



# WeatherWise

By Mike Griffin\*

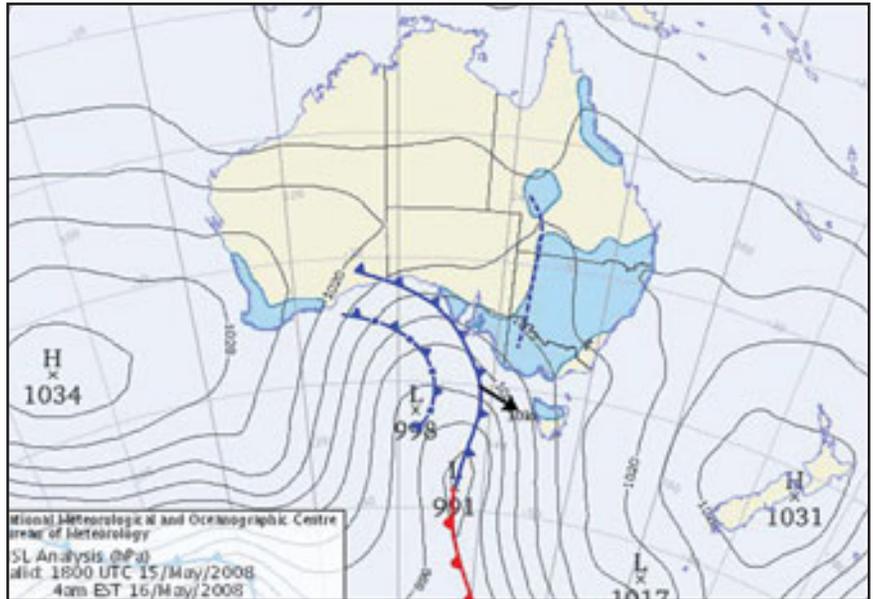
## Understanding The Weather From May To Early June

**T**he large high over south eastern Australia in early May has caused light winds for the coastal areas from southern Queensland through NSW and Victoria to SA. Only WA and parts of the North Tropical Coast of Queensland and parts of the north east Top End recorded cloud and shower conditions. So fishing has been a premium with “ fights at the boat ramp” and reports of numerous fishermen on the waters around southern, eastern and northern Australia.

This has been a contrast to April, where the east coast lows - forecast in the April edition – played havoc with would be fishing trips terminated, with the tinny left at home and watching sport on TV. This was before the arrival of the “Big High” fronts passing through Albany on the Tuesday and Wednesday’s of the week and in Bass Strait on the weekends.

How long are these conditions going to last?

The “Big High” seems to be drifting into the Tasman Sea. Moderate south easterly winds along the Queensland coast should stir up the seas ( 1.4 – 1.8 metres ) with showers. A front just off the south west coast of W.A. on Monday the 13th May should develop the dreaded north westerly on Tuesday from Geraldton to Cape Leeuwin followed by a cold southerly with squally showers, late Tuesday. Then move into eastern Australia on the weekend of the 16-18 of May. The Gold Coast to Gabo Island and west to Bass Strait should get showers and storms with strong to gale force winds in the south. Then



Beautiful Cruisecraft 685 Explorer running on a typical, cold, clear flat winter’s morning.



cold southerlies to follow. Morning fogs on the 14-15 May in the south east, will herald this change along the NSW coast.

### For the third and fourth week of May

**Queensland** – Expect light winds with possible north easterly in the afternoon is likely for most of the coast till about Thursday. Offshore winds could be fresh early morning if a low develops off the NSW coast. A large high should drive south to

south easterly winds by the weekend. Early fogs on Tuesday and Wednesday will herald this change. If the high is small the change will be short lived so early the final week in May could commence another good sequence. But there is a stronger chance that another large high could linger. Watch for the initial south west change could be light inshore but a good 20 knots offshore with 2 metres seas – trap for young players.

**NSW** – Monday should be cool to cold with moderate to occasionally

## TIP OF THE MONTH: COLD, And The WIND CHILL Factor

**T**he Dictionary defines the word cold as “a feeling of numbness usually related to a large temperature drop”. Scientists – after reading some major publications with arguable definitions - suggest it is a 5 degree or more drop in the normal temperature for the time of year. Most people like 20C plus but in the “teens” (say, 13-17°C) there is a need for extra clothing.

