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ENSO Update – OCOF 221

18 February 2026



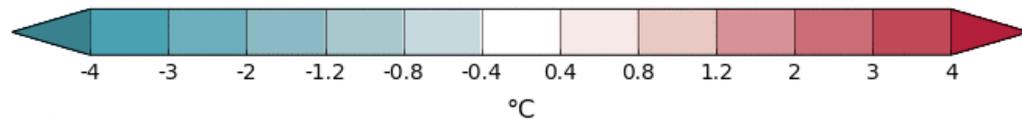
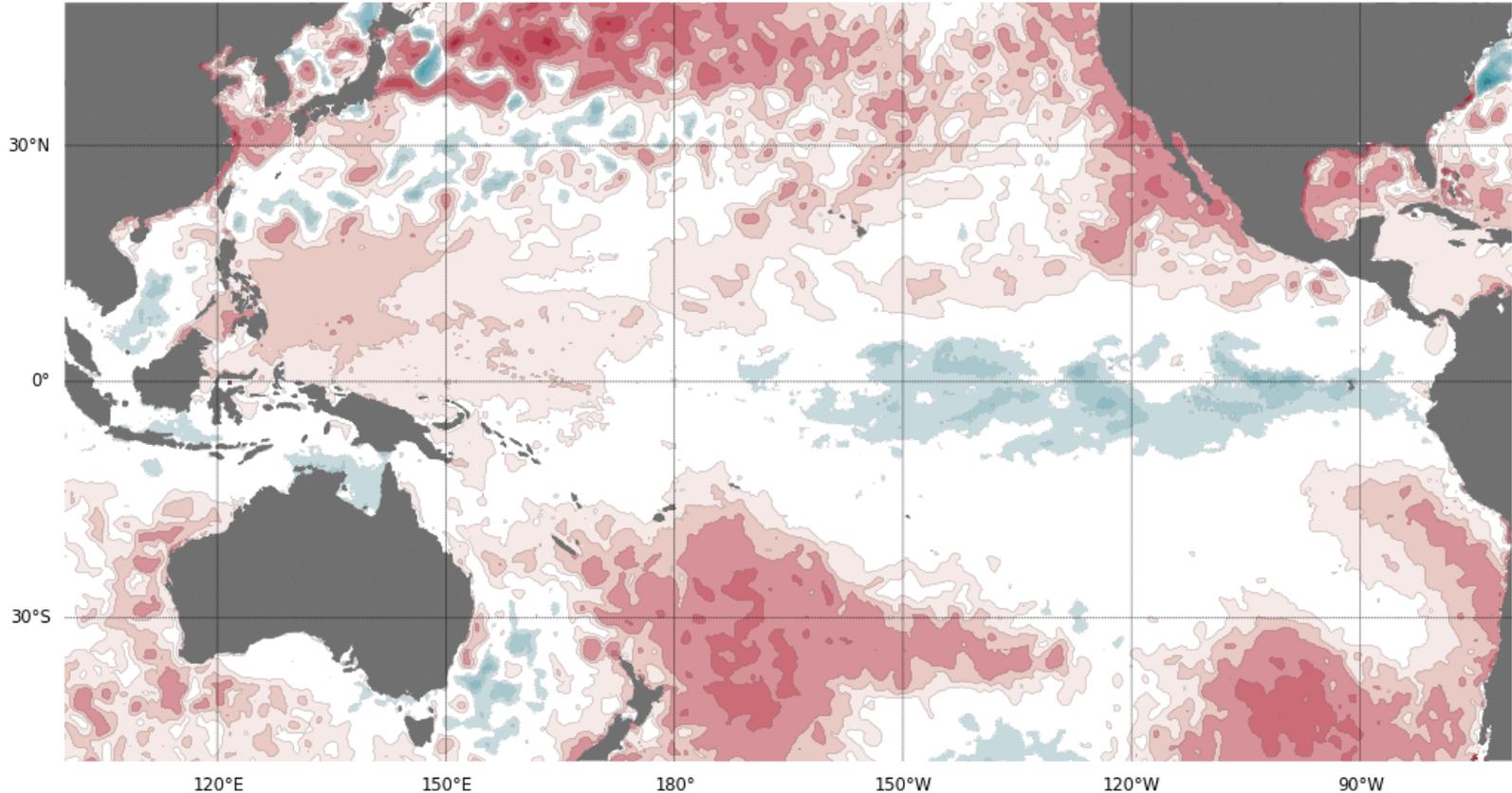
ENSO Update

- The 2025–26 La Niña continues to weaken. Sea surface temperatures in the central tropical Pacific have been fluctuating around the La Niña threshold (-0.80 °C) since late January.
- Atmospheric indicators, such as trade winds, pressure and cloud patterns in the tropical Pacific, are consistent with borderline La Niña conditions. Recent warming in the sub-surface suggests that the event is likely to decline further in the coming weeks.
- These recent changes in the tropical Pacific are consistent with model forecasts, indicating a general easing of La Niña during the latter part of the 2025–26 summer.
- All models indicate a return to neutral ENSO conditions later this month or in early autumn. Continued warming in the tropical Pacific is forecast, with a neutral ENSO state favoured through to at least late autumn.
- Some models suggest the possibility of El Niño development from June. It should be noted that this is a very long lead time for this prediction, and forecasts beyond autumn are highly uncertain.
- The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) index is $+0.53$ °C, above the positive IOD threshold. IOD events typically do not occur from December to April. These positive values are not expected to form an event. Model forecasts expect the IOD to remain neutral until at least the end of autumn 2026.
- The MJO is weak in the Indian Ocean during Phase 2. Preliminary forecast has the Western Pacific returning to Phase 6 in early March.

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January 2026 SSTs

Sea surface temperature anomaly: 01/01/2026 to 31/01/2026



Data: GAMSSA
Climatology baseline: 1991 to 2020
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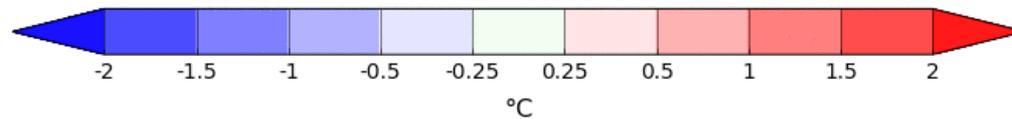
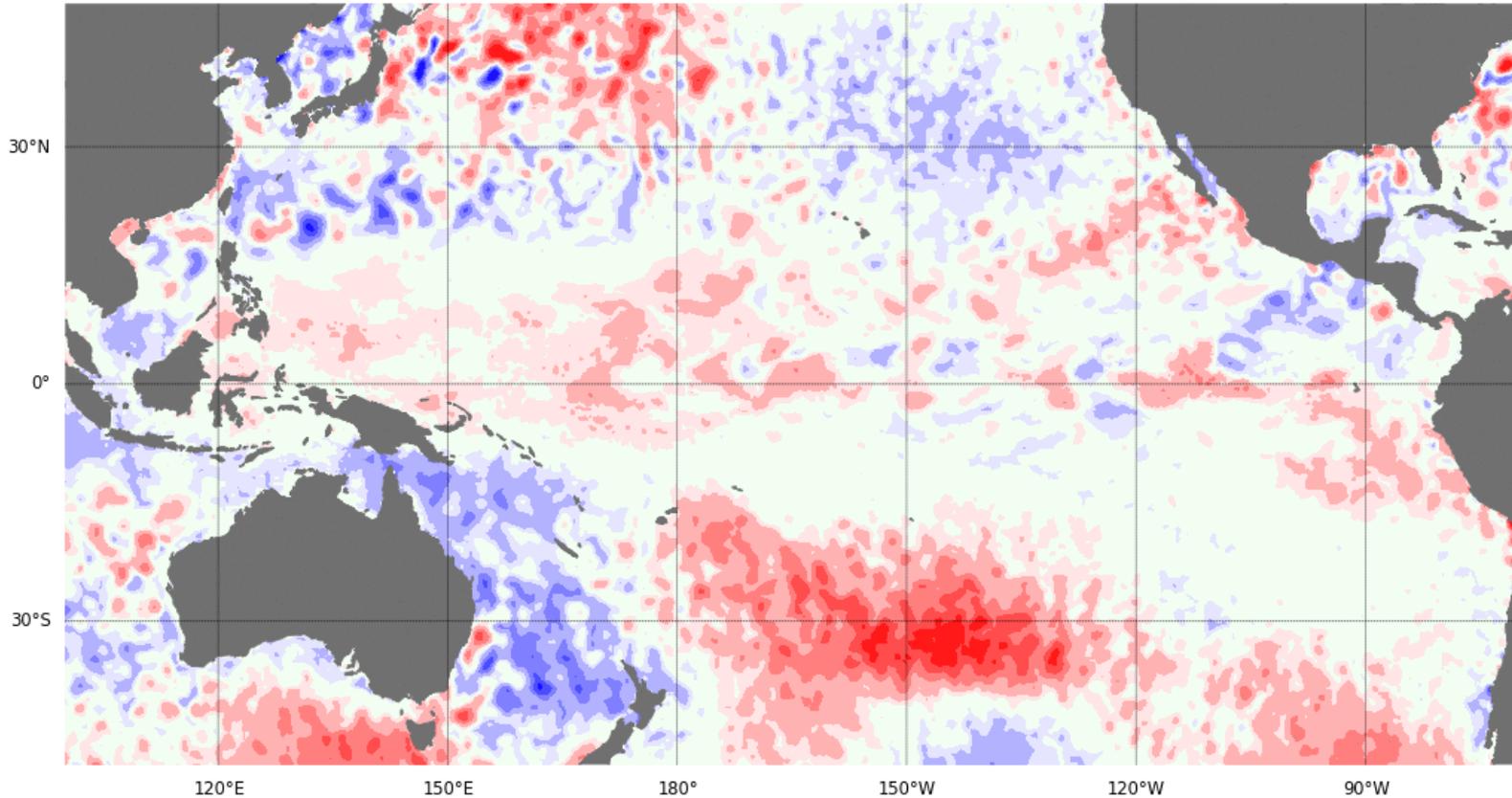
<http://www.bom.gov.au/climate>

