

QUEENSLAND CLIMATE ASSESSMENT REPORT

Current climate and seasonal outlook information to support sustainable grazing land, water, catchment and environmental management in Queensland.

SEASONAL CONDITIONS SUMMARY

FINDINGS AS AT 19 AUGUST 2026

- El Niño conditions continue to intensify with sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies of the tropical Pacific Ocean showing a steady rising trend.
- As of 1 August 2026, the Science Division of DETSI considers that the probability of exceeding median summer (November 2026 to March 2027) rainfall for much of Queensland is currently in the below- to near-average range (20 – 50%).
- The DETSI outlook for summer rainfall factored in the extra-tropical SST pattern in March and the evolving ENSO related SST in Pacific Ocean in July.
- Twelve-month rainfall to the end of June 2026, averaged over the main grazing lands of Queensland, was 13 per cent above the long-term average (1890 to 2025).
- Over the last three months rainfall was well-below average over the north-eastern half Queensland, whilst remaining well-above average in the south-western half of the State.
- Over last six- and 12-month periods rainfall was well-above average over much of western and northern Queensland but well-below average in parts of southern Queensland.

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Historical Rainfall Variability and Drought Situation

Figure 1 shows 12-month rainfall averaged over the region of Queensland shown on the grey map (top right). This region carries over 80 per cent of the State's cattle and sheep herd and covers only 60 per cent of Queensland's land area. In each graph, rainfall is expressed as a percentage difference from the long-term (1890 to 2025) average. The upper graph shows the running 12-month rainfall anomaly since 1890, indicating the long-term history of wet and dry periods over this region. The lower graph focuses on changes since 2010 and shows, at selected times, those parts of Queensland drought-declared under State Government processes. Twelve-month rainfall to the end of July 2026, averaged over the main grazing lands of Queensland, was 13 per cent above the long-term average (1890 to 2025). As reviewed at 1 August 2026, there are now three fully drought-declared local government areas and one partly drought-declared local government area.

