[AMENDMENT DUE TO TECHNICAL ERROR]

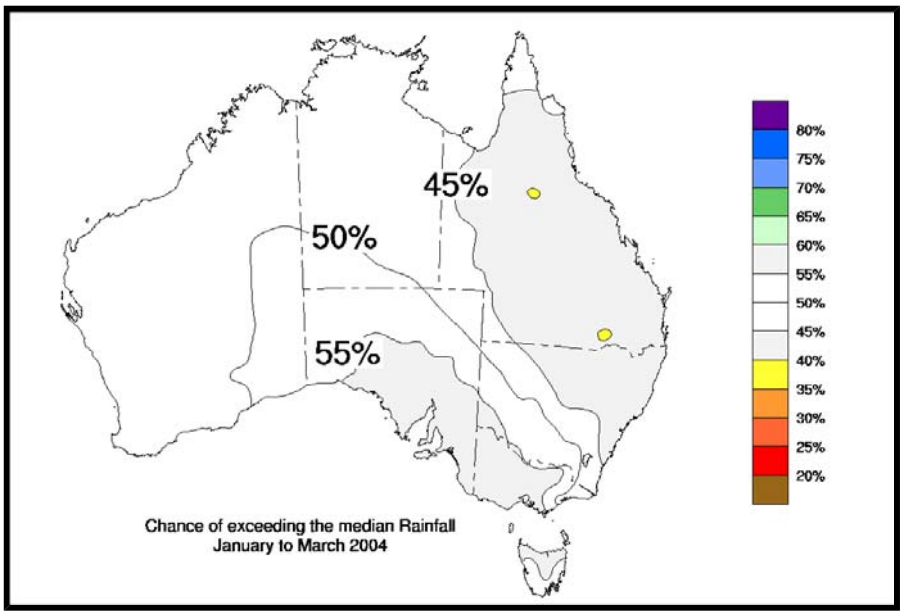
National Seasonal Rainfall Outlook: probabilities for January to March 2004, issued 16th December 2003

Neutral odds for March quarter rainfall

The Bureau's seasonal rainfall outlook for the March quarter shows no strong swings in the odds towards wetter or drier conditions. The chances of above average seasonal falls are generally close to a neutral 50%. This outlook is due to the fact that Pacific and Indian Ocean temperatures don't strongly influence Australian rainfall during mid-summer to early autumn.

For the January to March period, the chances of above median rainfall are between 40 and 60% across all States and Territories, except for two small patches in Queensland where the chances are slightly less than 40% (see map). So with climate patterns like the current, about 5 seasons out of 10 are expected to be wetter than average over Australia, with about 5 out of 10 being drier.

Outlook confidence is related to the influence of Pacific and Indian Ocean temperatures on seasonal rainfall. During the March quarter, history shows this influence to be moderately consistent through eastern parts of NSW and Queensland, much of the NT and southern and western WA. Elsewhere the influence is only weakly or very weakly consistent (see page 3).



Following a recent cooling trend, the tropical Indian Ocean warmed slightly during November, as did the tropical Pacific. For more detail see www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso/. The temperature patterns in the Indian Ocean and Pacific Oceans are not extreme enough to produce large swings in the outlook probabilities.

November's value of the Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) was –3, slightly below the –2 recorded in October. The approximate SOI for the 30 days ending 14th December was +1.

The following climate meteorologists in the National Climate Centre can be contacted about this outlook: Grant Beard on (03) 9669 4527, Janita Pahalad on (03) 9669 4859, David Jones on (03) 9669 4085, Felicity Gamble on (03) 9669 4256.

