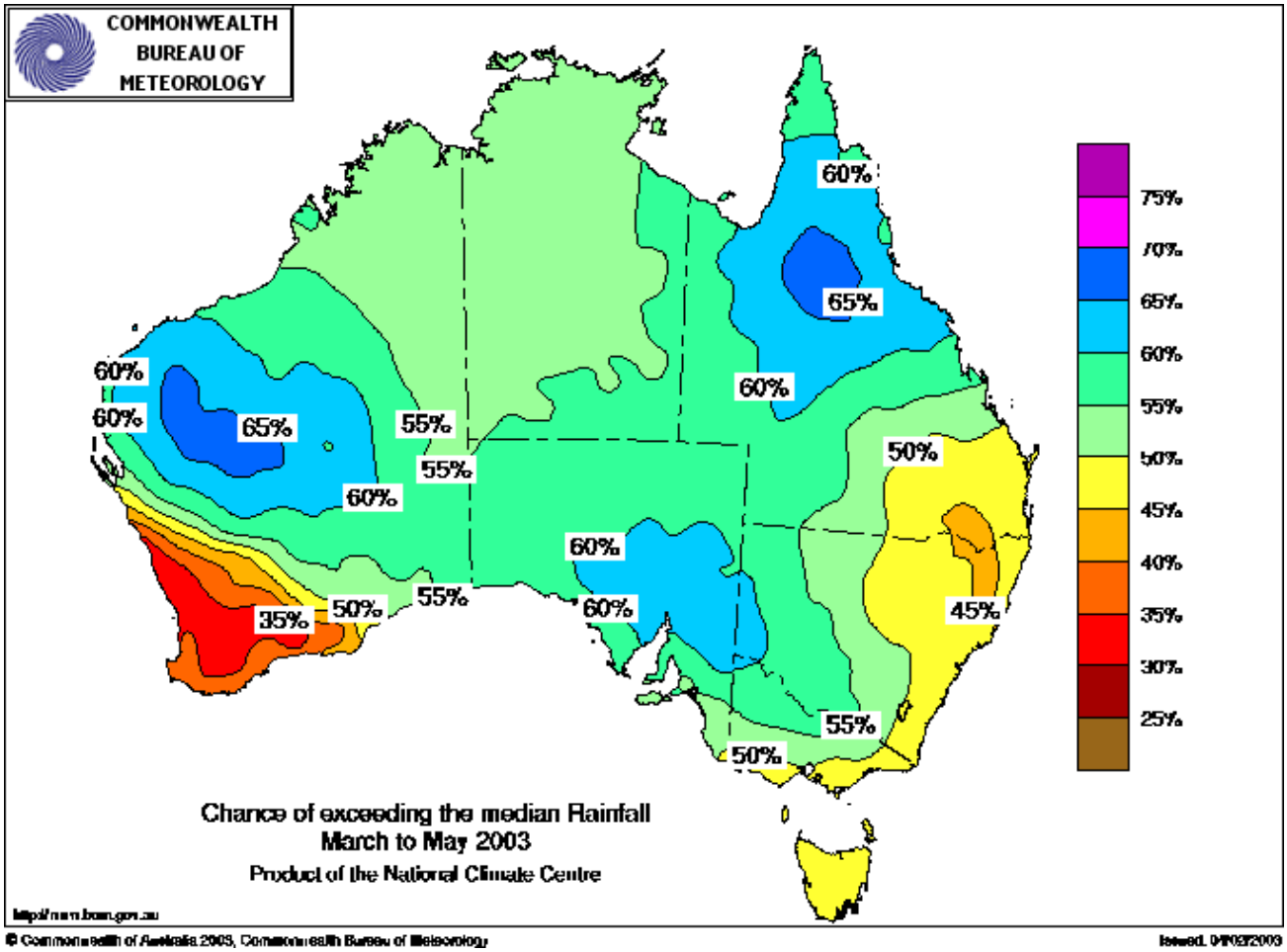
THREE-MONTH SEASONAL CLIMATE OUTLOOK SUMMARY

Rainfall probabilities for Autumn 2003, issued 18th February 2003

Mixed Autumn rainfall outlook

The latest seasonal rainfall outlook from the Bureau's National Climate Centre shows a mixed pattern of odds for the autumn season.