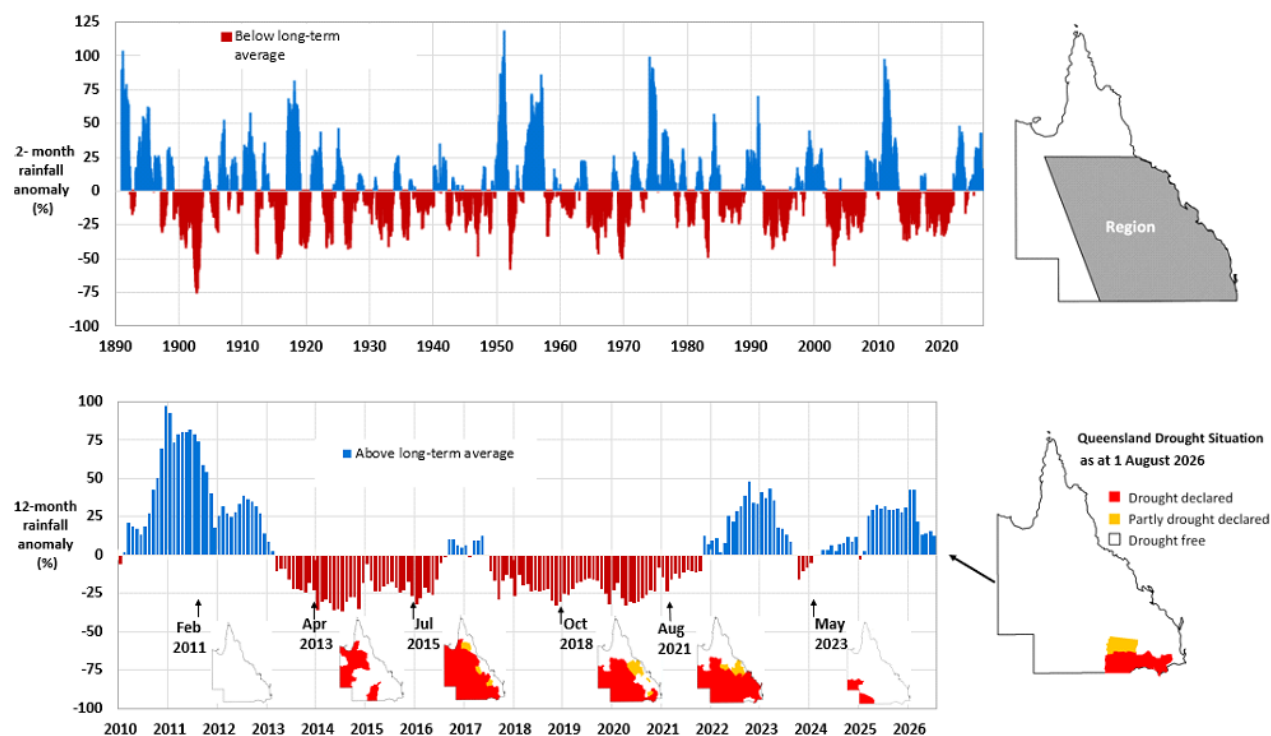


Fig.1: Historical 12-month rainfall anomalies

(Rainfall data source: <https://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/silo/>)

Rainfall and Pasture Growth Update

Figures 2 and 3 are products of the [AussieGRASS Environmental Calculator](https://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/aussiegrass/) (Carter et al. 2000). Figure 2 shows rainfall over the last three-, six- and 12-month periods (up to June 30, 2026) ranked against historical values. Rainfall over the last three-month period was well-below average over much of north-eastern half of Queensland while well-above average over south-western parts of the State. During six- and 12-month periods rainfall was well-above average over much of western and northern Queensland but well-below average in parts of southern Queensland.

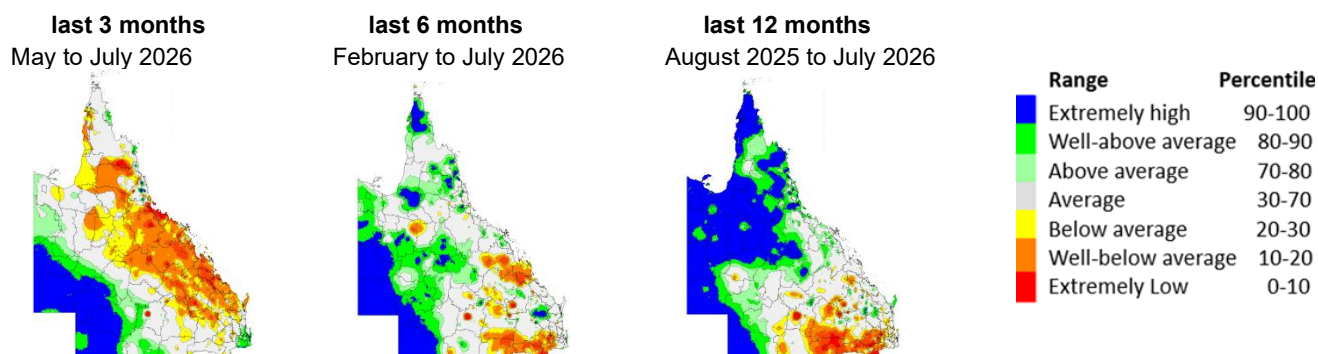


Fig. 2: Rainfall percentiles (base period 1890 to current)
(Source: <https://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/aussiegrass/>)

Figure 3 shows calculated pasture growth percentiles over the last three-, six-, and 12-month periods. The pattern of calculated pasture growth percentiles over the last three-, six-, and 12-month periods has broad similarities for much of the state to that of rainfall percentiles (above), ranging from extremely low to extremely high depending on region and length of period considered.

