environment/short-term attitude.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**



*'A system where people can't buy their way to clearing vegetation through offsets. Priorities are wrong. Relying on desktop assessments and consultant's reports is not accurate and is leading to poor decision making. Consultant reports are constantly under-representing the actual condition of vegetation.'* **Other Stakeholder**

## Lacks a strategic approach

*'DWER has been distracted, and continues to be distracted, by a number of initiatives that are not providing material improvements. Streamline WA has had its time and no longer has a positive value proposition.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**





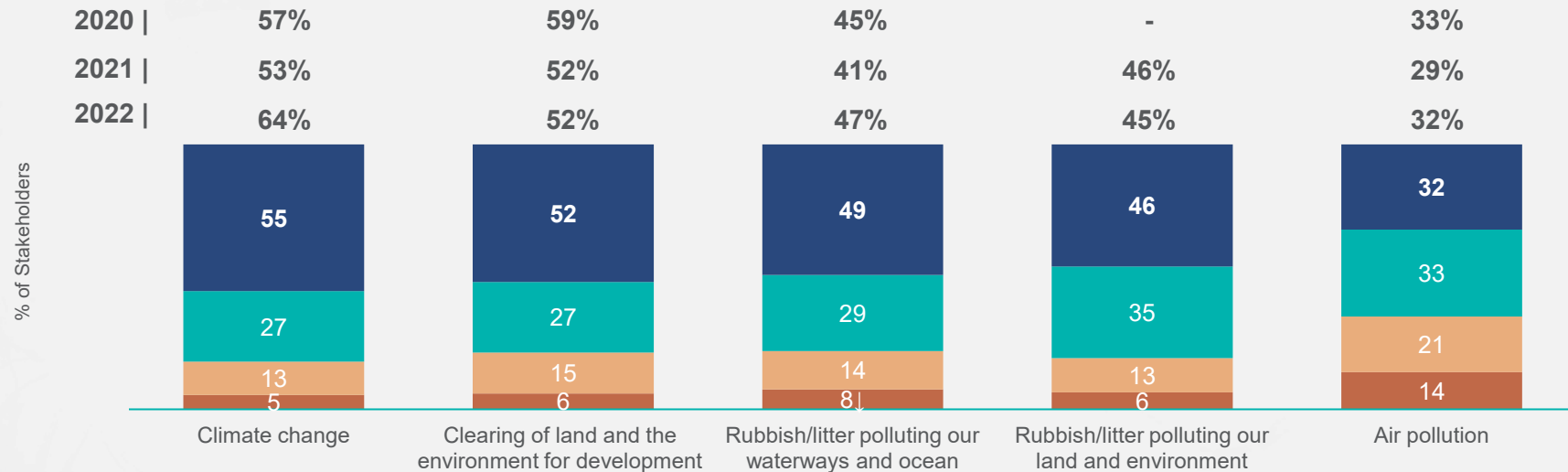
# Although not as likely to be rated a 'high priority' this year, climate change is still the key environmental priority among Stakeholders



## Environmental Related Stakeholder Priority Areas

### High Priority

■ 1- Low priority for my business / organisation ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 - High priority for my business / organisation



### Don't Know

2%      2%      3%      2%      3%

2023: n= 354 | 353 | 351 | 352 | 351  
 2022: n= 381 | 381 | 381 | 383 | 379  
 2021: n= 347 | 346 | 350 | 347 | 345  
 2020: n= 350 | 349 | 349 | - | 351

Q26. And to what extent are each of the following considered a priority by your business/organisation for DWER to focus on regarding the management of our state's water and environmental issues

