

# *Australian Water Information Advisory Council*

## *The importance of water information to national water reform*

Russell Mein

Chair

Australian Water Information Advisory Council

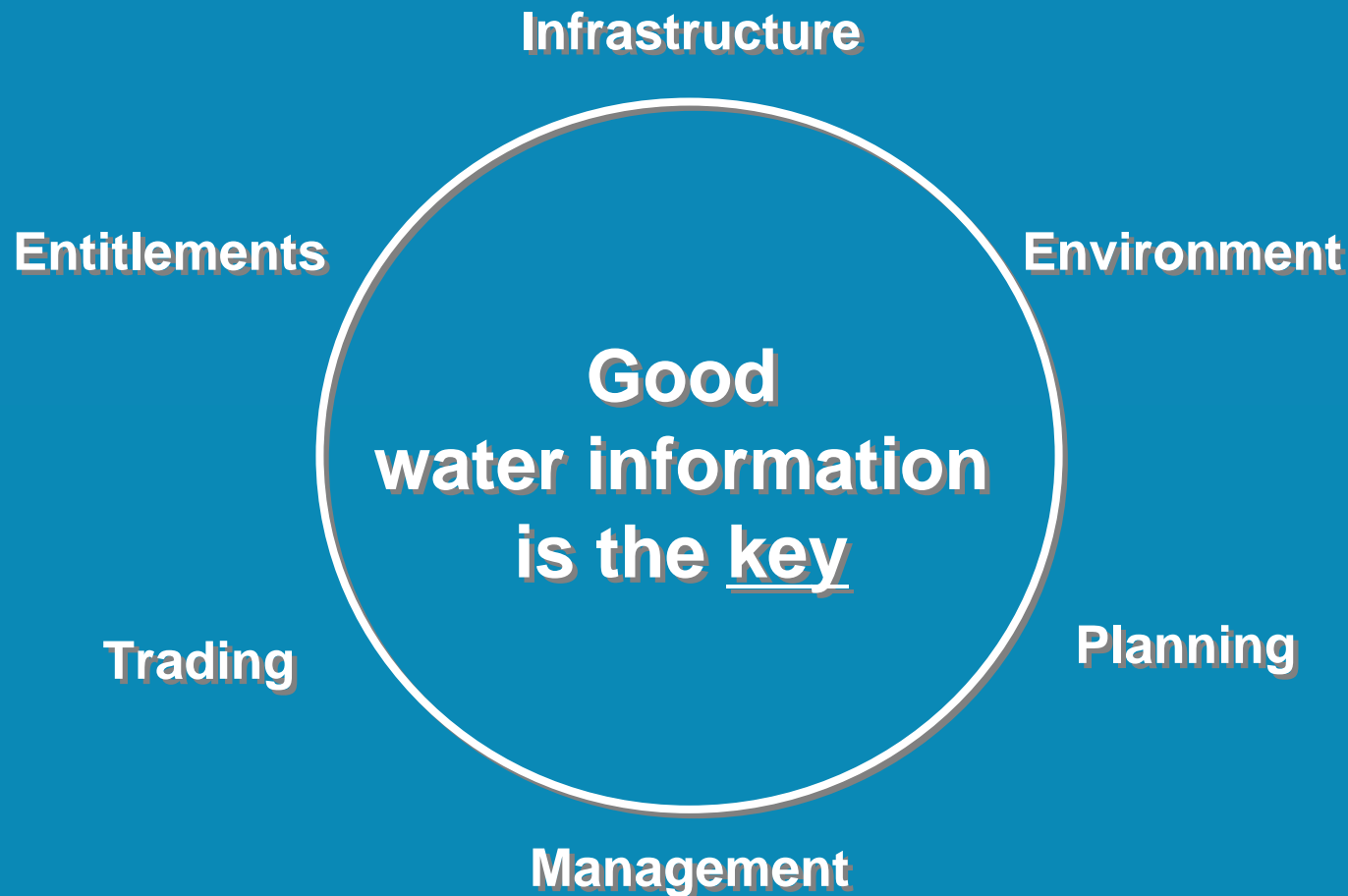
