

THE SUMMER FORECAST

FOR SOUTHERN MDB REGIONS 2017/18



As predicted by Kevin Long (Bendigo VIC) 1 DEC 2017 ph (03) 54412394

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A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE 2017 GROWING SEASON

The southern growing season started out with ideal conditions due to above-average rains falling during late March and late April for most regions of the MDB. Drier conditions set in again during June, then the southern third of the MDB received good average rains during July and August. Crop yields were then greatly reduced by the very dry September and early October period which brought on an early and generally disappointing end to the southern growing season.

The harvest season started in early October with generally cool dry weather which resulted in a slow hay making season. Thunder storms and heavy rain then kicked in during late Spring which caused severe damage to any hay not under cover. Hail and widespread frost also caused further losses to many Victorian farmers during late Spring.

MAJOR AND RAPID SEA SURFACE CHANGES DURING NOVEMBER

- After a long period dominated by below-average Sea Surface Temperature (SST) in the Bight region, rapid warming commenced in early November. This new development combined with a rapid move towards a very strong La Nina trend in the southern half of the Pacific ----has greatly increased the chances of this Summer producing **well above average rains over most regions of Eastern Australia.**
- Near record low Antarctic sea ice conditions during the last 14 months have now started a warming trend in the southern Oceans. **This is a good compounding driver for the heavier rains that are now falling** regularly across SA and Victoria. Recent rains have been helped along by the rapid rise of the SOI associated with the presently developing La Nina trends. (Surges up to + 30 points in the daily SOI are now common).
- After June, high-altitude humidity started to increase again after the most rapid decline ever recorded, which occurred during the 10 months prior. This present rising cycle of high-altitude humidity (together with some weak Jetstream flows) was the main active system that stimulated the late-Winter rains that fell mainly in the southern half of Australia.
- Unexpected below-average SST has also recently developed to the east of QLD. This condition is presently reducing the intensity of the rains now falling over the Top End. I forecast this cool SST will soon rapidly warm again and then help to draw in 4 or 5 strong cyclonic systems during this Summer. The Indian Ocean SST's are also moving into positive rain producing conditions. **An above average Summer wet season is now forecast for the northern half of Australia.**

MORE LARGE RESERVOIRS NEEDED

This Summer (like the summer of 2010/11) will again highlight the need to build more large reservoirs up in the Great Dividing Range, similar to the Dartmouth Dam. Then only rarely would wasteful and damaging floods need to be released down onto defenseless people living on the plains below. These extra reservoirs (together with the existing reservoirs) all need to be managed to mitigate future floods and provide very valuable water during future droughts. A measure of 8% "air space" in all reservoirs must be maintained during times of wet catchments and La Nina conditions, such as we see developing today.

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Extreme thunder storms and above-average rain for the rest of 2017.

- The strongest Northeast Air Tides are over until next Spring. The dryer "transition phase" of the air tide cycle will help to reduce monthly rainfall totals for the first three months of 2018.
- February is forecast to be the driest month of Summer, bringing on the highest fire risk period of this Summer.
- Presently the SST's of the southern, central and eastern Pacific are as good as they get for creating an above-average Top End wet season, as well as a wetter than average finish to the year for most regions east of WA.
- SA and Victoria should now record close to average rainfall totals for 2017.
- The southern half of Australia should benefit greatly from the good top end wet season, with extra northern humidity helping produce a very early and wet Autumn break during the March April period.

I wish you all the best for the New Year. I look forward to hearing your comments and ideas. Kind regards, Kevin.

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