↑ Significant difference to 2022 results at 95% confidence

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

Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

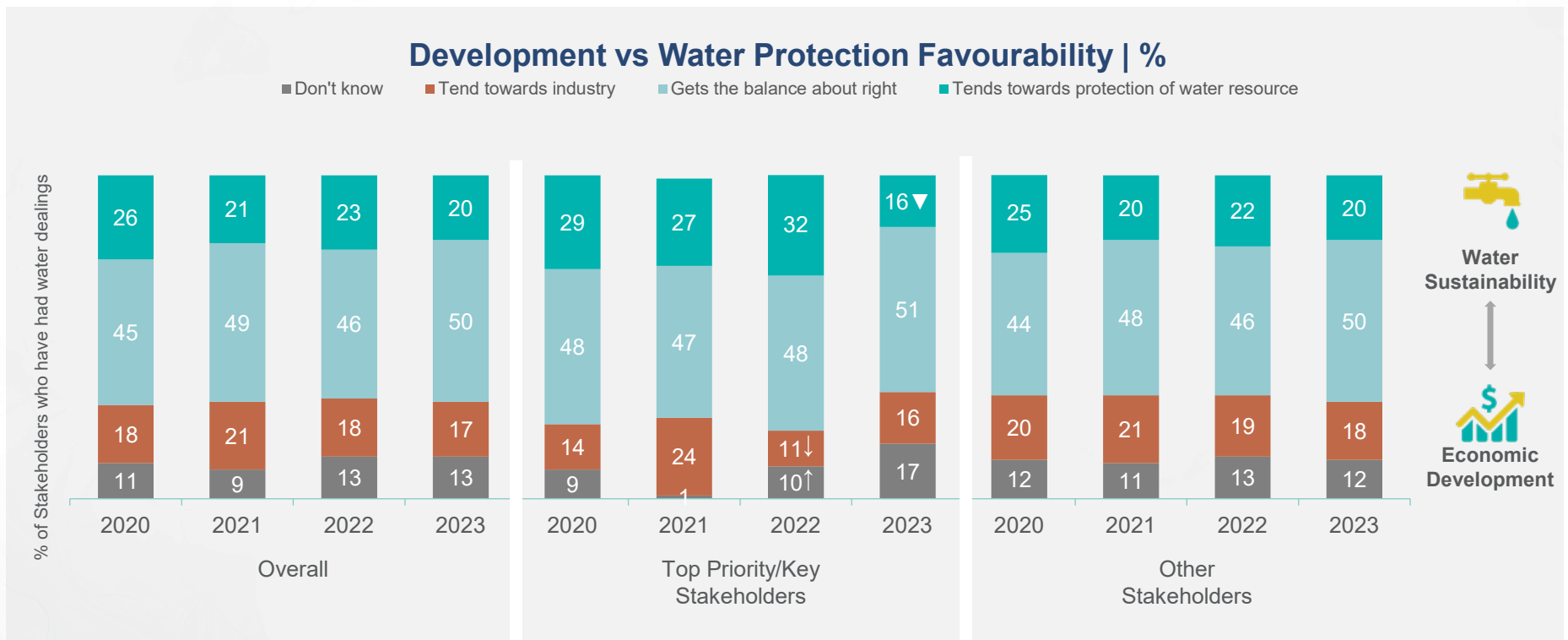
'Rubbish/litter polluting our land and environment' was not asked in 2020.