The chances of ABOVE median rainfall for the March to May period are 60 to 70% in north Queensland, central WA and parts of northern and eastern SA.



So with climate patterns like the current, about 7 seasons out of 10 are expected to be wetter than average in these areas, whilst about 3 out of 10 are drier. The statistical outlook scheme is moderately reliable in north Queensland and central WA for autumn, but has little skill in SA.

In contrast, the chances of above median rainfall in southwest WA between 30 and 40%, meaning BELOW median falls have a 60 to 70% chance of occurring and the outlook scheme has low to moderate reliability in this area.

The overall pattern of probabilities has resulted from a sharp rise in Indian Ocean temperatures, and the current but weakening El Niño pattern of above average Pacific Ocean temperatures. In fact in terms of just the ocean data, the El Niño is close to being finished. Furthermore, the SOI is showing a clear rising trend. Whilst a regeneration of El Niño cannot be ruled out entirely, this is much less likely than either neutral or La Niña conditions. For more detail see www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso

The heavy rain that has occurred over Queensland so far this month is consistent with what the National Climate Centre has been saying for some months now; that is, the most likely time for a switch in Australia's rainfall patterns was between January and March. However, in terms of an end to the drought there are several points to note:

(a) it may take several months of sustained above average falls in some areas to effectively end the drought;

(b) the breakdown will not occur uniformly across all drought affected areas;

(c) some El Niño indicators (eg SOI, trade winds) may continue to fluctuate in and out of neutral values after the change in Australian rainfall patterns. Regular updates of the progress of the El Niño are available at www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso

Background Information:

- The Outlook probabilities are based on recent Indian and Pacific Ocean temperatures. The Pacific Ocean cooled in January and the Indian Ocean warmed.
- The Australian impacts of 23 El Niño events since 1900 are summarized on the Bureau's web site at http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso/australia_detail.shtml .
- January's value of the Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) was -2, a rise of 9 points from the -11 in December. The approximate SOI for the 30 days ending 15th February was -8.
- This outlook represents a summary, more detail is available from the contact people or web sites listed below.
- Important: Probability outlooks should not be used as if they were categorical forecasts. More on probabilities is contained in the booklet "The Seasonal Climate Outlook - What it is and how to use it", available from the National Climate Centre.

The national text, and a colour map, are on the WEB at http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead/rain_ahead.shtml An online Seasonal Climate Outlook subscription service is available at http://www.bom.gov.au/silo

