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Climate expert wins Wealth from Oceans Fellowship

A University of NSW expert in how climate change in the Southern Ocean affects Australian weather patterns, Associate Professor Matthew England, has been appointed a Visiting Fellow with the CSIRO Wealth from Oceans Flagship.

The Fellowship provides A/Professor England with the opportunity to work for six months with CSIRO colleagues to increase our understanding of how oscillations in the atmospheric pressure difference between the polar region and latitudes of 40-50°S - the Southern Annular Mode (SAM) - is linked to variations in Australia's climate.

The influence of the oceans surrounding Australia on regional climate is an important research theme within the Wealth from Oceans portfolio, but until now the Flagship has concentrated its efforts on understanding the Indian Ocean's influence.

A/Professor England will use his Wealth from Oceans Fellowship to analyse climate model simulations and historical variations in the SAM (also known as the Antarctic Oscillation). He will then examine whether these variations can be linked to extreme patterns of Australian rainfall over the same period. This work will help Wealth from Oceans scientists develop better seasonal forecasts to provide farmers, and others who depend on reliable longer term weather predictions, with the information they require to manage their businesses with greater certainty.

A/Professor England will be analysing ocean observational data collected over the past 50 years. While observations were recorded from the 1930s, for 40 years they were sparse due to the logistical difficulties of collecting data in the high latitudes, which are remote and hostile.

The research will be undertaken in collaboration with the climate research team in CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research based in Hobart and Aspendale (Victoria).

A/Professor England has also been appointed a Federation Fellow with the Australian Research Council - a prestigious appointment of national significance that he will begin in March 2006. His Federation Fellowship is concerned with the influence of the extratropical ocean/atmosphere on Australian climate.

Flagship Visiting Fellowships are designed to enable Australian-based researchers to be seconded from their organisations to undertake agreed collaborative projects under the auspices of CSIRO's National Research Flagships program. The program has been allocated \$97 million over seven years under the Federal Government's 'Backing Australia's Ability - Building Our Future Through Science and Innovation' package.

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