

# Polling - Murray Darling

*September 2023*

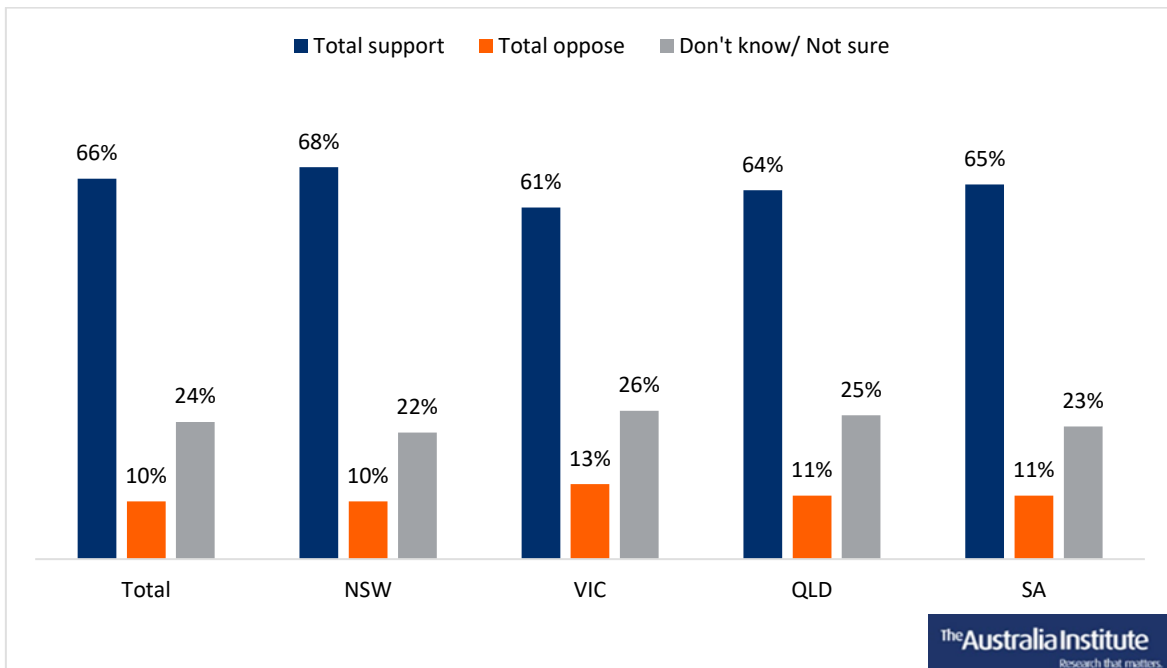
## Key results

The Australia Institute surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,535 Australians about their attitudes towards the Murray Darling Basin and Murray Cod.

The results show that a majority of Australians support the policy to reinstate voluntary water buybacks under the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

- Two in three Australians (66%) support the reintroduction of voluntary water buybacks.
- Only one in 10 Australians (11%) oppose the policy to reintroduce voluntary water buybacks.
- A majority in the Basin States of NSW (68%), SA (66%), Queensland (64%) and Victoria (61%) support the policy to reintroduce voluntary water buybacks.

**Figure 1: Support the policy to reintroduce voluntary water buybacks, by state**



Respondents were shown the following:

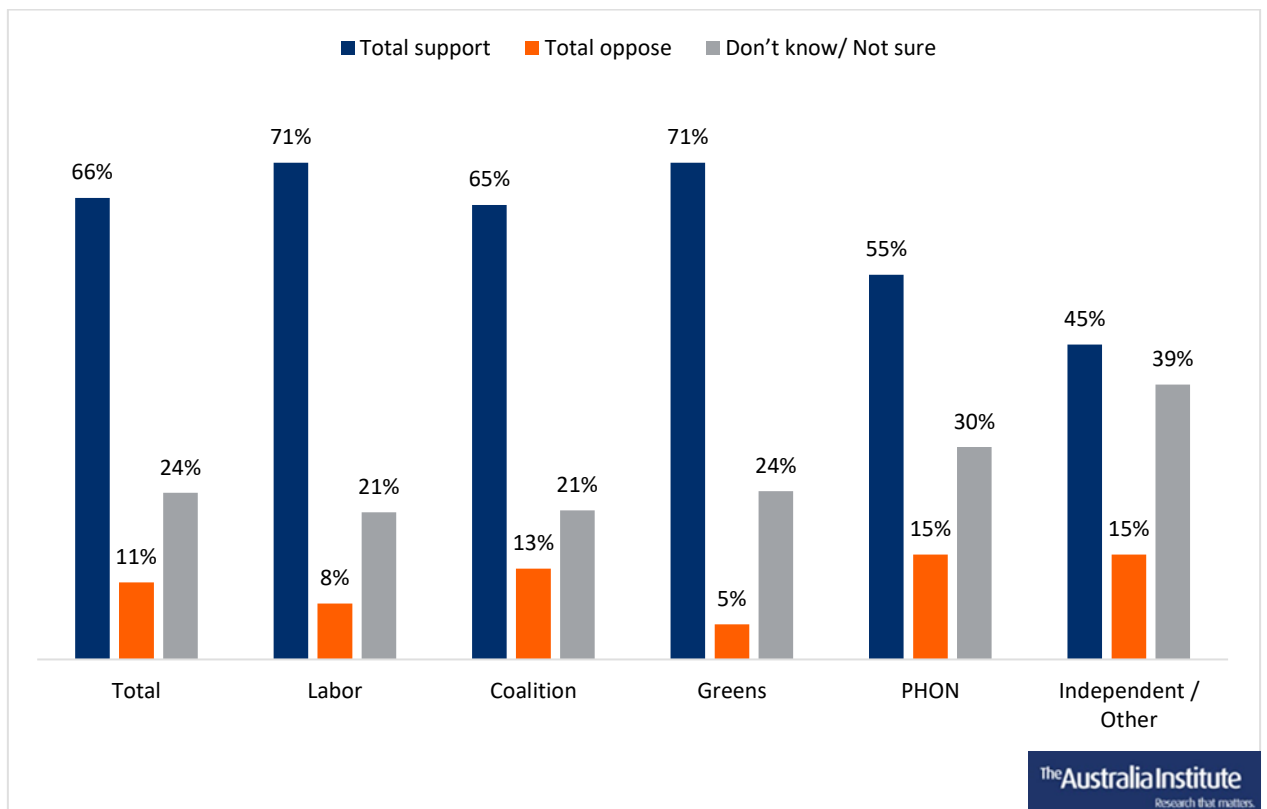
A water ‘buyback’ is where willing licence holders can sell their entitlements to the Government in exchange for money, so that the water can be returned to the environment.

They were then asked to what extent they support or oppose the policy to reintroduce voluntary water buybacks.

The results show that:

- Support for buybacks is highest among Labor (71%), Greens (71%) and Coalition (65%) voters.
- The majority of One Nation voters (55%) support buybacks, while 15% oppose the policy.
- Independent/Other voters were more likely to support (45%) buybacks than oppose (15%) but more than a third (39%) didn’t know or were not sure.