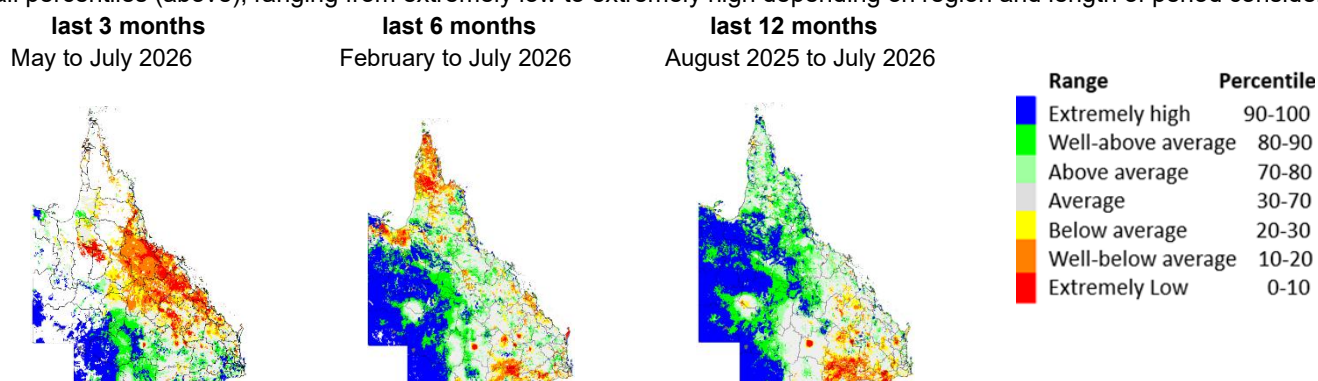


Fig. 3: Pasture growth percentiles (base period 1957 to current)
White shading indicates areas that normally have "seasonally low" pasture growth.
(Source: <https://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/aussiegrass/>)

Season-to-Date Rainfall versus April to October historical records

Rainfall for April to July 2026 period, averaged across Queensland's major grazing lands region (grey region on the map in Fig.4), totalled 71 mm, and is tracking lower than the long-term median for April to October period and the current season is drier compared to the same period last year for April to July 2025.

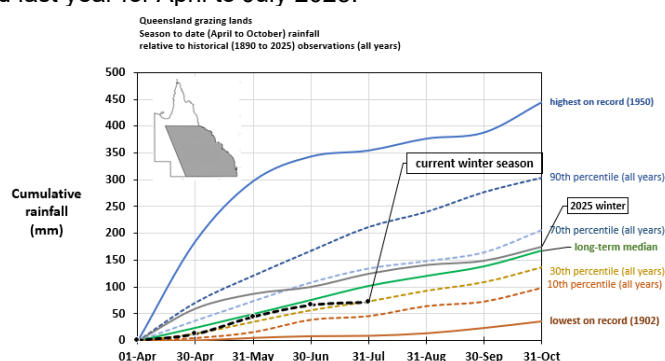


Fig. 4: April to October 2026 season accumulated rainfall as at 1 August 2026, compared to historical values.

Percentiles based on season-to-date rainfall at the end of each month since 1 November (based on data from 1890 to 2024).

Data source: <https://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/silo/>

El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO)

The most closely monitored driver of Queensland rainfall is the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) phenomenon. Climate scientists monitor several ENSO indices, including the atmospheric [Southern Oscillation Index](#) (SOI) and sea-surface temperature (SST) anomalies in the central equatorial Pacific Ocean.