Monthly average: January 2026
Created: 03/02/2026

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January – December SSTs

Change in the monthly SST anomaly: January-2026 - December-2025

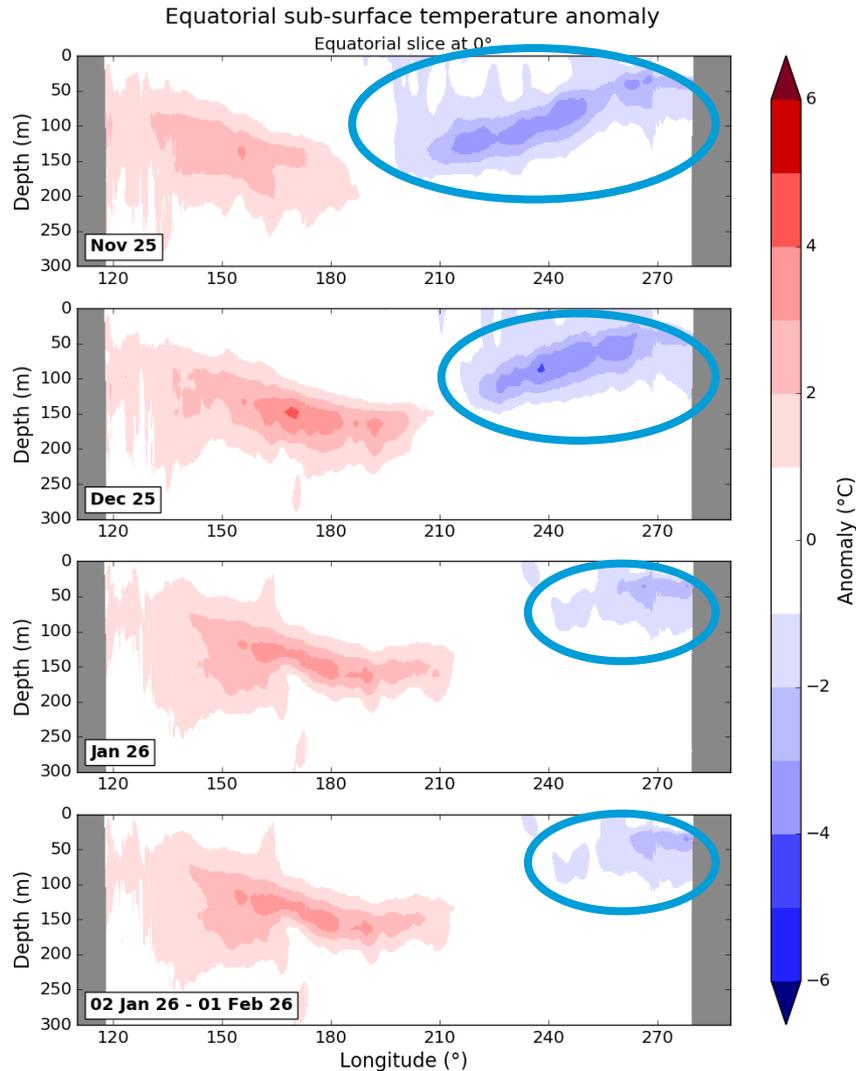


Data: GAMSSA
Climatology baseline: 1991 to 2020
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<http://www.bom.gov.au/climate>

Anomaly monthly difference
Created: 03/02/2026

Equatorial Pacific Sub-surface Profile

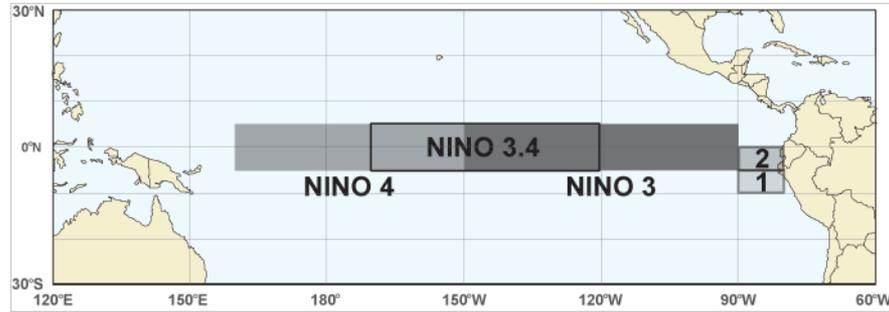


Cooler water in the eastern Pacific continues to recede as we transition into ENSO neutral.

Cooler than average waters beneath the surface of the eastern tropical Pacific can be a sign of La Niña development.

Warmer than average waters beneath the surface of the eastern Pacific can be a sign of El Niño development.

Observed Relative NINO Indices



Relative Niño4 index

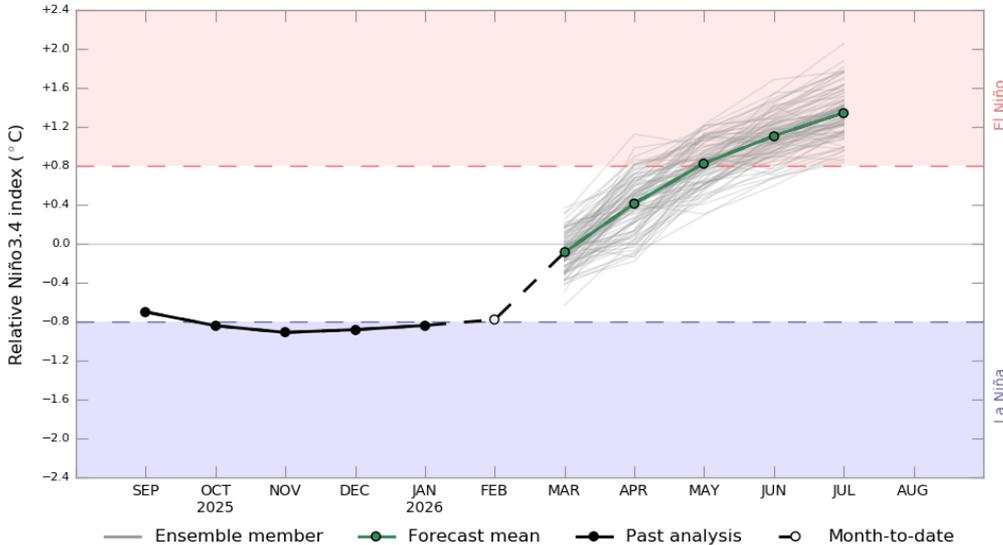


Relative Niño3.4 index



Relative ENSO Outlook

Relative Niño3.4 index



www.bom.gov.au/climate
Commonwealth of Australia 2026, Australian Bureau of Meteorology

Past analysis base period: 1991-2020
Forecast base period: 1981-2018
Model: ACCESS-S2
Model run: 14 Feb 2026



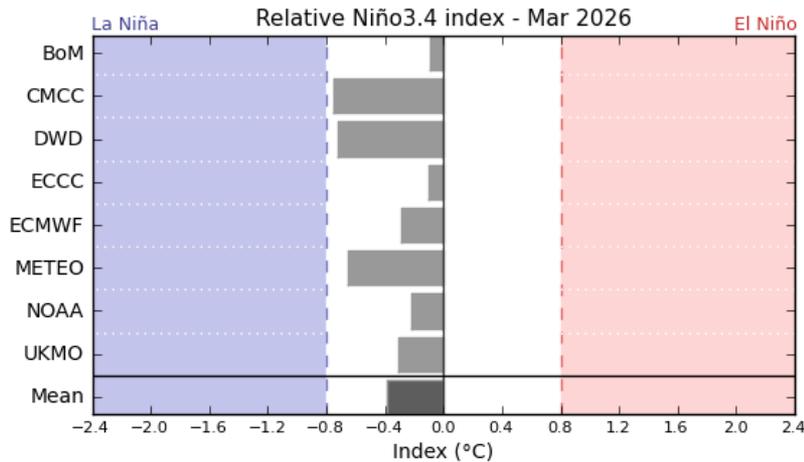
La Niña is still present in the tropical Pacific and slowly transitioning back to ENSO Neutral.