**water** *information*

*Data ↪ Information ↪ Insight*

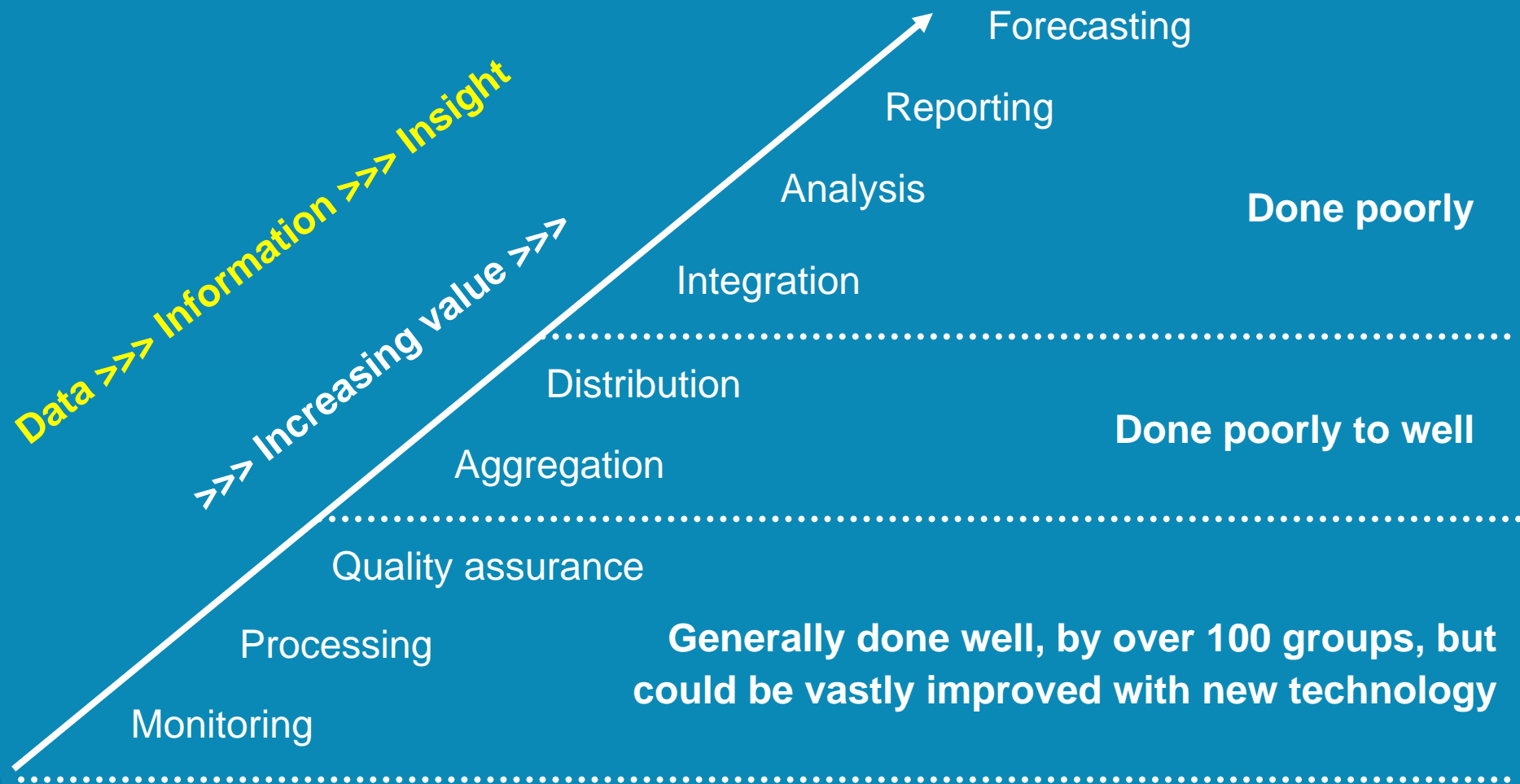
# *Water information needs*

- infrastructure sizing
- planning
- water trading
- providing for environmental flows
- management
- allocation/entitlements