Rolling three-month average values of the SOI and central equatorial Pacific (Niño 3.4 region) SST anomalies since 2009 are shown in Figure 5. Both the recent three-month (May to July) value of the SOI (-20.9) and the NOAA 3-month rolling Oceanic Niño 3.4 (ONI) SST anomaly (+1.51°C) are in the El Niño range. El Niño conditions continue to intensify with sea surface temperature anomalies across the tropical Pacific showing a steady rising trend (Figure 6). Aligning of the oceanic and atmospheric indicators support further intensification of the ongoing El Niño event. The most recent weekly average (anomaly) of the ONI Niño3.4 centred around July 15, 2026, rose to +2.1°C well-above the El Niño threshold. All international models, including the bureau's, forecast the tropical Pacific to continue warming and likely peaking in late spring or early summer.

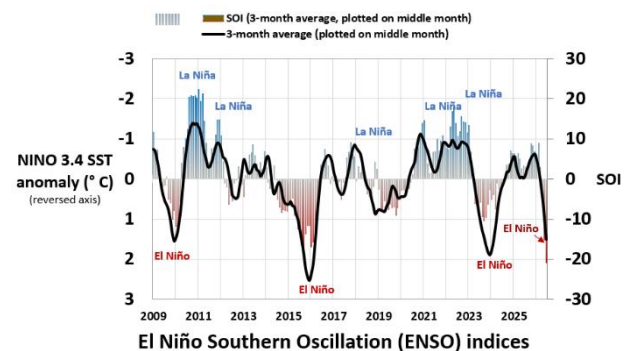


Fig. 5: El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) Indices

SST source: www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/data/indices
(NINO3.4 SST, monthly OISST.v2.1 (1991 to 2020 base period))
SOI source: www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/soi/soi-data-files
(monthly SOI 1887-1989 base period)

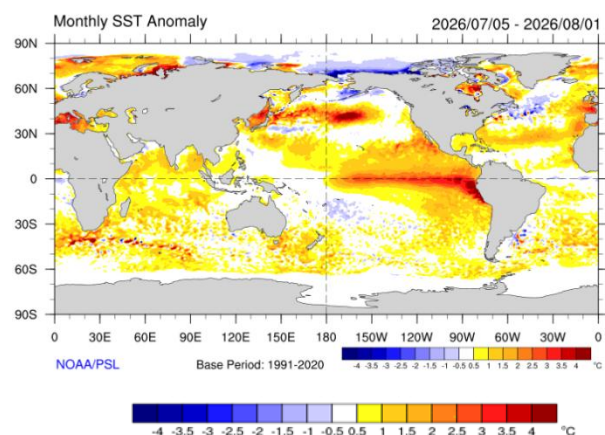
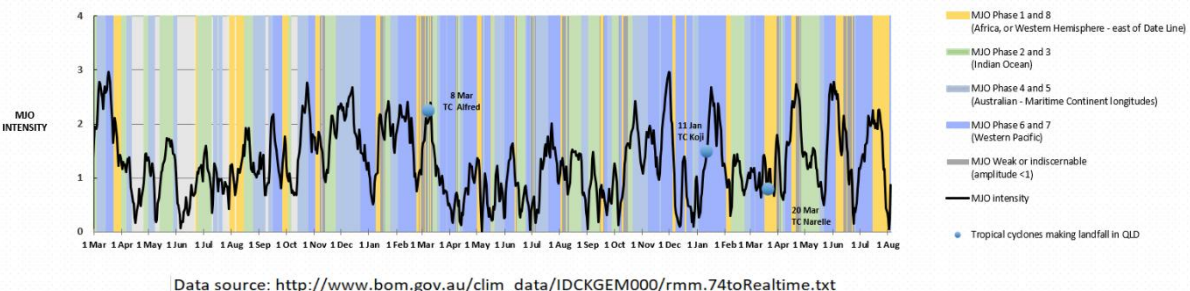


Fig. 6: Pacific Ocean sea-surface temperature anomalies (°C)
for 5 July to 1 August 2026 based on NOAA OISST.v3.1 SST data (1991 to 2020 based period) Map source: <https://psl.noaa.gov/map/clim/sst.shtml>

Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO)

