

# Seasonal conditions insights snapshot

April 2026

## Key points

April 2026 continued to deliver only limited relief from prolonged dry conditions across parts of Tasmania. Rainfall was predominantly average across the western half of the State and the Bass Strait Islands; however, significant rainfall deficits persisted across much of the eastern half, particularly along the east coast and parts of the midlands. Statewide rainfall remained around 23 per cent below the long-term (1961–1990) average for the month of April 2026 and was insufficient to offset accumulated three-month and twelve-month rainfall deficiencies.

Temperatures during April were generally warmer than average, with mean maximum temperatures above average across most regions and very much above average in parts of the north-east and Bass Strait Islands. Mean minimum temperatures were closer to average overall, though some inland and elevated locations recorded notably cool overnight conditions.

Soil moisture conditions continued to show a pronounced east–west divide. Very much below-average soil moisture has developed across large parts of the eastern half of Tasmania. In contrast, soil moisture across the west coast and western inland areas remained broadly stable, with near-normal conditions prevailing in many catchments.

Runoff conditions improved across the western half of the State, with most catchments returning to near-normal levels following earlier autumn rainfall. However, eastern Tasmania experienced further declines, with very much below-average runoff now widespread along east coast catchments from Eddystone Point to Dunalley, indicating increasing hydrological strain and a water-resource concern.

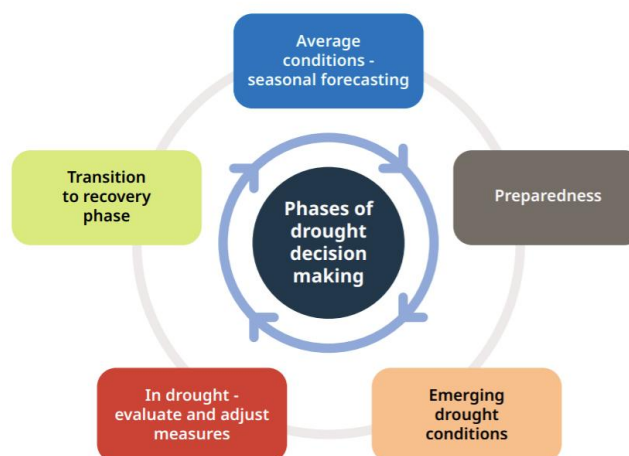
Agronomic conditions were generally stable for the month, but variability increased across regions, with a notable change in the southern part of the midlands. Harvest activities progressed well overall, with cereal yields reported as strong, while apples, wine grapes and potatoes continued harvest later than usual due to seasonal conditions. Pasture growth is slowing as autumn advances, particularly in dryland systems. Fodder availability is currently sufficient across Tasmania.

Economic conditions remain challenging for producers. Rising fuel, fertiliser, freight and other input costs associated with Middle East disruptions, alongside higher

interest rates, are tightening margins across sectors. On a positive note, livestock markets remain relatively strong.

Overall, April reinforced a pattern of stabilisation across western Tasmania but ongoing dryness across the east coast. Long-range forecasts from the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) indicate an increased likelihood of warmer-than-average conditions and a tendency toward drier-than-average conditions as autumn progresses. Without additional rainfall, dry conditions in eastern Tasmania are likely to persist or intensify into early winter.

Under the *Monitoring Seasonal Conditions and Drought Framework*, the combined primary and climatic indicators show that the north east, south east, east coast and parts of the midlands (such as Oatlands, Tunnack) continue to experience ongoing dry conditions. These regions have recorded persistent below-average rainfall over the past 12 months, with associated low to moderate plant growth and declining soil moisture. Overall, these areas are currently assessed as being in the ‘preparedness’ phase of the drought cycle.

