SEASONAL CLIMATE INFORMATION SERVICE

SOI FAX HOTLINES

(Southern Oscillation Index)

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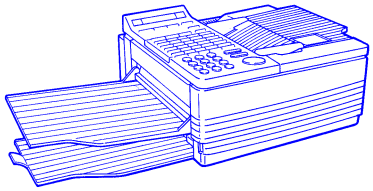

SOI MESSAGE - 26 FEBRUARY 1997

SOI (a) AVERAGES / PHASE

November 96	*	- 0.8
December 1996	*	+7.3
January 97	*	+3.5
Last 30 days		+ 12.1
Last 90 days (b)		+ 7.7

SOI trend (b) during December - January was Phase 2 (i.e. positive ▲) .

NOTE : (a) SOI values calculated using mean baro-metric pressures from 1880 to 1992 - subject to revision by Bureau of Meteorology.
*** Preliminary value ** Revised value**

(b) See **AUSTRALIAN RAINMAN** for effects of SOI on rainfall at your location.

REVIEW OF CLIMATIC FORECASTS AND INFORMATION

"LITTLE CHANGE TO CLIMATE OUTLOOK"

Rainfall prospects remain little changed for the March to May period. Use of the `SOI phase analysis' system within RAINMAN shows most of Queensland and NSW has a 50% chance of receiving median rain for the next three months. Exceptions to this are the northern coast and interior, western Cape York Peninsula, and the southern coastal districts of NSW where the probabilities are higher at 60%-80%. Conversely, sections of south-eastern Queensland and northern central NSW have a 30%-40% chance of receiving their median rainfall for this time of year.

Bureau of Meteorology forecast systems currently suggest little bias towards either an excessively-high or unusually-low rainfall pattern for this time of year.

Sea-surface temperatures (SSTs) continue to be cooler-than-normal in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean. However the current SST pattern suggests that the La Niña phase is on the wane, and that the rainfall outlook is becoming neutral.

Warmer-than-normal SST's have largely dissipated in the western Pacific. SSTs are warmer than normal in a large band across central and eastern parts of the southern Pacific Ocean, including the region adjacent to the Chilean coast.

An interesting feature, identified by Bureau of Meteorology Research Centre, is a region of warmer-than-normal water (at 150m depth) that appears to be slowly progressing eastwards into the central and eastern Pacific Ocean. It will be important to carefully monitor this sub-surface pattern over the next three months, for any further signs of deleterious effects on our climate patterns.

The average SOI over the previous 30 days has risen to +12.1. Most climate forecasts continue to suggest a high probability of near average rainfall for most of Queensland during the February to April period.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The 30-to-50-day oscillation is due over the next few days, extending into early March. The next passage of it would then be expected about the second week in April.

To obtain more information for your location, we recommend combined use of the AUSTRALIAN RAINMAN package and the Bureau of Meteorology's Seasonal Climate Outlook. Also a lot of additional information is available on our Internet World Wide Web service, 'The Long Paddock', at URL - http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/longpdk/, and also on BoM's fax and Internet information services.

The next SOI MESSAGE update will be on the 5th of March (usually by 5pm).

Climate Impacts and Spatial Systems - Department of Primary Industries
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If you would like any further information, please contact Col Paull on (07) 389 69587, or one of the Climate Risk Co-Ordinators located at Longreach (076) 584 400, Charters Towers (077) 872 155, Emerald (079) 828 801, Kingaroy (071) 600 717 and Roma(076) 229 999
Some information courtesy Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO and National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, USA