# Perceived Effectiveness – Water Management



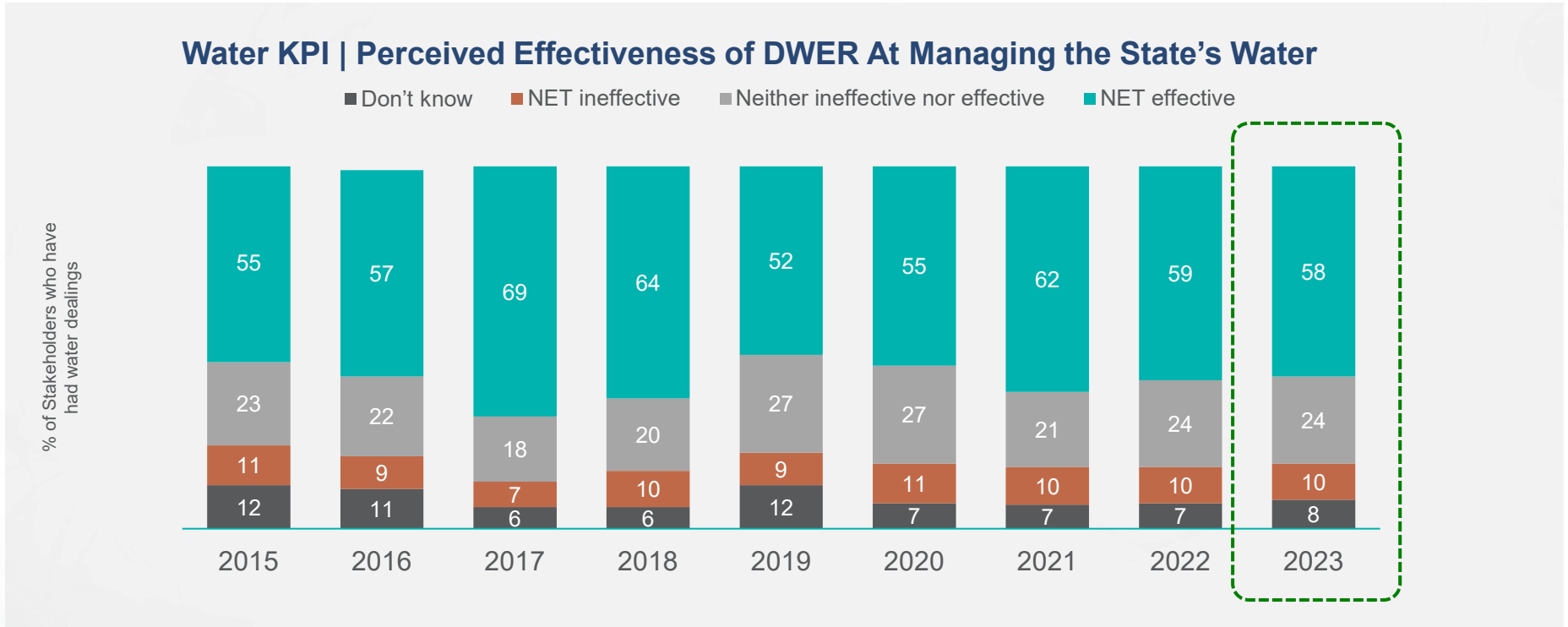
# The proportion of Stakeholders who feel DWER achieves the right balance between development and protection of water resources held steady this year

However, there has been some shift in the attitudes of Top Priority/Key Stakeholders who this year were less likely to consider DWER as tending towards the protection of water resources.



2023: Overall n=268 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=50 | Other Stakeholders n=218  
 2022: Overall n=286 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=64 | Other Stakeholders n=222  
 2021: Overall n=284 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=70 | Other Stakeholders n=222  
 2020: Overall n=298 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=58 | Other Stakeholders n=245  
 Q10. From your experience with and understanding of the Department, would you say that overall, it ...?  
 ▲ ▼ Significant difference to 2022 scores at 90% confidence  
 Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