La Niña is associated with **increased rainfall** across the far western Pacific.



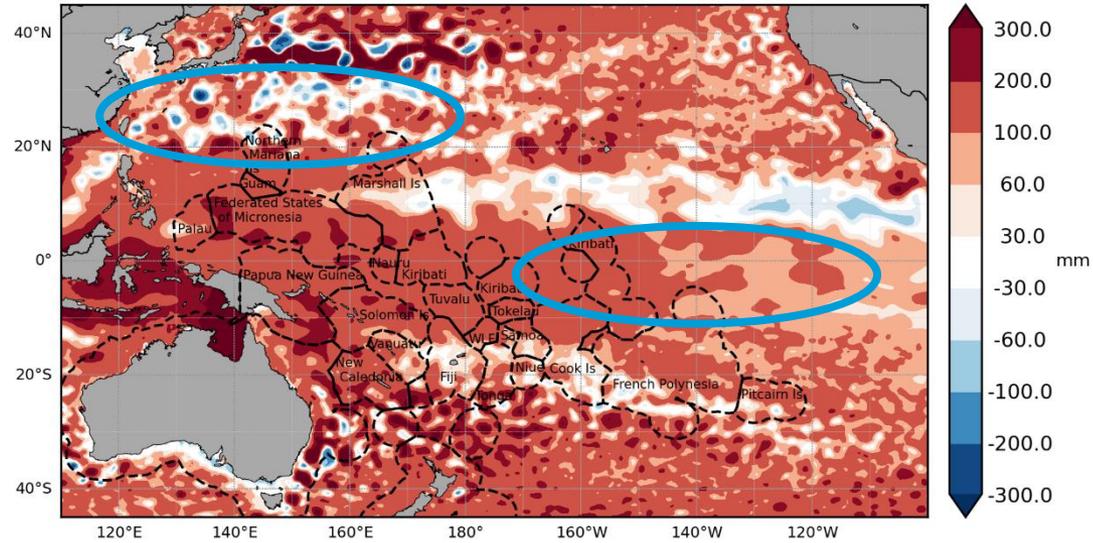
La Niña is associated with **decreased rainfall** across the Eastern and Central Pacific.



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January 2026 Sea Level Anomaly

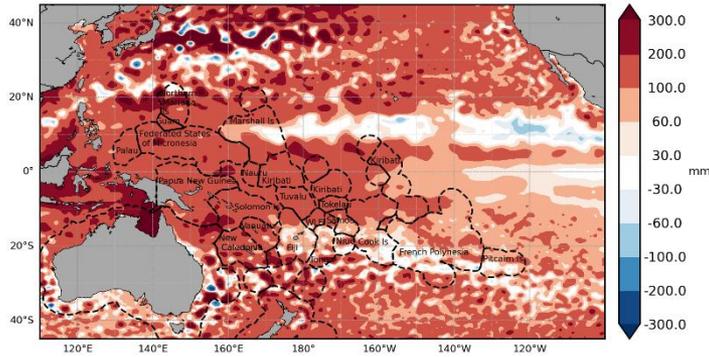
Pacific Islands
Monthly Sea Level Anomaly: January 2026



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<https://doi.org/10.48670/moi-00149>

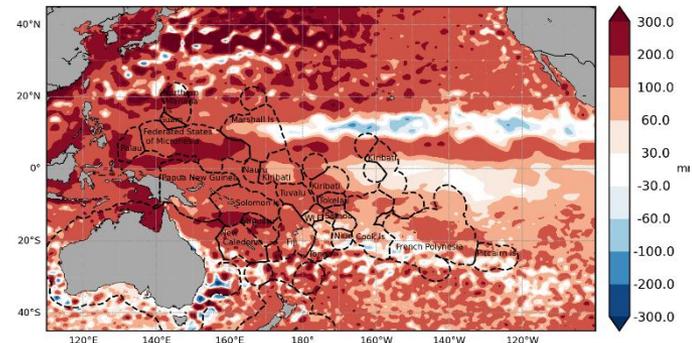
Pacific Islands
Monthly Sea Level Anomaly: December 2025



© Pacific Community (SPC) 2025

Generated using E.U. Copernicus Marine Service Information;
<https://doi.org/10.48670/moi-00149>

Pacific Islands
Monthly Sea Level Anomaly: November 2025



© Pacific Community (SPC) 2025

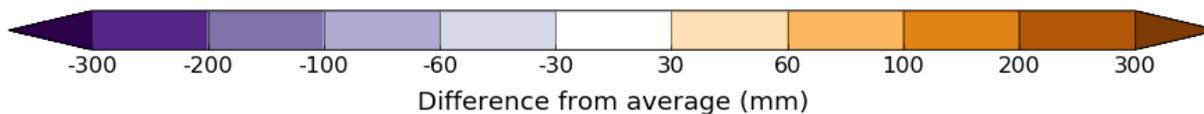
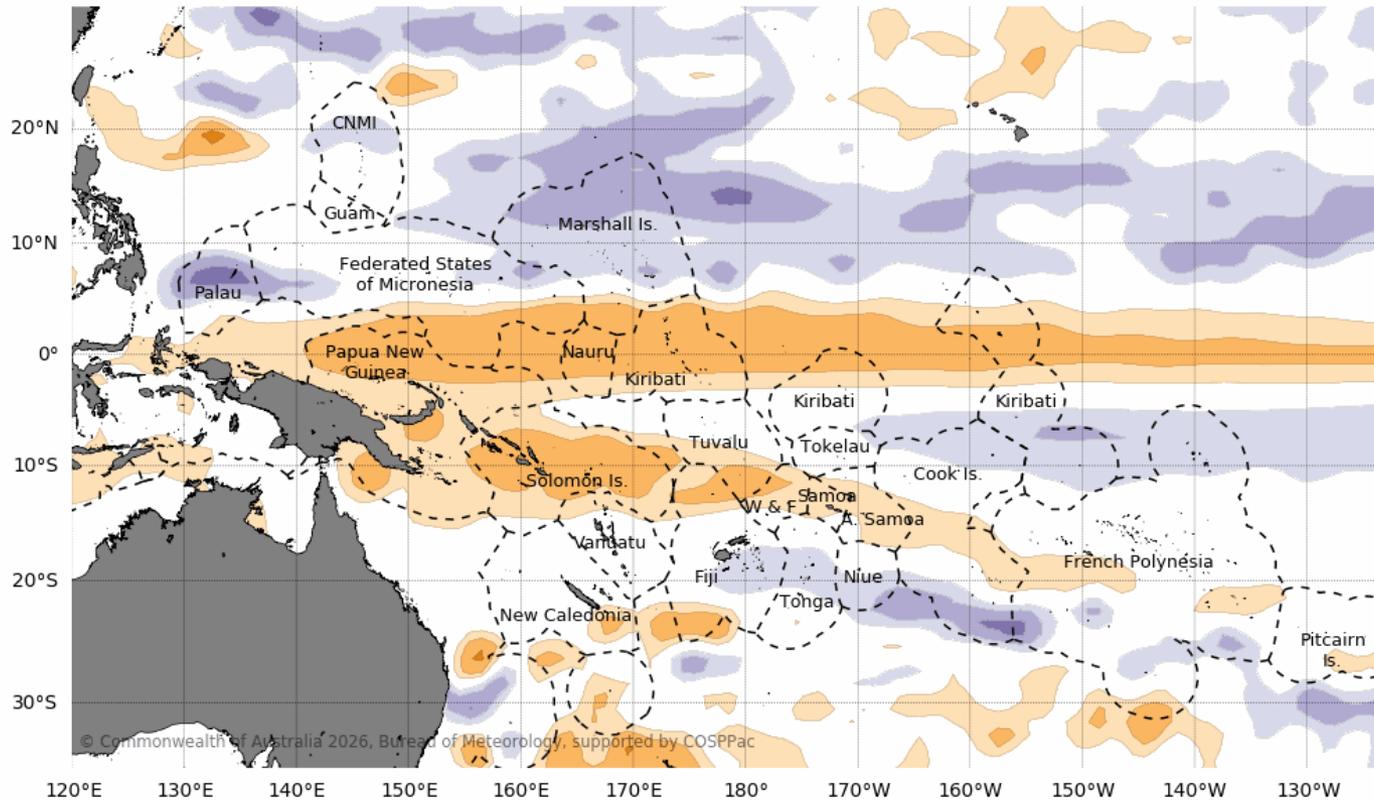
Generated using E.U. Copernicus Marine Service Information;
<https://doi.org/10.48670/moi-00149>

