

# THE UPPER MURRUMBIDGEE RIVER COMMUNITY SURVEY REPORT



*The Forgotten River*

***Our family grew up on the 'bidgee. It was not only a place of beauty, food, sustainability, home but a way of life. Our family were the park rangers for the river for near a hundred years. Our Indigenous family lived along the river and surrounding mountains before that and we all married and accepted each other as equal. To me the river represents life, family, future, past, love happiness, sorrow, hard times and great times. It fills my heart with love and happiness to remember the river and all it has given my spirit of memories.***

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land and waters on which the Upper Murrumbidgee River Survey was conducted. We acknowledge that the Upper Murrumbidgee River and all Australian waterways hold a rich history and connection with First Nations Peoples, and would like to pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

***Public won't engage with an issue (like health, future, of river) in the abstract without empirical experience. To most people, the river is closed, inaccessible so incomprehensible. I believe there is a need for multiple public access reserves along the river; these would give public a sense of river diversity and dynamics. I also believe that the riparian zone should not be in private hands but should be a continuous corridor (stock-free, ungrazed) held by the government as a long-term security for river health.***

***I own land on the Murrumbidgee. I don't want to see my river disappear.***

***Christmas lunch with family and friends under the bridge at Tharwa - beautiful clear water to swim in together. Pure joy***

***It always felt like it was 'just there'. School camps, Birthdays. As I get older I realise it's not going to be 'just there'. As an artist I find it fascinating. There will never be a large enough canvas to convey the minuscule to the magnificent. The quiet dignity it exudes. Until then I'll just keep trying as long as you do too.***

***I fell asleep on April night in the headwaters of the Murrumbidgee River, up the back of a swamp beside the Tantangara Dam reservoir, to the sound of a powerful owl. Its hoots were haunting in the very cold air, carrying unusually clearly across the landscape. In the morning I awoke to a hoar frost, the water I had assiduously gathered for a morning brew frozen through, and unable to be used. The morning sun shone through the trees on the ridge as beams onto us below, and I was shocked at how perfect it all was.***

***We have dams. Dams are designed to alleviate flooding and provide water storage for bad times. You d\*\*\*heads want to have “environmental flows” and are more than happy to see good quality fresh water flow out to sea. F\*\*\* the Cooyong [sic Coorong]! Living on agricultural land at the head of the Murrumbidgee we need the water here.***

***More control over the water rights and it's uses. The Murray Darling whilst part of the system is too far removed from the upper Murrumbidgee to make relevant or sound decisions. I feel they are more concerned about their 'end' than ours (I have lived all my life in various areas of the upper Murrumbidgee). They want more and more for thirsty crops like almonds, rice and cotton.***

***I think we should consider not stocking trout, and have areas of the river of the catchment restocked with native fish like macquarie perch and silver perch. We must remove feral horses causing a huge amount of damage to the river and surrounding ecosystems. Farmers should be forced to fence off river frontage from hooved animals, with agreed segments of the river left open for watering of stock, carefully managed.***

***Would welcome the ACT Government working more in partnership with NSW Government in promoting the overall health of the Murrumbidgee River on a regular basis.***

***Knowledge about how this water system works is crucial. People must understand the importance of a free-flowing river system for the environment. Education is key!***

***Biggest issues affecting the Murrumbidgee are the water extractions and damming upstream. It's imperative that we let this river flow naturally. We need to stop manipulating it for agriculture and power generation!***

***Ironic an iconic river that supports the Nations capital has been ignored as a natural, cultural and recreational asset. Sadly beholden to economic exploitation. About time to re-balance the scales. It is our river!***

***I was completely unaware of the Tantangara dam and its use by Snowy Hydro. I was also unaware that the Murray-Darling Basin Plan didn't include regulation of water flows in the Upper Murrumbidgee River. Thank you for alerting me to all this. I am pleased that Sen Pocock is aware and acting on this matter. A sustainable environment is essential, and if there needs to be social, energy and agricultural changes based on scientific data, this should happen. But inform the community as the process progresses please - bring us with you! And does Snowy Hydro governance and operations need to be more transparent?***

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Where this box appears, we've provided an interpretation of the survey results, which include any particular insights, recommendations as well as any limitations.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- *In November 2023, a community survey was conducted about the Upper Murrumbidgee River to gauge community understanding of how the river is managed. Respondents were asked what they value about the river, their understanding about how it is managed, and how they would like to see it managed in future.*
- *The survey was based on community opinion, collecting the thoughts and views volunteered by over 1000 respondents who live along the Upper Murrumbidgee, including Canberra.*
- *A total of 1064 people commenced the survey, with most questions receiving over 900 responses. The survey questions were not mandatory, therefore we observed the highest answered question to be the first question “Is the Upper Murrumbidgee River part of the Murray–Darling Basin?” with 1,064 responses. As anticipated, the least answered questions were the qualitative questions, however 10% to 30% of respondents still least provided their insights.*
- *The survey showed that the community holds strong personal connections to the river. They value the Upper Murrumbidgee for a range of cultural, social, environmental and economic benefits, with many having strong connections relating to childhood and family experiences. They are also clear in their responses that these values need to be better considered in the river’s current and future management.*
- *There is a deep, almost spiritual fondness for the Upper Murrumbidgee that comes up again and again - it’s personal. Along with this is a profound sadness and sense of loss that some of what gave rise to this fondness is gone.*
- *Respondents expressed a strong desire to ‘do something’ to repair the river; but, oddly, not a strong sense of personal agency in doing the ‘something’ (see next dot point). Rather it is mostly more passive: that someone (else) needs to ‘do something’*
- *There is also a strong sense of disenchantment / disempowerment — bordering on cynicism — about whether anything positive will actually be done. There’s a belief that decisions are made behind closed doors and that vested interests rule.*
- *Most respondents were aware that the Upper Murrumbidgee River is in the Murray-Darling Basin and that Canberra is the largest city in the Basin, although almost 1 in 5 were unsure about Canberra being the largest city in the Basin.*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- *Of 894 people, most people were unaware (52.7%) or unsure (10.2%) that although the river is part of the Murray-Darling Basin, the water reforms have had little to no impact on improving its health. 37% of people were aware of this.*
- *Most people were unaware that the Tantangara Dam captured over 90% of the headwaters of the river. Anecdotally, this is the key fact that many people think is simply not sustainable, with one respondent querying whether there are any national or international standards for hydropower generation to allow minimum flow rates for the rivers they impact.*
- *When respondents were asked what, in addition to power generation and revenue, they would like to see included in the Statement of Expectations from Snowy Hydro Shareholders to the Snowy Hydro Board they said (in order of importance); water quality, transparency in operations, environmental sustainability, Critical Human Water Needs, community engagement and cultural values. Regional development, recreational and agricultural values were also included as values to be considered, but as lesser priorities compared to the others.*
- *In the qualitative responses, many raised the need for complementary natural resource management activities. In particular, the need for investment in pest plant and animal control programs around terrestrial animals (e.g. horses, pigs, goats and deer) and aquatic pest species (especially carp, as well as redfin, gambusia and trout). The need for weed control for willows, box elder, blackberries and other species was also frequently raised as a problem needing to be addressed.*
- *Other strong themes that emerged related to the deep concern about environmental degradation, feral animals and plants (in river and in the riparian zone), and the risks Snowy 2.0 poses to the health of the river.*
- *Complementary natural resource management activities were highlighted as needing to be delivered alongside improved flows and be visible to, or delivered with community. Nature positive solutions and more holistic river management were also mentioned.*
- *When asked about what should be considered in the future management of the river, respondents said ecological health was the highest priority, alongside water quality, water security and cultural values respectively. Agriculture/industrial uses and recreational uses were ranked fifth and sixth respectively, but still warrant consideration in future management.*