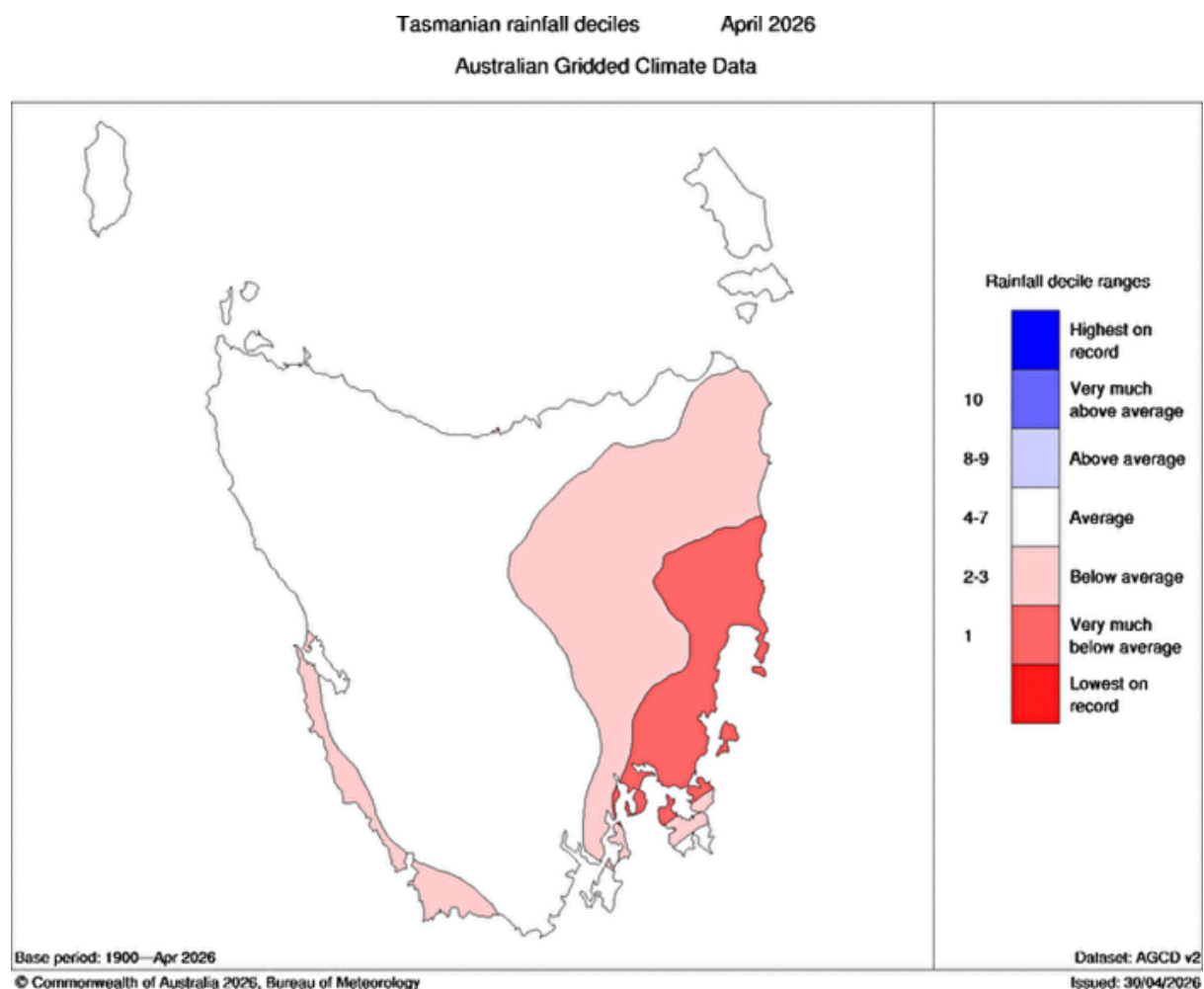


Drought Phases	Districts
<b>Average Seasonal Conditions</b>	Flinders Island, King Island, Circular Head, west coast, Derwent Valley, Central Highlands, Tasman Peninsula
<b>Preparedness</b>	North east, south east, east coast, midlands
<b>Emerging Drought Conditions</b>	Nil
<b>In Drought</b>	Nil

# Primary (lead) condition indicator

## Precipitation

In April 2026, Tasmania experienced predominantly average rainfall on the western half of the mainland and King and Flinders Island, but below average along the south-west coastal strip and for parts of the east and north east, and very much below average along the east coast from around Hobart to Scamander, including parts of the midlands. The statewide rainfall amounted to 86.1mm, representing a 23 per cent deficit relative to the 1961-1990 average.