The [Madden-Julian Oscillation \(MJO\)](#) is a broad area of tropical convection (cloud and rainfall) which tracks east from the western Indian Ocean toward the eastern Pacific Ocean. This MJO cycle tends to recur on average every 30 to 60 days (intraseasonal), distinct from El Niño and La Niña events which typically persist for three to nine months. In Queensland, the MJO has its greatest influence on rainfall during the tropical cyclone season (November to April), particularly in northern parts of the State, as its passage can enhance the strength of the northern Australian monsoon and increase the chance of tropical cyclones. For example, two tropical cyclones made landfall in Queensland during 2025 and 2026 ('Alfred' on 8 March 2025 and 'Koji' on 11 Jan 2026), and they occurred when the MJO was active in Australian-Western Pacific longitudes and Western Hemisphere respectively. A stationary and moderate MJO signal was located in the Western Hemisphere at the end of July and is forecast to weaken before re-emerging in the Western Pacific during the first week of August.



Data source: http://www.bom.gov.au/clim_data/IDCKGEM000/rmm.74toRealtime.txt

Fig. 7: Madden-Julian Oscillation intensity and phase-location

The graph shows the general location (coloured bars) and intensity (grey line) of the MJO from 1 March 2024 to 4 August 2026.
Data source: http://www.bom.gov.au/clim_data/IDCKGEM000/rmm.74toRealtime.txt

Long-lead Summer Rainfall Outlook

(produced on 5 August, based on SPOTA-1)

The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) monitors SST anomalies in key regions of the Pacific Ocean over autumn, winter, and spring and provides objective outlooks for summer (November to March) rainfall on this basis.

The current DETSI outlook for summer rainfall in Queensland is an objective analysis of historical conditions using an index based on SST anomalies measured in key regions of the extra-tropical Pacific Ocean. Historical SST gradients across these regions, from March to October, have been related to rainfall over much of Queensland in the following summer. As at 1 August, the Science Division of DETSI considers that the likelihood of much of Queensland receiving above-median summer rainfall (November 2026 to March 2027) is currently below- to near-normal (Figs. 8 and 9).

This long-lead outlook for summer is based on both the extra-tropical SST pattern in the Pacific Ocean in March 2026, and the evolving ENSO-related SST pattern in the central and southwest Pacific in July. Further updates will follow each month until November.

Three-month Rainfall Outlooks

based on international dynamical models

The maps in Figure 10 show rainfall probabilities for upcoming three-month periods, based on dynamical climate modelling, sourced from a range of international climate agencies. Rainfall probabilities differ for each model, on both a spatial and temporal basis, due to the different methodologies used.

For August to October period, models show below normal probability of median rainfall for much of Queensland.

Dynamical model outlook sources:

Australian Bureau of Meteorology <http://www.bom.gov.au/jsp/sco/archive/>

UK Met Office: <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/seasonal-to-decadal/gpc-outlooks/glob-seas-prob>

European C3S (Copernicus Climate Change Service) multi-model: https://climate.copernicus.eu/charts/c3s_seasonal/ (C3S multi-system (7))

NOAA North American Multi-model Ensemble -USA: <https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/NMME/seasanom.shtml> (Global prate)

Probability of exceeding median summer rainfall for November 2026 - March 2027, as at 1 August 2026

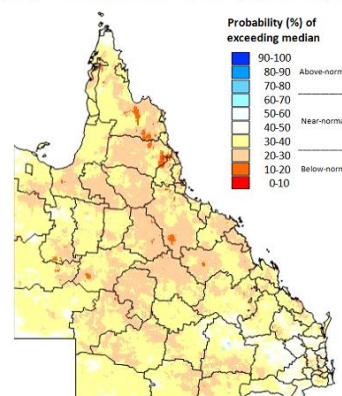


Fig. 8: Probability of exceeding median summer rainfall (for November 2026 to March 2027) as at 1 August 2026
Produced by the DETSI SPOTA-1 system.

