



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Queenslanders encouraged to Get Ready for storm and cyclone season**

Rugby league legend Johnathan Thurston officially kicked off Get Ready Queensland Week (12-18 October) at Rocklea State School this morning and the message is for all Queenslanders to be prepared this storm and cyclone season.

The Get Ready Queensland Week launch coincided with the Bureau of Meteorology releasing its Severe Weather Outlook.

Bureau Meteorologist Laura Boekel said Queensland could experience heavier than usual rainfall, widespread and prolonged flooding, and possibly more cyclones than average, with La Niña conditions active for the 2020-21 severe weather season.

"The Bureau's lifting in September of the La Niña alert to a current La Niña should have communities preparing for wetter and more cyclone-prone months ahead," Ms Boekel said.

"La Niña typically results in greater than average rainfall, more tropical cyclones, and an earlier onset of the first rains of the wet season.

"Australia's last significant La Niña was in 2010-12 when Queensland experienced the Category 5 Cyclone Yasi and the State saw devastating flooding in many regions.

"While the La Niña conditions of this season are not expected to be as strong as those of 2010-12, this forecast does not mean impacts won't be comparable this time around.

"When a La Niña is active, Australia usually experiences close to, or slightly above, the long-term average of 11 cyclones in a season – and there tends to be more coastal crossings.

"Queensland communities should not be complacent at any time of year, but the Get Ready Queensland launch is a timely reminder that Queenslanders live in a state that sees more than its fair share of weather-related impacts caused by floods, storms and cyclones."

Get Ready Queensland Ambassador Johnathan Thurston said October was the perfect time for all Queenslanders to think about their disaster risk and take some simple steps to protect their loved ones.

"It's time for Queenslanders to prepare their homes, have an emergency kit and plan in place and check their insurance so they know they are covered," Mr Thurston said.

"The Bureau forecast is for a busier than usual storm season which could mean some extra challenges for our emergency services so we need to do all we can to help ourselves before severe weather strikes.

"With all the disasters we've experienced in recent years including catastrophic bushfires and widespread flooding along with the unexpected impacts of COVID-19, it's important that we show our emergency services that they can count on us too.

"If everyone can take some time to be prepared for disaster season, it means that our emergency services can focus on the people who really need help in a disaster.

"It takes just 10 minutes to prepare your household emergency plan on the Get Ready Queensland website and will prove to our emergency services that we are all on the same side," he said.

“COVID-19 brings some new challenges this disaster season so we are also asking people to add a few new items to their household emergency kits including tissues, hand sanitiser, face masks and disinfectant wipes,” he said.

Queensland Reconstruction Authority Chief Executive Officer Brendan Moon said Get Ready Queensland research shows we still have a long way to go to prepare households and loved ones for the disaster season.

“Almost half (44 per cent) of Queenslanders say they will wait for an actual or impending disaster to get prepared, which means many people would be caught out by rapid onset disasters such as bushfires, severe storms and flash flooding,” Mr Moon said.

“We know from past disaster experiences that people may have limited time to protect their possessions and evacuate safely.

“Get Ready Queensland Week is all about making disaster preparedness front of mind before the next disaster, so that people have peace of mind that they have done all they can ahead of severe weather.

“This year has been a year like no other and as a result of international and national travel restrictions due to COVID-19 it is expected more Queenslanders will hit the open road this year.

“Even on holiday, it’s important for people to consider their risks while travelling and simple measures such as having a car emergency kit with spare water, fuel, food, torches, batteries and blankets will come in handy should the unexpected happen,” he said.

Suncorp Chief Operating Officer Paul Smeaton said the insurer was partnering with Get Ready Queensland to help improve the state’s resilience to natural disasters.

“The impacts of a changing climate mean extreme weather events are becoming more severe and frequent, with many communities and homes at increased risk if we don’t act now,” Mr Smeaton said.

“Over the next few months Suncorp will work with JT, Queensland Reconstruction Authority and SES to encourage households, businesses and communities to get prepared.

“Our research shows even small-scale storms can have a big impact, so it is critical Queenslanders undertake home preparation and maintenance now as waiting until a storm is bearing down is just too late.”

Get Ready Queensland’s advertising campaign featuring Ambassador Johnathan Thurston as well as representatives from Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and Lifeline is running until 14 November 2020.

For more information on Get Ready Queensland visit: <https://getready.qld.gov.au/>

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