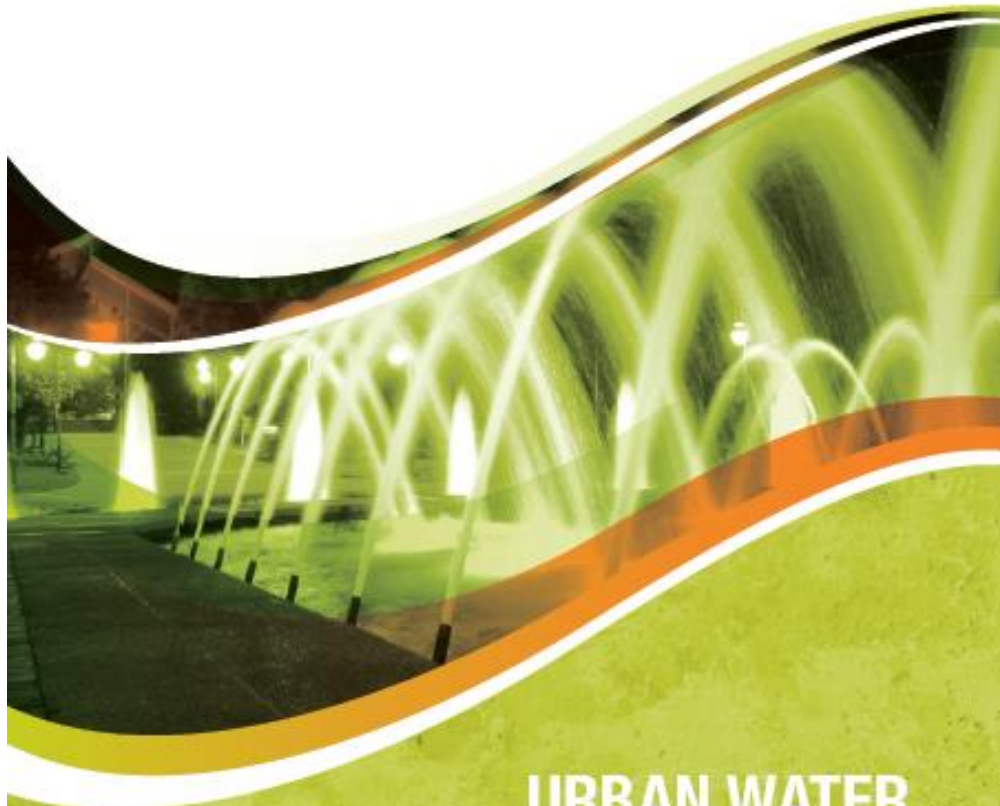


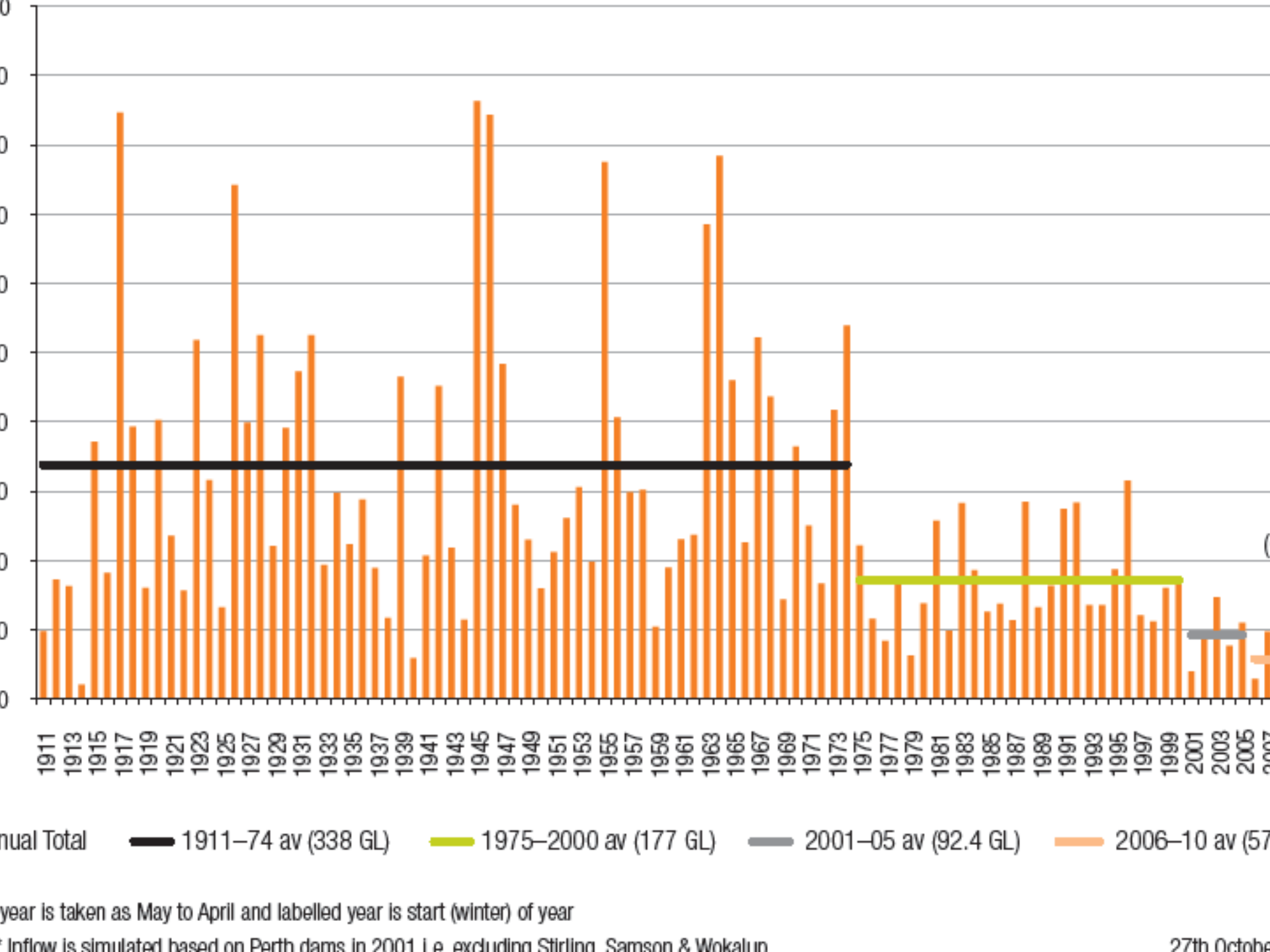


Australian Government
National Water Commission



URBAN WATER

in Australia: future directions
2011



Findings

During the 2000s, most of urban Australia experienced severe and prolonged drought. The initial responses largely focused on water conservation campaigns and demand-management programs, combined with increasingly severe and prolonged water restrictions.

The unforeseen duration of the drought led governments to investments in conditions of great urgency.

The response to the drought also saw a major increase in direct government funding of water supply augmentations and demand-management programs. The Commonwealth has committed funding of \$328 million for the Adelaide Desalination Plant.

The fundamental question is whether the scale of the reduction in inflows was the main, or only, reason why this point of crisis was reached, or whether deficiencies in the underlying policy and institutional arrangements were a contributing factor.

