

10 October 2010

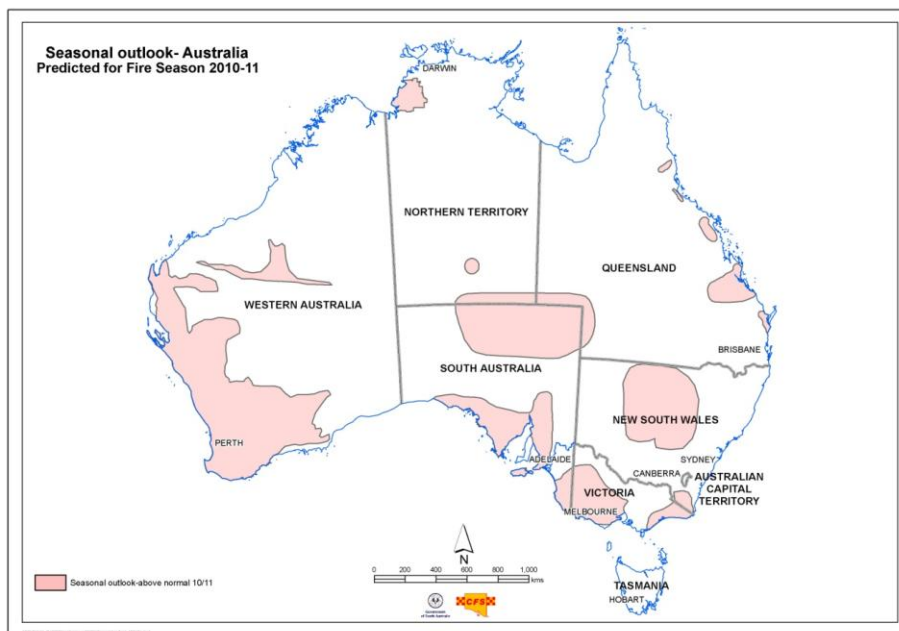
Scientists map bushfire outlook for Australian summer

A strengthening La Niña which brought above-average rainfall to much of eastern Australia from January to August means much of Queensland, eastern New South Wales and central Victoria can expect average fire potential this coming bushfire season. However, the fire potential in southwest Western Australia, southern South Australia and much of western Victoria will be above average.

These are the consensus views of Bureau of Meteorology scientists and fire managers from around Australia, brought together by the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre at separate sessions in Darwin and Melbourne to discuss the outlook for the 2010-11 fire season.

The result is a Bushfire CRC Fire Note, *Australian Seasonal Bushfire Assessment 2010-11*, published today.

The accompanying map shows the main areas of expected above-average fire potential in pink, with the main areas of average potential in white.





M E D I A R E L E A S E

Gary Morgan, CEO of the Bushfire CRC, said the first eight months of the year were the wettest since 1995 for southeast Australia. Conversely, southwest Western Australia recorded its second driest January to August, driest April to August, and driest winter. Hobart only avoided having its driest January to August on record by 4mm.

For the period October to December, the seasonal climate outlook favours warmer than average daytime and night-time temperatures in the tropical north and southeast of the continent, with cooler daytime temperatures favoured over southern Queensland and northern New South Wales.

The Australian rainfall outlook from October to December favours wetter than average conditions over large parts of Australia, with more neutral odds for above median rainfall over Victoria and Tasmania.

“The fire potential has been estimated by taking account of many factors, not just weather and climate,” said Mr Morgan. “The fire potential also relates to fuel abundance and availability, recent fire history and the amount of firefighting resources available in a particular area.”

This is the fifth year the Bushfire CRC has coordinated the fire potential scenarios from fire and land management agencies across Australia to produce a seasonal bushfire assessment. The assessment provides useful information that assists fire authorities and governments to make strategic decisions such as resource planning and planned fire management and to reduce the negative impacts of bushfire.