Seasonal Outlook: Sea Surface Height Anomaly

Difference from average sea surface height forecast for
March to May 2026

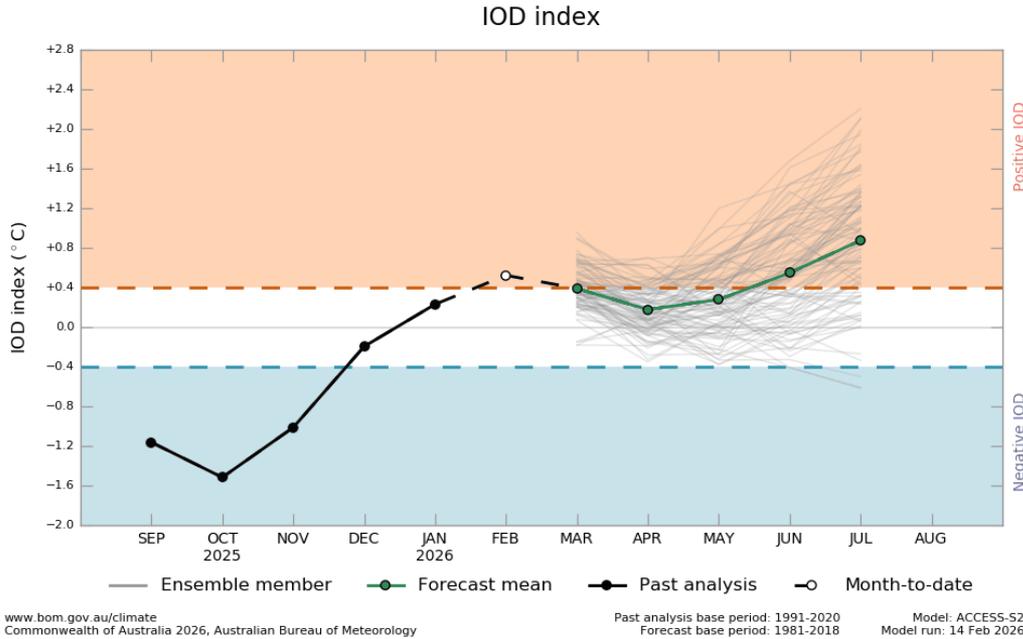
Base period: 1981-2018
Model: ACCESS-S2

Model run: 14/02/2026
Issued: 16/02/2026



-- -- EEZ border V11 (Flanders Marine Institute, 2019).

Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)



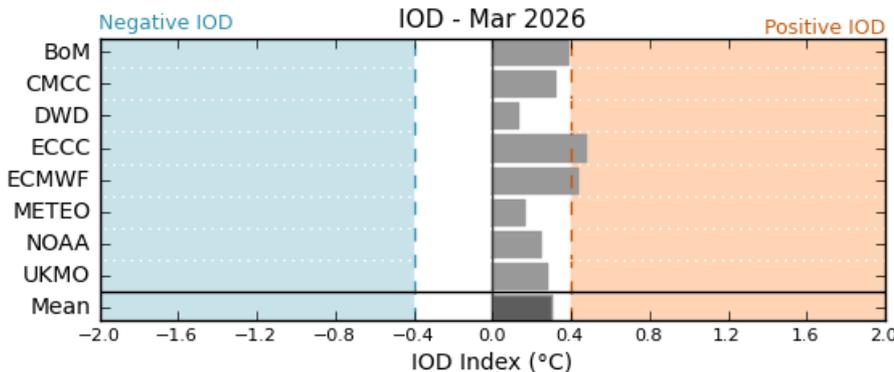
The IOD is +0.53 °C, above the positive IOD threshold. IOD events do not typically form during December to April. No event is expected and the models suggest a return to neutral soon.



IOD negative is associated with **increased rainfall** across the far western Pacific.



IOD positive is associated with **decreased rainfall** across the far western Pacific.

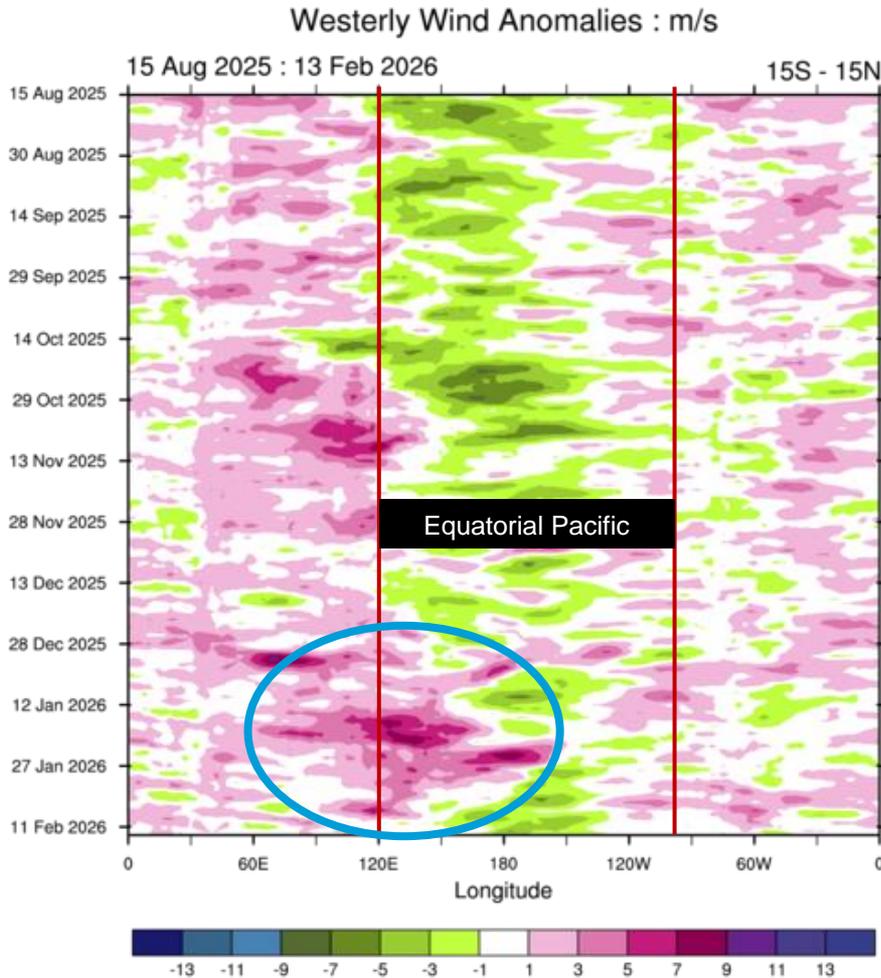


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Atmosphere Outlook

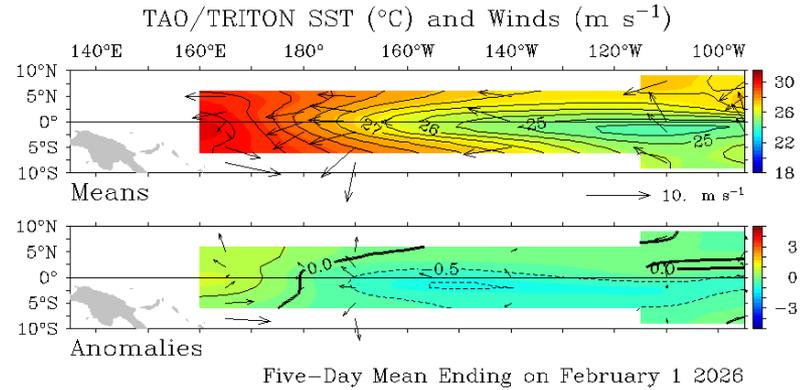


Wind Anomalies



Easterly (stronger trade)

Westerly (weaker trade)



Weaker trade winds (pink) allow for the development of more clouds and potential for rain.

