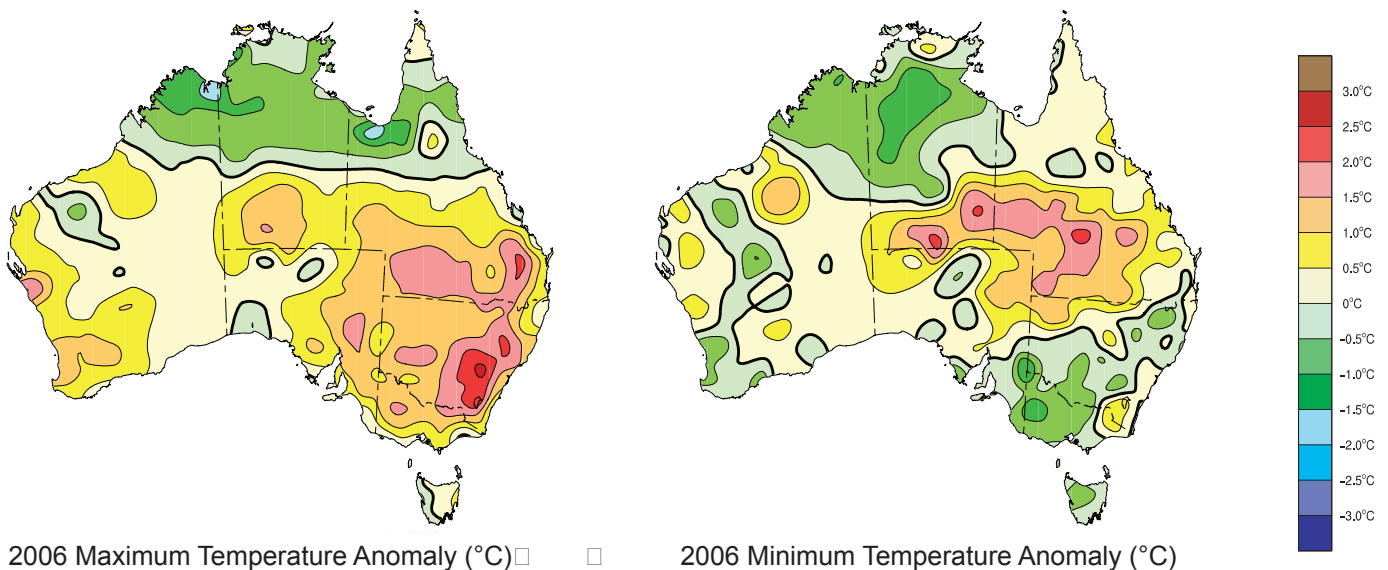
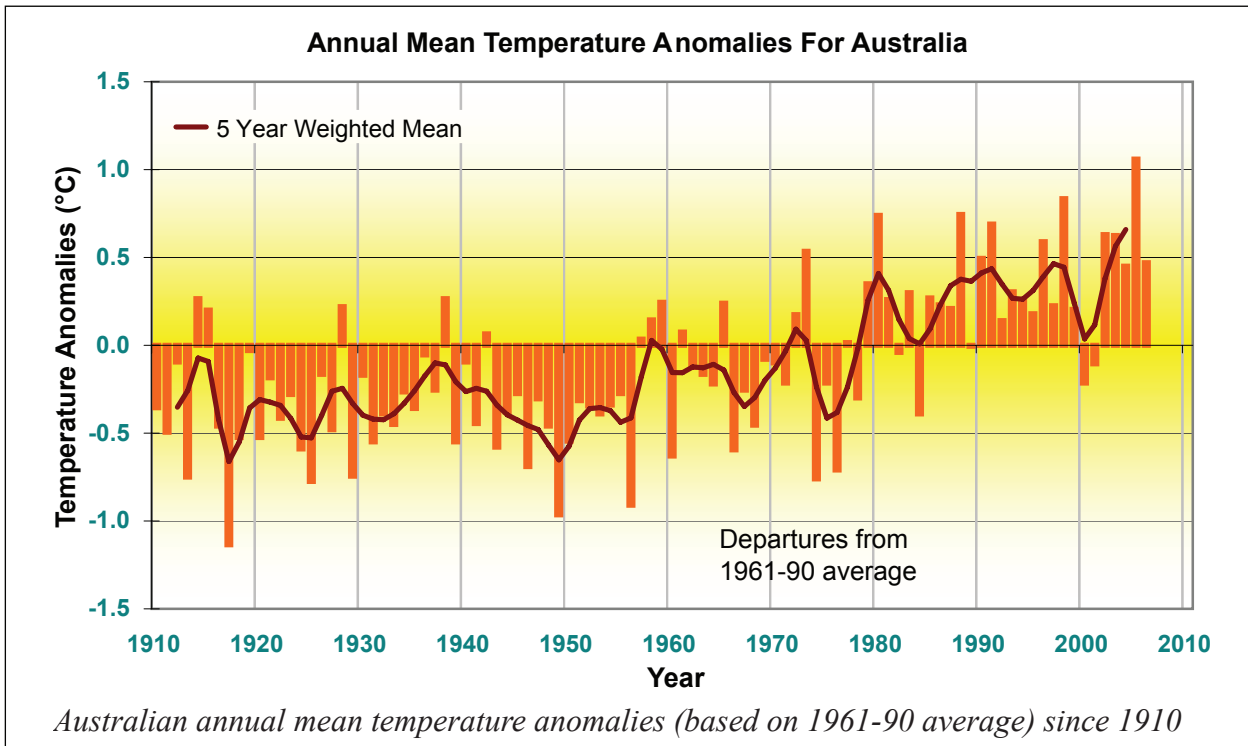


