

Analysing the NorthWest Cloud Band

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Improved rainfall predictions will help protect the rangelands during drought and will help managers increase productivity when seasons are good.

Much of the recent rainfall forecasting work in Australia has centred on the eastern states, with less emphasis on the west, particularly the north-west. To partly redress this imbalance, the GMS has entered into a two-year collaborative project with the Queensland Centre for Climate Applications (QCCA) to improve seasonal forecasts for the region.

The first stage of the project will involve talking to pastoralists about the specific times of the year when improved forecasts would be of most benefit to them. It may be that accurate forecasts can be made – but at the wrong time of the year.

The next stage will be to review at least ten existing forecast systems to determine how relevant they are to the GMS region. Recent work has suggested that there is greater skill in this area than has been recognised. Once the outcome of this review is known a decision will be made as to whether existing systems can be “tweaked” for the GMS or whether new systems will need to be developed. The production implications of better forecasts will be investigated through pasture growth modelling and establishing clever ways of delivering the information.

The project will build on recently completed work carried out by the Centre for Water Research at the University of Western Australia for GMS. This has enabled predictions to be made of north-west cloudband activity over the region during winter.

The new collaborative project with QCCA allows the GMS to tap into a nation wide climate science network including links to the Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO, state government departments, universities and overseas institutions.

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*For more information see the NorthwestCloudband and Australian Rainfall website at:
<http://www.cwr.edu.au/~telcick/menu.html>*