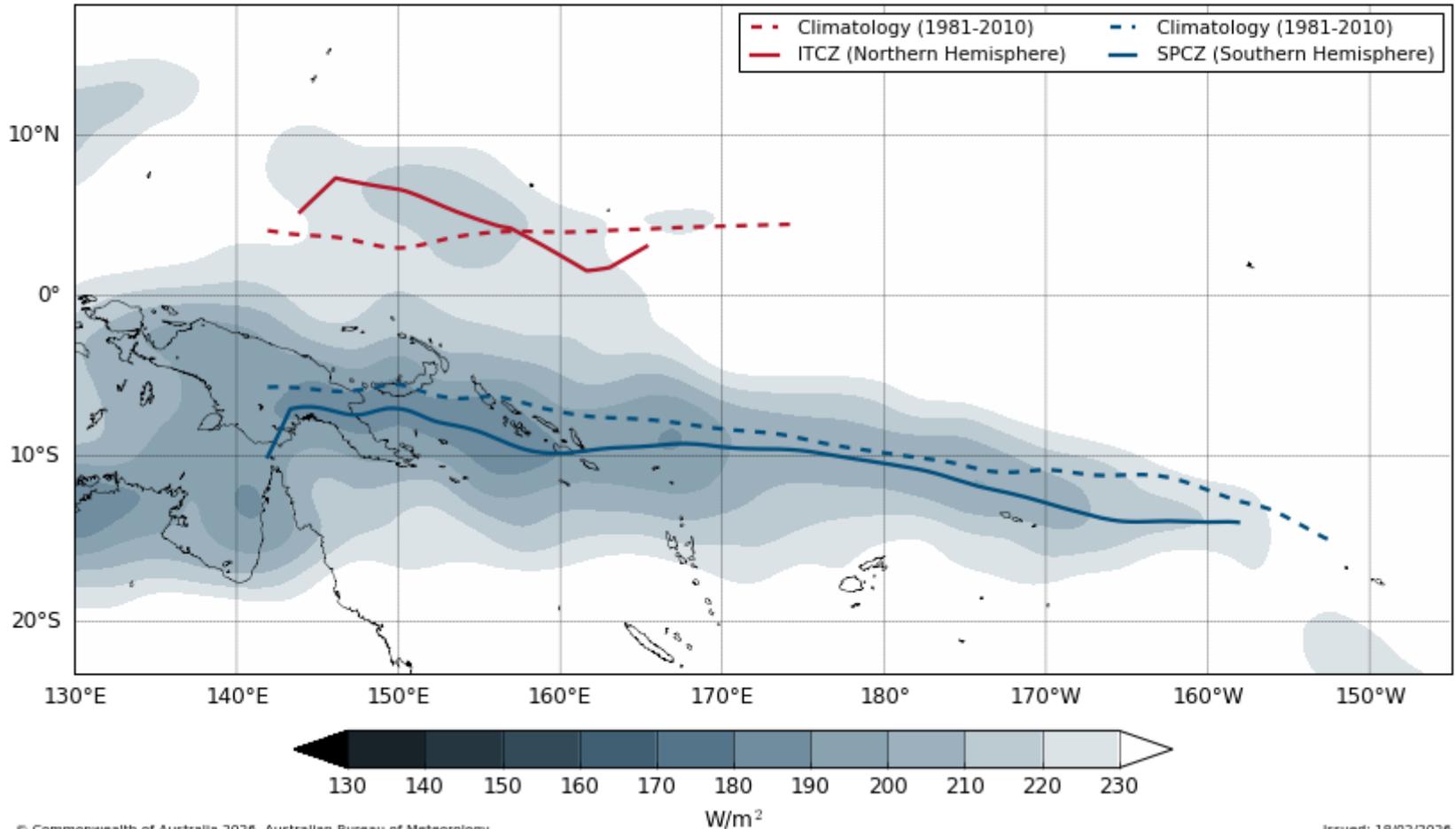


Stronger trade winds (green) hinders cloud development and the potential for rain.

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ITCZ and SPCZ

30 Day Average Outgoing Longwave Radiation (OLR) minimum to 2026-02-15



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Issued: 18/02/2026

More clouds

Less clouds

Madden – Julian Oscillation



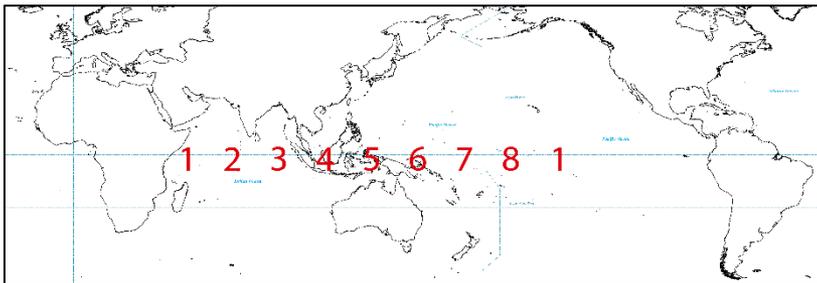
The **MJO** is weak in **Phase 2** Indian Ocean. Preliminary forecast has return to **Phase 6** Western Pacific in early March.



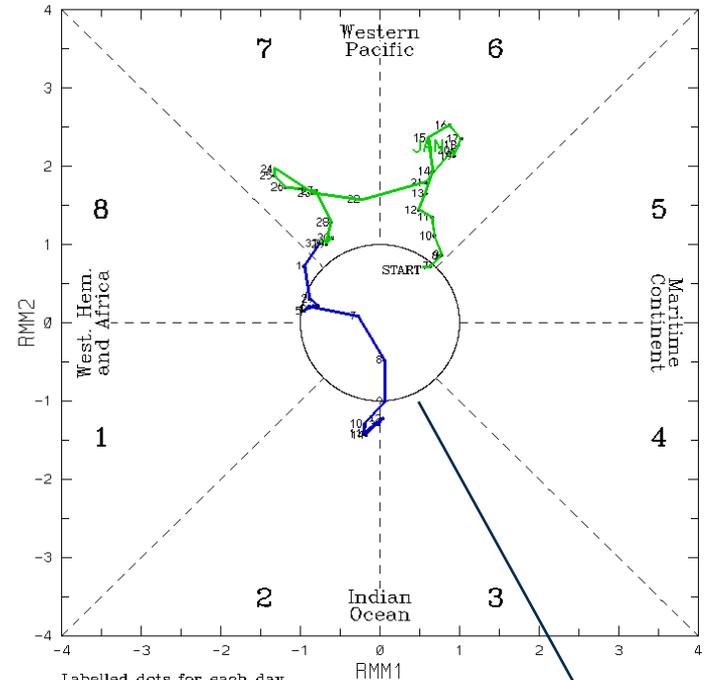
Phases **6, 7 and 8** are typically associated with **increased rainfall** across the Pacific.



Phases **2, 3 and 4** are typically associated with **decreased rainfall** across the Pacific.



(RMM1,RMM2) phase space for 6-Jan-2026 to 14-Feb-2026

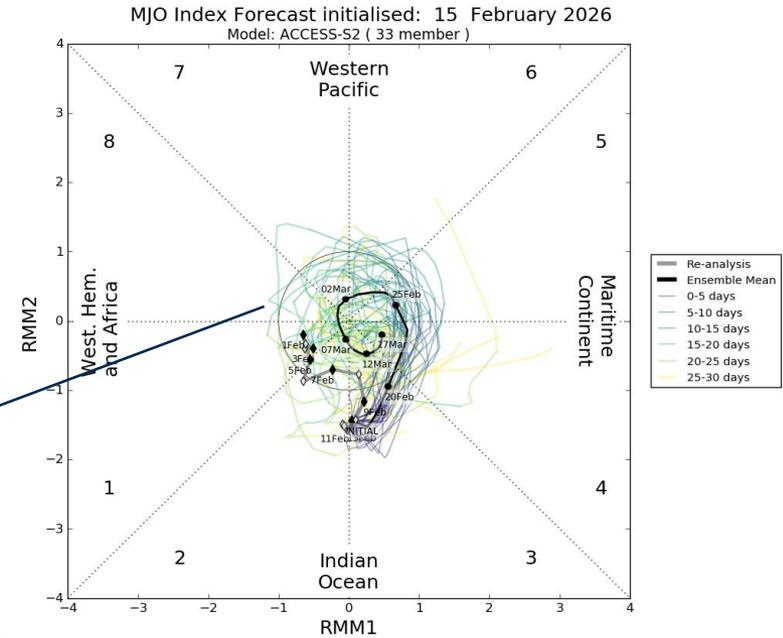
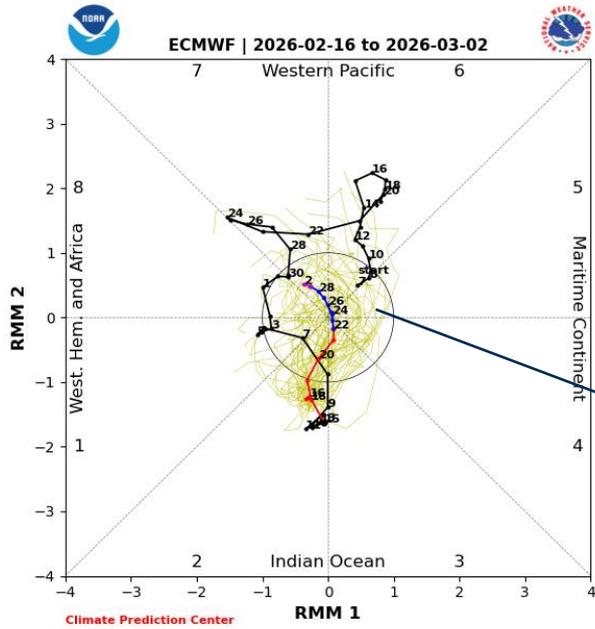


Labelled dots for each day.
Blue line is for Feb, green line is for Jan, red line is for Dec.