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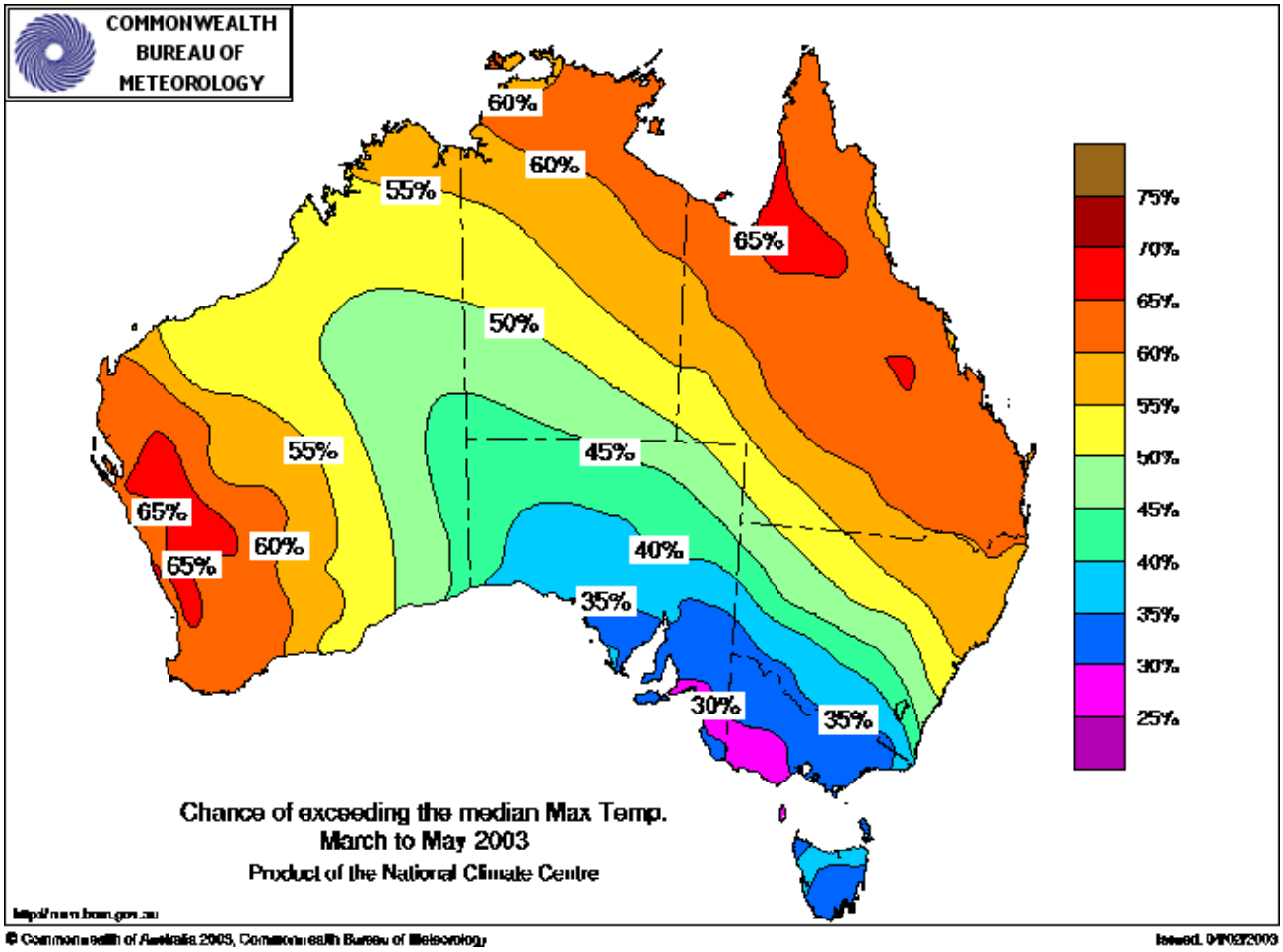
Temperature probabilities for Autumn 2003, issued 18th February 2003

Mixed outlook for Autumn temperatures

The latest seasonal temperature outlook from the Bureau's National Climate Centre shows a mixed pattern of odds for the autumn season.

