

A Very Wet Year

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7 January 2011

Before this wet season even began for the north, we had already spent much of 2010 in record rainfall territory. The La Niña event brought Australia's third-wettest year on record. Eleven months of 2010 experienced above average rainfall which has only been recorded once, nearly 40 years ago. The second half of 2010 was the wettest on record.

Central Australia, Queensland and northern New South Wales have been inundated, with some areas recording their highest flood levels on record. There was major flooding in northern Victoria and the New South Wales Riverina region in September, and of the Gascoyne River in northern Western Australia in mid-December.

Then the 2010-2011 wet season arrived in the north, bringing with it more record-breaking floods across central Queensland and more to come. Coupled with predictions for a higher than average number of tropical cyclones this season, Australia is bracing for more heavy rainfall and floods.

Can our industry, farms, mines and environment withstand the forecast?

The wet season has only just begun and the economic loss associated with damage to property and infrastructure, together with disruptions to agriculture and mining, following the current flooding is expected to total several billion dollars. Ecologically, there are some clear losers but also some winners: for example coral and seagrass suffer due to smothering by sediment, freshwater fish benefit by reaching new waterways. It is hard to put a dollar value on these ecological changes.

What can we do now to reduce the impact of the rain and flooding for our farmers, families, industries and our environment?

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