Summer (Nov to Mar) rainfall probabilities for Queensland regions, as at 1 August 2026

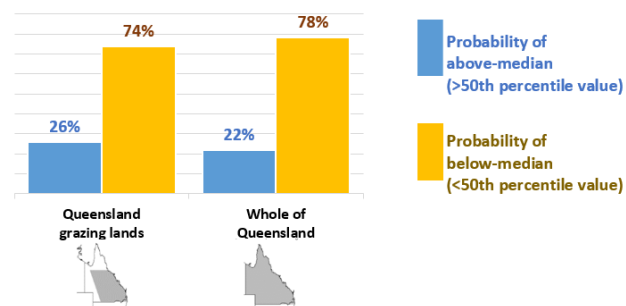


Fig. 9: Probabilities of above and below median summer rainfall (for November to March) as at 1 August 2026.

For the Queensland's major grazing region and the State as a whole, based on historical analogue year output from the DETSI SPOTA-1 system.

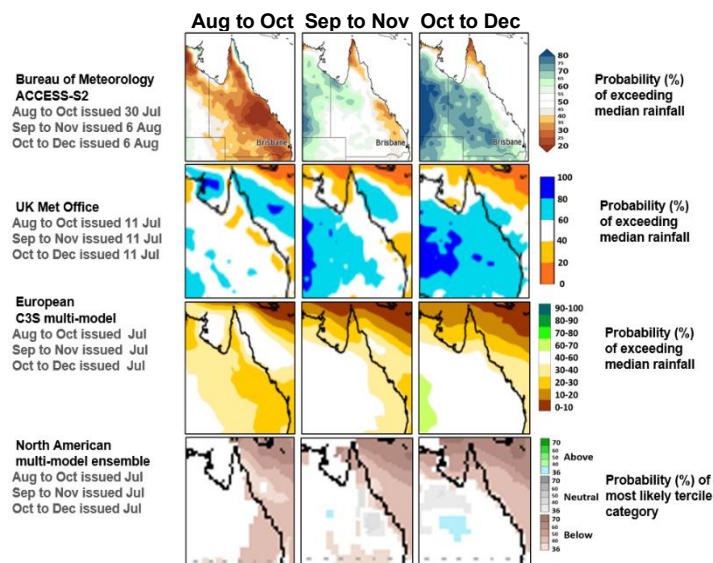


Fig. 10: Rainfall probabilities for August to December 2026, based on international dynamical models.

Three-month Rainfall Outlook

based on the SOI Phase system

The map in Figure 11 shows rainfall probabilities for the coming three-month period, based solely on a Consistently Negative 'phase' of the SOI at the end of July 2026, as determined by the SOI Phase system. The current phase of the SOI ([click for more detail](#)) is based on the most recent values of the SOI -22.7 for June and -26.8 for July 2026.

The map, which is based on 19 previous years (from 1889 to 2015) which had a 'Consistently Negative' phase of the SOI at the end of July 2026, indicates a generally 10 to 40 per cent probability of exceeding median August to October 2026 rainfall across much of Queensland.

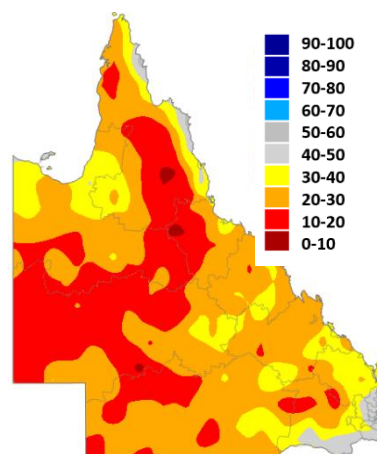
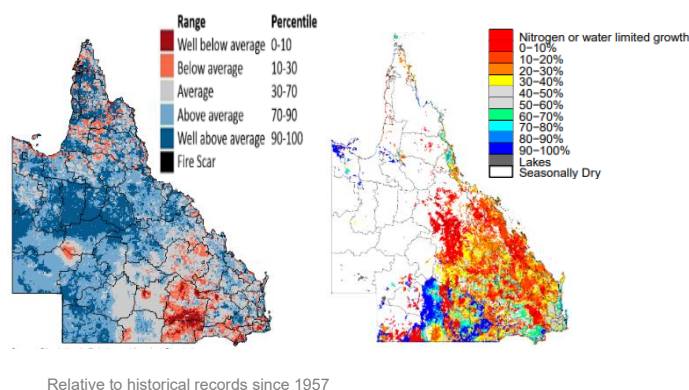


