



SOI FAX HOTLINES

(Southern Oscillation Index)

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this page is updated each Wednesday, usually by 5pm



SOI MESSAGE - 21 May 1997

SOI (a) AVERAGES / PHASE		
February 97	*	+12.4
March 97	*	-7.0
April 97	*	-14.4

Last 30 days		- 9.4
Last 90 days (b)		- 8.3

SOI trend (b) during March - April was Phase 3 (i.e. rapidly falling \searrow).		
NOTE : (a) SOI values calculated using mean barometric pressures from 1880 to 1992 - subject to revision by Bureau of Meteorology. * Preliminary value ** Revised value		
(b) See AUSTRALIAN RAINMAN for		

REVIEW OF CLIMATIC FORECASTS AND INFORMATION

“DROUGHT WATCH DECLARED”

The rapid fall in the SOI over the past nine weeks and the continued deterioration in the sea-surface temperature patterns in the Pacific Ocean are cause for concern. Use of the ‘SOI Phase Analysis’ system within AUSTRALIAN RAINMAN shows that much of eastern Australia has a 50% chance of receiving median rainfall during the May - July period. This means that for those areas, climate forecast systems cannot do any better than describing the long-term climatic averages for this time of year.

However, there are considerable areas where rainfall probabilities are about 35% : part of the Taroom Shire, parts of central Queensland from Theodore to west of Emerald, Cunnamulla district, Longreach district, parts of north-west and south-west Queensland, parts of north-western and south-western NSW, and most of Victoria.

Alternatively, probabilities are about 65% for the Darling Downs, coastal districts between Childers and the NSW border, tropical north Queensland coast, northern parts of Cape

York Peninsula and coastal north-eastern NSW.

The Bureau of Meteorology research section advises that sea-surface temperatures are continuing to warm in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean. They have cooled rapidly in the Coral Sea and over the western Pacific. There are now anomalously westerly winds to the north of Australia.

Generally, these conditions are not conducive to worthwhile rainfall for eastern Australia in the longer-term. The next passage of the 30- to 50-day oscillation is expected during the fourth week of June.

Statistical records indicate that generally there is a low probability of unusually late frosts this winter. This assessment will be updated at the end of May.

In the current situation we strongly recommend a ‘**DROUGHT WATCH**’ response involving planning for dry conditions, and regular monitoring of the SOI, sea-surface temperature patterns and published seasonal climate outlooks. We also advise caution when making property management decisions.

The average SOI over the previous 30 days is now -9.4. The chance of obtaining ‘average’ rainfall during the May-July period is about 30% for some areas of Queensland, and 65% in the south-eastern corner of the State.

THE BOTTOM LINE

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 on BoM’s fax and Internet information services.

NEXT UPDATE of the SOI MESSAGE: 28 May

Climate Impacts and Spatial Systems - Department of Primary Industries Compiled by Col Paull and Dr Roger Stone, QDPI.

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) 584 418 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