1. Overview

A year of climate contrasts

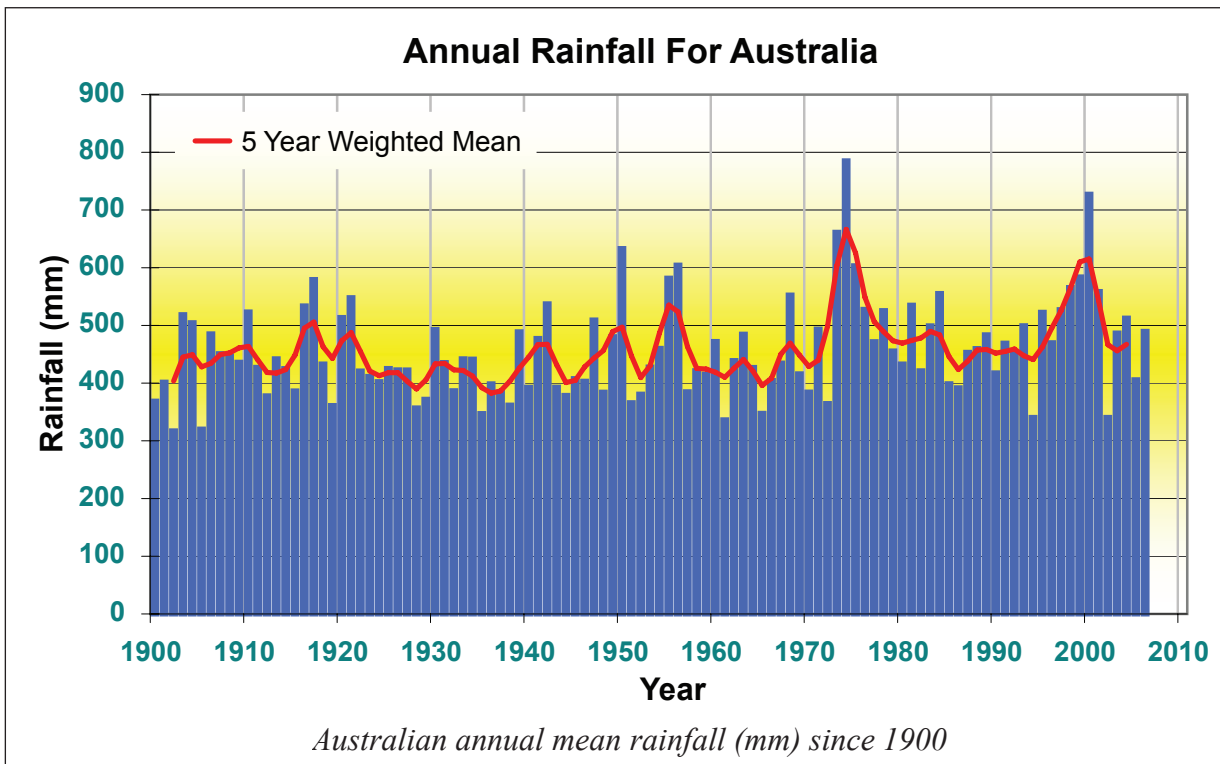
Data collected by the Bureau of Meteorology indicate that Australia's annual mean temperature for 2006 was 0.47°C above the standard 1961-90 average, making it the eleventh warmest year in a data-set of reliable, widespread temperature observations going back to 1910. Rainfall was well below normal in the southeast and far southwest, but close to average when averaged over the whole country.