Fig. 11: Probability of exceeding median rainfall for August to October 2026 based on a 'Consistently Negative' phase of the SOI at the end of July 2026.

Pasture Outlook

Figures 12 and 13 are products of the [AussieGRASS Environmental Calculator](#). Calculated pasture ground cover at the end of July 2026 (Fig. 12) ranged from average to well-above average in most parts of Queensland, except for parts of southeast with below average ground cover. Figure 13 shows that the probability of exceeding median pasture growth over August to October 2026 is above-average for parts of southwest Queensland and generally below-average ground cover for central-east and south-east of the State. The end of the main pasture growing season is the end of March, so pasture growth is generally low in the projected months. This calculation takes into account both current conditions (e.g., soil water content) and rainfall probabilities for the next three-month period) based on [SOI Phase analogue years](#).



Relative to historical records since 1957

Fig. 12:
Calculated pasture cover at 31 July 2026.

Fig. 13:
Probability of exceeding median pasture growth for August to October 2026 based on a 'Consistently Negative' phase of the SOI at the end of July 2026.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

References:

- Carter, J.O. *et al.* (2000). Aussie GRASS: Australian Grassland and Rangeland Assessment by Spatial Simulation. In 'Applications of seasonal climate forecasting in agricultural and natural ecosystems - the Australian experience.' (Eds. G. Hammer, N. Nicholls and C. Mitchell). Kluwer Academic Press, Netherlands, pp. 329-349.
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- Day, K.A. and McKeon, G.M. (2018). An Index of Summer Rainfall for Queensland's Grazing Lands. *Journal of Applied Meteorology and Climatology*, **57**, 1623-41. <https://doi.org/10.1175/JAMC-D-17-0148.1>
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- Stone, R. and Auliciems, A. (1992), SOI phase relationships with rainfall in eastern Australia. *Int. J. Climatol.*, **12**: 625-636. <https://doi.org/10.1002/joc.3370120608>
- Stone, R., Hammer, G. & Marcussen, T. Prediction of global rainfall probabilities using phases of the Southern Oscillation Index. *Nature* **384**, 252–255 (1996). <https://doi.org/10.1038/384252a0>

Additional resources:

For further information on AussieGRASS, seasonal climate outlooks (including the SOI Phase scheme and the SPOTA-1 scheme) and Queensland drought declarations, visit the Long Paddock website, <https://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au>.

MJO description: <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/blogs/enso/what-mjo-and-why-do-we-care>

General Disclaimer:

Information contained in this report is provided as general advice and the maps are designed to provide information relevant at a regional (shire) scale. More detailed information is required when making specific property scale management decisions. The State of Queensland, as represented by the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation, gives no warranty in relation to the data including without limitation, accuracy, reliability, completeness or fitness for a particular purpose.

It should be noted that seasonal outlooks are probabilistic and not deterministic in nature. For example, if an outlook indicates that there is an 80 per cent probability of exceeding median rainfall, should be interpreted as also meaning that there is a 20 per cent probability of rainfall being below the long-term median. In cases where outcomes with a high probability may be more likely, this does not mean that less probable events will not occur in any given year. Users should also consider sourcing information related to the historical track record of any outlook scheme, and such information is becoming increasingly available.

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