**Figure 2: Support the policy to reintroduce voluntary water buybacks, by voting**



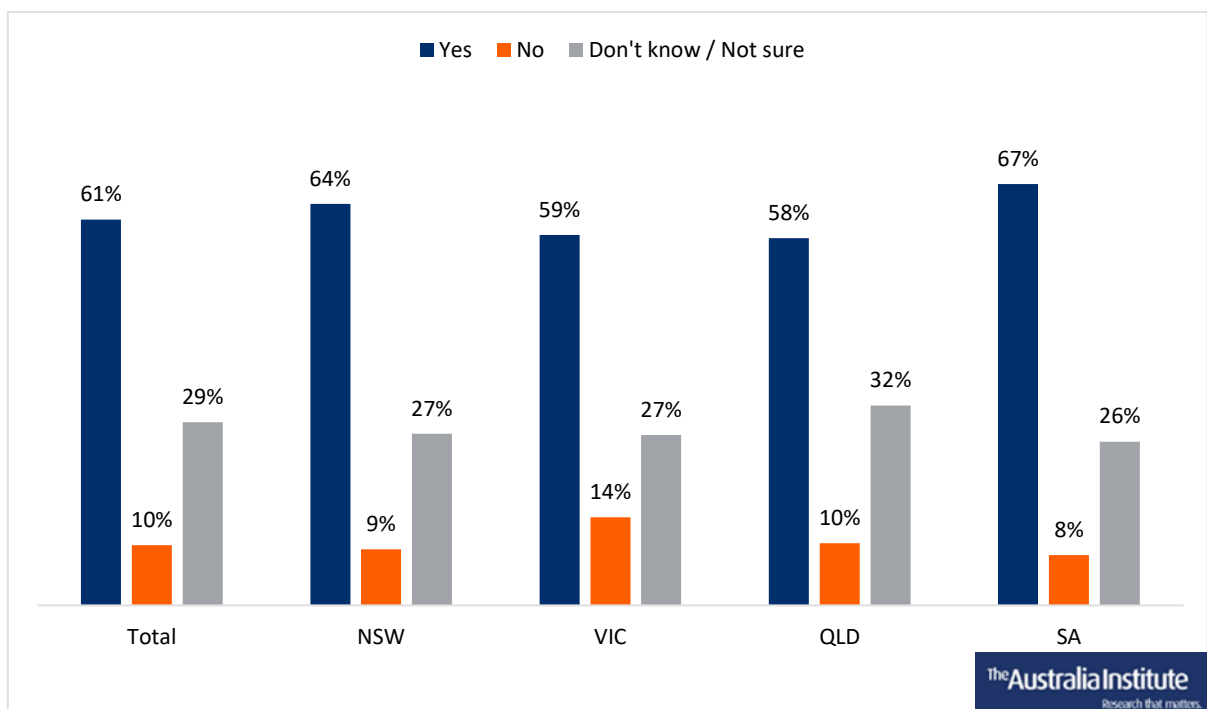
Respondents were shown the following:

Following the Millennium Drought, the Murray Darling Basin Plan was created to return water to the environment. The Plan has fallen behind schedule and, as a result, the Federal Government must now amend the Plan (or legislation). This will include extensions to the current water recovery deadlines and reintroducing voluntary water buybacks.

They were then asked whether they thought additional water should be returned to the environment to compensate for the expected two-and-a-half to three-and-a-half-year extension of timelines.

- Six in 10 Australians (61%) say additional water should be returned to the environment to compensate for delays in implementing the Basin Plan.
- Only one in 10 (10%) say additional water should not be returned to the environment due to the delays.
- The majority of SA (67%), NSW (64%), Victoria (59%) and Queensland (58%) residents support additional water to compensate for Basin Plan delays.

**Figure 3: Additional water should be returned to the environment to compensate for delays in implementing the Basin plan, by state**