Despite record warm daytime temperatures in the drought-affected southeast, 2006 was cooler than the previous year when averaged across the whole country. This was largely due to a very active tropical wet season early in the year resulting in cooler temperatures through the north, and clear skies and low soil moisture associated with the drought resulting in cold overnight temperatures from April to July. The annual mean maximum temperature was 0.60°C above average (ninth highest), while the mean minimum temperature was 0.34°C above average (seventeenth highest). Temperature anomalies varied throughout the year, but spring was particularly noteworthy for its warmth – the Australia-wide mean temperature anomaly of +1.42°C was a new record for the season.



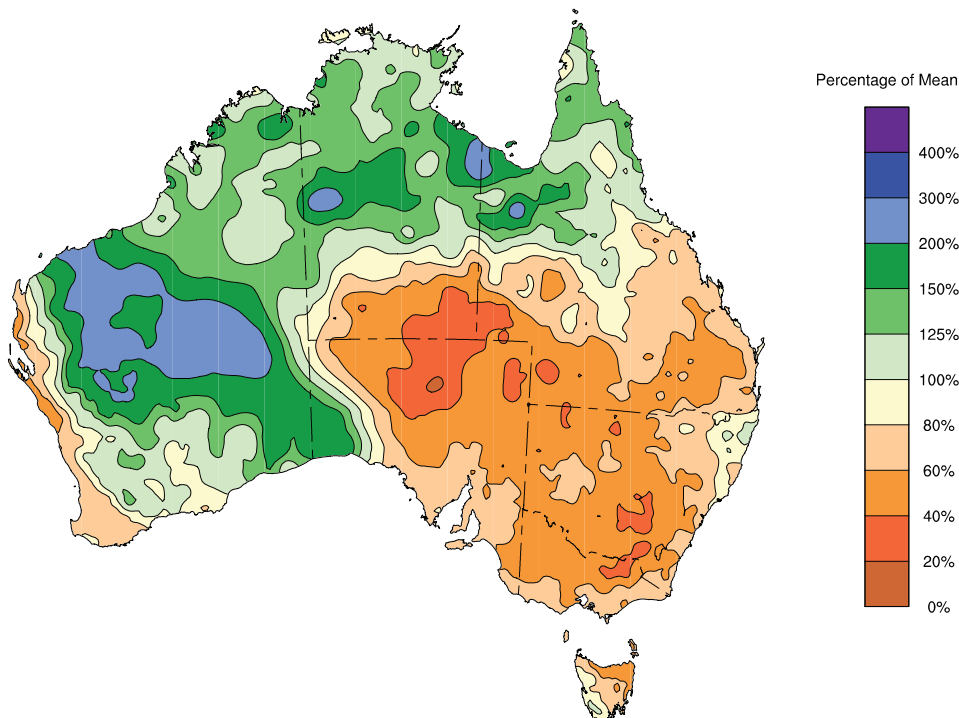
Australian annual mean temperatures have increased by approximately 0.9°C since 1910, consistent with a global mean temperature increase of between 0.7°C and 0.8°C since 1900. According to a preliminary estimate released by the World Meteorological Organization on 14th December 2006, the global mean temperature for 2006 was about 0.42°C above average, making it the sixth warmest year globally since records commenced in 1861.

