

# Tropical cyclone awareness and preparedness amongst backpackers and accommodation providers in Cairns, Queensland, Australia

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- Pamphlets with cyclone information directed to backpackers should be designed in a visually attractive way, as backpackers are not interested in complex and detailed cyclone information. The interests and behaviour of the backpackers has to be taken into consideration at the design of specific cyclone information.



The objective of this project is to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of how to improve awareness of the tropical cyclone risk among backpackers and the mode and style of delivery of cyclone awareness campaigns targeted towards backpacker tourists.

This project is an expansion of a previous project carried out by the Centre for Disaster Studies in 2000, also supported by the Cairns City Council, which was performed outside the cyclone season. As an extension on the previous project this study also focused on the information resources of backpackers.

Backpackers are in general aware of cyclones in Australia, although their specific knowledge about cyclones is minimal. The behaviour of backpackers is not influenced in regards to the hazards of cyclones, as backpackers did not plan their trip according to the cyclone season, even though aware of it. When a severe cyclone is heading for the coast, backpackers may act in various ways: look into what to do, evacuate, shelter or stay, all plausible actions.

Because backpackers are not likely to search in an active way for cyclone information prior to a cyclone warning, the current passive cyclone awareness campaigns should be changed to more active campaigns directed to backpackers. The recommended way to provide cyclone information to backpackers is by pamphlets and brochures at accommodation providers with a direction to an Internet site. Moreover, information can be provided at bus stops and in guidebooks like the Lonely Planet.

Regarding the accommodations providers, improvements can be made in the way they are prepared for cyclones. To ensure the safety of backpackers all the staff of accommodations should be well informed about the safety procedures present.

A significant number of the tourists visiting the popular tourist destinations of Cairns and the coast up to Cape Tribulation are backpackers. These places are located in the coastal area of Queensland, and are prone to tropical cyclones. Backpackers are considered more vulnerable to the impacts of tropical cyclones compared to other tourists, because they are independent. Therefore the accommodation providers have a big responsibility towards cyclone safety.

This project is an expansion of a previous project, carried out by the Centre for Disaster Studies in 2000, which was performed outside the cyclone season. The report of this study was finished in 2001. In the 2001 report, the previous experience with tropical cyclones of backpackers was investigated, as well as their general knowledge and awareness about tropical cyclones, their preparedness and perceptions of risk were investigated. This study is focussed on the above subjects, and the information resources of backpackers to determine the best way to reach them with information about tropical cyclones.

The objective of this project is to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of how

The need to understand vulnerability in a study about natural disasters and the risk they are to a community is immanent. This risk of disasters to communities is dependent on three factors; hazard, elements at risk and vulnerability. Natural disasters, like cyclones, cause significantly more risk to the safety of people when their vulnerability is relatively high.

According to the Bureau of Meteorology a tropical cyclone is an extreme low pressure system in the tropics which, in the Southern Hemisphere, has a well defined clockwise wind circulation with a region surrounding the centre with gale force winds (sustained winds of 63 km/h or greater with gusts in excess of 90 km/h) (EMA & BOM, 2002).

Tropical cyclones only arise over oceans with a minimum temperature of 26,5 °C, and within 5°-12° north and south of the equator. They create mainly coastal hazards, because most of the systems decay rapidly over land areas (Smith, 1996). Therefore, the coastal areas of the northern half of Australia are prone to tropical cyclones.

Tropical cyclones are divided into five categories; with category five being the most severe. The three most common hazards that are associated with tropical cyclones are; strong winds, heavy rainfall with flooding, and storm surges (EMA & BOM, 2002). Storm surges are coastal inundations of the sea, caused by the low pressure of the centre of a cyclone.

The term vulnerability has a commonplace meaning: being prone or susceptible to damage or injury. A working definition is: the characteristics of a person or group in terms of their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural hazard. Some groups in society are more prone than others to damage, loss and suffering from different hazards. Key characteristics of these variations of impact are for example class, ethnicity, gender, disability and age. From this it can be deduced that vulnerability is closely correlated with socio-economic positions (Blaikie, 1994).