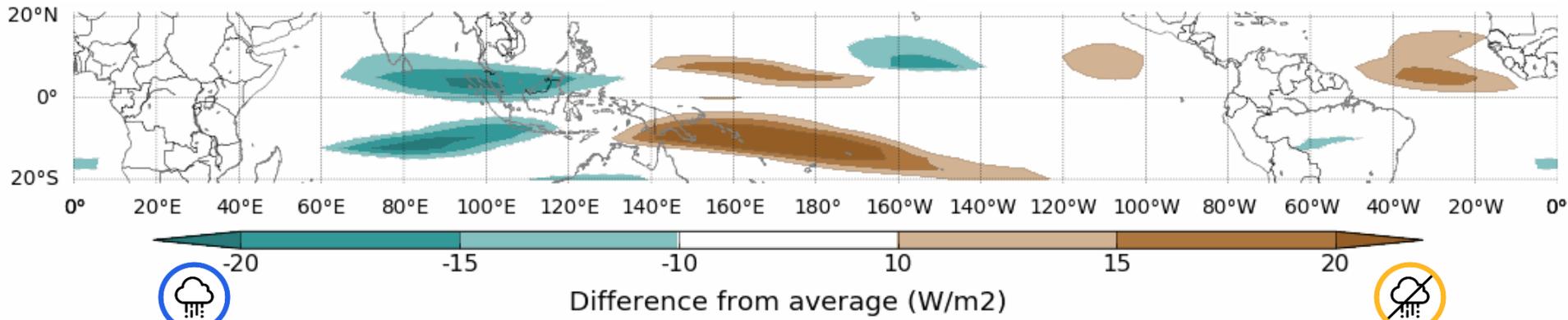
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Unit circle:
If inside the unit circle the MJO signal is weak

Madden – Julian Oscillation



Unit circle:
If inside the unit circle the MJO signal is weak



Observed Rainfall – January 2026

Observed

Percentile

1-month total rainfall ending January 2026

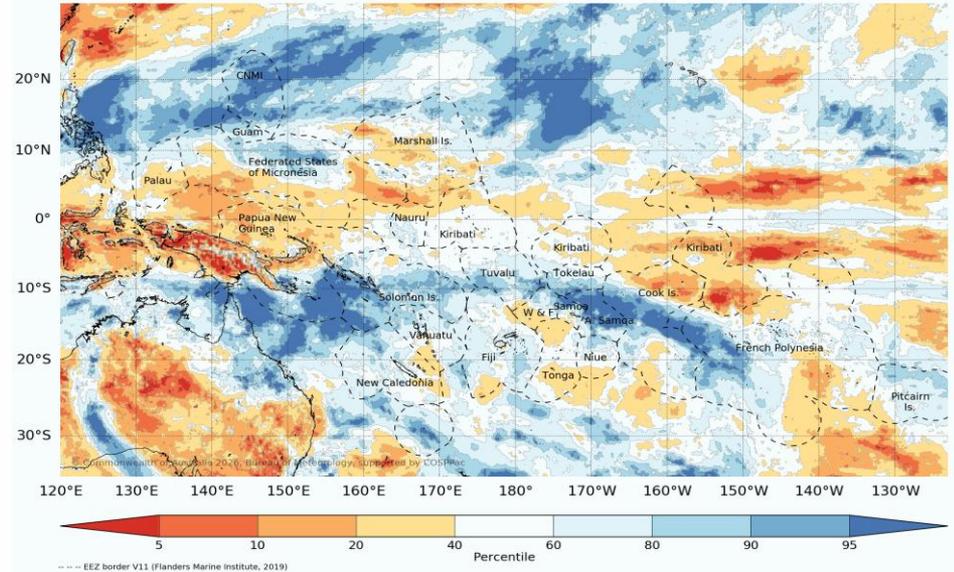
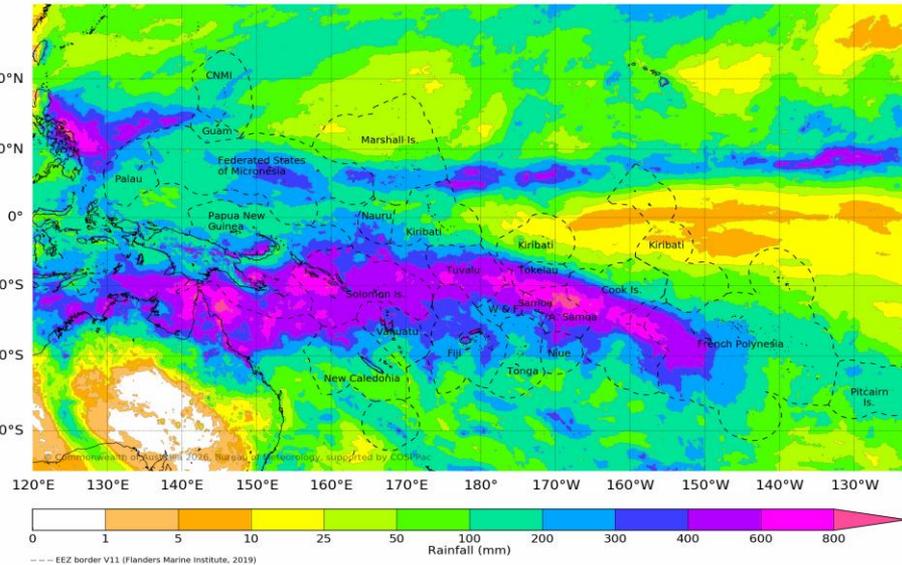
1-month Percentile to end of January 2026