**FIGURE 1: TASMANIAN RAINFALL DECILES FOR APRIL 2026 FROM BUREAU OF METEOROLOGY**

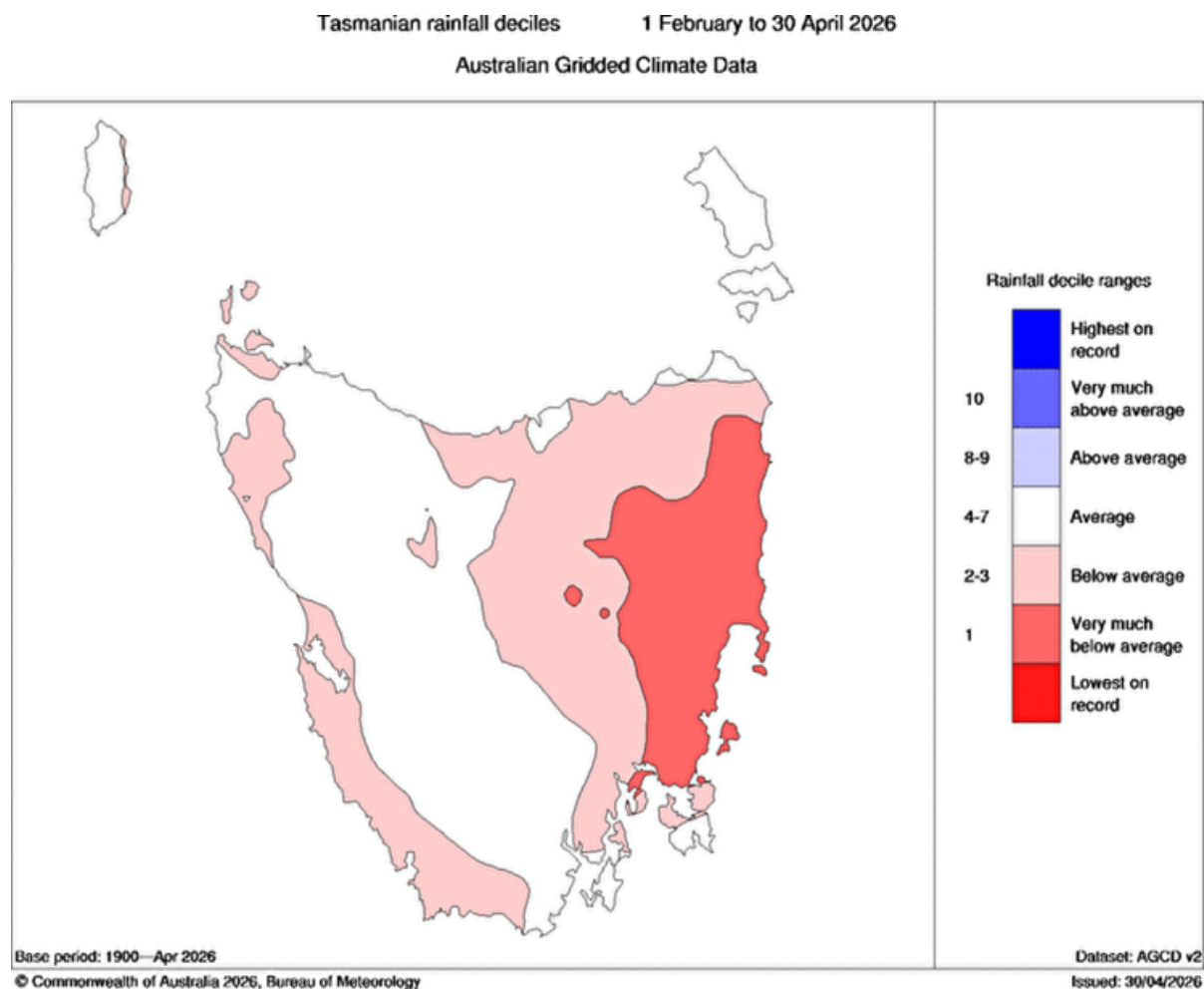
## Temperature

Mean maximum temperatures in April were above average for most of Tasmania, and very much above average for parts of the Bass Strait Islands and the north-east. The State's area-averaged mean maximum temperature was 16.0°C, which was 0.70 °C above the 1961–1990 average. Mean minimum temperatures in April were average for most of the State, and above average across the north west, the west and south

coast, and parts of the Tasman Peninsula. The area-averaged mean minimum temperature was 6.6 °C, 0.32 °C below average, with Butlers Gorge recording its lowest April mean minimum temperature since 1998. Overall, Tasmania’s area-averaged mean temperature was 11.3 °C, 0.19 °C above the 1961–1990 average.

