

October 15, 2013

## Near-average cyclone season is no reason for complacency, says ICA

The Bureau of Meteorology's forecast for a near-average cyclone season means cyclones are still likely to approach or cross the Queensland coast this summer.

The Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) advises Queenslanders to prepare for cyclone season, and also consider the risks posed by bushfires and thunderstorms.

The ICA's advice comes during **Get Ready Queensland Week**, a state government initiative aimed at encouraging all Queenslanders to help build a resilient Queensland to counter the impact of floods, cyclones and fires on the community.

ICA CEO Rob Whelan said: "A near-average season for cyclones does not mean Queensland will escape their damaging effects, and communities must prepare.

"This forecast is not a reason to be complacent. Since 1970, major Queensland centres including Cairns and Townsville have been affected by dozens of cyclones."

Weather bureau records reveal 99 cyclones have affected far north Queensland since 1970 - 15 cyclones have come within 100km of Cairns and 17 cyclones within 100km of Townsville. On average, Australia experiences its first cyclone crossing the coast in late December.

"It's important for everyone in cyclone-vulnerable communities to understand what they can do to prepare for disasters – every effort, no matter how small, can help save lives and secure property," Mr Whelan said.

"Households and businesses need to start preparing now. Make sure your insurance is up to date and consider what you can do to prepare your property by using our disaster checklists."

The latest Bureau of Meteorology report for Queensland warns of potentially higher thunderstorm activity and a near-average cyclone season. A near-average season sees four cyclones form in the eastern region of Australia. The bureau also says eastern Australia has a 53 per cent chance of more cyclones than average.

Mr Whelan said many parts of Queensland could face bushfires over summer, with abundant dry fuel loads the legacy of January's ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald and a warm winter.

Catastrophes since the start of 2010 have caused billions of dollars of damage across Australia and insurance losses of more than \$8.8 billion. Queensland has borne the brunt, with devastating floods, storms and cyclones and insurance losses of \$4.9 billion.

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Mr Whelan said cyclones did not have to cross the coast to cause extensive damage, and even downgraded cyclones, such as Tropical Cyclone Oswald, which struck the coast as a tropical low, caused extensive damage in two states.

“Inundation and storm damage inflicted by Ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald caused \$978 million in insurance losses in Queensland and \$121 million in New South Wales. The damage in New South Wales would have been considerably worse if not for the levees built over a number of decades,” Mr Whelan said.

“More than 98 per cent of insurance claims have now been settled. Homes have been rebuilt, houses have been refurnished and cars replaced – in essence, communities have been rebuilt. But there is still work to be done to protect these communities.

“These disasters have highlighted the importance of a durable, resilient built environment, flood mitigation work and policies to help drive this work forward.”

**EDITORS NOTE:** An ICA spokesperson is available for interview during Get Ready Queensland week.

### **ICA Disaster Preparation Checklists**

- [Storm Preparation](#)
- [Bushfire Preparation](#)
- [Securing your property](#)

### **Bureau of Meteorology**

- [Australian tropical cyclone season outlook](#)