According to the theory of Granger (1999), there are five elements at risk in the community and their vulnerability. The first element is the **physical environment**. This contains the basic topics, like physical environment, infrastructure, and administrative arrangements. The second element is **places of shelter**: the buildings that provide shelter to the community at home, at work and at play. The next element is **service infrastructures**. This includes the service infrastructures such as water supply, sewerage, power supply and telecommunications. Next is the **health and wealth** of the community, measured in terms of its health and wealth and by the forms of protections that are provided. For example, hospitals and fire stations are protection facilities. The final element is the **society**. The society is measured in terms of language, education, religion, awareness and so on. These elements together provide an adequate measure of

Tourists are at greater risk than local residents, because they are unfamiliar with the place. When they find themselves at risk in unfamiliar places, tourists are often not equipped with a self-protective behaviour (Burby & Wagner, 1996). That is why cyclone preparedness for tourists needs special attention.

The community is not easy to define. It could be defined as a universal focus of social activity. In general, communities occupy physical space and can be characterised in part by their terrain and climate conditions. Because communities are very complex systems of human activity, it is useful to define a community as a multi organisational system. A community can be described as a location of social action (Quarantelli, 1998). In relation to this investigation, the location of social action is the region of Cairns.

A community can also be

There is a common assumption in the literature and in public action on natural hazards that heightened awareness of hazards leads to greater likelihood of adoption of mitigation measures. At the same time, there is increasing scepticism that more information by itself will lead to appropriate adjustments. It has been documented many times that planning to overcome the worst effects of natural hazards is most intense immediately after an extreme hazard event (Saarinen, 1982).

Because backpackers tend to travel independently, they tend to gather their own information for the trip. The earlier CDS report (2001) indicates that the three most commonly used information resources about next destination are guidebooks, friends and word of mouth. However, the source of information for the most up to date information about cyclones would be local residents, followed by the Internet. In other words, backpackers use informal networks to make decisions about where to travel, but consult formal sources to find out more information about intended destinations. Almost half of the backpackers in Cairns were not informed at all about cyclones in Northern Australia, whereas the most frequently used sources of cyclone information are news/radio, word of mouth and general knowledge.

In Australia, there are several public warning messages that may be issued during the season. As the threat increases, more detailed information will be included in the advices given to the community.

The tropical cyclone watch is an advice that is issued every 6 hours when it is suspected that gales or stronger winds reach coastal communities within 48 hours, but not within 24 hours. This advice includes the cyclone's location, intensity, severity category and movement. The next step in warning signals is the tropical cyclone warning, which is an advice that is issued every three hours when it is suspected that gales or stronger winds will reach coastal communities within 24 hours. The warning includes more detailed information about the cyclone, the hazards, and advises about precautions. When a cyclone is under radar surveillance nearby the coast, even hourly advice may be broadcasted.

When a cyclone stronger than category two is suspected to affect a community within 12 hours, an audible standard emergency warning signal is sounded on broadcast

media. Another way used to inform the community is via a cyclone track and threat map, which shows the

Two questionnaires were formulated for this research project. One of them was designed to investigate the awareness and knowledge about tropical cyclones and its hazards amongst backpackers, and which information sources they used. The target was to interview at least 200 backpackers.

The second questionnaire was designed for the accommodation providers with questions to determine the information about tropical cyclones that is presented to the visitors and their opinion about the potential risks. Eight accommodation providers were interviewed.

The objective of the project is to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of how to improve awareness of the tropical cyclone risk amongst backpackers and the mode and style of delivery of cyclone awareness campaigns targeted towards backpacker tourists.

The questions about the personal details were formulated to get an overview of the origin, age and level of education of backpackers. Based on these characteristics the s4011 Tc 0.0161



damage caused by a tropical cyclone and how to behave in case of an emergency illustrate the attitude and concern about tropical cyclones.

Backpacker accommodation providers were interviewed to ascertain their views and behaviour. Questions about the number of beds and the occupancy rate are formulated to get an overview of the accommodation provider characteristics. The concern about cyclones is determined by questions about the effect and risk level of cyclones.

There are also some questions to get an indication about the information for visitors and the mode of information delivery. The last questions are about the preparedness of accommodation providers for cyclones: where they gather cyclone information during the cyclone season and the emergency plans.

Interviewing of the backpackers was carried out inside backpacker accommodation, as well as at public areas like the Esplanade and Lake Street Mall. The addresses for the administration of the interviews at accommodation locations were taken from an official list provided by the Cairns City Council. Systematic random sampling was used because of the large amount of accommodation providers and backpackers in order to obtain an overview of a selected group that is similar to the population in its position.

The interviews were carried out during the wet season of 2003, during the months of February, March and April. Every interview was conducted face to face by one of the two Principal Investigators. Interviewing was paused while a cyclone was active in the region in order to ensure that all interviews were conducted under comparable conditions.