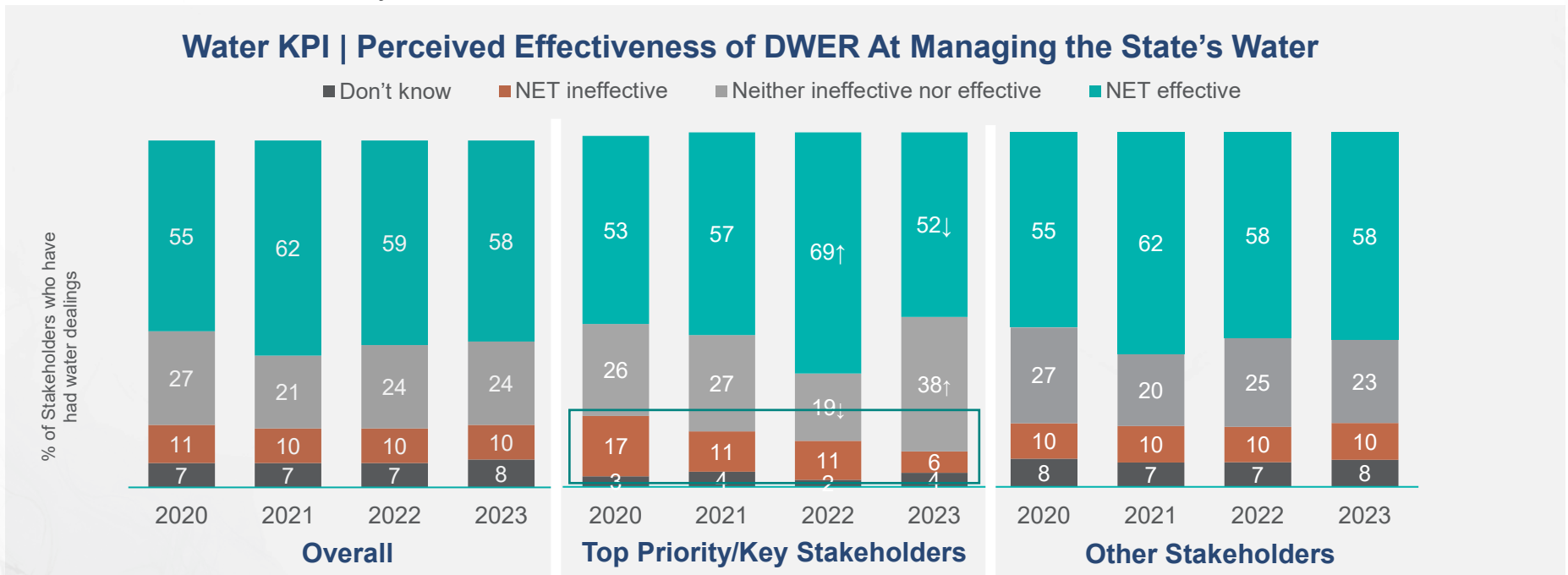
This year's KPI result is on par with last year's result. Six in ten Stakeholders rated DWER as effective in managing the state's water as a resource for sustainable productive use



2023 n=268 | 2022 n=286 | 2021 n= 284 | 2020 n=298 | 2019 n=250 | 2018 n=233 | 2017 n=319 | 2016 n=263 | 2015 n=279  
 Q11. From your experience with and understanding of the Department, would you say that overall it ...?  
 Scores may equal 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

# However, there was a decline in the proportion of Top Priority/Key Stakeholders who rated DWER's water management as effective this year

Positively, the proportion of ineffective ratings from Top Priority/Key Stakeholders has incrementally declined since 2020 (now sitting at 6% compared to 17%), reflective of an increased focus on *relationship management* during that time. However, in the last 12 months, there has been a shift from effective to neutral ratings. This is most likely due to the Department undergoing a period of transition to a new portfolio-based operating model, which has resulted in several senior leadership staff changes. A review of *Stakeholder management* across the Agency is planned as one of the initiatives of the DWER Reform Roadmap, which should help to improve the experience and perceptions of this core Stakeholder group. The perceptions of Other Stakeholders have held steady.