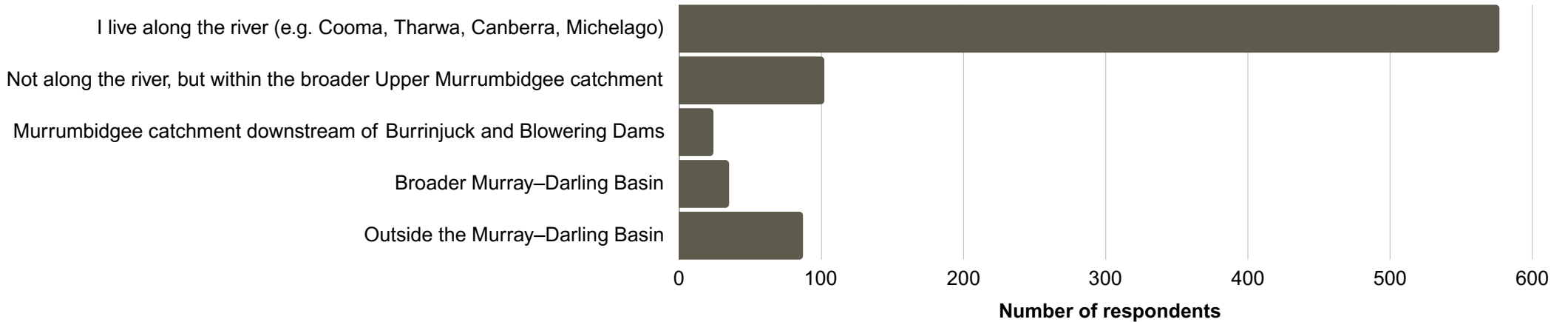


# RELATIONSHIP TO THE RIVER

A variety of people interact with the Upper Murrumbidgee and the wider Murray-Darling Basin. From this first question, we learned that most respondents live in and along the Upper Murrumbidgee River, but we also have perspectives from below Burrinjuck Dam, the broader Murray Darling Basin, and people outside the Basin. 577 of 825 respondents who answered this question (~70%) live along the river, and this increases to over 80% when encompassing people living in the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment.

**Q: Where do you live, in relationship to the Upper Murrumbidgee River?**

Answered: 825

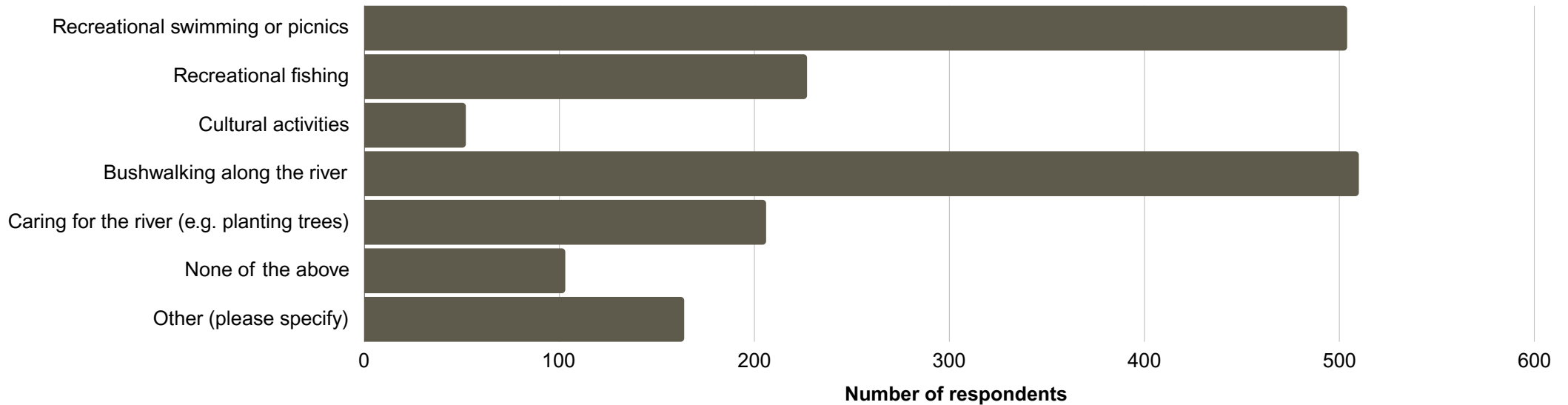


# RELATIONSHIP TO THE RIVER

Survey respondents have strong connections to the rivers and waterways of their region. These connections may be formed from early childhood as part of family and cultural connections, as part of their livelihoods, or is a connection which grows over time. 825 people told us how they interact with the river, highlighting a range of values while also sharing how they seek to care for it.

**Q: How do you currently interact with the Upper Murrumbidgee River? (Respondents could select more than one option)**

Answered: 825



A qualitative review of the additional comments indicated the following summary of activities and personal connections to the Upper Murrumbidgee River (in no particular order):

- Farm management and river restoration along the river and its tributaries
- Ecological restoration of waterways, through advocacy, work, research, policy and university education
- Personal or familial connections to the river
- Recreational activities such as bushwalking, cycling, kayaking, swimming, fishing, picnicking
- Spirituality and therapeutic connection
- Biodiversity watching (birds, frogs, platypus)
- Removing rubbish along the waterways
- Weed control and planting trees to maintain the river's natural environment
- Cultural history and connection to the land and river
- Engaged with community groups and fisheries, and activities to improve its health



The qualitative data revealed a number of common themes (see dot points) Overall, the combined data suggests that community well-being is inextricably linked with spending time in and around the river, and caring for it.

# RELATIONSHIP TO THE RIVER

The survey asked participants to elaborate on their relationship to the river, and 329 people took the time to provide a detailed response. Respondents shared the high value they place on the river as a place of fun, reflection, connection, celebration and wonder.