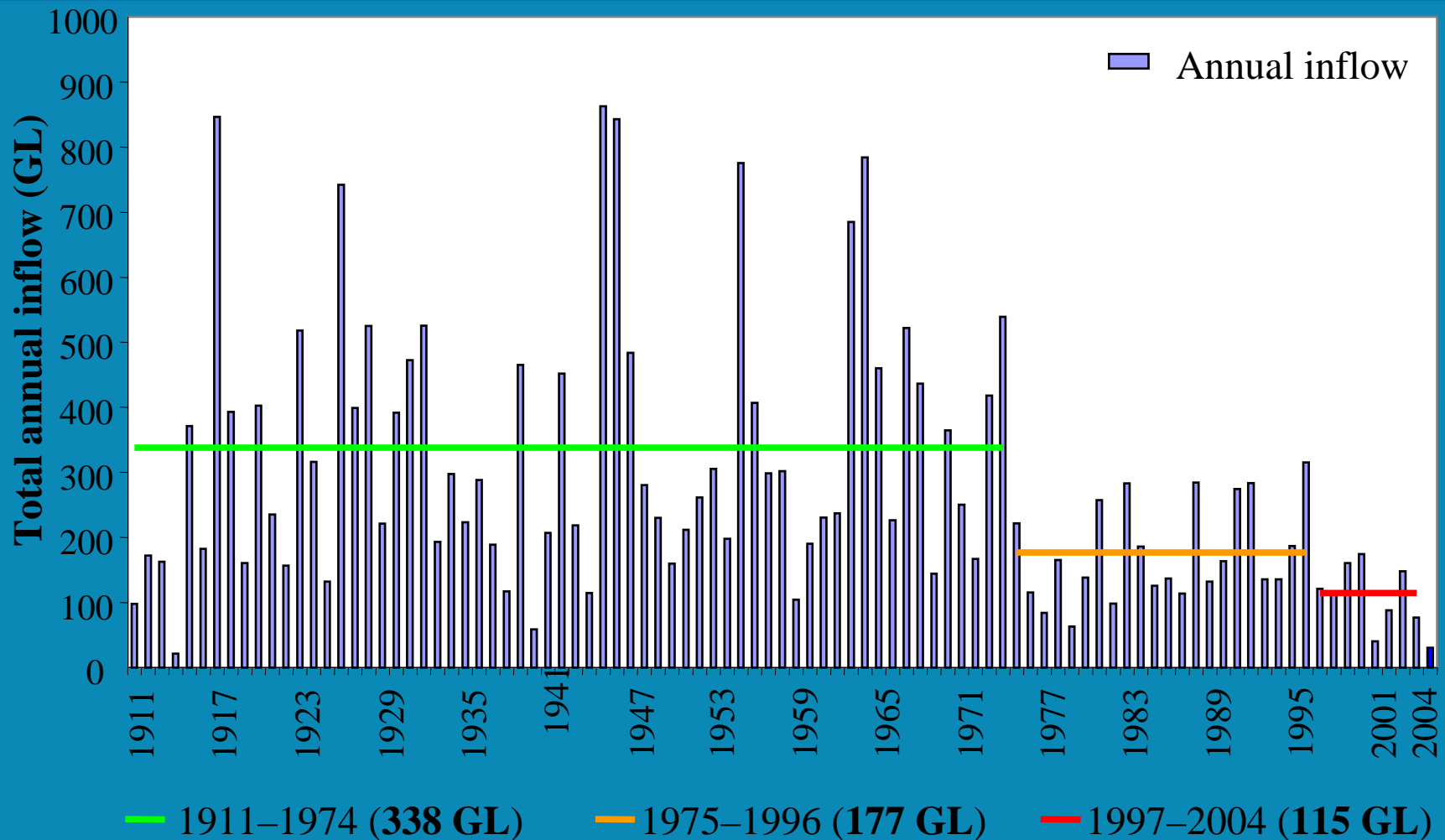
# *Sustainable water resources management*