### 3-monthly rainfall deciles for Tasmania

Over the past three months, much of eastern Tasmania experienced below-average rainfall, with notable deficiencies along the east coast heading inland towards the midlands of Tasmania. These dry conditions occurred alongside generally warmer-than-average daytime temperatures across most of the State. Mean maximums were above the long-term average, while overnight temperatures were closer to average overall, despite some inland and elevated locations experiencing their lowest minimum temperatures since 1998. Together, the combination of rainfall shortfalls and variable temperatures contributed to persistent dry conditions across affected regions.



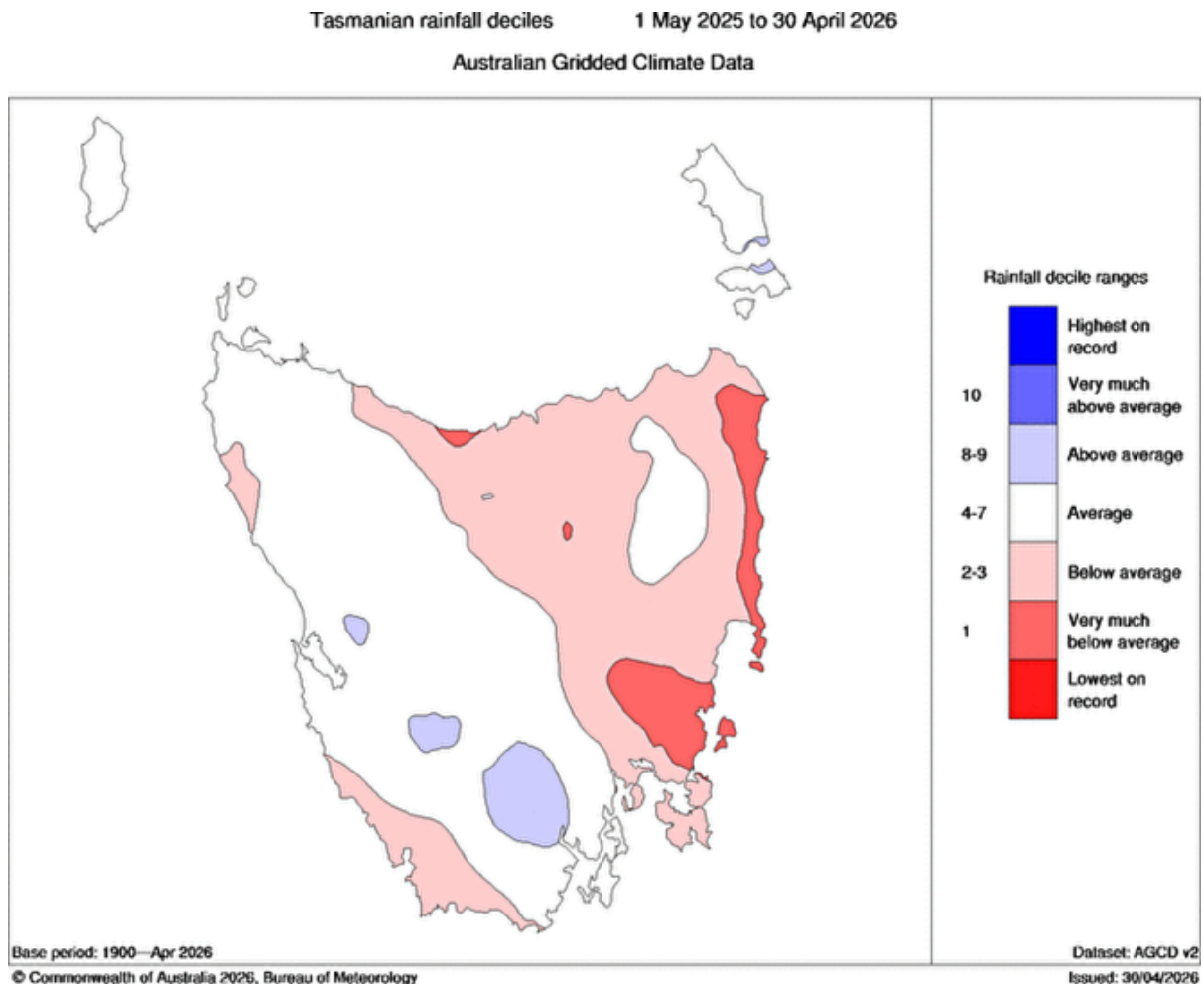
**FIGURE 2: RAINFALL DEFICIENCIES FOR 3 MONTHS TO END APRIL 2026 FROM BUREAU OF METEOROLOGY**