**Q: For many people, the Upper Murrumbidgee River is a special place.**

**Do you have a favourite memory or connection with the river you would like to share?**

Answered: 329

The below synthesis highlights the common themes observed in the responses to this question, in order of prevalence:



**1. Nature and Biodiversity Appreciation:** Many respondents express a deep connection with the natural beauty and wildlife of the river. This includes mentions of specific animals like platypus, Murray cod, eastern water dragons, and various bird species. The scenic beauty of the river, including remote gorges and the sounds of nature, also features prominently.



**2. Recreational Activities:** Recreational activities such as swimming, rafting/kayaking, fishing and BBQs are fondly remembered. These activities highlight the river's role as a place for leisure and enjoyment.



**3. Tranquility and Reflection:** The tranquility of the river environment is a recurring theme. Respondents talk about the peace and calm they find by the river, suggesting it as a place for relaxation and reflection.



**4. Family and Community Experiences:** Several responses recall spending time with family and friends at the river. This includes picnics, gatherings, and simple moments of togetherness, illustrating the river's significance as a social and communal space.

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**5. Unique and Personal Memories:** Individual experiences that are unique and personally significant are also mentioned, such as specific events or moments that left a lasting impression on the respondents.



# RELATIONSHIP TO THE RIVER

**Q: For many people, the Upper Murrumbidgee River is a special place.  
Do you have a favourite memory or connection with the river you would like to share?**

Answered: 329

*Camped along the river as a child.*

*Bringing my newborn daughter to Uriarra to introduce her to country after she almost died and thank the ancestors for keeping her safe.*

*Camping at the Cotter River campsite many times with my significant other. Connection to my grandparents who camped there with extended family many years ago. Photographing beautiful River Oaks when the Cotter river was in flood a couple of years ago. Seeing the amazing red adventitious roots of the River Oaks in the water that was allowing them to get oxygen during the floods.*

*A favourite memory was BBQs and swimming at the Cotter. If children don't have a physical or emotional connection with the river, they don't think of it as a critical requirement as an adult.*

*Seeing a platypus swimming for a few minutes at Murrells Crossing Cooma in July 23. Just magic!*

*Murray - my pet Murray cod in the river at our place. I've caught him about 4 or 5 times and seen him grow - pictures can be provided...*



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# RELATIONSHIP TO THE RIVER

Q: For many people, the Upper Murrumbidgee River is a special place.

Do you have a favourite memory or connection with the river you would like to share?

Answered: 329

*Angle Crossing was always a great place to take the kids but the banks have not been maintained since the pumping station was installed!*

*As a child we would always swim in the Murrumbidgee rather than the pool. Today the quality is too poor.*

*As a family of six, the river has been a large part of our children's upbringing. Always a pull to visit the river especially during flood and drought times.*

*The clear, clean water that I remember from my youth, no silt or prolonged muddy water. Trout jumping for insects, no carp, a feeling of being one with the river and blessed to be in it's presence.*

*We regularly drive from central Cooma down to the river to cool down, picnic, kayak and explore. Good times!*

*As a keen bushwalker I love the upper catchment areas. I was saddened to see it nearly dry during the last drought.*

*As a kid I used to spend hours on the river fishing and looking at aquatic life. Best memory floating down the river near Adaminaby in an old tractor inner tube.*

*As a teenager in the late 1970's I kayaked from near Adaminaby to near Cooma. Camping on the river two nights. It was a great experience.*

*Camping in a remote gorge and watching 5 platypus playing in a rapids in the evening-- The sound of the wind sighing through Casuarina fronds -- Carefully catching and releasing many beautiful wild Murray cod (on lures and barbless hooks) -- the bird life I have seen and heard, including precious rainbow bee-eaters and various raptors -- the charismatic eastern water dragons.*

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# RELATIONSHIP TO THE RIVER

**Q: For many people, the Upper Murrumbidgee River is a special place.  
Do you have a favourite memory or connection with the river you would like to share?**

Answered: 329

*As a teenager my family travelled throughout the Snowy region camping on the waterways. What a magical place from the Murray and Snowy headwaters down, its part of our Australian cultural identity.*

*I own land adjacent to the upper 'bidgee and I treat it as a privilege.*

*At high school in England in the late 1950's we learned about the MDB. To actually stand on the 'Bidgee's banks since coming to Canberra 40 years ago is always special.*

*Being able to look down on the River from rocky snow gum woodlands at 1400m above sea level. Finding rare plant species in the headwaters."*

*Being in Canberra a lot of our recreation has been around the Murrumbidgee. I loved my school excursion to the Lower Molonglo Water Quality Control Centre I felt I learnt a lot.*





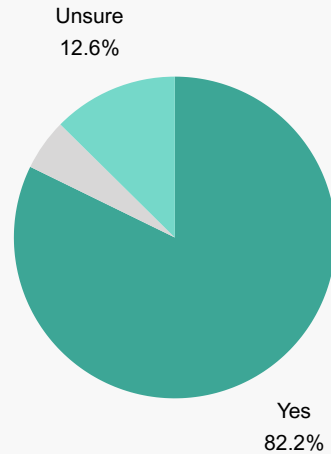


# AWARENESS

A key part of the survey was to engage and empower participants through raising awareness. These questions provided participants with an opportunity to test their knowledge about the river and its management.

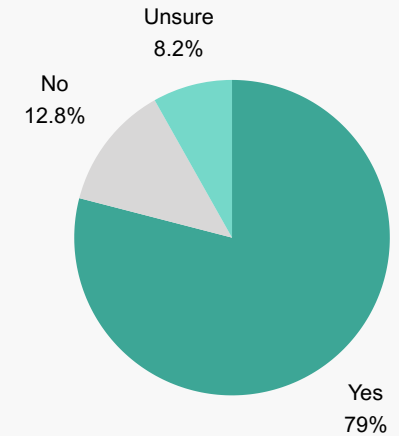
**Q: Is the Upper Murrumbidgee River part of the Murray–Darling Basin?**

Respondents: 1,064



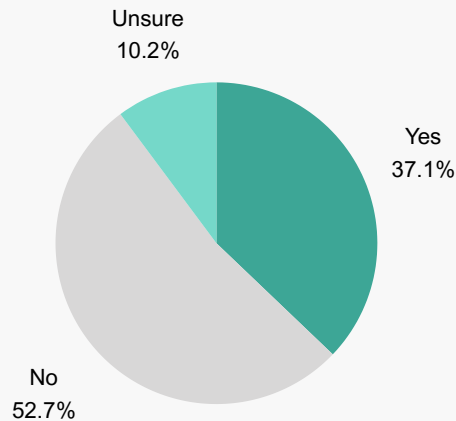
**Q: Is Canberra the largest city in the Murray–Darling Basin?**

Respondents: 1,030



**Q: Did you know that the rules which apply to the Upper Murrumbidgee River mean that the Murray–Darling Basin Plan has had little to no impact on improving the health of the Upper Murrumbidgee River?**