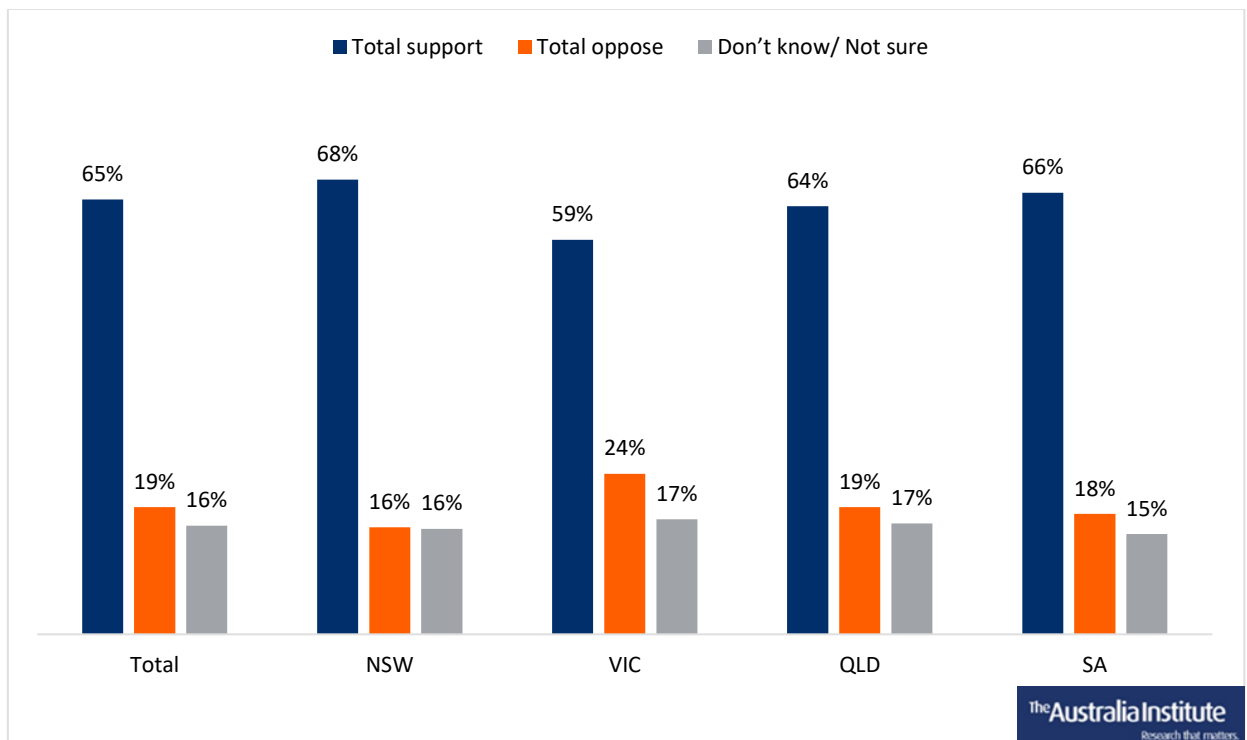
Respondents were shown the following:

Murray Cod were once abundant throughout the Murray-Darling River system but overfishing and overextraction of water have caused it to be listed as 'Vulnerable' under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

They were then asked whether they would support or oppose reducing water extraction from rivers where the Murray Cod is at risk of extinction.

- Two in three Australians (65%) support water extraction being reduced in rivers where the Murray Cod is at risk of extinction.
- The majority of NSW (68%), SA (67%), Queensland (64%) and Victoria (58%) residents support a reduction in water extraction in rivers where Murray Cod are at risk of extinction.
- Only one in five (19%) oppose reducing extraction in rivers where the Murray Cod are at risk of extinction.

**Figure 4: Water extraction should be reduced from rivers where Murray Cod are at risk of extinction, by state**



## Metro vs Regional results

Respondents were shown the following:

