

MEDIA RELEASE

Australians are not confident about water security and are willing to pay for alternative water sources

EMBARGOED:

12 October 2016 (12pm)

The Australian Water Association and Arup have just released the Australian Water Outlook – the results of the Australian Water Survey which investigates attitudes to water issues among the Australian water industry and the wider community.

The survey attracted 2500 responses, and Australian Water Association CEO Jonathan McKeown said the results evidenced that there were areas of serious concern around water security and governance, whilst there also being an appetite among Australians to make use of alternative sources of water to ensure future supply.

Only 4% of industry and 3% of community respondents were completely confident that Australia currently has sufficient water security to meet social, environmental and economic needs into the future, with more than half of both groups saying they were not confident.

“Clearly the expectations of the Australian community on water security are not being met and both governments and the water industry need to work together to address these expectations,” Mr McKeown said.

“The Association is preparing a Water Security Scorecard to further analyse the level of water security in each state and territory that will be launched in May 2017. This Water Security Scorecard will measure the level of water security provided highlighting the achievements and gaps to safeguard our future water requirements.”

Despite the lack of confidence in water security, the Australian Water survey showed there was strong support from the community and the water industry for alternative, sustainable water sources.

“Both the industry and the community are overwhelmingly confident in using alternative sources of water for drinking purposes including ground water, desalinated water, recycled water, in addition to surface water from dams and rivers,” said Arup’s Australasia Water Leader, Daniel Lambert.

The standout is recycled water; traditionally recycled water has been seen as a less favourable option, but the survey revealed 77% of community and 83% of industry said they were confident in using recycled water for potable use provided it was treated to drinking water standards, and even higher when asked in relation to non-drinking uses - industry ranked recycled water as the number one most important non-drinking supply.

“This suggests that the community may be further down the track on accepting alternative water sources for drinking and non-potable water than we have given them credit for to date. Seventy-one percent of community said they were willing to pay at least somewhat more for alternative water sources,” Mr Lambert continued.

The community is motivated to take direct action to address improved water efficiency by either paying more to become more water efficient (74% saying they were willing to spend more) or taking steps themselves to reduce their own water consumption (less than 1% of respondents nationally reported taking no action to save water).

Additional highlights from the Australian Water Outlook 2016 Report:

- Saving water and water efficiency is a medium or high priority for 88% of community.
- Only 5% of community respondents said governments are focused on water security as an important issue compared to 28% of industry
- Only 47% of industry respondents think drinking water in regional areas is of a high or acceptable quality
- Climate change and drought is seen as having the highest impacts, and concern has increased since 2015
- 1/3 of respondents are extremely willing or willing to pay more for water - with WA most willing and Tasmania the least willing.
- More than half (52%) of the community thought efforts of the water sector to save water were average or below, while only 8% of industry thought it was average or below.
- 83% of respondents are concerned about water shortages across Australia.

The Australian Water Outlook will be launched at the World Water Congress in Brisbane on Wednesday October 12.

The full report can be found [here](#).

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To arrange an interview with Jonathan McKeown or Daniel Lambert contact Ashleigh James 0488 160 277.

About the Australian Water Association

The Australian Water Association) is an independent, not-for-profit association for water professionals and organisations, providing leadership in the water sector through collaboration, advocacy and professional development. As Australia's peak water industry body, the Australian Water Association has the largest broadly based membership, with approximately 700 corporate members and 5,000 individual members representing the diversity and breadth of the Australian water industry.

www.awa.asn.au

About Arup

Arup is the creative force at the heart of many of the world's most prominent projects in the built environment and across industry. We offer a broad range of professional services that combine to make a real difference to our clients and the communities in which we work. We are truly global. From 90 offices in 35 countries our 13,000 planners, designers, engineers and consultants deliver innovative projects across the world with creativity and passion. Founded in 1946 with an enduring set of values, our unique trust ownership fosters a distinctive culture and an intellectual independence that encourages collaborative working. This is reflected in everything we do, allowing us to develop meaningful ideas, help shape agendas and deliver results that frequently surpass the expectations of our clients. The people at Arup are driven to find a better way and to deliver better solutions for our clients.

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