

Flooding in Cairns worst in a generation, dozens rescued as region's roads cut

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VIDEO: Tractor pulls dinghy through floodwaters (ABC News)

Flooding from the Barron River in Cairns is the worst recorded since February 2000, but the height of the flooding emergency has passed for the time being, the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) says.

The latest BOM flood warning indicated the river level was falling at Cairns Airport, with no further significant rain expected over the next few days.

More than 40 people were evacuated from a caravan park and others rescued from flooded cars, as the tail-end of ex-Tropical Cyclone Nora drenches areas in far north Queensland.

Swift-water rescue crews used a motorboat to rescue a person trapped in a tree surrounded by floodwaters in the northern Cairns suburb of Yorkeys Knob just before 9:00am.



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Key points:

- Cairns residents urged to stay home as flooded Barron River leaves many stranded
- Four Cairns state schools closed
- Bruce Highway blocked in several locations, Captain Cook Highway closed

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VIDEO: Flooding in Cairns caravan park (ABC News)

Queensland Fire and Emergency Service (QFES) spokesman Shane Jarvis said calls for help from the caravan parks in Brinsmead and Redlynch started just before midnight.

"Swift-water rescue teams were really under the pump — they were working solid to continuously keep bringing people out on our rafts to safety," he said.

Mr Jarvis said people were in "disbelief" at how quickly the water rushed through the park.



PHOTO: More than 40 people were evacuated from two caravan parks in Brinsmead and Redlynch. (ABC News: Kristy Sexton-McGrath)

"To see this occur is very, very rare — to have seen this happen so that was the look on most people's faces, even today," he said on Tuesday.

Mr Jarvis said one family with a small child had to smash a back window of their campervan to escape.

Jamie Corfield was staying at the Crystal Cascades Caravan Park in Redlynch when floodwaters began rising, and said by the time he left his van to investigate, the water was lapping at the stairs.

"I made my way to higher ground at the front office where there were some other people in the same boat, and we saw cars and caravans floating around, we could hear people screaming," he said.

Mr Corfield said he watched as an elderly resident's van "pinballed along the road", bumping into other vans and units.

"We did eventually get to him and get him out, but all I can say is that it's a miracle that we didn't have any loss of life."

The State Emergency Service (SES) said two people also needed rescuing from a vehicle trapped in floodwaters on the Captain Cook Highway.



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PHOTO: A camper van thrown about by flash flooding at a caravan park in Cairns overnight. (ABC News: Kristy Sexton-McGrath)

Redlynch Valley resident Jason Christopher has lived in the area for 14 years and said he had never seen anything like it.

"All this part of Redlynch was just a torrent, just a brown river," he said.

Another resident Maya Piggott said the water rose so high her horses and chickens were "swimming".

"They were pretty much just floating down getting carried by the water it was pretty full on," she said.

Ms Piggott said she could also hear people screaming for help from the caravan park.



PHOTO: Roads and farmland under water north of Cairns on Tuesday morning. (Facebook: Ryan Lancini)

SES northern region director Wayne Coutts said the [External Link: Facebook video of Cairns kart hire flooded](#) Cairns council had made arrangements for the caravan park residents to go into temporary accommodation early this morning.

He said QFES officers were contacting people in the main affected areas.

"Some 8,000 phones were alerted in that area early this morning ... and QFES officers are backing that up with doorknocks," he said.

Water shortage, evacuation centre open

Meanwhile Douglas Shire, north of Cairns, is running critically low on clean water, with only five hours' supply left at current usage rates.

Mayor Julia Lau is urging residents to stop using hoses to clean mud and limit water usage to essential needs.

The Cairns Regional Council has opened an evacuation centre at Marlin Coast Recreation Centre in Smithfield for anyone who wishes to leave home.

Lake Placid resident Nerissa Ward had not had her property inundated, but she was watching closely.

She said she woke up at 4:00am to a tweet saying there was a major flood warning for the Barron River.

"Our property is an extreme flood risk so we've been watching and preparing since then, deciding if we should stay or go," she said.

"We can't see the water from our house but we can hear it."

[External Link: @QldFES: More than 40 people have been evacuated from two caravan parks in Cairns overnight](#)

She said she although she thought they had already reached high tide, she was worried about what was coming down the catchment from the Tablelands.

"It's probably equivalent to what we had in 1998 when the suburb was evacuated — it seems to be at the same levels," Ms Ward said.

Schools closed, BOM warns more flooding ahead



PHOTO: Debris in a flood-damaged caravan park in Cairns. (ABC News: Kristy Sexton-McGrath)

Four state schools in Cairns have been closed due to flooding, including Caravonica, Machans Beach, Yorkeys Knob and Kuranda District.

Lower Tully State School, Tully State High School and the primary school have also closed their doors to students.

Several schools in the Gulf were also still closed after ex-Tropical Cyclone Nora tore through the region over the weekend.

The Captain Cook Highway is closed between Aeroglen and Yorkeys Knob.

The Bruce Highway is blocked in multiple locations and the Gillies Range Road is closed.

Yorkeys Knob residents have been isolated due to the floodwaters.

The town of Tully, south of Cairns, has been completely cut off, with Cassowary Coast Regional Council saying all access roads to the town were closed to traffic.



VIDEO: [Barron Falls in full force after heavy rainfall](#) (ABC News)

BOM forecaster Jess Carey said some areas had more than 500 millimetres of rain overnight.

"We've seen some very, very heavy rainfall overnight, in addition to some extremely heavy rainfall yesterday as well," he said on Tuesday.

Earlier, senior forecaster Michael Knepp said the low-pressure system was still "lingering" just south-east of the Gulf Country but would start to move west.

"As it moves a bit more rapidly to the west tomorrow it will weaken that trough that extends towards the north tropical coast and we should see the conditions ease there," he said on Tuesday.



VIDEO: [Floodwaters reach Cairns restaurant](#) (ABC News)

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