While there has been a consistent warming trend apparent in Australian temperatures, annual temperatures will continue to vary from year to year in association with factors such as the El Niño-Southern Oscillation. Consequently, it is not surprising that the mean Australian temperature for 2006 was cooler than for 2005, the nation's warmest year on record (1.06°C above normal).



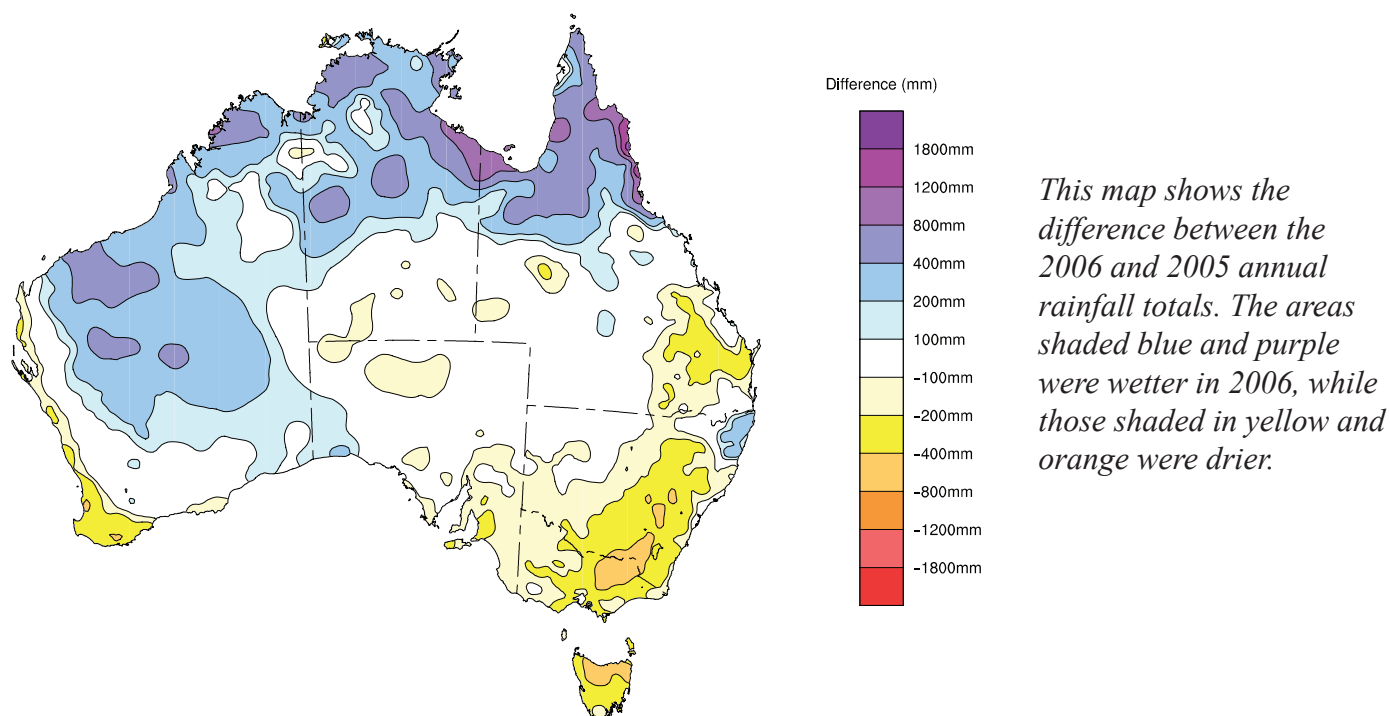
The average total rainfall throughout Australia for 2006 was about 490 mm, slightly more than the long-term average of 472 mm. However, the near-normal all-Australian total was a combination of well above average totals across the tropics and inland Western Australia, cancelling out the well below average totals recorded in the southeast and far southwest. Most of the southeast recorded less than 60% of normal annual rainfall, with some parts experiencing their driest year on record, including key catchment areas which feed the Murray River. It was also the driest year on record along parts of WA's west coast. In contrast, annual totals of at least 125% of normal were observed across much of the tropics, while some parts of inland Western Australia recorded more than double their mean annual rainfall.