### 12-monthly rainfall deciles for Tasmania

During the 12-month period from 1 May 2025 to 30 April 2026, large areas of Tasmania recorded below-average rainfall, particularly across much of the central, western, and northern agricultural regions, as indicated by decile rankings. This extended the parts of the east experiencing very much below-average rainfall into the midlands. Small pockets in the south and western region experienced above-average rainfall conditions.

The pocket of very much below average area around Ulverstone indicated on the map below is deemed an anomaly by NRE Tas. When other indicators are considered such as Standard Precipitation Evapotranspiration Index ([SPEI]) that captures the run-off and soil moisture in the area, Ulverstone is considered to be experiencing nominal conditions. NRE Tas is monitoring this location.

Overall, a predominance of drier-than-normal conditions persists across the State, with limited areas receiving near- or above-average rainfall, consistent with observations of ongoing dryness across many regions.



**FIGURE 3: RAINFALL DECILES FOR THE 12 MONTHS TO END APRIL 2026 FROM BUREAU OF METEOROLOGY**

### ***Long range rainfall and temperature forecast***

According to the BoM long-range forecast issued on 30 April 2026, autumn rainfall is likely to be below average across much of eastern Australia – including northern Tasmania, with probabilities generally ranging between 60 and 80 per cent. For most other parts there is no clear signal for either wetter or drier conditions.

At the same time, BoM temperature outlooks show similar chances of warmer-than-average conditions across most of Australia, including Tasmania. Maximum temperatures have an increased likelihood (greater than 70 per cent) of being unusually high across most of Tasmania, while minimum temperatures are also likely to be above average across much of the country (generally with 60 per cent to greater than 80 per cent probability) and unusually high for Tasmania (over 60 per cent chance).

This combination of reduced rainfall likelihood and higher temperatures suggests an increased potential for ongoing dry conditions into autumn, particularly in southern regions. This forecast could increase the frequency and severity of frost events in Tasmania, particularly in late winter and spring.

### ***Soil moisture:***

Soil moisture patterns showed a similar east–west contrast. Very much below average soil moisture has now developed across large parts of the eastern half of Tasmania, particularly along the east coast between Eddystone Point and Dunalley.

Elsewhere, soil moisture remained broadly similar to March, with below average levels persisting in parts of the west coast and northern hinterland, and near-normal conditions over much of the remainder of the State. This points to increasingly dry soil profiles along the east coast, against a background of more stable to the west.

### ***Runoff:***

Runoff in April generally improved in the western half of the State, where most catchments reverted to near-normal to slightly below average conditions, consolidating the recovery that began in March. In contrast, the eastern half remained dry, with very much below average runoff now evident along most east coast catchments from Eddystone Point through to Dunalley. This indicates significantly reduced streamflow and increasing hydrological strain in these coastal and hinterland areas.