2023 Overall n=268 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=50 | Other Stakeholders n=218  
 2022 Overall n=286 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=64 | Other Stakeholders n=222  
 2021 Overall n=284 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=70 | Other Stakeholders n=222  
 2020 Overall n=298 | Top Priority/Key Stakeholders n=58 | Other Stakeholders n=245  
 Q11. From your experience with and understanding of the Department, would you say that overall it ...?  
 Scores may equal 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding  
 ↑↓ Significant difference to the previous year's results at 95% confidence

# Perceptions of inadequate long-term planning and inequitable water allocations continue to be top reasons why Stakeholders rate DWER's management of WA's water, ineffective

Specific feedback provided indicates that some Stakeholders would like to see a more strategic and proactive approach to water source planning. This may be partly due to the Gngangara Groundwater Allocation Plan (released in June 2022) having yet to gain traction among some Stakeholders, but also that some Stakeholders think more broadly (than groundwater). Effective execution and communication of other key strategies and corresponding plans within the 2022-26 Strategic Plan should also help to address ineffective ratings of water management driven by perceptions of inadequate long-term planning of water sources and inequitable water allocation. These key strategies are *developing and implementing new water resource legislation to provide for sustainable water management in the face of climate change*, and *reviewing and updating Water Allocation Plans in the area where climate change and demand pressures are projected to be most acute*.

## Reasons for Perceived Ineffectiveness of DWER's Management of the State's Water | Top 6 2023

*New topics raised in 2023*



n=7

**Inadequate  
Long-Term  
Planning of  
Water Sources**



n=6

**Inequitable  
Allocation of  
Water**



n=3

**Lack of a  
Balanced  
Approach**



n=3

**More  
Communication  
and Collaboration**



n=2

**Not Holding  
Water Users  
Accountable**



n=2

**Does Not  
Prioritise  
Environment or  
Conservation  
Policies**

Number (n=) of Stakeholders who have had water dealings

2023 n: n=23\*

Q12. Why do you rate DWER's management of water for sustainable productive use as ineffective? What are the things you would like to see improved?

**\*Caution: Results indicative only due to small sample**

# In their own words...

## Inadequate long-term planning of water sources

*'There is no strategic planning for water. They don't take into consideration the information already available in regard to climate change and rainfall, and there is no cross referencing between agencies when it comes to land clearing and water protections. When they look at applications, they need to look at the wider affect it has, as water is a precious declining resource.'* **Other Stakeholder**



*'I would like to see an improvement in the river and use of the river and capturing and managing the water that comes down when we have a storm event and generally assisting and looking after the health of the river so that it becomes more usable for recreational side of things but also for primary sectors and agricultural use.'* **Other Stakeholder**

*'DWER seems to be reactive rather than proactive. We're putting in pipelines to truck water in from a different area, but they are running out and the dams are too small. With climate change, the response is reactive rather than looking at a technological solution.'* **Other Stakeholder**

## Inequitable allocation of water

*'I have doubts that water is being allocated sustainably and for the highest quality users (for example, a large amount is being piped to a haematite mine for little return).'* **Other Stakeholder**

*'It is unfair. Mining companies have huge water allocations where we smaller primary producers don't get enough.'* **Other Stakeholder**

*'They bend over backwards for big industry, it's all to do with the dollar.'* **Other Stakeholder**



# In their own words...

## Lack of a balanced approach

*'The approach seems to be inconsistent and at times impractical. There is also a tendency to make policy decisions that can't deliver environmentally needed outcomes.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**



*'They don't value social opportunity and developments; they value economic developments.'* **Other Stakeholder**

## More communication and collaboration

*'Lack of communication on water policy.'* **Top Priority/Key Stakeholder**



*'DWER need to consult better.'* **Other Stakeholder**

## Not holding water users accountable

*'The lack to control the private bores in the restricted water catchments is appalling. The metro area has how many private bores in the back of the house? And pay nothing and use more than the Agriculture Industry.'* **Other Stakeholder**



