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Fishing Port Douglas

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Tropical Cyclone Narelle passed through the Far Northern region of the Marine Park as a Category 5 system and crossed the Queensland coast as a Category 4 on 20 March. The cyclone generated intense winds and strong wave action along its track in the Far Northern Region, with modelling also indicating wide-spread high wave action in the Northern region, particularly across offshore reefs. The extent of damage will be assessed in the coming weeks.

The El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) climate pattern, La Niña, continues to weaken, and conditions are expected to return to a neutral phase in early Autumn. However, forecasts suggest that by winter, the system may shift into an El Niño phase, which often brings warmer and drier conditions to much of Australia.

Temperature

Sea surface temperatures continue to fall across the Marine Park, with the largest drop (0.8°C) recorded in the Northern region, however they remain around 0.6°C above the long-term monthly averages.

Despite recent decreases in sea surface temperatures, some reefs in the Far Northern and Northern regions have accumulated heat stress exposure that can cause some coral species to bleach.

Rainfall

From 16–22 March, localised heavy rainfall was recorded in the Cape York and Wet Tropics catchments as Tropical Cyclone Narelle moved through the region. Weekly rainfall totals ranged from 200–450mm, with some locations receiving more than 100–200mm in a single day which included our biggest catchment area on the

Daintree.

Flood warnings are active across parts of the Cape York catchment, and significant flooding has been reported in the Pascoe River, which is currently at record levels.

Reef health

Over the past week, 67 Reef Health Impact Surveys were completed across nine reefs in the Northern (between Innisfail and just above Cooktown), Central (between Mackay and Innisfail) and Southern regions (between Bundaberg and Mackay).

Coral bleaching in the Northern region varied from moderate (11–30%) to very high (61–90%). Of the five reefs surveyed, one reef also showed signs of coral mortality. These impacts are likely linked to a combination of exposure to ongoing heat stress and recent floodwaters.

In the coming weeks, Reef Authority and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service teams - along with partners from our broader network will carry out targeted surveys across the Northern and Far Northern regions. These assessments will focus on areas exposed to cyclone-driven wave damage and earlier heat stress, helping us build a clearer picture of how reefs have been affected.

Marine Monitoring Program teams and partners have already sampled floodwaters in the Annan–Endeavour subregion following Cyclone Narelle. Conditions permitting, the team will begin sampling flood-plume waters offshore from the Pascoe River. This work will help us assess water quality impacts from recent flooding.

Fishing Reports Next Page

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Local Fishing News

This month we are going to share some information which over rides a general fishing report. You'll see why

Look the major news to pass through up this way was the intense rainfall in our region in the first part of the month then the crossing of Cyclone Narelle which proved to be a beauty exploring the east to the west coast of Australia. It certainly played some 'funny buggers' as it travelled as it wished creating all sorts of havoc for northern Australians.

But if this was not enough the heavy, heavy rainfall we experienced prior to the cyclone run amok locally, particularly on the Daintree River 40 minutes drive from Port Douglas. It took out the main tourism pontoon used for the boarding of crocodile and fishing tours plus also the transport ferry just down the road which is the absolute lifeline to many living across the river north.

Now this could have been all unavoidable if it was not for one person's stupidity or possibly more. This is from very credible sources and is alleged activity. Yes the river level rose very quickly on the night of the incident, however some hobo with a known leaky boat from the village upstream repositioned it downstream at the pontoon - mind you allegedly illegally. It took on water, sank and managed to rip the pontoon of its land based points. However, also legally parked at the pontoon were two crocodile spotting vessels which were attached to the pontoon. Now when the pontoon gave way everything got washed 400m downstream hitting the ferry. This impact caused it to come off its cables and floated further on (allegedly not properly secured to absolute protocol).

So the outcome of this has been :

- 2 destroyed Crocodile Spotting vessels of which one was found floating upside down some 100km near a reef off Cairns
- 2 fishing charter businesses unable to work for weeks
- a lifeline ferry system to thousands that were cut off to society south of the river (apparently functional by Easter)
- multiple and multiple of jobs lost in the tourism industry and businesses hanging on by a bare thread.
- Exasperate this with the fuel crisis, it is a bit of doom and gloom for the general area

Looking forward for the fishing prospects, the coastal and outer reef will go off big time as we say goodbye to the worst of the wet season rain. There is so much bait floating out there it should be a free for all and sets us up for good months ahead.

The rivers are adjusting and levels are dropping rapidly. They will fire up as conditions clean up. Overall we'll know what fruit has been produced in the coming weeks, so it's positive in this aspect.

Word on the street is that local accommodations are relatively busy for Easter but all this will equate to the fuel crisis which definitely has a major effect on the marine industry. Definitely nervous times ahead.



*First Light in the morning
Pontoon slammed into Ferry
No pontoon boats in sight - gone!*



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