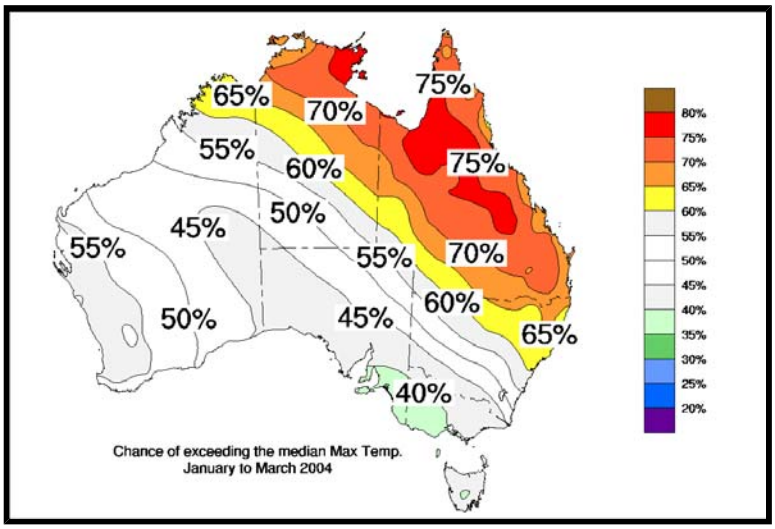
For national and regional web versions of this release, see www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead/rain_ahead.shtml .

National Seasonal Temperature Outlook: probabilities for January to March 2004, issued 16th December 2003

Higher temperatures likely in north and east

The Bureau's seasonal temperature outlook for the March quarter, shows increased chances of above average daytime temperatures in parts of northern and eastern Australia. In contrast, in parts of southeastern Australia the first three months of 2004 are more likely to be cooler than average. This outlook pattern is mainly the result of above average temperatures in the tropical Pacific Ocean, particularly the west.

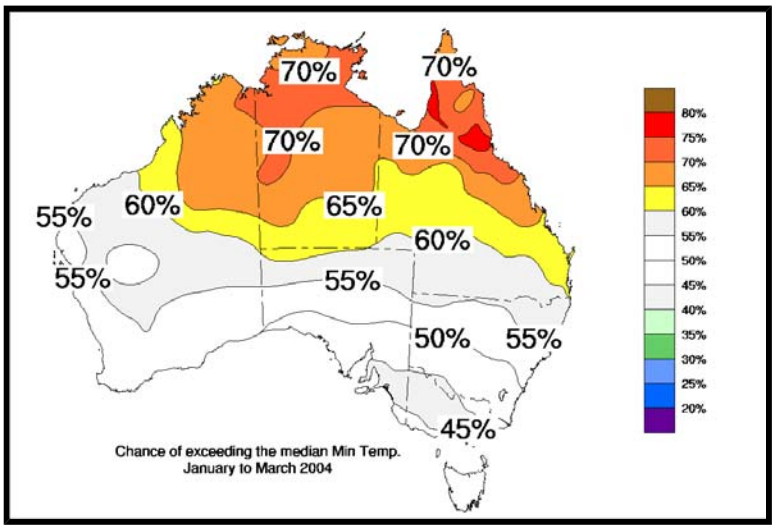
For the January to March period, the chances of above average seasonal daytime temperatures are over 60% northeast of a line from Derby in northwest WA to Sydney. Within this region, the chances peak in the 75 to 80% range in eastern Arnhem Land and in parts of northern and central Queensland (see map). So with climate patterns like the current, about 6 or 7 seasons out of every 10 are expected to be warmer than average across these parts of the country, with about 3 or 4 out of 10 being cooler.



Chance of exceeding the median Max Temp.
January to March 2004

In southeast SA, western Victoria and a small part of central Tasmania, the chances of a warmer than average January to March are between 35 and 40%. This means that a cooler than average season has a 60 to 65% chance of occurring.

Outlook confidence is related to the consistency of the influence of Pacific and Indian Ocean temperatures on seasonal temperatures. During the March quarter, history shows this influence on maximum temperatures to be moderately consistent over large areas of the country. The influence is weak or very weak in parts of northern, central and far western Australia (see page 3).



Chance of exceeding the median Min Temp.
January to March 2004

Warmer than average nights are favoured over most of the northern half of the continent, with probabilities above 60% across the NT, the northern three-quarters of Queensland and northeast WA. Elsewhere, the chances of above average overnight March quarter temperatures range between 40 and 60%. This outlook pattern is mostly due to above average temperatures in the Pacific Ocean.

History shows the oceans' influence on minimum temperatures in the March quarter to be moderately consistent over most of Queensland, the NT and northern WA. Elsewhere the influence shows weak to very weak consistency.

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