

# Thousands evacuated as Australian bushfires rage

November 28 2018

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Firefighters have been battling to contain more than 130 blazes across Queensland

Thousands of people were being evacuated from their homes in northeast Australia late Wednesday, as bushfires raged across

Queensland state amid a scorching heatwave.

Some 8,000 people were told to leave the town of Gracemere, south of the central coast area of Rockhampton, as a fast-moving blaze threatened homes.

The Bureau of Meteorology declared a "catastrophic" fire danger—the highest possible risk rating—in some central areas, while firefighters battled to contain more than 130 blazes across the state.

"This is a very [stressful situation](#) for families. I need you to all be strong. I need you to all listen. Your family and the protection of our community is vital," state premier Annastacia Palaszczuk warned those told to leave.

"So we need to reach out to [community members](#) who are frail, who are elderly, who have a disability. Please listen to authorities, it is going to get a lot worse," she added.

The Bureau of Meteorology said scorching temperatures had broken records across Queensland, with the state capital Brisbane reaching 37.9 degrees Celsius (100.2 degrees Fahrenheit).

At least 34 schools were closed, and authorities earlier in the day said the number of homes destroyed was likely in "single digits" but it was too early to confirm.



The fires erupted as Queensland is in the grip of a scorching heatwave

Other [states](#) were sending back up firefighters to Queensland.

"We will see more fires flare up very very quickly, so this is the start of it," Queensland [fire](#) and emergency services commissioner Katarina Carroll warned those evacuating.

"It is very difficult to get a sense of how long people have in the area because the winds are picking up faster than what was expected—so evolving, but very, very quickly," she added.

Resident Luana Royle from the central Queensland town of Finch Hatton told national broadcaster ABC that the area had been hard-hit by the blaze.



A water bomber helicopter returns to fill its tank in the Blackwater creek of

Deepwater National Park area of Queensland

"Our fires around here, you couldn't even see 500 metres in front of you this morning," she said.

"Everyone is OK, but two houses have went, which is pretty sad."

Australia is no stranger to [extreme weather](#), experiencing [flash floods](#), sandstorms and even extreme drought in [areas](#) that are now being inundated.

South of Queensland, in the neighbouring state of New South Wales, Sydney on Wednesday was hit by severe thunderstorms and heavy rainfall.



While Queensland battles bushfires and extreme temperatures, further south Sydney was hit by severe thunderstorms

The local Bureau of Meteorology reported more than 106 millimetres of rain in some places within a few hours.

Flights were cancelled, railway lines closed and motorists stranded on flooded roads, as a month's worth of rain fell there early Wednesday morning.

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