

Rooftop rescues in Australia as tens of thousands evacuated from floods

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A couple wades through a waterlogged street on the banks of the overflowing Brisbane River.

Tens of thousands of Australians were ordered to flee their homes Monday, as torrential rain sent floodwaters to record levels, leaving

residents stranded on the rooftops of their homes.

Eight people have died, and the country's weather bureau has warned further severe thunderstorms and intense rainfall will cause "life-threatening flash flooding" across a swathe of the central Pacific coastal region.

In the country town of Lismore, resident Danika Hardiman woke Monday morning to find mud-brown floodwaters had reached the balcony of her second-floor apartment.

She and her partner managed to climb up to the roof, where they were spotted by passing kayakers, who flagged down a makeshift rescue boat.

"We were rescued by two guys in a boat, two locals," Hardiman told AFP, describing the scenes in Lismore as "horrific".

"Imagine you're in a boat sailing past people's roofs," she said.

"The scary thing is this is just the beginning, there's lots of rain to come."

With the town's levees already breached, 43,000 residents were ordered to leave by this morning.

Emergency services were overwhelmed by calls for aid, leading some locals—including Lismore's mayor Steve Krieg—to turn to [social media](#) for help.

"If anyone has a boat and can get to Engine Street, there's a pregnant lady sitting on her roof. HELP Please," he posted on Facebook Monday.

Emergency rescue services said they had also deployed a helicopter to

pluck other stranded residents from rooftops.

More than 400 millimetres (16 inches) of rain has fallen in the past 24 hours around Lismore, with the town's Wilson River still rising, according to the weather bureau.

Water levels in Lismore have not yet reached their expected peak of 14 metres—but they are already the worst floods the town has experienced.

A miraculous rescue

Flooding across eastern Australia has now killed eight people, after a man in his 50s died Monday when his car was swept away by floodwaters in the northern state of Queensland.

Millions of people have been told to stay home and nearly 1,000 schools in Queensland remain closed because of the floods.

A 70-year-old man miraculously survived after his houseboat, swept along by the raging Brisbane River, collided with a ferry terminal and quickly sank.

Members of the public were able to rescue the man, with one telling public broadcaster ABC they had linked arms to create a human chain and fish the man from the river unharmed.

"I don't know how he survived it, to be honest," onlooker Matthew Toomey said.

Rain has battered eastern Australia for the better part of a week as an extreme weather system—the tail end of a wet summer fuelled by La Nina—has moved south down the country's coast, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake.

Queensland premier Anastacia Palaszczuk said Monday that some regions of her tropical state had experienced a year's worth of rainfall in just days.

Australia has been on the sharp end of climate change, with droughts, deadly bushfires, bleaching events on the Great Barrier Reef and floods becoming more common and more intense as global climate patterns change.

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