Respondents: 894



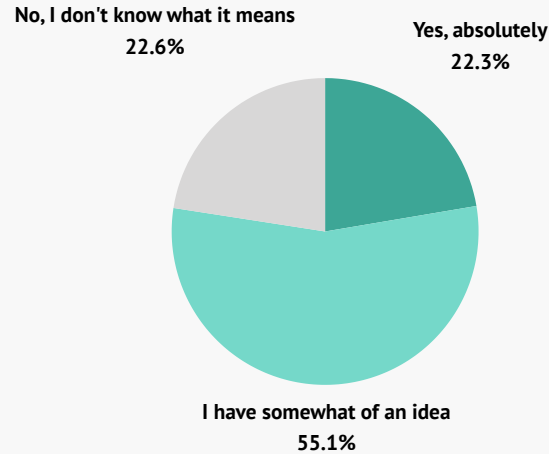
Most people are aware that the Upper Murrumbidgee River is part of the Murray Darling Basin and that Canberra is the largest city in the Basin. One in five people did not know or were unsure that Canberra is the largest city in the Basin. Over 50% of respondents were not aware that the Basin Plan has had little impact on improving the health of the river.

# AWARENESS

*Critical Human Water Needs is a term used in legislation, and is defined as the minimum amount of water needed to meet basic human needs such as water for drinking, food preparation and hygiene. It also includes non-human needs, where a failure to meet these needs would cause too much damage to social, economic or national security, for example water for significant local industries or community uses such as firefighting.*

## Q: Do you know what the term Critical Human Water Needs means?

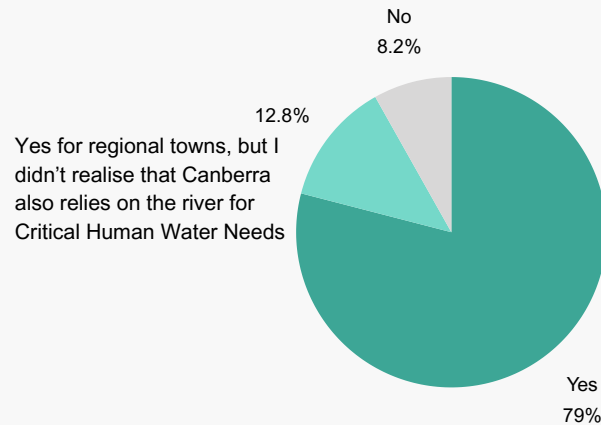
Respondents: 949



The awareness of Critical Human Water Needs is mixed, with 1 in 5 people not knowing, or unsure that the Upper Bidgee is a source of water for Canberra.

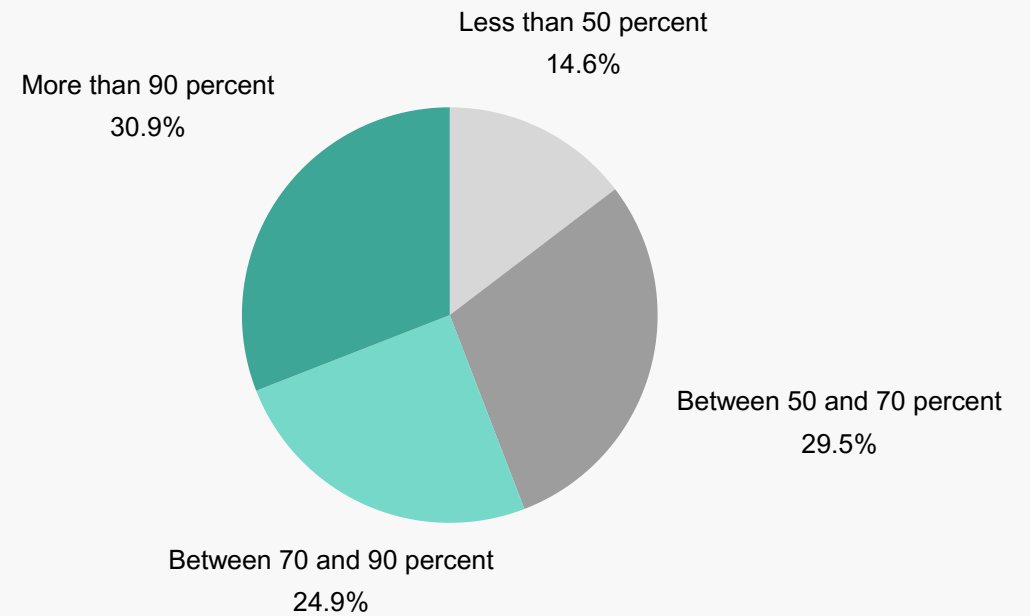
## Q: Did you know that the Upper Murrumbidgee River is a source of Critical Human Water Needs for Canberra and surrounding region including towns such as Cooma and Tharwa?

Respondents: 934



## Q: How much of the headwater flow of the Upper Murrumbidgee River is captured by Tantangara Dam and diverted away from the river as part of the Snowy Hydro Scheme?

Respondents: 915



Only 30.93% of people answered correctly, suggesting much more knowledge sharing and transparency is needed to inform the community about the activities, benefits and risks of Snowy Hydro. For many participants who were unaware that over 90% of water is diverted, this was a surprise and of concern.

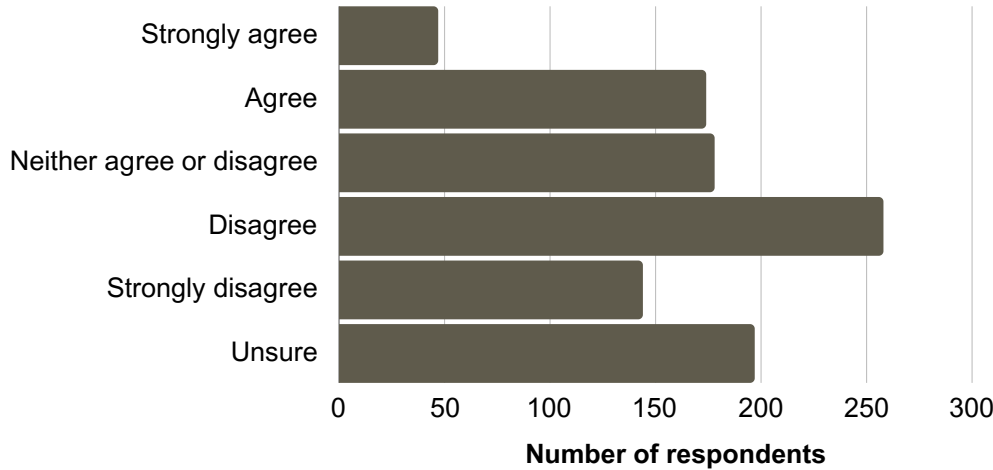


# OPINION

The following quantitative data focused on gathering the opinion of participants was vital to understand how much ACT and Upper Murrumbidgee communities know about their river and how they want the river managed into the future.