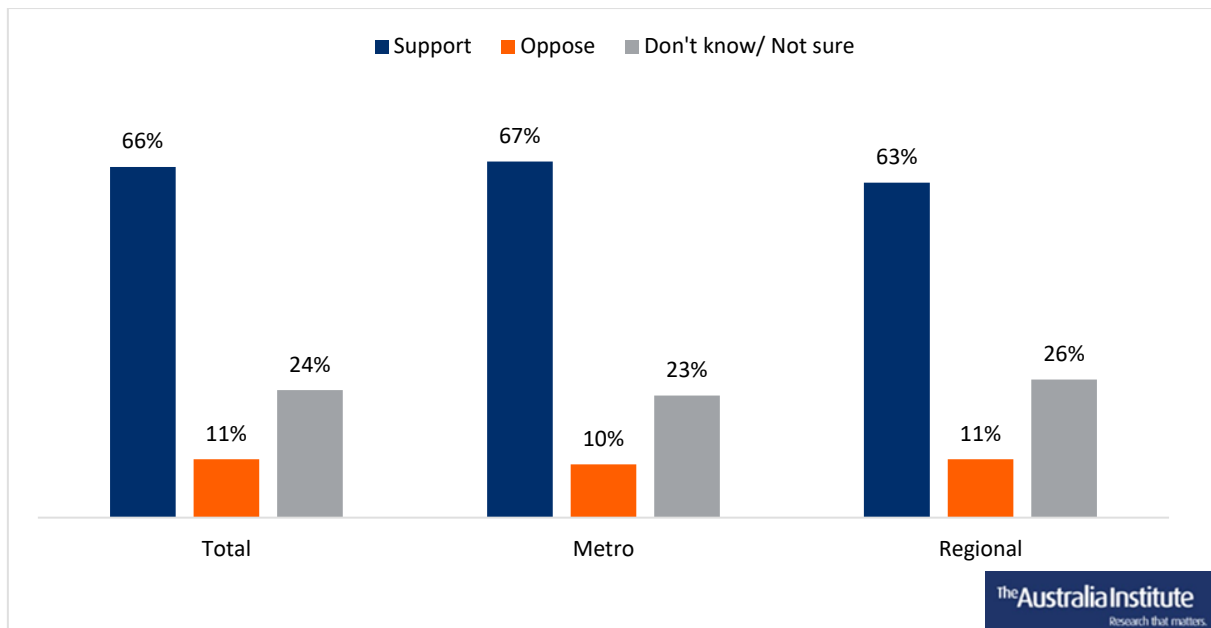
A water ‘buyback’ is where willing licence holders can sell their entitlements to the Government in exchange for money, so that the water can be returned to the environment.

They were then asked to what extent they support or oppose the policy to reintroduce voluntary water buybacks.

The results show that:

- Three in five or more Australians support voluntary water buybacks across both metro (67%) and regional (63%) areas.
- Only one in 10 regional (11%) and metro (10%) residents oppose the policy to reintroduce voluntary water buybacks.

**Figure 5: Support the policy to reintroduce voluntary water buybacks, metro vs regional**



Respondents were shown the following:

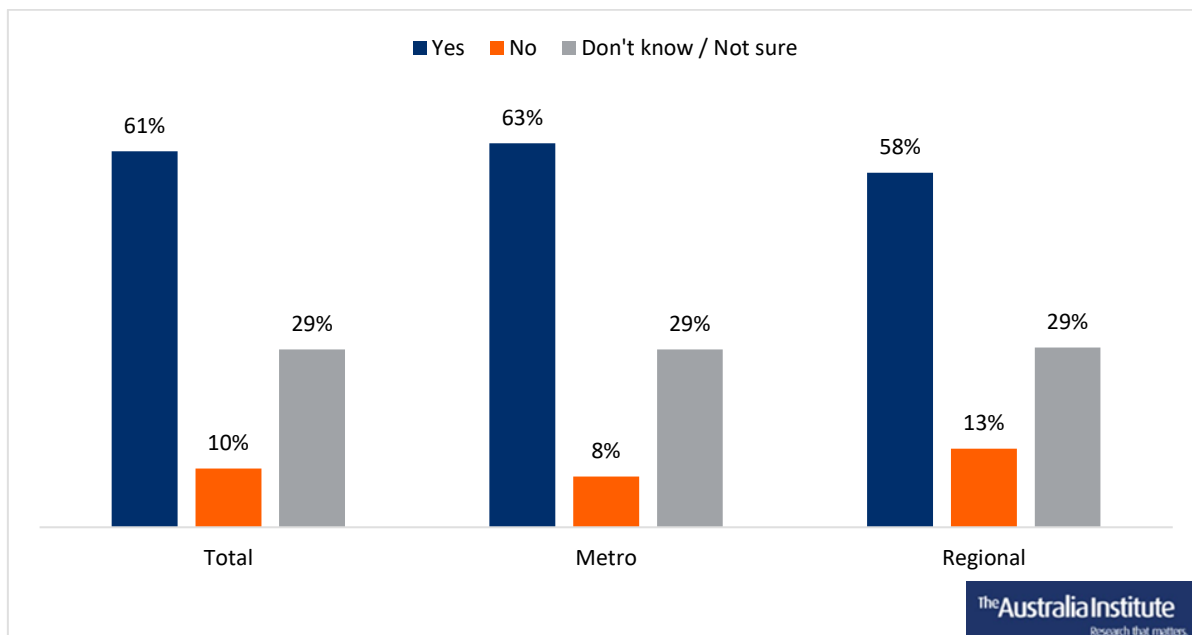
Following the Millennium Drought, the Murray Darling Basin Plan was created to return water to the environment. The Plan has fallen behind schedule and, as a result, the Federal Government must now amend the Plan (or legislation). This will include extensions to the current water recovery deadlines and reintroducing voluntary water buybacks.

