



Headlines

- » **Water** supply, conservation and management / drought was the **fifth most important issue** after health, education, public transport and roads and traffic as an issue for State Government attention now.
- » It was ranked **third as an issue** for NSW Government attention in 10 years time.
- » **Water conservation** related issues were clearly the **top environmental issues** in 2006, nominated by 57%, having risen from 3–4% in 1997 and 2000.
- » As water conservation, management and supply issues have increased, **water quality and pollution issues have declined**, from 56% in 1997 to 11% in 2006.
- » The **most important environmental initiative** for the NSW Government over the next few years was **implementing measures to deal with water** supply, conservation and management, and drought, nominated by 19%.
- » **64%** of those in the survey **did not know** that **agriculture is the major user of water** in NSW.
- » **Three-quarters of people** in the survey reported they had **often reduced water consumption** in the previous 12 months.
- » **Women** were more likely than men to report that they have **often or sometimes reduced water consumption** (95% compared to 89%).
- » **Younger people** (15–24) were less likely to say they had prevented stormwater pollution (75% compared to 86-90% for other groups) or reduced water consumption.

"We have to be careful and change the way we use water or there won't be any left"

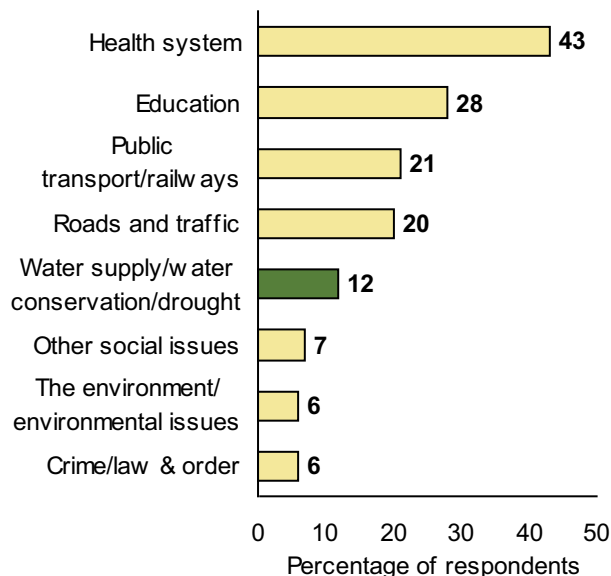
Focus group, 2006

Who Cares about the Environment in 2006?

- Contains the results of two telephone surveys with a representative sample of 1721 people from across NSW
- Includes analysis of demographic differences with all questions
- Includes findings from focus group discussions about people's views of the environment and their own environmental activities

Priority issues for the NSW Government now...

Compared to other issues, water conservation issues ranked fifth as a current priority.



Water conservation issues were more likely to be nominated by people in Sydney (15% compared to 5-10% for other areas) as one of the most important issues for NSW government action today¹.

...and in the future

People were also asked what they thought would be priorities for the NSW Government in ten years time. Water issues were third after health and education as a future issue. More people thought the issues of water, as well as energy, environment and planning/ development would be priorities in the future than thought they are priorities now.

Men were more likely than women to nominate water conservation as a future issue (22% compared with 12%).

Those in Sydney (19%) and rural areas (20%) are also more likely to nominate water conservation as a future issue than those in other areas.

¹ Only those groups between which differences are statistically significant are reported throughout this fact sheet



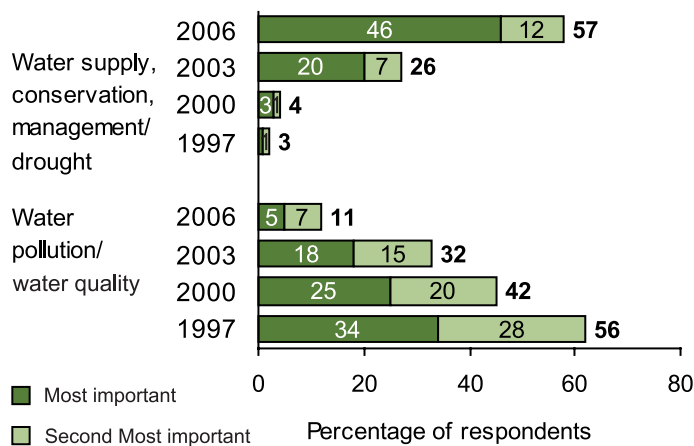
The most important environmental issues

The number of people mentioning water conservation issues as one of their two most important environmental issues has more than doubled from 2003 to 2006. More than half the people surveyed rated water conservation as one of the two most important environmental issues in NSW, almost triple the next ranked issue.

Two most important environmental issues	%
Water conservation & management/drought	57
Air pollution/air quality	20
Forest/bushland/ biodiversity issues	16
Climate change	13
Energy	12
Water pollution/water quality	11
Other pollution	10
Waste	8
Development and planning	7
Land degradation/ soil/ erosion/ salinity etc	4

Water pollution/water quality issues are mentioned by only 11% in 2006 compared to 56% in 1997. While water overall has consistently been the most commonly mentioned group of environmental issues, concerns have shifted from quality and pollution to conservation, management and supply.