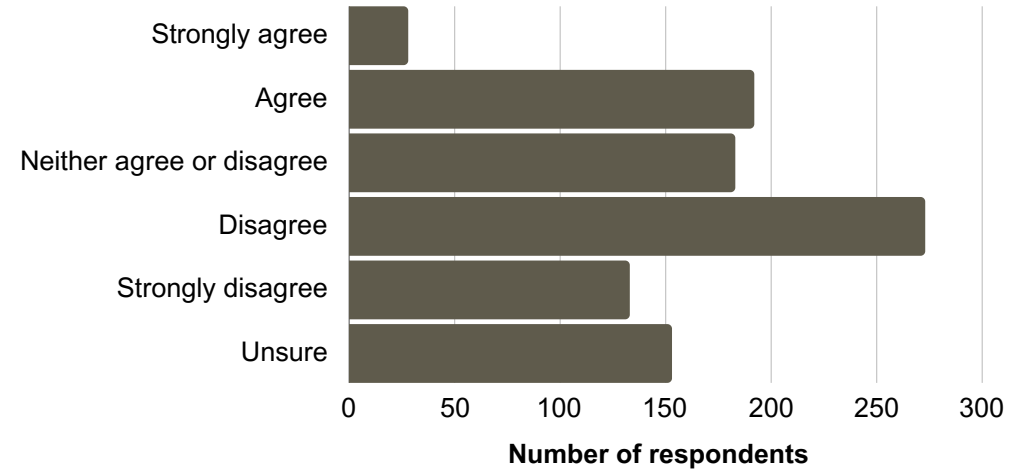
## Q: Do you agree that the Murray–Darling Basin Plan has helped improve the health of the Upper Murrumbidgee River?

Respondents: 998



## Q: Do you agree that your local and regional communities have had input into how local waterways are managed?

Respondents: 962



The results here are mixed, however most respondents selected that they disagree with these questions. 40% of 998 respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the basin Plan had improved the health of the Upper Murrumbidgee River, or that communities had input into water management (962 respondents). Many people also selected 'unsure' suggesting that despite being a well educated group, there is a potential knowledge gap preventing respondents from forming concrete opinions.

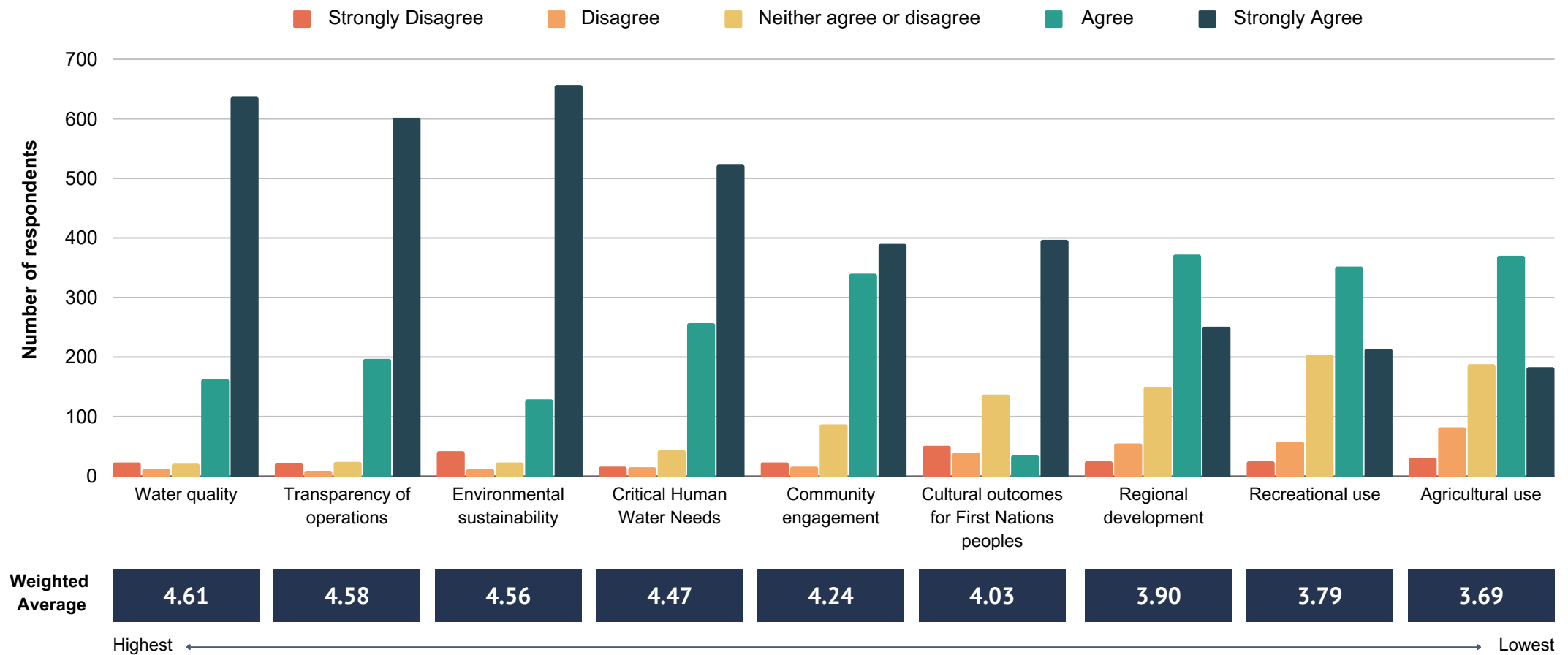


# DESIRES

This quantitative data presents the matters that the participants find most important to consider in the Statement of Expectations from Shareholders to Snowy Hydro Limited. The matters have been ordered from most important to least important (left to right).

**Q: In addition to power generation and revenue which are outlined in the Statement of Expectations issued by previous shareholders, to what extent do you agree that the Statement of Expectations from Shareholders to Snowy Hydro Limited should consider the following matters?**

Answered: 998



# DESIRES

In addition to the quantitative data, a follow up question was included in the survey. This question and a synthesis of the responses received is provided below. A full set of responses can be found in the Appendix.

## Q: Would you like to add any additional comments in regards to the above?

Respondents: 998

A qualitative review of the additional comments indicated the following common themes (in no particular order):



**Environmental Concerns and River Health:** Many respondents emphasise the importance of environmental flows and the overall health of rivers. There is a suggestion for incorporating river health experts in the review process and a focus on sustainable renewable power generation.



**Economic and Social Factors:** Some respondents bring up economic considerations, including the impact on local communities, industries, and the broader economic benefits of Snowy Hydro operations. Water security and Critical Human Water Needs are emphasised multiple times. Social factors, such as recreational use of water resources and the impact on local lifestyles, are also highlighted.