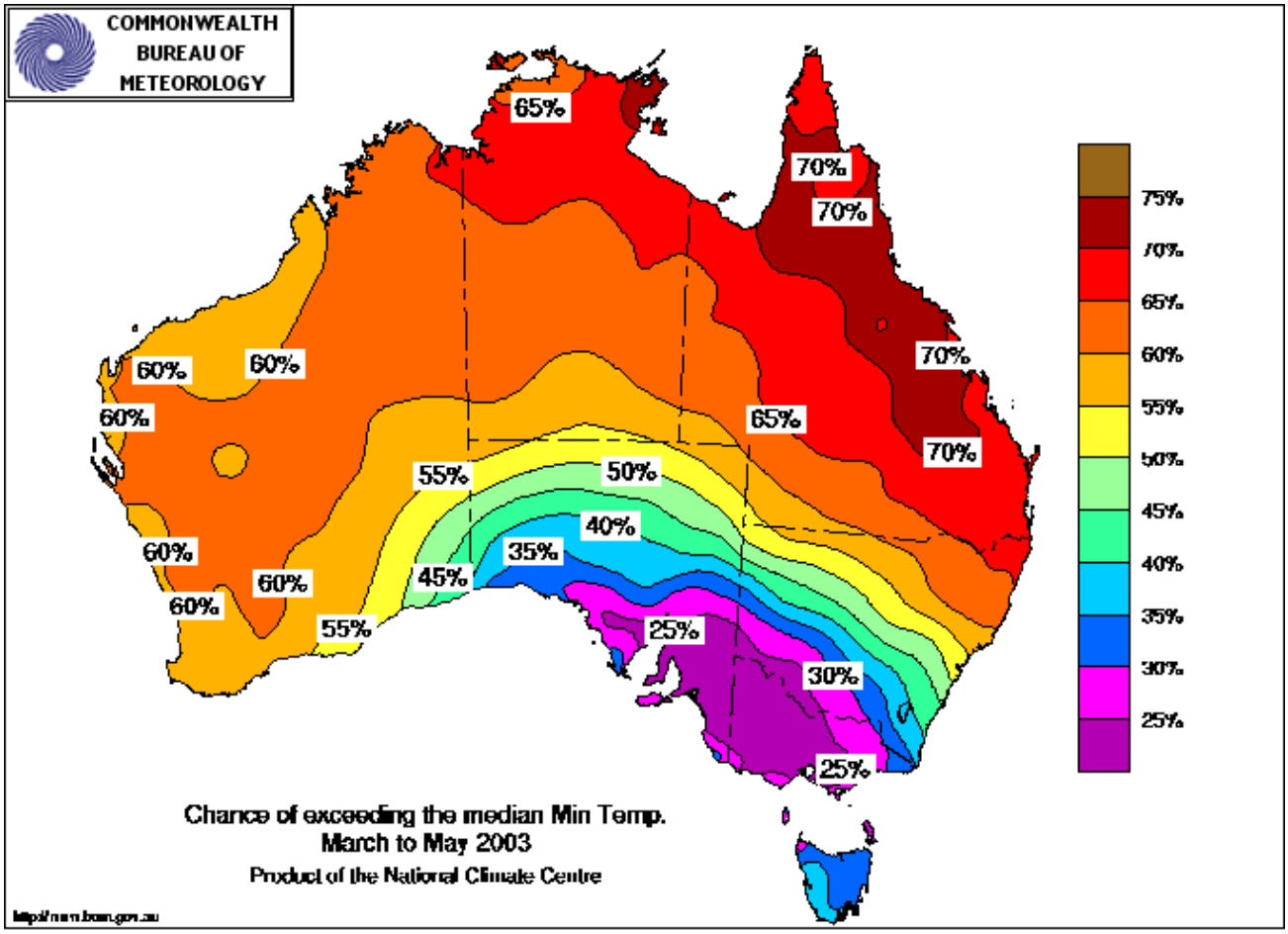


Issued 04/02/2003

For the March to May period the chances of above average seasonal maximum temperatures are between 60 and 70% in the west of WA, the north of the NT and across much of Queensland. These probabilities have resulted from higher than average sea temperatures across the tropical Pacific Ocean, and a strong rise in Indian Ocean temperatures. So with climate patterns like the current, about 6 or 7 seasons out of every 10 are warmer than average across these parts of the country, with about 3 or 4 out of 10 being cooler. Furthermore, the statistical outlook model has moderate to high reliability over much of Queensland and the north of the NT for autumn, but mostly low reliability in western WA.

In contrast, in Victoria, Tasmania, much of SA and the southern fringe of NSW, the chances of above median temperatures are between 25 and 40% meaning that BELOW median seasonal maximum temperatures have a 60 to 75% chance of occurring. The outlook scheme has low to moderate reliability in Victoria and Tasmania for autumn, but little useful skill in SA and NSW.

The chances of above average seasonal minimum temperatures are between 60 and 75% across much of the northern half of Australia and central WA, and minimum temperature outlooks for this period have moderate to high reliability over these same areas. Below average overnight temperatures are favoured in the southeast of the country.



Background Information:

- These outlooks are for the average maximum and minimum temperatures for the entire outlook period. Information about individual days or weeks, which may be unusually hot or cold, is unavailable.
- This outlook uses data from both the Pacific and Indian Oceans, with the Pacific Ocean having the major influence on the north of the country and the Indian Ocean the chief influence on southern areas.
- This outlook represents a summary: more detail is available from the contact people or web site listed below.
- Important: Probability outlooks should not be used as if they were categorical forecasts. More on probabilities is contained in the booklet "The Seasonal Climate Outlook - What it is and how to use it", available from the National Climate Centre.

The national text, with colour maps, is also on the WEB at http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead/temps_ahead.shtml