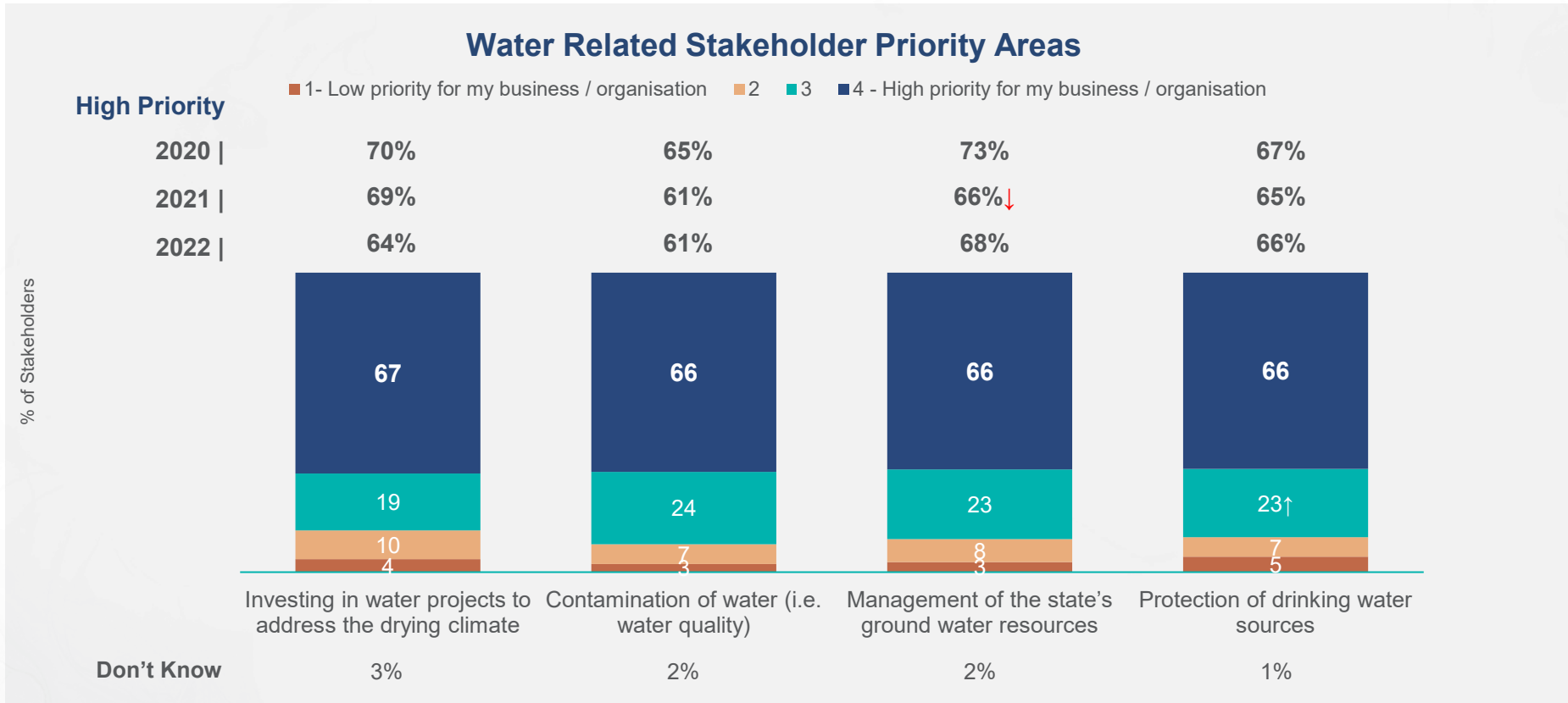
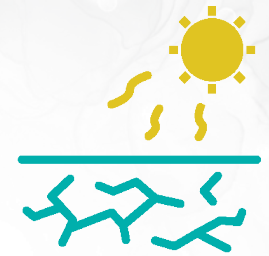
## Does not prioritise environment or conservation policies

*'I believe that industry and economics trumps any kind of environmental constraints.'* **Other Stakeholder**





# Water security remains a key priority for Stakeholders, both new sources and managing existing water resources



2023: n= 351 | 353 | 354 | 357  
 2022: n= 383 | 386 | 380 | 382  
 2021: n= 346 | 349 | 394 | 354  
 2020: n= 354 | 353 | 355 | 360

