

Australia: At least 1 dead as heavy rain and floods hit northern Queensland

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The far north of the Australian state of Queensland was hit with over a week of high rainfall and flooding over the new year holidays. At least one man is confirmed dead, and the extreme weather has once again exposed the unpreparedness of the state and federal governments for such events.

Some regions across northern Queensland have received rainfall equivalent to an average year's worth of precipitation in just a few days. This has been due to an unusually active monsoon trough and associated low-pressure systems, which have delivered prolonged heavy rain across both coastal and inland areas.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) has issued major flood warnings for the Flinders River, with river systems including the Flinders, Cloncurry, Mulgrave, Georgina, Norman and Diamantina all showing elevated water levels and ongoing flood risk. Severe weather and flood warnings remain in force across a wide area, and experts from the BOM have cautioned that waters may take weeks to recede due to slow drainage across flat inland landscapes.

Some of the hardest-hit areas include stretches of inland Queensland north of Winton and toward the Gulf of Carpentaria, as well as regions on the east coast, between Townsville and Innisfail. Some of these areas have recorded more than 500 mm (19.6 inches) of rain in a matter of days, contributing to swollen rivers and inundated floodplains.

Along the northeast coast, towns such as Bingil Bay recorded around 1.1 metres (43 inches) of rain in a four-day span, and Innisfail saw daily rainfall totals exceeding 400 mm (15.7 inches), the highest it has been since 1999.

At least one person has been confirmed dead as a result of the extreme weather. On Tuesday, a man in his seventies, who has not been identified, was found dead

inside his submerged car at Normanton, just south of the Gulf of Carpentaria. In recovering the man's body, emergency services personnel had to brave crocodile-infested water. Mount Isa District Acting Superintendent Paul Austin noted, "There's some really big crocs in the Norman River."

Emergency services have been called for other serious incidents, including seven people who needed rescuing near the town of Ingham and three people who required medical aid after their house was struck by lightning.

Major roads across northern and Far North Queensland have been cut off or severely damaged by the heavy rain and flooding. In the Gulf Country and outback, towns such as Normanton and Cloncurry have seen road access severed, while further east, flooding and landslips have disrupted major coastal highways. Sections of the Captain Cook Highway, the main coastal link between Cairns and Port Douglas, were damaged by landslides and wash-outs triggered by prolonged heavy rain.

In the broader region, segments of the Bruce Highway, Queensland's major north-south transport artery, have also been cut, particularly near Townsville and the Cassowary Coast, where heavy rain and flash flooding forced closures and put further strain on logistics and supply chains. These closures have left some communities reliant on limited alternate routes for essential supplies, with locals reporting shortages of food, fuel and medical access as trucks and emergency vehicles are delayed or rerouted.

Early government and industry reporting—and accounts from graziers on the ground—indicate significant livestock loss. In heavily affected areas such as around Cloncurry and Julia Creek, producers are reporting thousands of cattle submerged, stranded or

requiring aerial relocation to higher ground. For producers in regional towns, the loss of cattle and sheep translates directly into lost income at a time when many were already facing heavy financial strain.

The BOM has warned the danger has not yet passed. Meteorologist Angus Hines stated that the weather system may in fact “build through the first few days of next week, around Monday and Tuesday.” Although the risk is still low at this point, there is a possibility of a tropical cyclone forming near Cairns in the far north of the state.

Many residents have reported severe anxiety about the most recent downpour, especially given the experience many of them have been through in previous years. Northern Queensland has been hit by a succession of severe floods that illustrate a clear, worsening pattern. The devastating 2019 Townsville floods killed five people and inflicted enormous damage across the region’s grazing and agricultural districts, producing massive livestock losses and causing sharp financial strain on rural communities already squeezed by the cost-of-living crisis.

Early last year, floods again struck many of the same shires, killing two people and displacing hundreds, while towns were isolated by washed-out roads and bridges and essential services including airports, power and communications were knocked out for days.

It is undeniable that climate change has made such events more likely to occur. While it is not scientifically valid to immediately draw a direct link between this particular extreme weather event and climate change, a substantial body of evidence confirms that global warming has made heavy rainfall events in Australia far more frequent. This is in large part due to the atmosphere being able to hold more water vapour as it warms in temperature.

A clear pattern of repeated, escalating extreme-weather disasters has emerged across Australia in the past several years. This history includes the 2019 Black Summer bushfires which burned an estimated 18.6 million hectares, destroyed more than 3,000 homes and were linked to the deaths of at least 33 people, as well as the 2019 and 2025 northern Queensland floods, the catastrophic New South Wales floods of early 2022, and Cyclone Alfred in 2025 which left hundreds of thousands of households without power for days and caused severe damage to low-lying

working-class suburbs.

More extreme weather events are expected for Australia and the world as the rise in global temperatures continues unabated. Since taking office in 2022, the Albanese Labor government has approved at least 31 new coal, oil and gas developments—together representing some 6.5 billion tonnes of CO₂-equivalent emissions over their lifetimes—while fast-tracking critical-minerals and other resource projects under recent environmental law changes. These policies directly undermine any credible pathway to limiting warming, locking in further greenhouse gas emissions.

Federal and state governments have overseen a sustained transfer of wealth to the financial elite while imposing austerity and market-driven policies that leave working people exposed when disaster strikes. Large numbers of households are living paycheque to paycheque. Mortgage and consumer debt ratios have climbed and many families lack any meaningful savings buffer, making them unable to absorb the immediate costs of evacuation, temporary accommodation and replacement of lost goods.

Taken together, these facts demonstrate that under capitalism the social capacity to prevent, prepare for and respond to climate disasters has been systematically eroded by policies that prioritise private profit and elite wealth accumulation over public safety.

The Queensland floods are not an isolated event, but rather an entirely predictable event that society has the resources to properly deal with. Those resources must be taken out of the hands of the capitalist class and used for social need, to ensure that working people are protected from the impacts of extreme weather events and to implement a rapid transition away from fossil fuels to mitigate further climate change. This is only possible through a fight by the international working class for the overthrow of the capitalist profit system and its replacement with socialism.



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