The analysis of the survey data was carried out by the use of SPSS version 11.0. The outcomes of these analyses are displayed as frequency tables, and bar diagrams. Some questions gave respondents the opportunity to give more than one answer, which required a specific approach concerning the data analysis. Only two of the answers to these questions are recorded, with the first two selected out of the given answers. The category "No second answer given" is added so when the answers of these questions are summed up, the total amount of answers is twice as many as there

are respondents. As a result of this, the answers of the individual respondents are not equal, although they still give a reliable indication.

The interviewing for this project was carried out in Cairns and Cape Tribulation. Both are located in Tropical Far North Queensland, functioning as a gateway to the Great Barrier Reef and Tropical Rainforests (Berry in 2000 study). Cairns is the capital of Tropical Far North Queensland and has a population of 123,760 inhabitants. The Far North Statistical Division's takings from tourism accommodation in the 12 month ended March 2002 were \$272.7 million, accounting for 21.8% per cent of Queensland's takings from accommodation. Cairns City contributed for 43.8% (\$119.4 million) to the takings of The Far North Statistical Division, and 4,521 rooms within 54 establishments were located within the area of Cairns (OESR, 2002).

Both Cairns and Cape Tribulation are located in the tropical cyclone prone area North of Australia. Amongst the 53 cyclones in the history of Cairns that caused a measured or reported impact on Cairns, at least 11 of them have done substantial damage or caused significant dislocation. Recent cyclones that headed straight over Cairns were category 2 cyclone Justin in 1997 with wind gusts of 128 km/h, damaging Cairns for over \$2 million and category 2 cyclone Steve. Cyclone Steve hit Cairns on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February 2000. A major flooding between Cairns and Mareeba. Wind gusts of up to 140 km/h. Hundreds of trees to be uprooted and powerlines

This investigation was carried out during the wet season. However, during the period of interviewing two actual cyclone watches were issued that resulted in two temporary interview stops. The respondents that were interviewed after the watches might be more aware about tropical cyclones.

As some Asian visitors could hardly understand the English language, it was impossible to interview them. As a result, the origin of the respondents is less representative of Asians.

A few hostels were visited more than one time, because at these hostels many respondents were located so they could be interviewed. This might influence the outcomes of the questions about the cyclone safety in the accommodation.

As the managers of the accommodation were hard to reach the desk employees of some facilities were interviewed instead of the managers. They might have had less knowledge about cyclone safety management than the manager, which could affect the outcomes of the survey.

Several general questions were asked of the respondents, to get an overview of the characteristics of backpackers.

There was no gender bias in the survey and this may be taken to be representative of the general backpacker population.

	Frequency	Percent
Female	112	50.9
Male	108	49.1
Total	220	100.0

Table 1: Gender

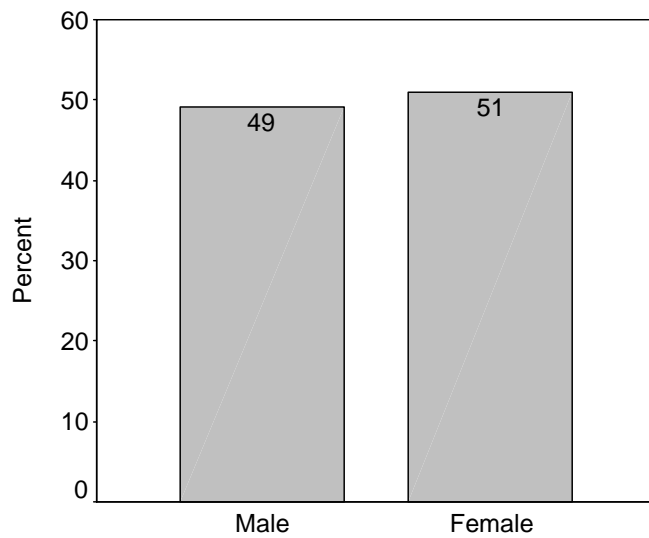


Figure 1: Gender





The majority of the backpackers have attained university (55.0%) or high school (26.8%) qualifications, as indicated in table 4. Many of those who have completed high school qualifications may have attended or be attending tertiary education, as the question asked what was the highest level of education achieved. Backpackers are clearly a very highly educated group, probably much more educated than the general tourist population,

	Frequency	Percent
Secondary school	12	5.5
High school	59	26.8
College	28	12.7
University	121	55.0
Total	220	100.0