# The water information value ladder



# Declining annual inflows to Perth's dams.

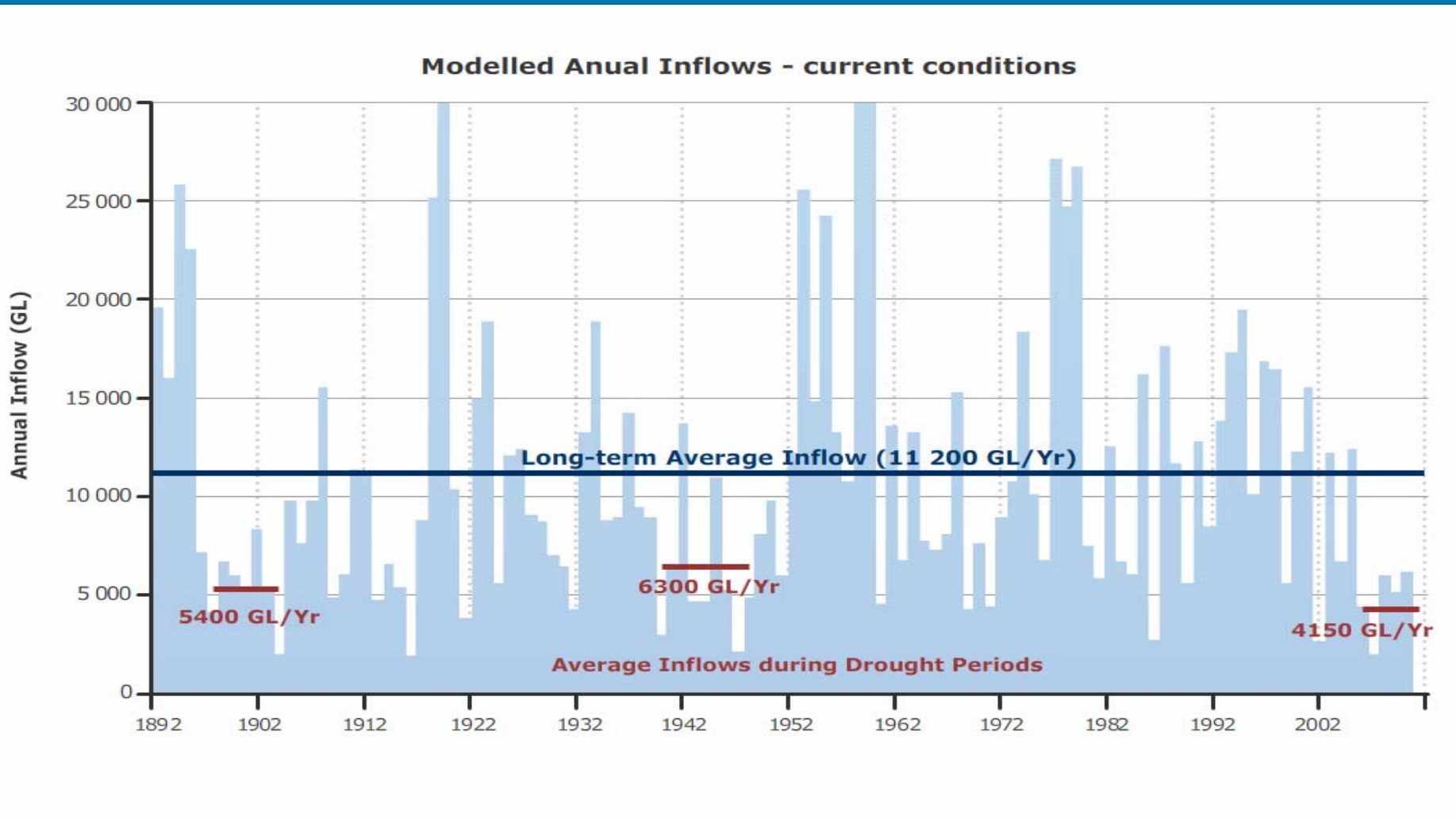


1911–1974 (338 GL)