Data source: MSWEP

Data source: MSWEP
Base period: 1981-2021

Issued: 07/02/2026

Issued: 07/02/2026

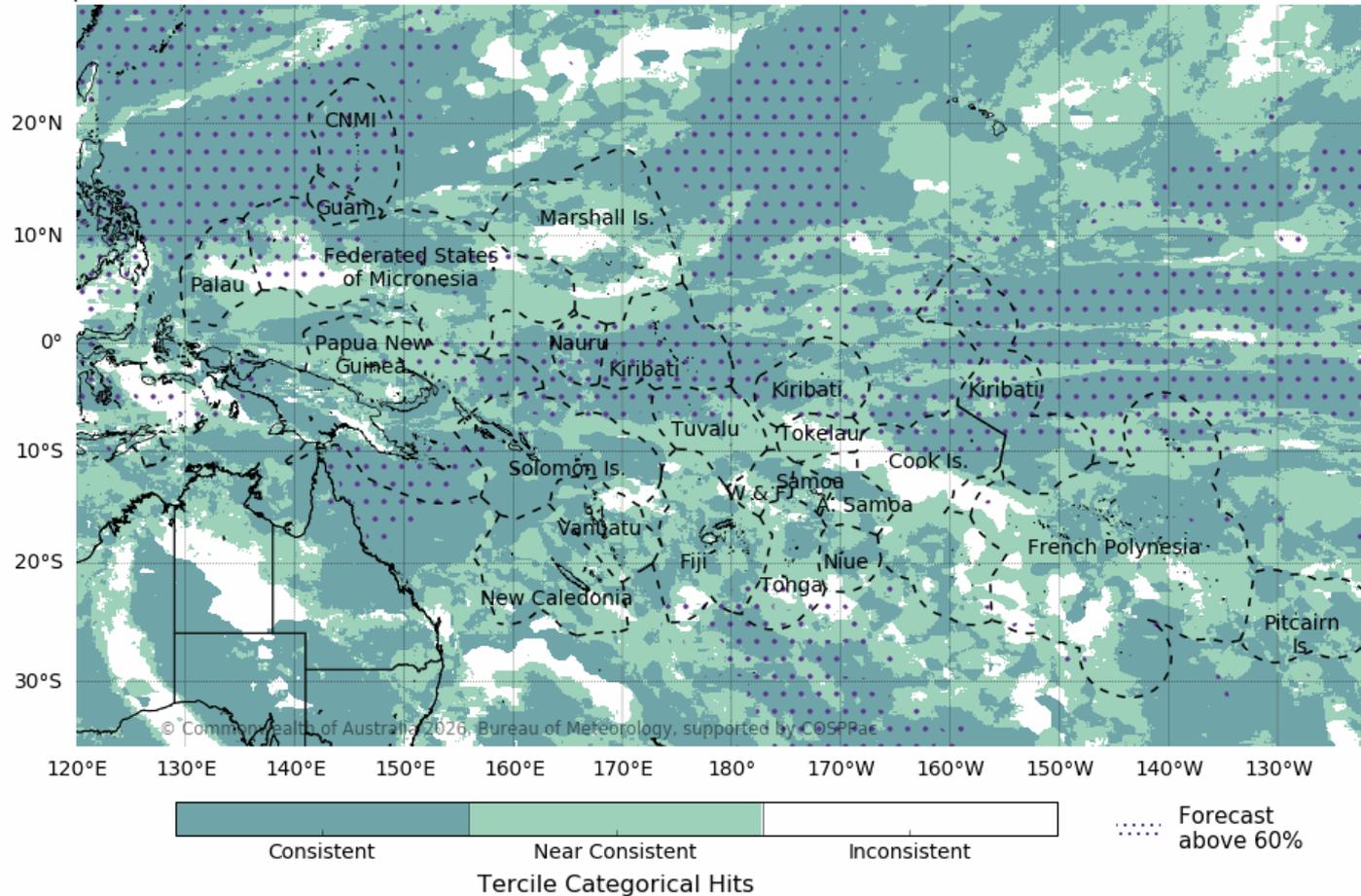


Forecast Verification – January

Near real-time tercile verification hit rate: rainfall January 2026

Data source: ACCESS-S2
Observations: MSWEP
Base period: 1981-2018

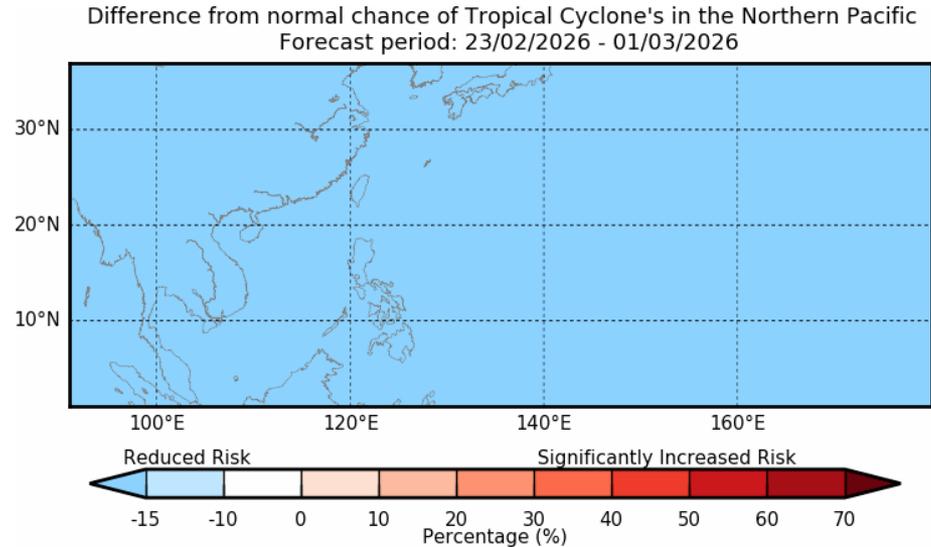
Model Run: 01/01/2026
Issued: 07/02/2026



--- EEZ border V11 (Flanders Marine Institute (2019))

TC Outlooks – Two Weeks

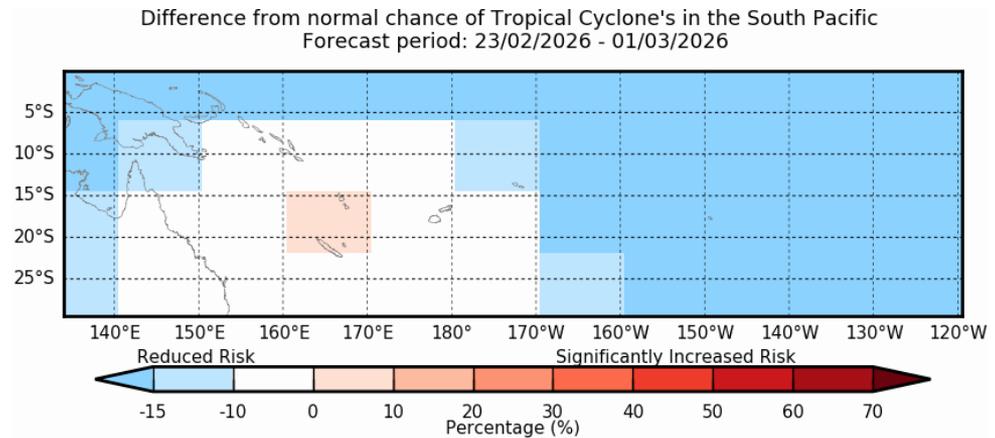
North Pacific



Calibrated Model anomaly probability in overlapping 15 x 20 degree boxes
© Commonwealth of Australia 2026, Australian Bureau of Meteorology

Model: ACCESS_S2 Model Run: 15/02/2026 Issued: 17/02/2026

South Pacific

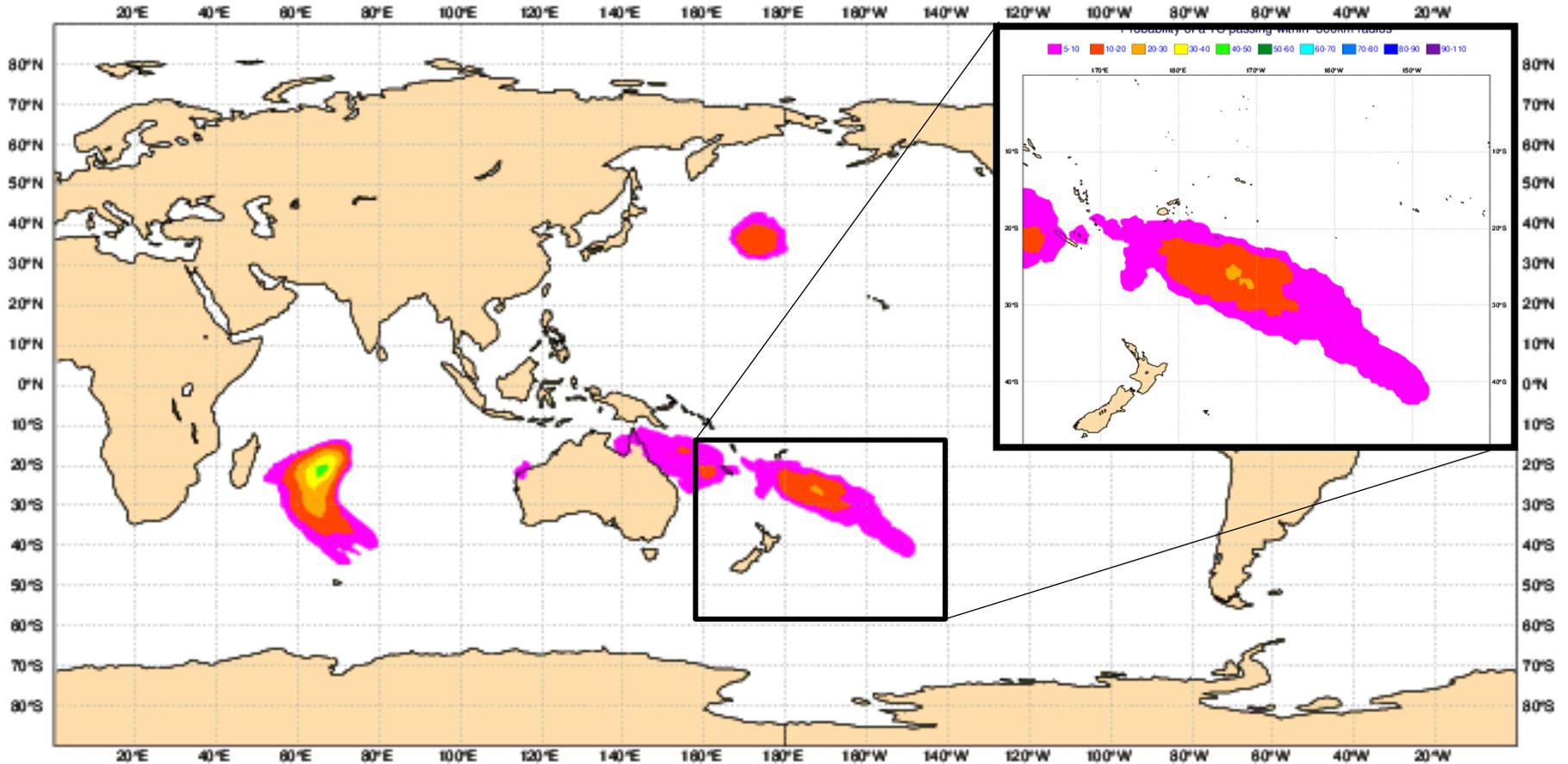


Calibrated Model anomaly probability in overlapping 15 x 20 degree boxes
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Model: ACCESS_S2 Model Run: 15/02/2026 Issued: 17/02/2026