Table 4: Educational level

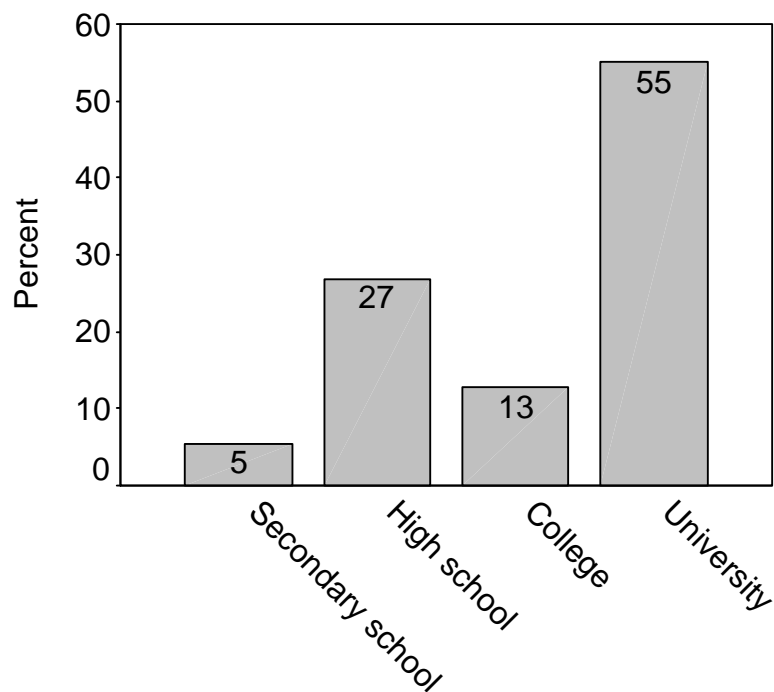


Figure 4: Educational level

The written and spoken English competency level of the majority of the respondents was fluent (74.5%), as described in table 5. This was partially caused by the fact that English was the first language for many backpackers. Out of the 102 backpackers that did not had English as first language 12.7% considered their competency level of English adequate to be fluent.

	Frequency	
	164	74.5
	28	12.7



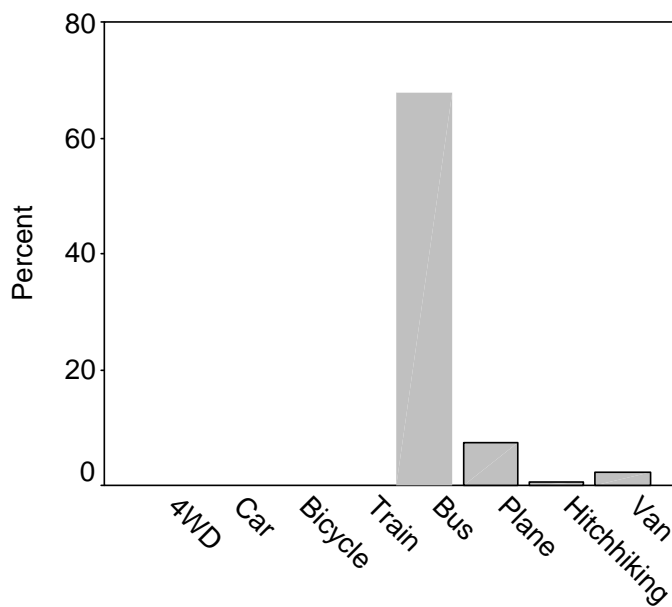
The main purpose for staying in Australia was holiday for most of the respondents (69.5%). A part of the backpackers were also in Australia for the combination of working and holiday (10.9%), whilst others came to visit friends or relatives (5.5%) and because of study purposes (3.6%), as shown in table 6. In this sense they are primary tourists.

	Frequency	Percent
Holiday	153	69.5
Working/Holiday	24	10.9
Visit friends/relatives	12	5.5
Study	8	3.6
Working	7	3.2
Language	4	1.8
Environment	4	1.8
Cultural	4	1.8
Other	3	1.4

Table 7 shows that most of the respondents used the bus (67.7%) as their main mean of transport while travelling through Australia. Both car (20.0%) and plane (7.3%) were also popular amongst the backpackers visiting Australia. As primary bus travellers they experience a more detailed network of places and have enormous flexibility of destination, route and duration of visit.