**Agricultural Impact:** Some respondents express opinions about the impact of agriculture on the environment, particularly in relation to irrigation practices. There is discussion about the balance between irrigation for farming and other uses of water resources, with varying opinions on how much priority agriculture should be given; including some sentiment that agricultural use should not be the primary focus, but rather a secondary consideration. Others recognise the importance of agriculture to communities.



**First Nations Perspectives:** Several responses highlight the significance of including First Nations perspectives in the management and care of rivers. The role of First Nations Peoples in leading river care and their inclusion in negotiations and decision-making processes is stressed.



**Broader Stakeholder Engagement:** A few respondents mention the need for a wide-ranging engagement process, involving a diverse group of experts and stakeholders, beyond environmental groups and political entities.



**Policy and Governance Issues:** There is a call for transparency, accountability, and a review of policies governing Snowy Hydro. Some responses suggest specific changes or additions to the Statement of Expectations to reflect contemporary challenges and opportunities.



**Scepticism Towards Political and Ideological Agendas:** Some responses express scepticism towards political and ideological agendas, including concerns about political interference in the process and the relevance of certain social issues in the context of river management.



**Review and integration with the Murray-Darling Basin Plan:** There are mentions of the need to consider and integrate the objectives of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in the review process of the Statement of Expectations.



**Technological and Infrastructure Development:** A few responses touch on the role of technological advancement and infrastructure development in improving efficiency and sustainability in Snowy Hydro's operations.

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**Q: Would you like to add any additional comments in regards to the above?**

Respondents: 998

Over the next two pages, we've shared some of the responses which best represent the themes identified:

***A specific mention for environmental flow commitments should be included in the statement. This ensures a focus on preserving and enhancing natural ecosystems, aligning with renewable energy goals.***

***Business considerations be they power generation, agriculture, environmental concerns must be balanced, but the prime focus should be on maintaining a reliable and economical power supply.***

***Environmental sustainability, Critical Human Water Needs and then productive water use (agriculture and industry) in that order of priority.***

***Aboriginal people caring for rivers and should be included in decision-making.***



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Q: Would you like to add any additional comments in regards to the above?

Respondents: 998

*The economic value and contribution to the local communities should be a significant factor in decision-making.*

*Consideration of the broader social impact, including on the tourism and recreational industries, is important.*

*Clear governance structures are needed, with transparency in how decisions are made and who they are benefiting.*

*The statement should include a commitment to regular policy reviews to ensure adaptability and responsiveness to new challenges.*

*Impact on infrastructure on the Upper Murrumbidgee due to increased flows needs to be carefully managed.*

*Money spent on buying back water for environmental flows could be better spent on technological solutions for water saving in agriculture.*

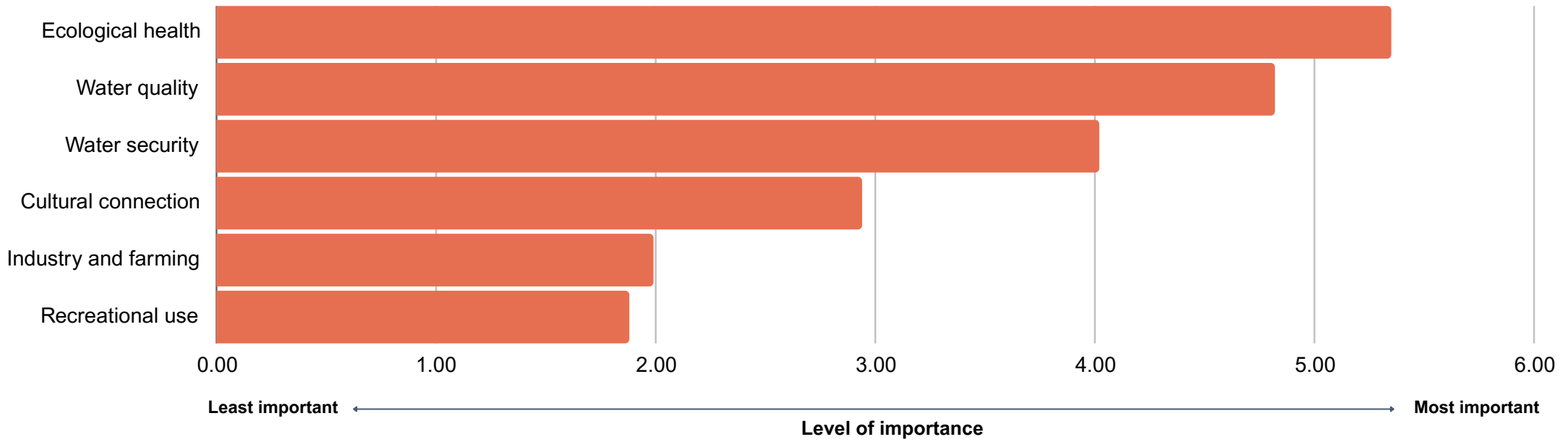
*I live on the river, rare for First Nation person to be on country, by the river, the carp are a huge problem so too woody weeds blackberries etc*



# DESIRES

**Q: When considering the future of the Upper Murrumbidgee River, how important are the following issues to you?  
(Respondents were asked to rank issues in order of most important to least important)**

Respondents: 845



# DESIRES

In addition to the quantitative data, a follow up question was included in the survey. This question and a synthesis of the responses received is provided below. A full set of responses can be found in the appendix provided alongside this report.

## Q: Are there any other issues that you believe are important for the future of the Upper Murrumbidgee River?

Respondents: 845

A qualitative review of the additional comments indicated the following common themes (in order of prevalence):

### High prevalence

**Biodiversity Conservation:** There is a significant concern about protecting native species, particularly fish. Respondents suggested stopping the stocking of exotic trout, which predate on native fish. There's also a call for more active conservation of threatened fish species.

**Habitat Restoration and Management:** Many responses focus on restoring and managing natural habitats. This includes restoring upland peatlands, culling feral herbivore populations, addressing pest plant and animal issues (e.g. carp), systematically restoring native vegetation along the riverbanks, and reducing sediment influx into the river. The restoration of deep holes in the river and removal or modification of barriers to fish migration (e.g., causeways at Angle and Point Hut Crossing) are also mentioned.

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### Medium prevalence

**Environmental Policies:** Respondents emphasise the need for "Nature positive" policies that govern water flows and usage. This includes allowing natural river flows and transparency in water management decisions.

**Water Quality and Pollution Control:** Several responses focus on the need to maintain or improve water quality, including managing pollution sources and ensuring clean water for both ecological and human uses.

### Low prevalence

**Climate Action:** A few responses highlight broader environmental concerns, such as the cessation of fossil fuel use and a shift to renewable energy sources.