Water as the most important environmental issue



Water issues 2003 and 2006

Issue	% 2006	% 2003
Water supply, conservation, management/drought	57	26
Total water pollution/water quality	11	32
Water pollution/water quality - general	4	8
Fresh water pollution – rivers, creeks	3	12
Pollution of beaches and/or the ocean	2	7
Sewage treatment, sewage in general	1	3
River health, including salinity & flows	1	3
The Murray-Darling Basin	1	1

Women were more likely to rate water conservation as one of the two most important environmental issues in NSW (60% compared to 54% of men).

Younger people (15–24) were less likely to think that water conservation is the most important issue in NSW (35% compared to 59–64% in other age groups).

The most important environmental initiative for the NSW Government

Measures to deal with water supply, conservation, management and drought were regarded as the highest priority environmental initiatives for NSW government action over the next few years, nominated by almost 20%. This is a marked increase from 2003 (8%). Almost half of those who mentioned water conservation measures provided one or more specific initiatives they felt important to deal with the issue.

These included:

- recycling/stormwater use,
- infrastructure including dams/pipelines, tanks, desalination plant,
- regulation/restrictions,
- pricing/incentives, and
- improved planning/management of crops and irrigation.

Residents of rural areas were more likely than others to suggest water conservation initiatives (28% compared to 15–19% in other areas).

Water quality/pollution initiatives were mentioned by 5%. Those living in small towns (11%) were more likely, and Sydney residents (3%) less likely, to suggest water quality/water pollution initiatives.

Knowledge about water issues

64% of those in the survey did not know that agriculture is the major user of water in NSW. Men were more likely than women to know this (40% compared to 30%) and people over 65 were also more likely to know.

67% did not know that recycling paper, cardboard and glass saves water, energy and fuel. This indicates relatively low knowledge about the full benefits of recycling, including the use of water in this process. Younger people (15–24) were more likely than other age groups to be correct on this question (42% compared to 30–32% for other age groups).



Views on improvement or deterioration in water management issues in NSW

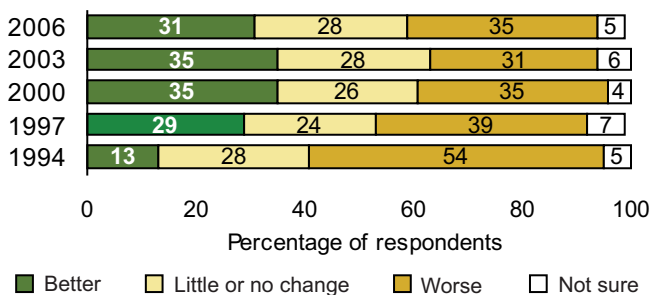
Perceptions related to several water management issues strongly reflect impacts of recent drought in NSW.

A majority of people believed that things had been getting better in NSW in **reducing water consumption** over the previous three years (65%, up from 46% in 2000). This probably reflects awareness of water restrictions and declining domestic consumption in response to the drought and falling dam levels.

With the impact of drought on the volume of water in NSW waterways, only 20% saw improvement in **ensuring environmental flows for rivers** with 48% seeing deterioration (up from 36% in 2003).

Likewise, perceptions about **water quality in rivers, lakes and creeks** declined slightly from 2003 although there has been relative consistency since 2000 with about one third seeing an improvement and one third seeing deterioration. However, these proportions show significant improvement from 1994 when 54% perceived deterioration and only 13% improvement.

Perceptions of water quality in rivers, lakes and creeks



Reflecting a range of management initiatives, a majority believed that **cleanliness of beaches and oceans** had improved over the past three years (56%, up 14% from 1994, but slightly lower than the high of 60% in 2003).

Older people (65+) were more likely to say that water quality in rivers, lakes and creeks had become worse (45% compared to 26-38% for all other age groups). Younger people (15-24) were more likely to think that there had been improvements in:

- water quality in rivers, lakes and creeks (41% compared to 25-33% for other age groups)
- reducing water consumption (74% compared to 53% for those 65+)

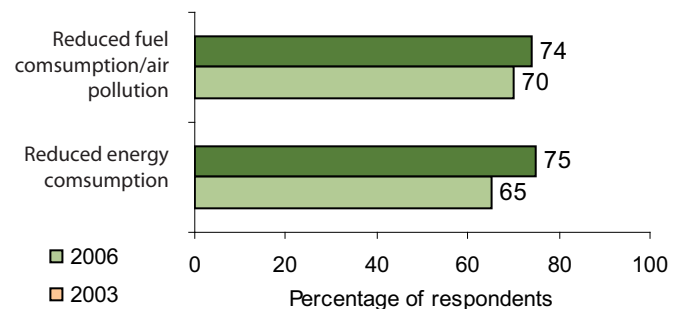
Attitudes regarding environmental flows

While 48% supported the proposition that **rivers and wetlands should have enough water to stay healthy** even at the expense of towns and farmers dependent on irrigation, 44% disagreed. More women and young people (15-24) disagreed with the proposition but there was no significant difference in views between those who live in city or country areas.