	Frequency	Percent
Bus	149	67.7
Car	44	20.0
Plane	16	7.3
Van	5	2.3
Train	3	1.4
4WD	1	.5
Bicycle	1	.5
Hitchhiking	1	.5
Total	220	100.0

Table 7: Main transport use



the respondents were travelling in a small informal group, travelling alone and only a small part (0.9%) were travelling in a group. This is a particularly interesting finding, though frustrating to know that these informal groups were formed prior to arrival in the country. Undoubtedly, both types are represented in the data, reflecting the social nature of this type of tourism as well as being a strategy of security.

Frequency	Percent
	31.4

The total length of stay in Australia was between 2 and 4 months for 30.9% of the backpackers, followed by 24.5% that stayed between 2 weeks and 2 months, as shown



After visiting Cairns, 34.1% of the backpackers went to another location in Queensland, followed by 22.7% of the respondents that went to the Northern Territory (22.7%). An overseas country was for 9.1% of the backpackers the next destination, whereas 7.7% of the backpackers went home after Cairns, as indicated in table 11. Thus although the stay in Cairns was less than 2 weeks for most respondents, their journeys were likely to keep them in a cyclone prone area for a longer period.

	Frequency	Percent
QLD	75	34.1
NT	50	22.7
NSW	31	14.1
Outside Australia	20	9.1
Home	17	7.7
VIC	14	6.4
WA	8	3.6
SA	4	1.8
No response	1	.5
Total	220	100.0

Table 11: Destination after Cairns

VIC SA WA NSW Home Outside australia No response



The respondents could give one or two answers to the question about the information sources that they used before and during their stay in Australia.

The majority (77.3%) of the backpackers searched for information about Australia before they started their trip, as shown in table 13.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes		



Before backpackers started travelling, they mainly searched for information about places of interest (34.9%), accommodation (24.4%) and trips (23.7%), see table 14. It can be assumed that they are not and probably will not search for information about hazards. This will need to be embedded within other sources of information.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Places of interest	103	23.4	34.9
Accommodation	72	16.4	24.4
Trips	70	15.9	23.7
Transport	24	5.5	8.1
Other	9	2.0	3.1
Nature	8	1.8	2.7
Prices	5	1.1	1.7
No response	4	.9	1.4
Total	295	67.0	100.0
No 2 <sup>nd</sup> answer	45	10.3	
Not searched for information	100 (50)	22.7	
Total	440	100.0	

Table 14: Kind of information searched for

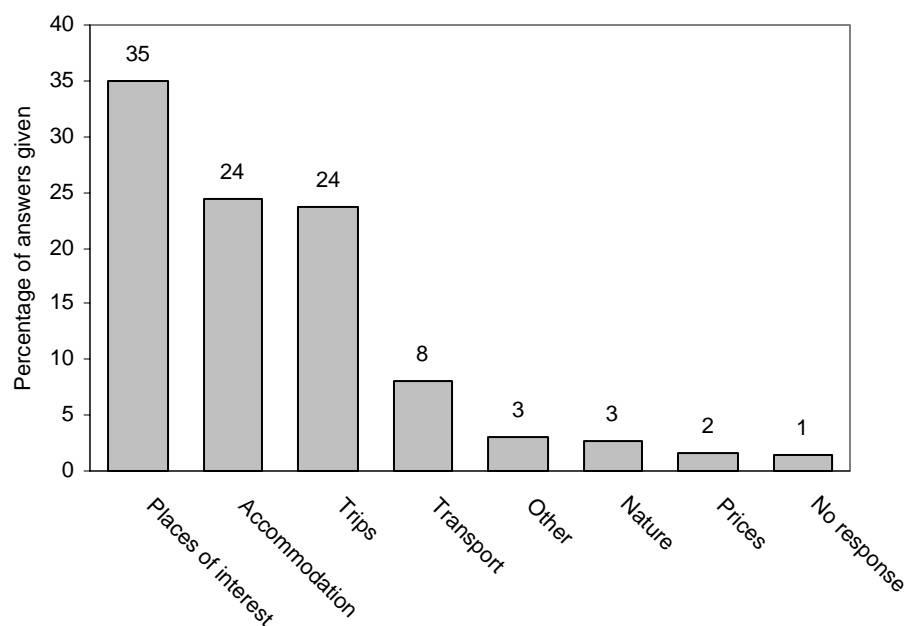


Figure 14: Kind of information searched for

The respondents used many kinds of information sources to search for information before their trip. The main part (46%) of the backpackers used a guidebook, whereas the second most popular information source was the Internet (30.4%). Two other information sources were information agents (offices that provide information to tourists) and friends, each counting for 10.3% of the answers (table 15).

