



**Australian Government**

**Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts**

Senator McEwen  
Chair  
Senate Standing Committee on Environment,  
Communications and the Arts  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Senator McEwen

On 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2007 Mr Tony Slatyer, First Assistant Secretary Water Reform Division, appeared as a witness before the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts.

At those hearings Senator Birmingham sought clarification as to the level of drought across the Murray Darling catchment basin in 2007 compared with the previous record dry of 2006. In response, Mr Slatyer said "I stand to be corrected by the experts, but my recollection of advice from the Bureau of Meteorology and the Murray-Darling Basin Commission is that 2007 was drier than 2006 as a calendar year, and would therefore it would have been the driest year on record."

Mr Slatyer wishes to advise the Committee the correct answer to Senator Birmingham's question is as follows:

"The Murray Darling Basin experienced lengthy periods of dry conditions in 2007, however, the 478mm average rainfall across the basin for the year was close to average. The two year total inflow to storages operated by the Murray Darling Basin Commission to December 2007 was the driest on record, being about half of the previous two year minimum experienced in 1937 to 1938."

Yours sincerely

Mr Malcolm Thompson  
First Assistant Secretary  
Policy Coordination Division  
16 April 2008