Q26. And to what extent are each of the following considered a priority by your business/organisation for DWER to focus on regarding the management of our state's water and environmental issues  
 Don't know responses have been removed from the charted data

↑↓ Significant difference to 2020 results at 95% confidence  
 Results may not equal to 100% by +/- 1% due to rounding

# Appendix



# Detailed research approach

Since 2016, the Department has been required to conduct a survey of its Stakeholders for KPI reporting purposes. In 2023, Metrix received an initial database of 1,405 Stakeholders from DWER. From this list, 214 contacts had either changed their contact information (mostly telephone) or were no longer with the target organisation and could not be contacted, resulting in a final usable sample of 1,191.

Consistent with previous years, a multi-modal method was developed to maximise Stakeholder engagement and participation in the survey. This included data collection via an online survey and telephone interviews as follows:

- A letter under the hand of the Director General of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation was sent to Stakeholders for whom the Department had only a postal address, inviting them to go online to complete the survey via a simple web address - [www.dwerStakeholdersurveys.com.au](http://www.dwerStakeholdersurveys.com.au). They were each provided with a unique access code to prevent unauthorised (or multiple) entries in the survey.
- Those with a direct email address were sent an email from the Director General inviting them to participate in the survey. Similar to the letter approach, each email included a unique link for the DWER Stakeholder survey to prevent unauthorised or repeat entries.
- Those who did not respond to the online survey and had a known contact number were contacted via fieldwork agency, *Thinkfield*, to complete the survey over the phone. They were also given the option to receive a link to the online survey if more convenient.

This resulted in a final sample of n=361. This is a response rate of 30% and provides results with a maximum sampling accuracy of +/- 4.31% at the 95% confidence level. Fieldwork was conducted from 13 October to 14 December 2022.

The available valid sample of Stakeholders is summarised below:

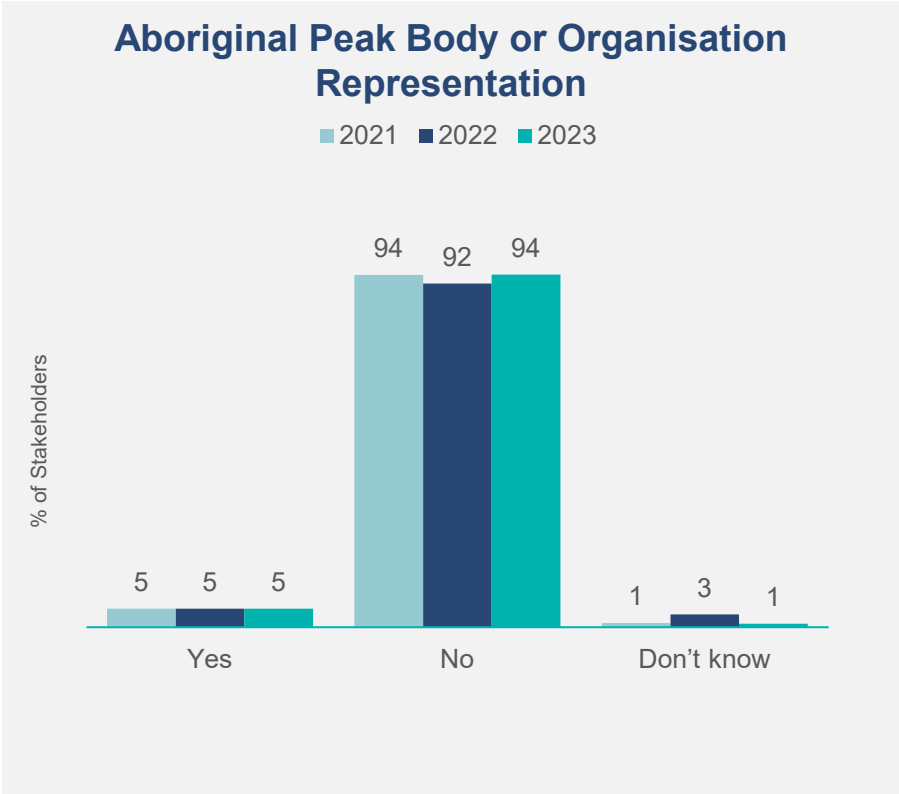
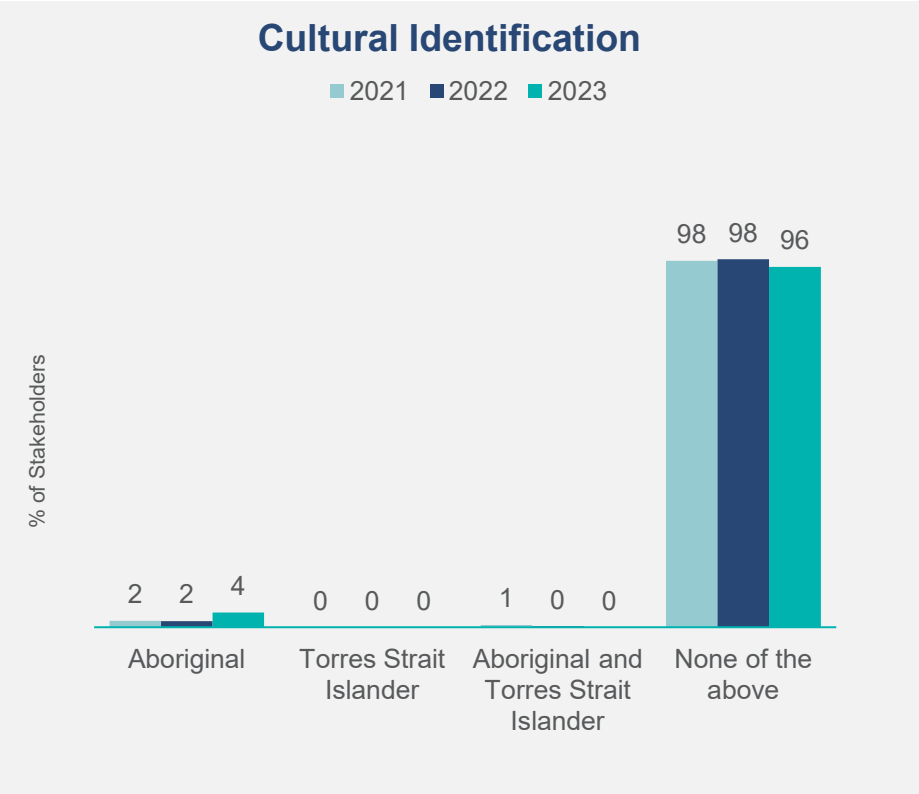
Contact Channel	Valid Sample
Phone only	23
Email only	529
Phone and email	527
Address only	112
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,191</b>

The sample for the Water KPI is based on those Stakeholders who have had water dealings with DWER. This ensures they were able to adequately rate DWER on its performance. A final sample of n=268 had water dealings with DWER was used to calculate the Water KPI.

Since 2020, the scope of this program of research also includes feedback from Customers (who interact with DWER across a range of services and have a mostly transactional relationship with the Department) and the broader WA community. Results are provided in separate reports.

# Stakeholder profile – cultural identification and Aboriginal peak body or organisation representation

Due to the small sample of Stakeholders who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or representatives, results are indicative only. Overall, their perceptions of DWER and satisfaction with their relationship with DWER is on par with other Stakeholders.



2023: n=361 | 2022: n=396 | 2021: n=365  
 NQ1. Do you identify as?  
 NQ2. Do you represent an Aboriginal Organisation or Peak Body?  
 Note: NQ1 and NQ2 were **not** asked in 2020

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