**Public Access and Land Use:** Issues related to public access to the river, population growth, and land clearing along the river are also raised. Runoff issues, presumably from agricultural or urban areas, are mentioned in the context of their impact on the river's health.

**Community Engagement and Education:** A few respondents suggest the importance of community engagement and education about the river's ecological value and the issues it faces.

**Sustainable Development:** There's a mention of the need for sustainable development practices in the region, balancing environmental preservation with human needs.

# DESIRES

**Q: Are there any other issues that you believe are important for the future of the Upper Murrumbidgee River?**

Respondents: 845

We've shared some of the responses to this question, which reflect a broad range of environmental, social, and policy-related issues, indicating a strong community interest in the sustainable and ecological management of the Upper Murrumbidgee River.

***Stop stocking exotic trout that prey on native fish.***

***Access and the population growth/clearing of land for new subdivisions in Canberra.***

***Restore upland peatlands and cull feral herbivore populations.***

***Adequate water flow and the maintenance of high water quality.***

***Holistic approaches include public education to urban dwellers about how their water use impacts the river.***

***Community education about its importance.***

***There needs to be information sharing at all levels so folk understand about water quality, usage, environmental flows, agricultural needs and BALANCE in protection and usage.***

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The overall sentiment of the responses is one of concern and urgency, mixed with hope about potential improvements or actions that can be taken for the river's future. The below is a summary of the language and sentiment of responses:

- **Protective and Proactive:** Respondents demonstrate a protective attitude towards the river, emphasising the need for active conservation measures. The suggestions for restoring habitats, protecting native species, and implementing "nature positive" policies reflect a proactive approach to environmental stewardship.
- **Environmental Awareness:** There is a strong sense of environmental awareness among the respondents. They not only recognise specific local issues, such as the impact of exotic species and habitat degradation, but also broader environmental challenges like climate change and sustainable development.
- **Desire for Change and Improvement:** The responses collectively express a desire for change in how the river and its surrounding ecosystems are managed. This includes calls for better water management practices, pollution control, and community engagement in conservation efforts.
- **Concern for Future Generations:** Implicit in many responses is a concern for the future health of the river and its ecosystems. Respondents seem motivated by a sense of responsibility to ensure that the river remains a vibrant and healthy ecosystem for future generations.
- **Need for Collaborative Efforts:** There is an underlying sentiment that addressing these issues will require collaborative efforts involving various stakeholders, including local communities, policymakers, and environmental groups.