Weekly ECMWF TC Forecast

Weekly mean Tropical Storm Strike Probability. Date: 20260217 0 UTC t+(144-312)
Probability of a TS passing within 300km radius

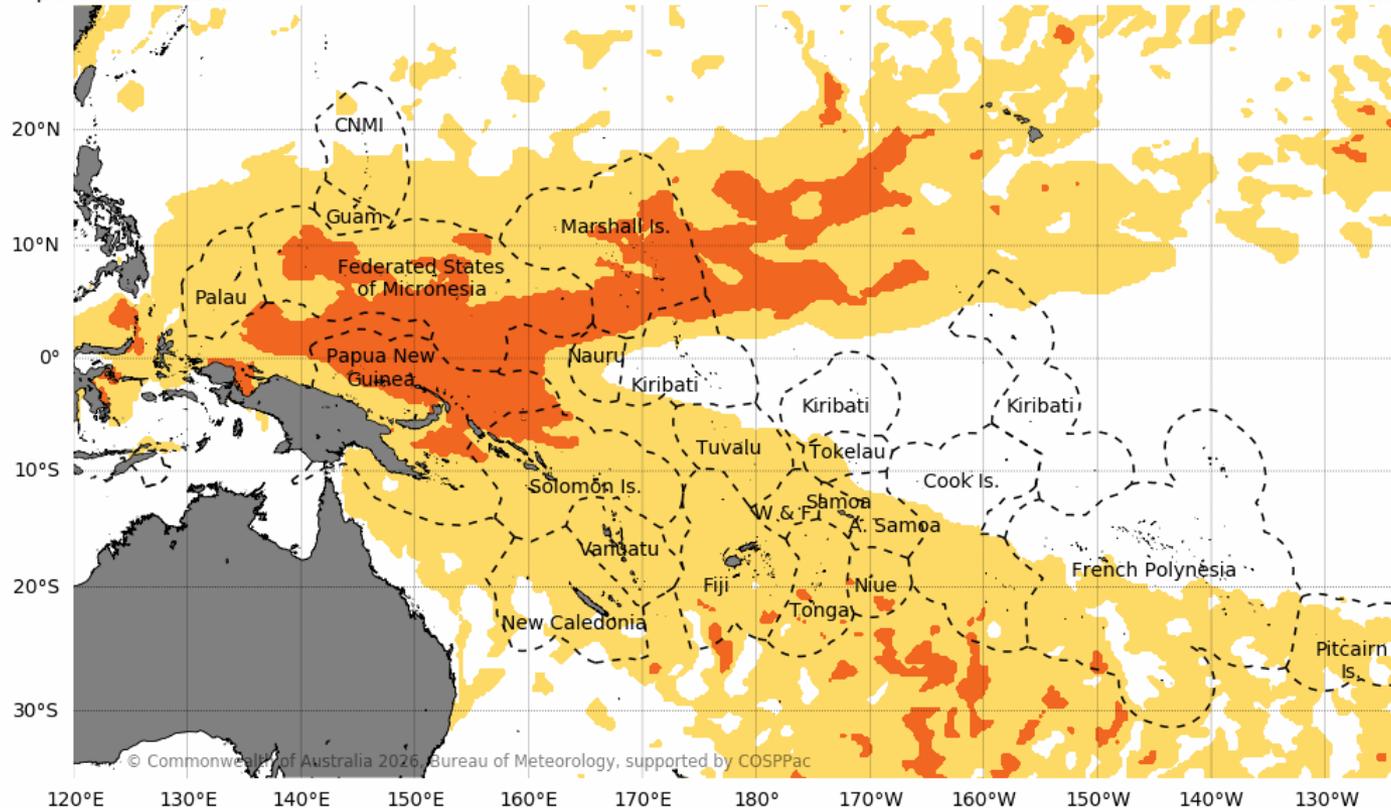


Marine Heatwaves

Marine heatwave category forecast for March 2026

Data source: ACCESS-S2
Base period: 1981-2018

Model Run: 14/02/2026
Issued: 16/02/2026



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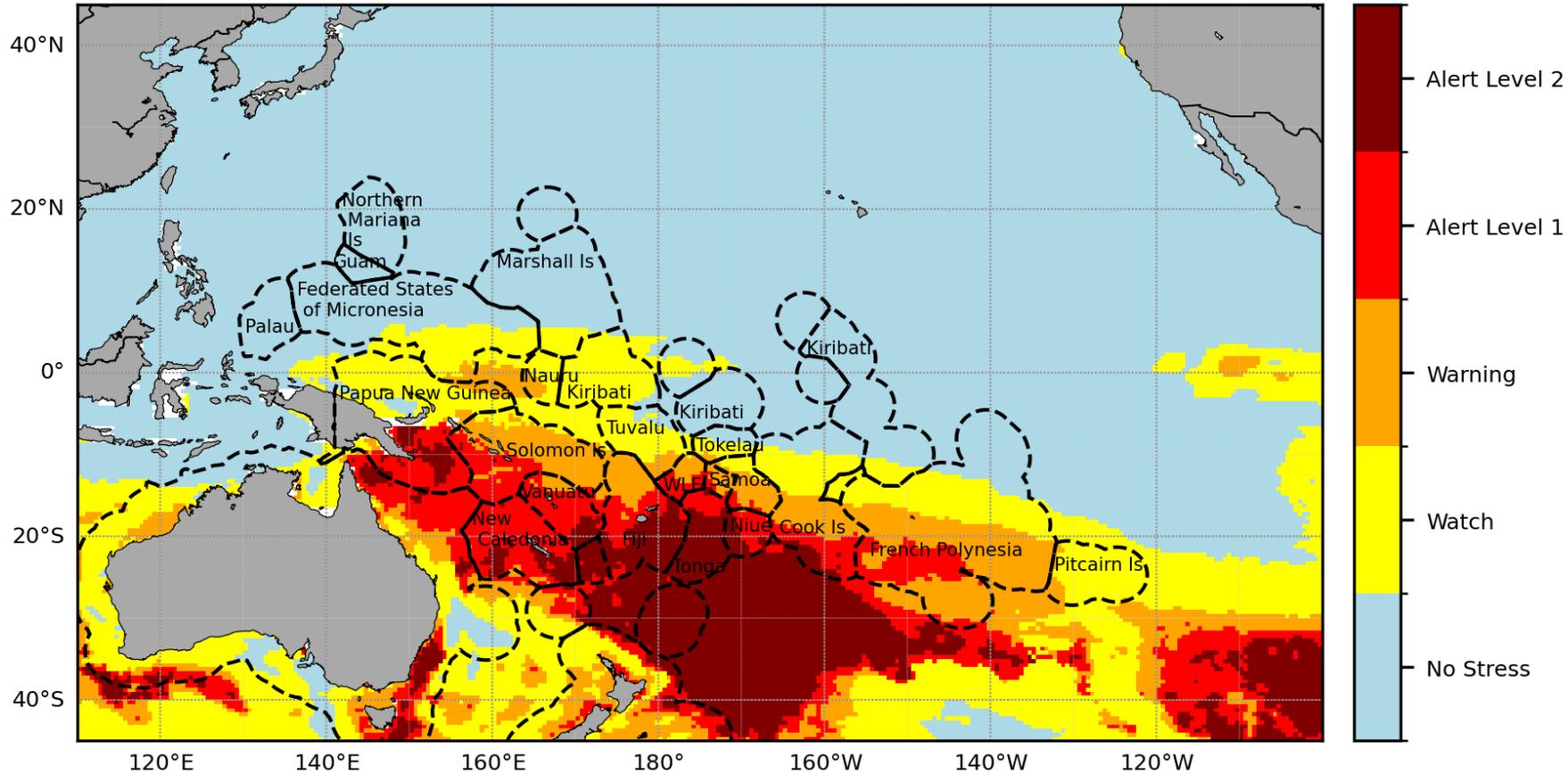


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Coral Bleaching

Pacific Islands
4 Week Coral Bleaching Outlook: 2 March 2026



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Thank you

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