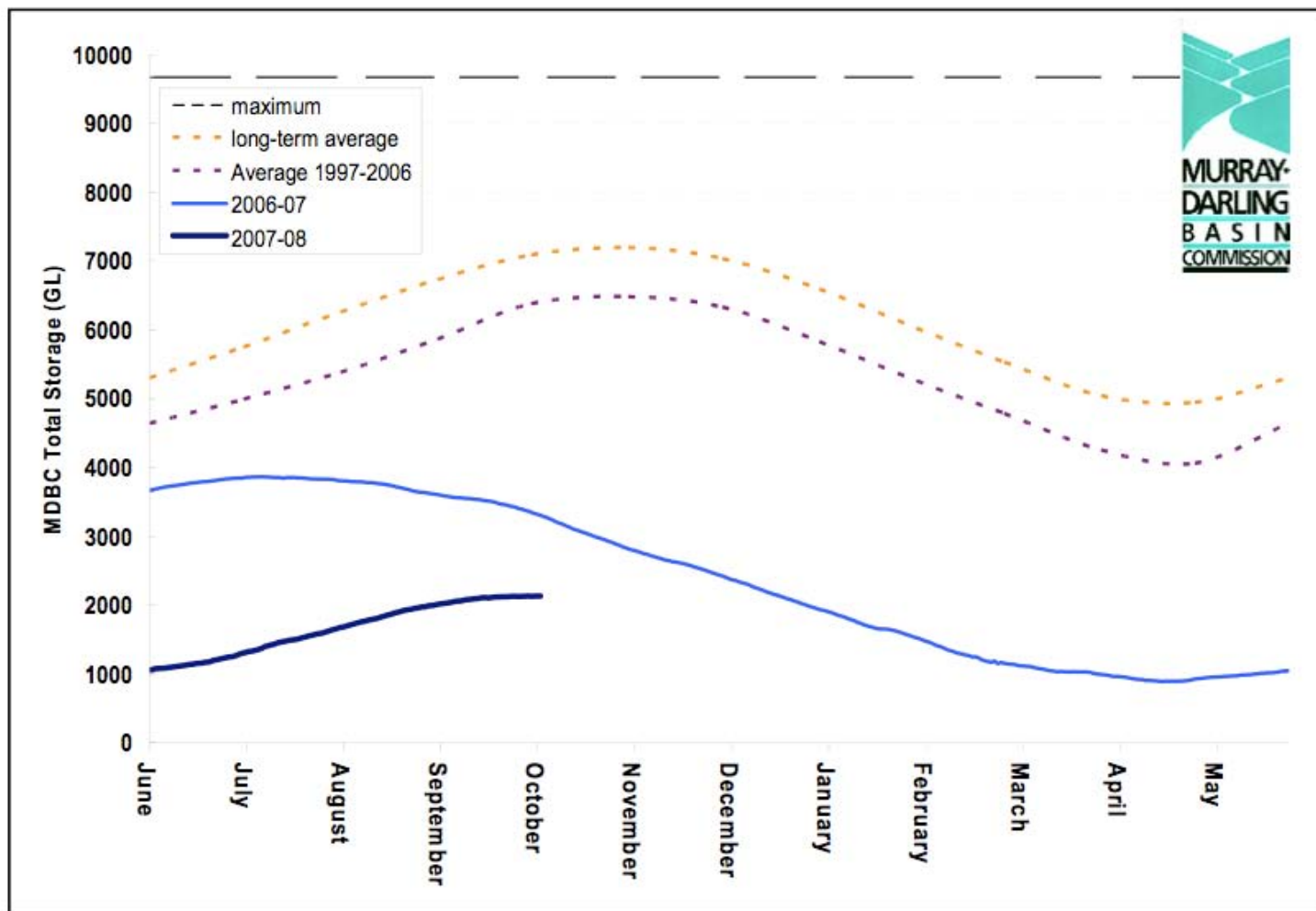
1975–1996 (177 GL)

1997–2004 (115 GL)

# Historic sequence of MDB system inflows.



# Water storage volumes in the MDB system.



# *The opportunity*

- Drought inspired ....
- Political support locked in
- Big dollars on the table

**Chance for a major improvement in water information data in Australia**



# *The National Plan for Water Security (NPWS)*

- **Announced by the Prime Minister in January, 2007**
- **\$10b over 10 years to reform water management**
- **Accelerates the National Water Initiative**
  - Australia's water reform blueprint
- **Supported by enabling legislation**
  - Water Act 2007
  - (passed in Aug 07; to be proclaimed in Mar 08)