The drought experienced throughout southeast Australia in 2006 was largely the result of the development of an El Niño in the tropical Pacific Ocean. Australia has however experienced marked rainfall trends over the last 50 years, with declines over southern and eastern Australia and increases across the northwest.



2006 rainfall compared with the 1961-1990 annual average.

The pattern of rainfall during 2006 continued this trend and maintained the long-term rainfall deficiencies in many regions. These deficiencies are now unprecedented in some parts. Compared to 2005, 2006 was much wetter across the tropics and the interior of WA, and much drier down the Great Dividing Range, in Tasmania and in the far southwest of Western Australia.



State averages reveal that 2006 was the third driest year on record for both Victoria and Tasmania. These States also recorded their second highest annual mean daytime temperatures, exacerbating the dry conditions through greater water demand.

Capital city statistics (inside back cover) show that most experienced warmer than average days; Canberra had its highest annual mean maximum on record, with a departure from normal of +2.1°C. Darwin was the only centre to record above average rainfall and a yearly total of more than 1000 mm (1803 mm); all the other capitals were dry or very dry. It was the driest year on record in Perth and Hobart, and the second driest in Adelaide, while decile 1 totals were observed in Canberra and Melbourne. Hobart had the most days with rain (138) and Canberra had the fewest (69), while in absolute terms Adelaide was the driest centre with a meagre 287.8 mm. The temperature extremes for the year were 44.2°C at Sydney on 1st January and -6.0°C at Canberra on 8th August.

	Rainfall (mm)			Maximum Temperature (°C)			Minimum Temperature (°C)		
	2006 total	Normal	Rank (of 107)	2006 anomaly	Normal	Rank (of 97)	2006 anomaly	Normal	Rank (of 97)
Australia	490	472	32 nd	+0.60	28.55	9 th	+0.34	15.07	17 th
New South Wales/A.C.T.	349	566	99 th	+1.55	23.91	2 nd	+0.13	10.75	25 th
Northern Territory	687	548	13 th	+0.07	31.88	45 th	+0.30	18.45	26 th
Queensland	607	630	55 th	+0.60	29.86	14 th	+0.86	16.57	8 th
South Australia	153	236	92 nd	+1.09	26.71	4 th	+0.55	12.20	10 th
Tasmania	877	1168	105 th	-0.15	14.71	51 st	-0.53	5.99	69 th
Victoria	367	654	105 th	+0.97	19.86	2 nd	-0.41	8.34	58 th
Western Australia	485	352	8 th	+0.36	29.27	15 th	+0.09	15.66	32 nd

Summary of 2006 mean rainfall and temperatures for Australia and States/Territories. Normal values are calculated using 1961-90 averages. Ranks are from highest to lowest. Mean annual temperatures can be calculated from the average of mean maximum and minimum temperatures.