They were then asked whether they thought additional water should be returned to the environment to compensate for the expected two-and-a-half to three-and-a-half-year extension of timelines.

The results show that:

- A majority of metro (63%) and regional (58%) Australians say additional water should be returned to the environment to compensate for delays in Basin plan implementation.
- Only 8% of Australians living in metro areas oppose additional water recovery, while 13% of regional residents oppose the policy.

**Figure 6: Additional water should be returned to the environment to compensate for delays in implementing the Basin plan, metro vs regional**



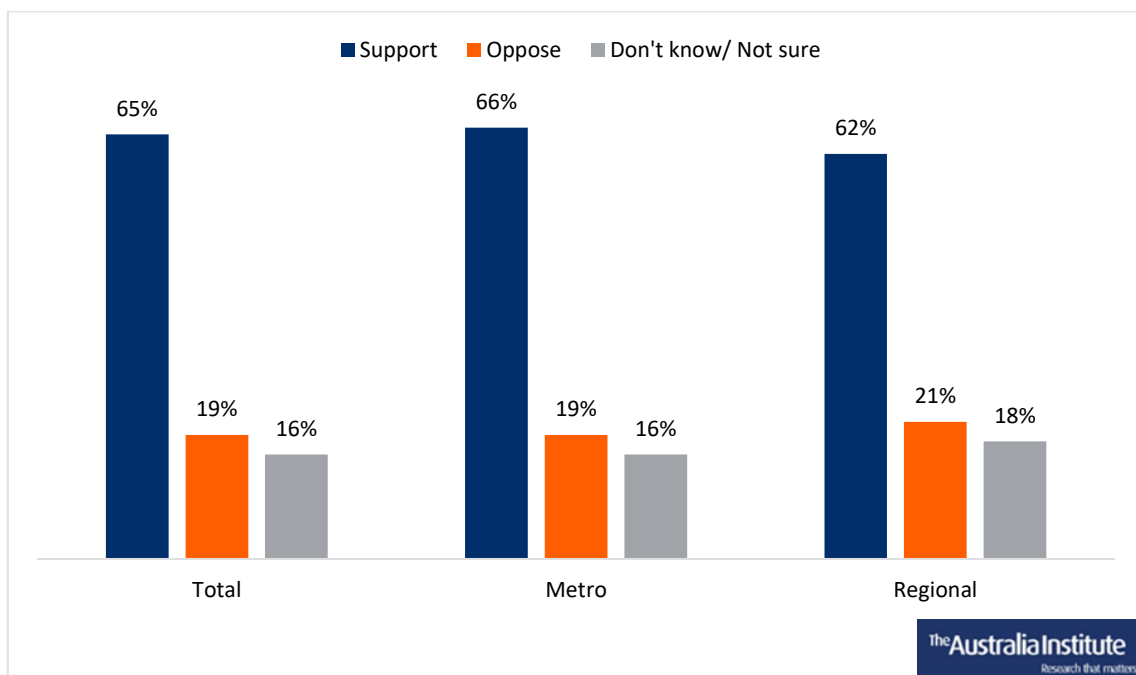
Respondents were then shown the following:

Murray Cod were once abundant throughout the Murray-Darling River system but overfishing and overextraction of water have caused it to be listed as 'Vulnerable' under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

They were then asked whether they would support or oppose reducing water extraction from rivers where the Murray Cod is at risk of extinction.