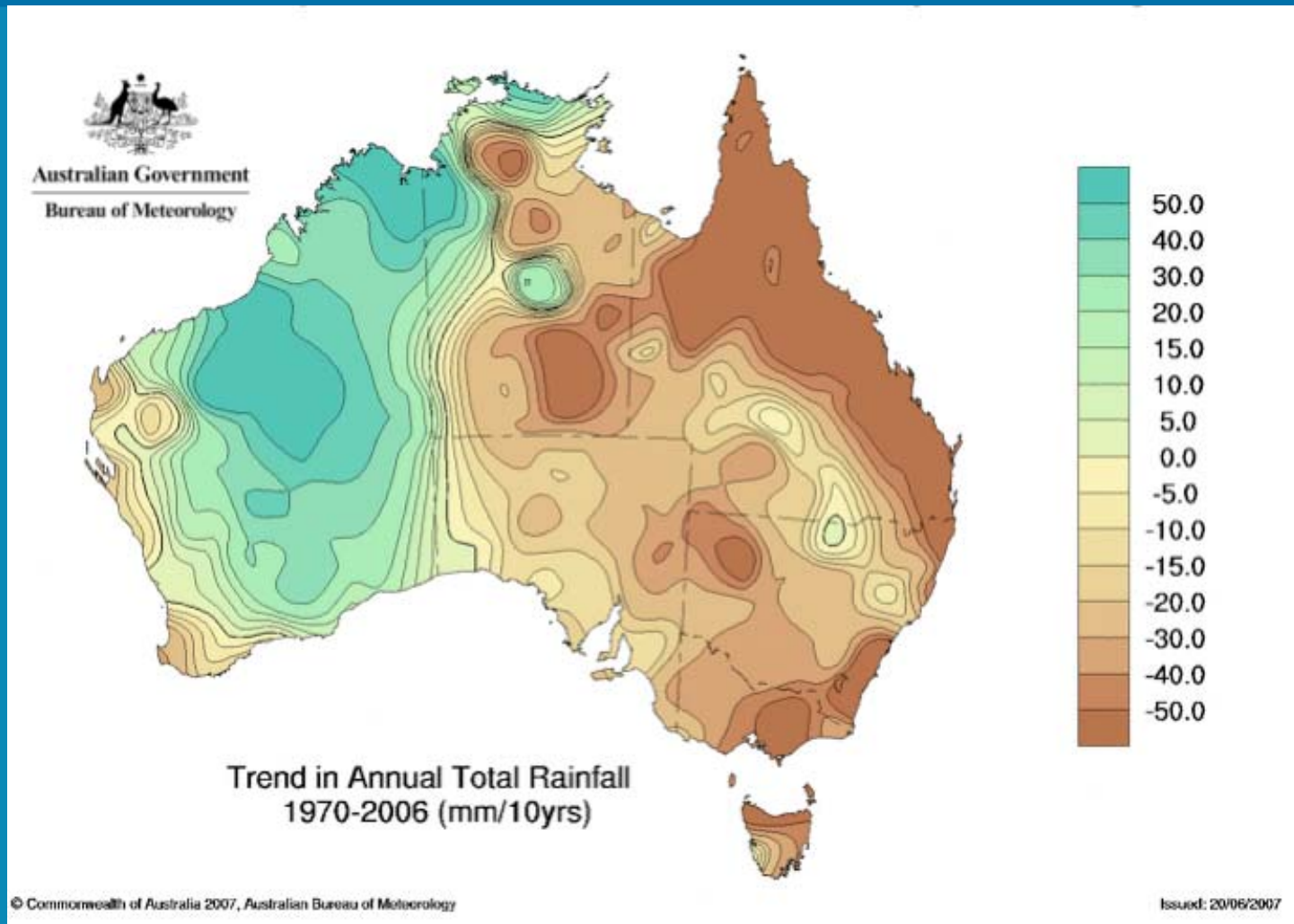
# *Elements of the NPWS.*

- A new Murray-Darling Basin Authority
- MDB water purchases and structural adjustments
- National irrigation delivery system upgrades
- National on-farm water savings measures
- MDB river system improvements
- ACCC oversight of MDB water charging and market rules
- National water use metering and telemetry
- **National water information program**
- Understanding the potential of Northern Australia
- Reducing groundwater losses in the GAB

# *The Water Information Program*

- Water information database held by Bureau of Meteorology
  - establish national standards
  - high level of data integration
  - impartiality (and authority) of the organisation
- Investment in new measurement technologies
- Investment to fill information gaps
- Enhanced information display and analysis
- Free access

# Trend in annual rainfall across Australia.



# *The questions we need to answer*

- How much water is available in different parts of the country today (and how does it compare with history)?
- How much water is likely to be available in the coming days, weeks, months and years?
- How much water is the environment getting?
- How is water quality changing?
- How much water is being intercepted by farm dams and various land management changes?

# *Benefits of the 'cooperative' model*

- major synergies from a collaborative approach to water information (State and other collection agencies, and the Bureau), including:
  - unified investment in new technologies
  - standardised data formats
  - rationalised software for display, analysis, and distribution

[Similar to USA approach]

# *Australian Water Information Advisory Council (AWIAC)*

- Provide strategic advice to the Bureau on emerging water information needs across the water sector.
- Advise the Bureau on how to maximize the value of its water information activities across the water sector.
- Evaluate the Bureau's contribution to NWI and NPWS objectives.
- Assist the Bureau by providing advocacy across the water sector for its new water information mission.

# *AWIAC members*

- Russell Mein (Chair)
- James Horne (Dept of Environment and Water Resources, AG)
- Ken Matthews (National Water Commission, AG)
- Rob Freeman (Dept of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation, SA)
- Warwick Watkins (Department of Lands, NSW)
- Ross Young (Water Services Association of Australia)
- Jolyon Burnett (Irrigation Australia Limited)



# Conclusion

- Reliable water information is the key to water management
- The opportunity is here now for a major improvement in the quality, usefulness, and availability of water information
- The Water Information initiative can deliver on this
- A collaborative approach will bring much benefit