### ***Standardised Precipitation Evapotranspiration (SPEI):***

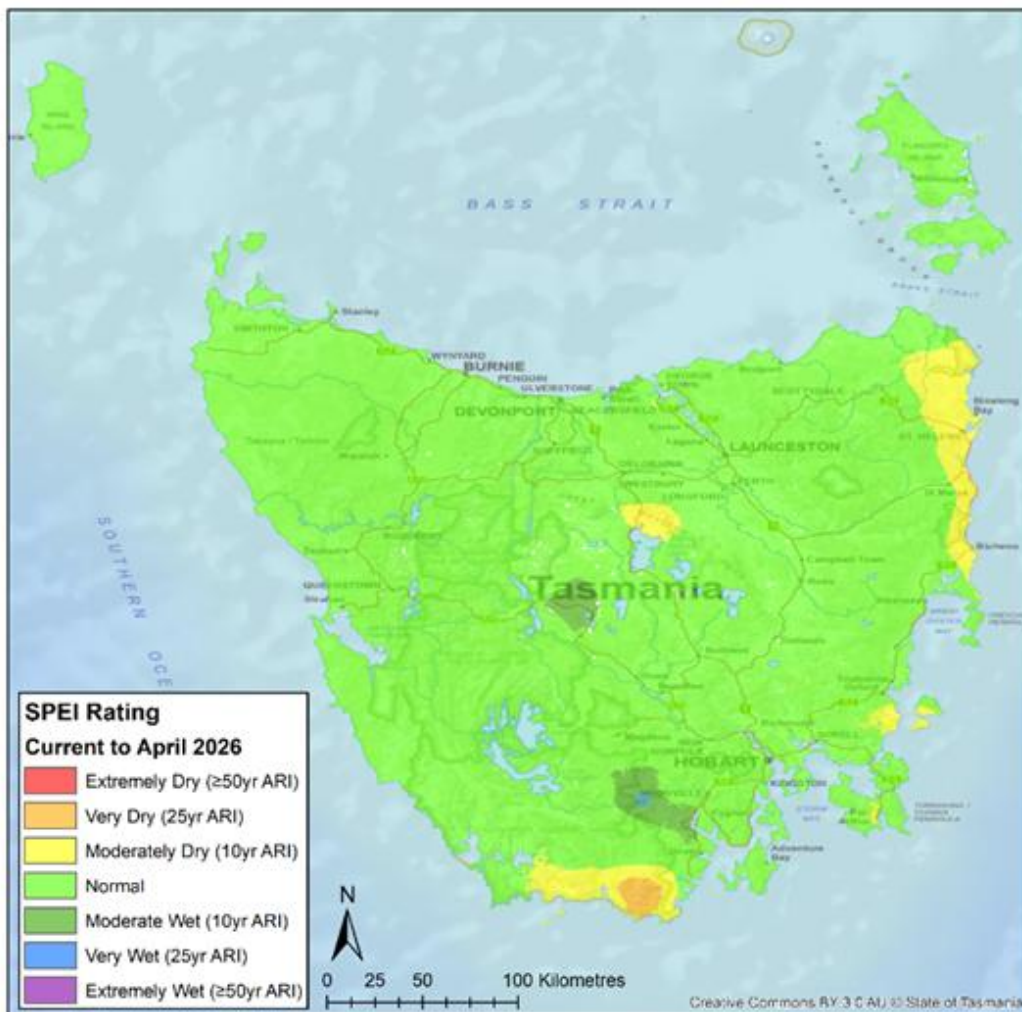
The Standardised Precipitation Evapotranspiration Index (SPEI, 12-month scale) in April was very similar to March, with most of Tasmania still within the normal range on a longer-term basis. However, the pocket of moderately dry SPEI values along the east coast from Eddystone Point to Bicheno has broadened slightly, reflecting the

cumulative effect of recent drying. A more pronounced moderately dry pocket is now evident around Triabunna, Orford and Maria Island areas, highlighting an emerging longer-term moisture deficit along the central east coast.

**Five monthly indicator:**

In summary, April 2026 marked a diverging climate signal across Tasmania, with runoff and soil moisture stabilising at near normal to slightly below average levels in the west, while conditions along the east coast continue to increase in dryness.

Very much below average runoff and soil moisture from Eddystone Point to Dunalley, along with expanding moderately dry SPEI pockets around Eddystone Point to Bicheno and Triabunna–Orford–Maria Island areas, indicate mounting hydrological and soil moisture strain in eastern districts. If this pattern persists into late autumn and winter, these east coast areas are likely to remain a focus for water-resource concern.