- The majority of metro (66%) and regional (62%) residents support reducing water extraction from rivers where the Murray Cod are at risk of extinction.
- Just one in five Australians across both metro (19%) and regional (21%) areas oppose reducing water extraction in rivers where the Murray Cod are at risk of extinction.

**Figure 7: Water extraction should be reduced from rivers where Murray Cod are at risk of extinction, metro vs regional**



## Method

Between 29 August and 1 September 2023, The Australia Institute surveyed 1,002 adults living in Australia, online through Dynata’s panel, with nationally representative samples by gender, age group and state/territory. A further 406 South Australians and 127 Queenslanders were sampled to produce more precise results, but weighting was used to ensure that people from these states were not over-represented in national results.

Furthermore, between 29 August and 6 September 2023, 605 adults living in South Australia were surveyed online through Dynata’s panel, with representative samples by gender and age group. This resulted in an effective sample size of 575. 406 of those adults contributed to the national totals. The margin of error (95% confidence level) for the state results is  $\pm 4\%$ . Voting crosstabs show voting intentions for the House of Representatives. Those who were undecided were asked which way they were leaning; these leanings are included in voting intention crosstabs.

The research is compliant with the [Australian Polling Council Quality Mark standards](#). The long methodology disclosure statement follows.

### Long disclosure statement

The results were weighted by three variables (gender, age group and state or territory) based on Australian Bureau of Statistics [“National, state and territory population”](#) data, using the raking method. Those who answered the gender identity question as “Non-binary”, “I use a different term”, or “Prefer not to answer” had their responses included with females for the purpose of reporting, due to constraints from weighting data availability. This resulted in a national effective sample size of 1,138.

The margin of error (95% confidence level) for the national results is  $\pm 3\%$ .

Results are shown only for larger states.

Voting intention questions appeared just after the initial demographic questions, before policy questions. Respondents who answered “Don’t know / Not sure” for voting intention were then asked a leaning question; these leanings are included in voting intention crosstabs. “Coalition” includes separate responses for Liberal and National. “Other” refers to Independent/Other, and minor parties in cases where they were included in the voting intention but represent too small a sample to be reported separately in the crosstabs.





## Detailed results

Preceding questions in the poll are expected to have influenced the results of some of the questions published here. The questions, and the response options for each question, are included in the order that they appeared:

**The Murray Darling Basin is the largest river system in Australia, covering parts of Queensland, NSW, ACT, Victoria and South Australia. It is a major agricultural region, is of great environmental significance and its management often attracts significant political and policy debate.**

**Regarding the Murray Darling Basin, what is your impression of the following?**

**“The current health of the river system”**

- **Very Good**
- **Good**
- **Neutral**
- **Poor**
- **Very Poor**
- **Don't know/ Not sure**

**Regarding the Murray Darling Basin, what is your impression of the following?**

**“The future health of the river system under current management”**

- **Very Good**
- **Good**
- **Neutral**
- **Poor**
- **Very Poor**
- **Don't know/ Not sure**

**Regarding the Murray Darling Basin, what is your impression of the following?**

**“The standard of river management by government agencies”**

- **Very Good**
- **Good**
- **Neutral**
- **Poor**
- **Very Poor**
- **Don't know/ Not sure**

Regarding the Murray Darling Basin, what is your impression of the following?

“The fairness of how water is shared between states”

- Very Good
- Good
- Neutral
- Poor
- Very Poor
- Don’t know/ Not sure

Following the Millennium Drought, the Murray Darling Basin Plan was created to return water to the environment. The Plan has fallen behind schedule and, as a result, the Federal Government must now amend the Plan (or legislation). This will include extensions to the current water recovery deadlines and reintroducing voluntary water buybacks.

Do you think additional water should be returned to the environment to compensate for the expected two-and-a-half to three-and-a-half-year extension of timelines?