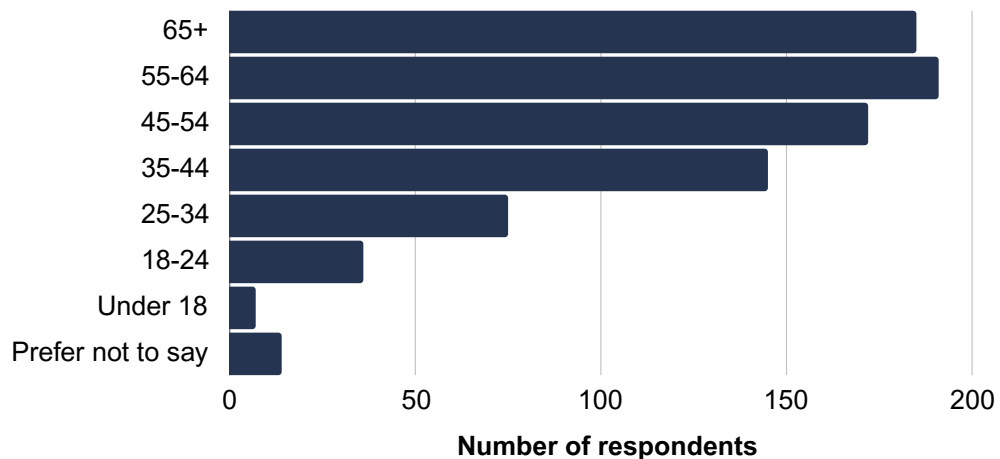




# WHO COMPLETED THE SURVEY

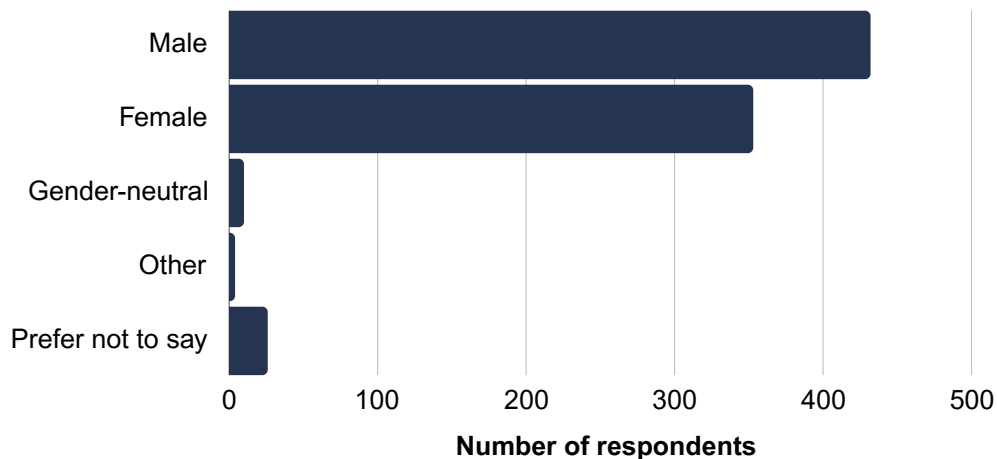
## Age of participant

Respondents: 825



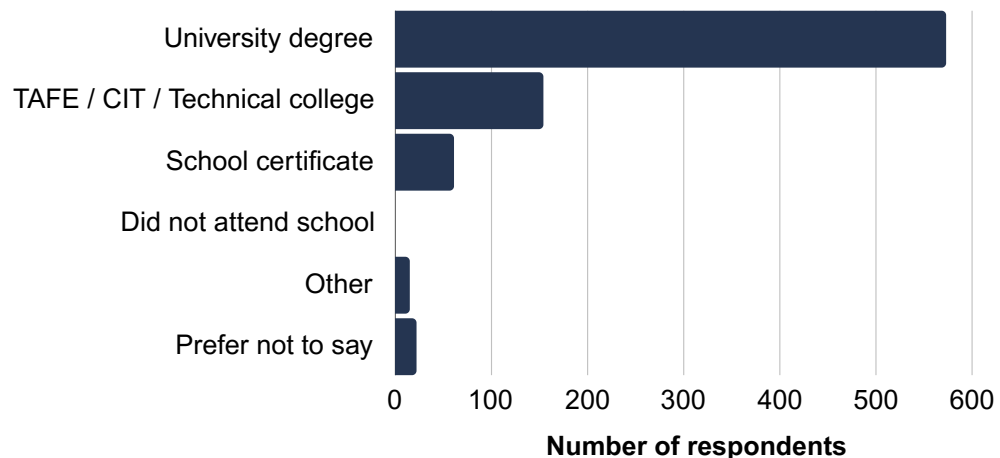
## Gender of participant

Respondents: 825



## Highest level of education

Respondents: 825



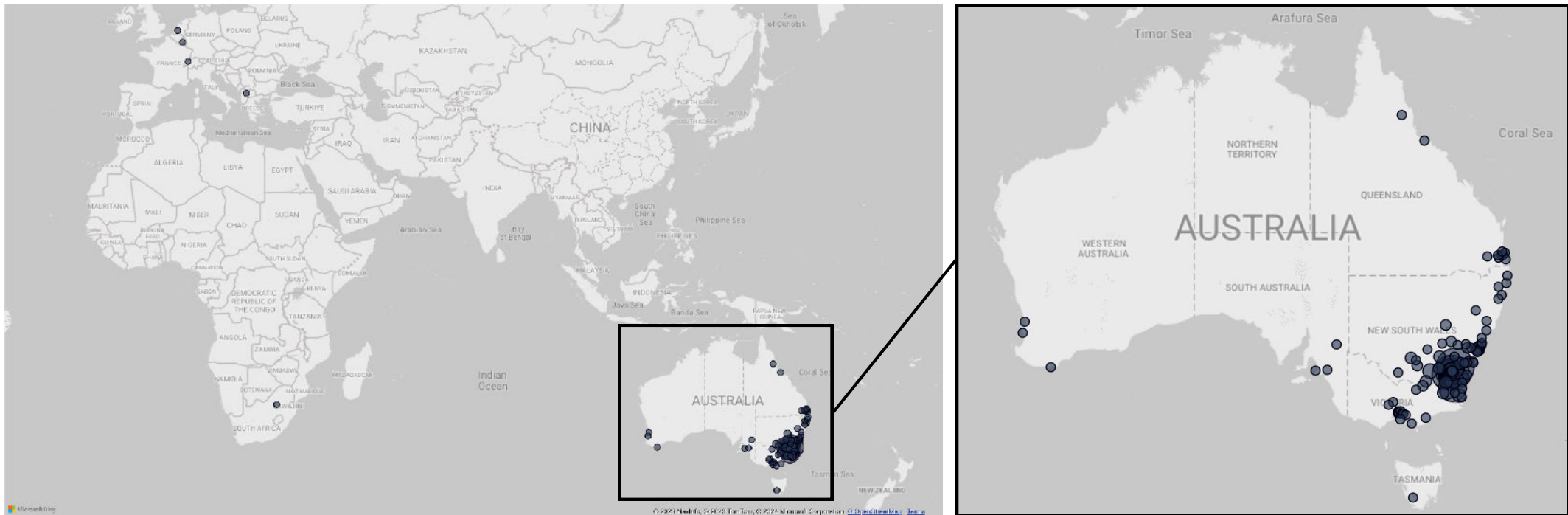
The demographics of the survey (825 respondents) reflect a highly educated respondent group with mix of genders and majority being older than 35. Some groups may have been inadvertently excluded due to our distribution networks and the wider ARRC audience.



# LOCATION

The majority of respondents indicated that they live along the river or within the Upper Murrumbidgee catchment. This is indicated on the map below.

Respondents: 825



## Postcodes with the highest respondents:

2620 (94 responses):

- ACT: Beard, Hume, Kowen, Oaks Estate, Paddy's River, Tharwa, Williamsdale
- NSW: Burra, Carwoola, Clear Range, Crestwood, Environa, Googong, Greenleigh, Gundaroo, Karabar, Michelago, Queanbeyan, Queanbeyan DC, Queanbeyan East, Queanbeyan West, Royalla, Sutton, The Angle, The Ridgeway, Tinderry, Tralee, Urila, Wamboin, Williamsdale, Yarrow

2602 (68 responses):

- ACT: Ainslie, Dickson, Downer, Hackett, Lyneham, O'Connor, Watson

2611 (58 responses):

- ACT: Chapman, Coombs, Coree, Denman Prospect, Duffy, Fisher, Holder, Rivett, Stirling, Stromlo, Uriarra Village, Waramanga, Weston, Weston Creek, Whitlam, Wright
- NSW: Bimberi, Brindabella, Cooleman, Uriarra



The range of postcodes show that respondents were from a wide ranging area in relation to the Upper Murrumbidgee River.



# ANECDOTAL REFLECTIONS

*This survey was one that was designed to gather views and opinions on the management of the Upper Murrumbidgee River, as well as educate respondents on the management of the river. Below are some of the anecdotal responses we received from people who had completed the survey.*

***I found the survey really interesting and liked that I also learnt a lot about the river as well.***

***I got the volume of water diverted wrong, and didn't know that over 90% of the water is diverted for power generation.***

***I didn't realise I didn't know so much about our waterways and where our water comes from. We should be teaching more of this in schools.***

***I didn't know that the river was left out of the Murray Darling Basin Plan, or that the Plan had little impact on improving its health.***



# LIMITATIONS

The survey had potential limitations which are identified below:

- This survey is not a statistical sample survey, rather, it is a voluntary poll. The results represents only the views of those that chose to respond and cannot be extrapolated or claimed to be representative of wider groups.
- The survey was distributed through a range of means including email networks, social media and personal networks. It was also promoted through ABC radio, the Riot Act and advertised on the Canberra Times website and the Monaro Post. This likely meant that many respondents have an interest in water management or natural resource management in the region.
- Although there is potential for bias in the sample selected, divergent views on some topics including trout (most said remove, one or two said re-stock trout), environmental water (most identified a need for more in the Upper Murrumbidgee River, a number said environmental flows were harming the basin) and strong sentiments for and against environmental concerns did indicate that we had reached a broader group with differing views.
- Due to some of the questions about water management frameworks, some people may have decided not to do the survey, or withdrew early, feeling they did not have enough knowledge of the subject to complete the survey.
- One person queried why we had combined industry and agriculture under the same category, when they should be separate.
- One person queried why cultural values are limited to First Nations peoples only, and that people of non-First Nation Decent may also have strong cultural connections to the river(s) of the region.
- The survey was heavily focused on the issue of water management in the region and not on broader catchment management issues. Many of the anecdotal responses indicated a need for complementary NRM activities to support river health, including pest plant and animal control, erosion control, revegetation and management of urban development. We fully agree with these sentiments of the need for complementary NRM activities to support river health, but note that this survey was heavily focused on water management.
- All qualitative responses have been reviewed and synthesised by multiple people, however they may be subject to human errors.

This report was prepared by the Australian River Restoration Centre.



*The Forgotten River*

[www.theforgottenriver.au](http://www.theforgottenriver.au)