**FIGURE 4: REGIONAL 12-MONTH STANDARDISED PRECIPITATION-EVAPOTRANSPIRATION INDEX (SPEI) TO END APRIL 2026.**

## Secondary indicators

### Hydrological monitoring

**Key message:** *Monitor conditions closely as the season transitions, noting the BoM outlook for increased likelihood of a drier and warmer-than-average autumn.*

### NRE Tas Water Operations

During the reporting period, the Water Compliance Team conducted 50 assessments, resulting in:

- 31 restrictions
- No flood take notices.
- No opportunistic take notices
- 16 easements
- No low flow warnings due to reduced river flows.

It is not unusual for a high number of assessments to be undertaken in April, as trigger values are met frequently due to dry conditions. A high number of water restrictions is also not unusual in April.

The occurrence of average rainfall in some regions is reflected in the water access notice figures, as a decrease in the number of restrictions issued this year is noticeable.

### Tasmanian Irrigation (TI)

Tasmanian Irrigation (TI) delivered 5,704 megalitres of irrigation water to Tasmanian farmers in April 2026 – down approximately 21 per cent from April 2025; however, the April 2026 volume are similar to what was delivered in April 2024.

FY2025–26 was a dry and operationally intensive irrigation season, with sustained high demand across the eastern, south eastern and midlands schemes driven by above average temperatures and below average rainfall through summer and early autumn.

Operational performance remained strong, with all TI schemes delivering 100 per cent seasonal allocations supported by sound storage positions and proactive water management. System demand peaked in January 2026, resulting in record monthly deliveries, and a season extension was implemented for nine schemes to support customers through the drier autumn period. TI has delivered 91,184 megalitres of water so far in the 2025-26 financial year at 1 May 2026.

### Bureau of Meteorology streamflow observations for Tasmania

The Bureau of Meteorology's (BoM) seasonal streamflow forecast indicates that northern Tasmania is likely to experience low streamflow conditions from April to June 2026. According to recent BOM long-range reporting, streamflow in March was low to near median for most of west and south-east and southern Australia, including

Tasmania, reflecting both below average rainfall and drier catchments. This all contributes to the current La Niña event expectation of a transition to El Niño by the end of winter.

## Economic indicators

**Key message:** *Economic conditions have tightened, as the Middle East tensions continue to influence price and supply uncertainty for key inputs such as fertiliser. Producers will face increasingly tight profit margins and business continuity planning to manage these risks is encouraged as input prices continue to creep upwards.*

Australia's economic conditions have tightened, with inflation rising sharply to 4.6 per cent in the twelve months to March 2026, up from 3.7 per cent in the twelve months to February 2026, driven by higher fuel, housing, and food costs.

The Reserve Bank of Australia raised its interest rate to 4.35 per cent, in response to rising inflation. Higher interest rates increase producers' borrowing and repayment costs, adding financial pressure. Meanwhile, the Australian dollar strengthened, rising 3.9 per cent against the USD to 71.13 cents and 3.1 per cent on a trade-weighted basis, slightly reducing export competitiveness but lowering the cost of imported inputs and cushioning some increases in fuel and fertiliser prices.

Cost pressures across supply chains remain significant. Oil prices were high and volatile in April, with Brent crude starting at USD 101 on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026, and ending at USD 110 per barrel on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April. Price, not supply remains the main concern, with costs partly passed through value chains.

Freight costs increased sharply, with the Containerized Freight Index up 10.5 per cent over April and 37.7 per cent year-on-year, compounded by Middle East disruptions that have reduced air cargo capacity to 30–50 per cent below pre-conflict levels.

Domestic sheep meat prices remain strong and higher than long-term averages. Projections suggest prices will remain strong over the coming months due to limited availability of sheep in the market. Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) projections suggest the Australian herd size will be lower as of June 30, 2026, compared to the previous financial year.