	<i>Total</i>	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA
<b>Yes</b>	61%	62%	60%	64%	59%	58%	60%	67%
<b>No</b>	10%	13%	6%	9%	14%	10%	4%	8%
<b>Don’t know/Not sure</b>	29%	25%	33%	27%	27%	32%	37%	26%

	<i>Total</i>	Labor	Coalition	Greens	One Nation	Other
<b>Yes</b>	61%	65%	57%	75%	57%	42%
<b>No</b>	10%	6%	17%	3%	13%	9%
<b>Don’t know/Not sure</b>	29%	29%	26%	23%	30%	49%

	<i>Total</i>	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
<b>Yes</b>	61%	72%	67%	57%	56%	56%
<b>No</b>	10%	9%	6%	11%	7%	13%
<b>Don’t know/Not sure</b>	29%	19%	27%	33%	36%	31%

	<i>Total</i>	Metro	Regional
<b>Yes</b>	61%	63%	58%
<b>No</b>	10%	8%	13%
<b>Don’t know/Not sure</b>	29%	29%	29%

A water 'buyback' is where willing licence holders can sell their entitlements to the Government in exchange for money, so that the water can be returned to the environment.

To what extent do you support or oppose the policy to reintroduce voluntary water buybacks?

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>VIC</i>	<i>QLD</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>
<b>Strongly support</b>	19%	20%	17%	20%	15%	15%	19%	22%
<b>Support</b>	47%	47%	47%	49%	46%	49%	48%	44%
<b>Oppose</b>	8%	9%	7%	7%	10%	8%	3%	8%
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	24%	21%	27%	22%	26%	25%	27%	23%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
<b>Strongly support</b>	19%	23%	14%	26%	10%	12%
<b>Support</b>	47%	47%	51%	45%	45%	33%
<b>Oppose</b>	8%	6%	10%	4%	10%	9%
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	3%	2%	3%	1%	5%	6%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	24%	21%	21%	24%	30%	39%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60+</i>
<b>Strongly support</b>	19%	21%	25%	16%	16%	17%
<b>Support</b>	47%	53%	47%	45%	42%	47%
<b>Oppose</b>	8%	7%	7%	9%	7%	8%
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	3%	1%	1%	6%	3%	3%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	24%	18%	21%	25%	32%	25%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Metro</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<b>Strongly support</b>	19%	20%	16%
<b>Support</b>	47%	47%	47%
<b>Oppose</b>	8%	8%	8%
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	3%	3%	3%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	24%	23%	26%

Murray Cod were once abundant throughout the Murray-Darling River system but overfishing and overextraction of water have caused it to be listed as ‘Vulnerable’ under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Would you support or oppose reducing water extraction from rivers where the Murray Cod is at risk of extinction?

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>VIC</i>	<i>QLD</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>
<b>Strongly support</b>	27%	28%	26%	32%	20%	25%	28%	29%
<b>Support</b>	37%	37%	38%	37%	38%	39%	39%	38%
<b>Oppose</b>	13%	13%	13%	11%	16%	11%	14%	13%
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	7%	8%	6%	5%	9%	8%	4%	5%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	16%	15%	18%	16%	17%	17%	16%	15%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
<b>Strongly support</b>	27%	30%	19%	44%	16%	23%
<b>Support</b>	37%	36%	42%	32%	43%	31%
<b>Oppose</b>	13%	12%	17%	8%	11%	11%
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	7%	8%	5%	6%	7%	7%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	16%	14%	17%	10%	24%	28%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60+</i>
<b>Strongly support</b>	27%	31%	34%	26%	24%	22%
<b>Support</b>	37%	41%	38%	36%	32%	38%
<b>Oppose</b>	13%	12%	9%	12%	14%	14%
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	7%	5%	4%	6%	8%	8%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	16%	11%	14%	19%	22%	17%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Metro</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<b>Strongly support</b>	27%	27%	27%
<b>Support</b>	37%	38%	35%
<b>Oppose</b>	13%	12%	14%
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	7%	6%	7%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	16%	16%	18%