What are people doing?

More people in 2006 than 2003 reported often engaging in both environmental behaviours associated with water. Those who said they had often reduced their water consumption in the previous 12 months increased by 10% from 2003 in association with greater awareness of the issue and the imposition of restrictions.

Pro-environmental behaviours in the last 12 months



Those who had often reduced water consumption were more likely to be female, have children, live in the Sydney – Illawarra region, have a sense of social responsibility and a more eco-centric outlook and were more likely to undertake other pro-environmental behaviours. Men were disproportionately represented in those least likely to reduce water consumption.

The most powerful motivators for people to engage in water conservation behaviours were knowledge about dam levels, drought and water shortage (mentioned by 36%), water restrictions (17%), education/media campaigns and reporting (12%) and cost savings (9%).

Demographic segments

There are some overall trends in the responses of demographic groups around water.

Women – Had a higher level of concern about the environment than men and were more likely to see water supply as the most important environmental issue (49% compared to 44%). Women also engaged in water-related environmental behaviours more often than men (95% of women said that they often reduced water consumption compared to 89% of men).

Young people (15-24) – were less likely to say that water supply/ conservation is the most important environmental issue or the most important initiative for the government in the next few years. This was then reflected in significantly lower levels of engagement in pro-environmental water related behaviours:

- often reduced water consumption*: young people (15-24) 58% compared to 82-86% for all other ages.
- often prevented stormwater pollution*: young people 59% compared to 71-81% for all other ages.

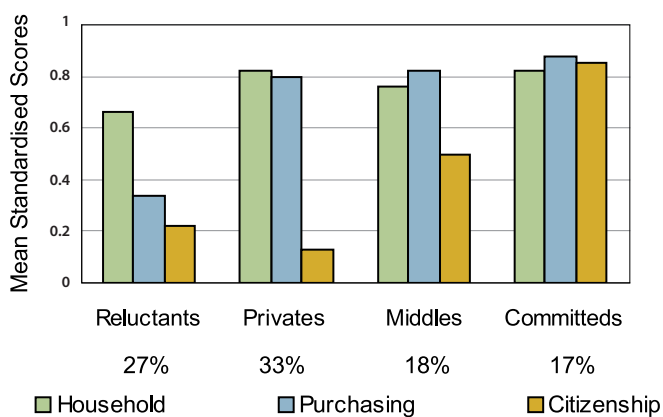


Community behaviour segments

Pro-environmental behaviours surveyed in *Who Cares?* cluster into three types: in-household behaviours (e.g. saving water, energy, avoiding stormwater pollution), green purchasing (shopping decisions) and environmental citizenship (e.g. Landcare, community participation, advocacy).

Based on the extent to which they engaged in behaviours of these different types, those surveyed were allocated to four segments, called *Reluctants*, *Privates*, *Middles* and *Committeds**. The graph shows the level of involvement in each behaviour type for those in each segment and the proportion of the population falling into each segment.

Behaviour profiles for community segments



* Different names to the focus group research are used to avoid confusion with the findings of that part of the research.

Responses on water

Generally there was little difference across the segments in opinions about the importance of water issues for State Government as a priority issue at present. *Reluctants* were most likely to say water issues will be important for the Government in 10 years time (19% compared to 13% of *Middles*), while *Committeds* were the most likely to say that water supply/conservation issues are the most important environmental issues (63%), compared to *Reluctants* (56%) and *Privates* (55%).

Reluctants were least likely to 'often' reduce water use (53% compared to 77–87% for other segments, rising to 80% compared to 95–97% if 'sometimes' is included). They were also less likely to often prevent stormwater pollution (66% compared to 76–84% for other segments).

Privates (86%) often reduced water consumption to the same extent as the *Committeds* (87%), compared to the *Reluctants* (53%) and *Middles* (77%).

Qualitative research - focus groups

Focus group discussions were also held with people grouped on the basis of their level of environmental interest, knowledge and behaviours. These groups, called *Limiteds*, *Moderates* and *Strongs*, were quite different in their perceptions of the environment, understanding of environmental concepts and commitment to behaviours and activities that protect the environment.



Responses on water

Water restrictions tended to be adhered to by most participants in the study and enforcement through regulation was a strong influence on behaviour across all three focus group segments, particularly *Limiteds*. Participants from the *Strongs* segment appreciated this type of legislation, asserting that it was the only way to effectively bring about changes in behaviour. While *Moderates* and *Limiteds* were less enthusiastic about such regulations, most followed them.

- For the *Limiteds*, respecting the water restrictions was one of only a small number of genuinely normalised pro-environmental behaviours (including recycling and not littering).
- For *Moderates*, behaviours such as washing cars on the lawn to conserve water, and not pouring pollutants down stormwater drains were also normalised.
- For *Strongs*, normalised behaviour extended to behaviours such as buying environmentally friendly products, installing low flow showerheads and rain water tanks and engaging in environmental activism.

These findings confirm the survey results where only 5% of people said they did not make any effort to reduce water consumption.

More details

Who Cares about the Environment in 2006? is available in print from the Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW on 131 555 and online at: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/whocares/

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