Powranna saleyard sales have been reported to be moderate, reflecting the limited stock on ground. Dry conditions in the Midlands, which is predominately a pastoral region, are causing some producers to rationalise stock numbers. Overall, sheep numbers going to the mainland have been normal and there has been limited sheep coming into the State. Tasmania securing a 4 tonne sheep meat deal into Singapore during the month is seen as a positive.

Cattle prices continue to be impacted by rising input prices and drier weather conditions. Despite these current challenges leading to a downward trend in price, cattle prices remain strong and higher than this time last year and the previous year.

Looking forward, prices will be impacted by international markets. Australia will trigger the Chinese safeguard tariff before the end of June, impacting the second half of the year. Exporters are purchasing high volumes of beef to sell to China before the safeguard mechanism is implemented. In addition to this, the tariff from South Korea

is expected to be triggered shortly after, leaving two of the largest four markets with significant tariffs for the second half of 2026. Notably, demand for Australian beef is still strong in the US market. This is likely to have some flow-on effect to Tasmanian prices.

Dairy markets softened, with the Global Dairy Trade Price Index down 2.7 per cent to USD 4,143/t, led by declines in butter and milk fats, and industry intelligence forecasting conservative opening milk prices next season due to higher global supply and weak economic outlooks. Despite the price expected to be above the long-term average, it is unlikely to alleviate the increased cost pressures as a result of the Middle East situation.

Fertiliser prices (such as urea) remain very high as globally, stocks are tight. 319,000 tonnes of urea are in transit to Australia as of 24 April 2026. Industry intelligence reports that farmers generally have enough fertiliser for autumn. High prices and uncertainty about availability into spring are already shaping crop planning and rotation decisions.

## Agronomic indicators

**Key message:** *Harvest continues to wind down for commodities such as potatoes and berries. Pasture growth now slowing. Fodder supplies remain available.*

Pasture growth has started to slow with biggest contributing factors being temperature and day length, despite some consistently warm temperatures. Daily evapotranspiration rate is steadily easing and currently sitting around between 1–2 mm/day (7–14 mm/week). On ground reporting suggests there is sufficient fodder available. Cereal hay in the north west of Tasmania is currently trading below the 5-year average according to Dairy Australia data.

Potato harvests are still continuing particularly in the north west due to the seasonal conditions impacting the ability to harvest. Other potato growing regions have largely completed harvest.

For poppies, there is an expectation that hectares sown will be similar to the last season level albeit with a slight increase. One company is offering a hardship payment of 10 per cent to support growers with increasing input costs as a result of the Middle East uncertainty.

Berries are winding down to the winter dormancy and are likely to be complete by end May 2026. Later markets are proving good with not much fruit in the market. Apples are still being harvested, particularly the later varieties. Markets have remained positive and prices are good. All late fruit has benefitted from the milder autumn temperatures through March. Cherries had an exceptional season with the [Bendigo Bank Agribusiness Report](#) stating cherry exports hit a record of \$82 million following a great season in Tasmania.

Industry intelligence is reporting that due to increasing freight costs resulting from higher fuel costs, fruit and vegetable prices are rising at a time Tasmania (alongside Queensland) is a key supplier into the domestic market.

## Social indicators

**Key message:** *Sentiment is mixed as the combination of economic factors and seasonal conditions start to impact the sector.*

As of 5 May 2026, the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) Farm Management Deposit (FMD) Rainfall Analyser indicates that there are currently no eligible FMD areas in Tasmania. The latest statistics from DAFF, as of 31 March 2026, indicates there are 768 FMD accounts for Tasmania with a total value of \$105,714,000. This is a decrease of 3 accounts, totalling \$111,000.

Sentiment amongst producers is mixed as producers weigh the likely impacts of the Middle East situation on farming input costs and prices they will receive for their product. Drier conditions in parts of the State are adding pressure on producers. Overall, there remains heightened concerns about the middle east uncertainty and how the season will progress.

## Freight and logistics

**Key message:** *Regular freight movements reported however freight and logistic prices will influence movements.*

Cattle movements for King Island in the April remain lower than average. Flinders continues to track as normal with movements being average. King Island cattle movements continue to be lower than last year due to favourable seasonal conditions supporting herd rebuilding.

**Prepared by:**

**AgriGrowth Tasmania**  
**Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania**

**April 2026**

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