In a world of risk, it is important to judge and learn from the decision-making processes and the policy settings in place at the time, not just the outcomes. Therefore, the prime objective of this assessment is not to undertake an ex-post assessment of decisions made under conditions of uncertainty. Instead, it is to examine the underlying policy and institutional settings.

Regulatory arrangements governing urban water quality with the aim of protecting public health and safety and the environment have served Australia well in the past, and our nation's drinking water is generally safe and of a very high quality.

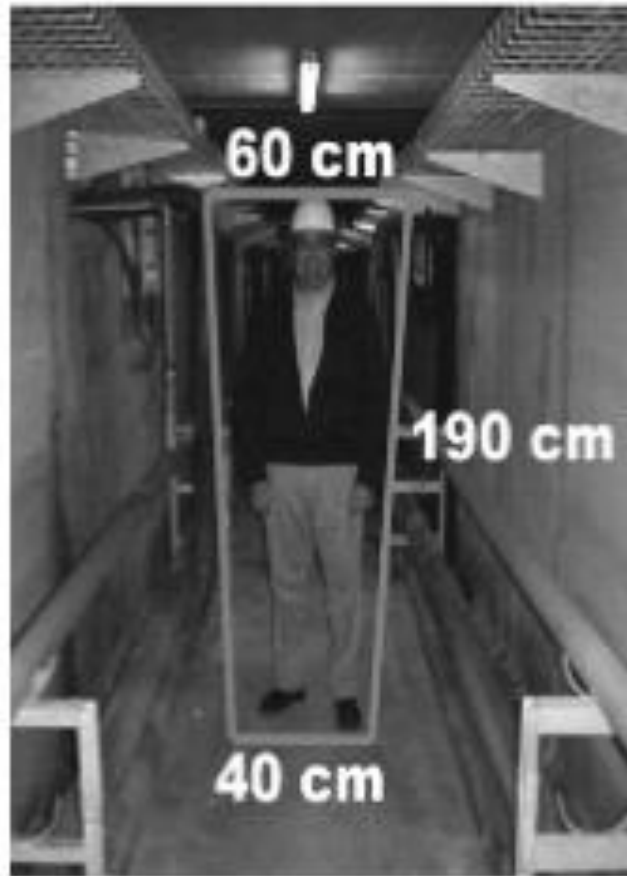
However, there is concern about some matters:

- + Wastewater treatment and disposal standards are often overprescriptive and set without enough consideration of the costs that they impose.

- + Uncertainty about regulatory obligations is resulting in different interpretations and conflict between water service providers and regulators, particularly in relation to environmental outcomes.

There is evidence of barriers to the consideration of all potential options to improve security of supply. Policy barriers have restricted the choice of supply-side options, including rural–urban water trading.





Visitable (Canto-Perello and Curiel-Esparza, 2001)



Tunnel in [Prague](#) is shared by pipes and cables