

Mini-cyclone, record floods hit Australia

March 7 2010



Passerbys help push a car down a flooded road in central Melbourne. The city is bracing itself for further storms after a mini-cyclone ripped through Australia's second largest city, bringing with it hail stones the size of tennis balls.

Melbourne was bracing itself Sunday for further storms after a mini-cyclone ripped through Australia's second largest city, bringing with it hail stones the size of tennis balls.

The [storm](#) dumped heavy rain across the southern state of Victoria, and smashed into the regional capital with winds of up to 100 kilometres (62 miles) an hour, cutting power to 100,000 homes.

Some 26 millimetres (one inch) of rain fell on Melbourne within an hour while other areas recorded up to 70 millimetres during the Saturday storm.

"Yesterday we had golf-to-tennis ball-sized hail and certainly there's a prospect of similar sized hail somewhere in the state today," Richard

Carlyon, the Bureau of Meteorology's senior forecaster, told ABC radio.

"Whether it's Melbourne I'm not so sure about... but if it's not Melbourne, I think there's a very good prospect of large hail being reported somewhere in the state."

In the city centre the National Gallery of Victoria suffered flooding, while the Docklands Stadium was among those buildings damaged during the violent storm, which washed out horse races.

Bureau of [Meteorology](#) forecaster Wasyl Drosdowsky said the hail that hit in one suburban area was up to 10 centimetres (four inches) in diameter.

"(It was) tennis ball size roughly," he said. "As far as we can tell, that's close to the biggest hail we've seen in Melbourne."

As the city readied for further violent storms Sunday, once-in-a-century floods were peaking in the state of Queensland in the country's northeast, parts of which have been in drought for almost a decade.

Townships in the state's cotton-growing south were cut off by rising flood waters and in St George the Balonne River reached 13.5 metres (44 feet), its highest level since records began in 1890.

Queensland Premier Anna Bligh said the cost of the flooding would be in the hundreds of millions of dollars, as there had been major damage to highways and rail lines had been washed away.

"This is a massive water event which has smashed all the records known here in the southwest," she told reporters Sunday as she toured St George.

"All this water ultimately is going to mean great things for local (farmers) but there is a lot of pain to be felt in these communities before we can see total recovery."

In the nearby tiny town of Nindigully, residents were marvelling at the amount of water surrounding the rural outpost.

"Overall, we are happy to have experienced this flood because of the beauty of vast expanses of water through the bush that you never forget," Steve Burns, the owner of the 146-year-old Nindigully Pub told AAP.

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