To the ordinary person, it means freezing body and a slowing down of active movement. The skin turns blue and the body shivers, reducing peripheral blood flow. Extra moisture on the exposed skin will enhance the feeling of the extent of “cold”. Precipitation in the form of hail, sleet or snow will further enhance the feeling. The immune systems begin being attacked. Doctors’ – commonsense - suggest more warmth if one gets a “cold”. For the fishing population, it means gloves, perhaps a beanie for head warmth, rugging up - and a more weatherwise look at the conditions.

Sea surface temperatures in the twenties (degree Celsius) have been known to allow people to survive for some time. European research suggests cramping can occur below 17C and hypothermia and death in single figure values. Age and physical fitness makes the “cold” threshold shorter or longer. New research into “dry-suit” technology will allow the body to last longer in extreme conditions. To save all that, best place to fish in the southern Australian winter is in or near the tropics. Making Broome to Darwin and Cairns waters the best pick – but that’s kind of difficult if you live and have to work in the south!

This is the time of year – May to June - that the winter

hits the southern hemisphere.

An “old salt” told me once - temperatures seem to drop quite regularly and dramatically after Anzac Day. It’s all directed by a colder than normal southerly burst of cold air up from past the Southern Ocean well south of Tasmania.

The “cold” fronts begin to move from their southern zonal position about the “roaring forties” northwards. I did a forecast for Maggie Williams – first woman to single –handed circumnavigate Australia – for her sail across the Bight in May 2006. Part of the forecast read “... at 42S sea temp 12C - wind chill will make it feel close to zero”.

Maggie thanked me for helping her to prepare and cut her work load to a minimum during the crossing. She said her fingers were that numb that she could not type in her reports. Only after holding on to her thermos flask she was able to report her position.

Watch for Cold Fronts on weather maps which past north of Perth – Adelaide – Melbourne – Hobart. Sydney and Brisbane also get bursts of this “cold” intrusion in winter.

### Some dot points as a guide to boating in cold conditions:

- If the maximum temperature gets to 16C or less, bring warm food, drink and clothing.
- A medical & radio VMR check – space blanket
- Wind chill – *there’s a number of articles on this* – Steadman is the pick. Rough rule: **Every 10 knots cuts affective skin temperature by 2-4 degrees.** Extra moisture and damage skin further enhances this.
- Planing (fast) boats slow down to cut wind chill - improves judgement in tight situations.
- **Last by no means least, be “weatherwise” - check the weather forecast.**

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fresh south to south east winds with showers and seas 2/3 metres. A low in the Tasman could develop good 1.7 to 2.0 metre swell. The surfers would love that. An easing trend Tuesday and Wednesday with winds tending initially south east to north east during the afternoon with seas abating 1.8 to 1.2 metres. As the high approaches the winds should surge up again from the south to south west from Nowra to Gabo Island, during the weekend. This could be a trap for the amateur fisherman. It will look calm inshore but 2/3 metres seas are likely to develop very quickly offshore on Saturday. If the up stream high establishes itself inland expect light conditions for the fourth week of May. Watch for fronts in the Bight and Bass Strait in the first week of June.

**Victoria & Tasmania** - Monday the 19th May fresh westerly winds in Bass Strait and strong winds over

Tasmania should ease Tuesday as a high ridges into the area. A small front should increase the winds in Tasmania Wednesday but should not affect Bass Strait. Port Phillip Bay and most of the Victorian coast could be a premium under a large high for the remainder of the week into week four of May. Watch for fogs early and sneaky fronts west of Tasmania surging onto the coast with gales and showers of sleet in June.

**S.A.** – Easing winds will become light and variable for most of the third week. It will be associated with a large broad high. This should be the pick of conditions for the southern part of Australia. A front is looming up on or about the middle of the fourth week.

**W.A.** – After the light winds from the back end of a large high a front approaches from the Indian Ocean south west of Perth. If the high strengthens in the east the front will slide away to the south. If not, it will

cause freshening north west winds with rain late in the third week.

**Tropical north** – Light to moderate easterlies right across the tropics with a trough in the Kimberly Coast and one near the Cape York Peninsula could develop a shower or storm during the middle of the week. The dry season is in full swing. Watch for freshening easterlies late in the month. Especially in the Gulf of Carpentaria and north of the Top End.

**Before going out always check the weather and become “weatherwise”**

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