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Guidebooks	121	27.5	46.0
Internet	80	18.2	30.4
Information agents	27	6.1	10.3
Friends	27	6.1	10.3
Relatives	6	1.4	2.3
Embassy	1	.2	.4
Other	1	.2	.4
Total	263	59.8	100.0
No 2 <sup>nd</sup> answer	77	17.5	
Not searched for information	100 (50)	22.7	
Total	440	100.0	

Table 15: Sources of information before trip

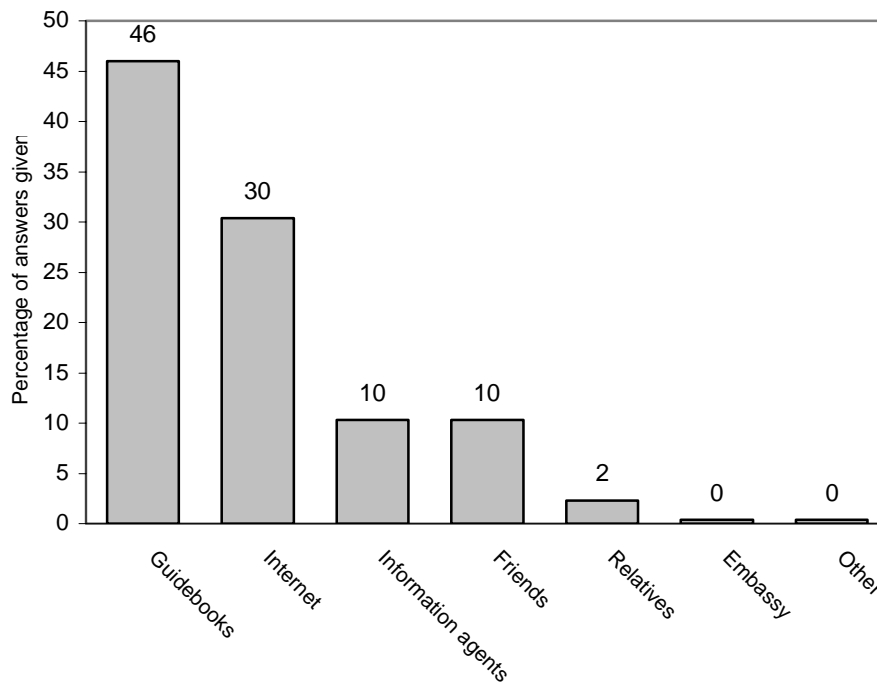
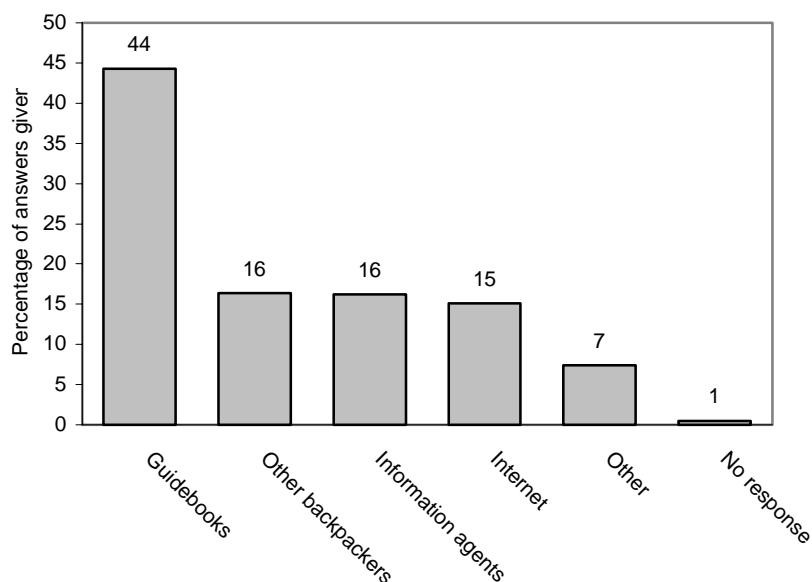


Figure 15: Sources of information before trip

All of the backpackers were gathering information during their trip. Not only was the guidebook the most popular source of information before the respondents started their trip, but also during their trip (44.3% of the answers). Other sources of information were talking to other backpackers (16.4%), information agents (16.2%) and the Internet (15.1%), see table 16.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Guidebooks	167	38.0	44.3
Other backpackers	62	14.1	16.4
Information agents	61	13.9	16.2
Internet	57	13.0	15.1
Other	28	6.4	7.4
No response	2 (1)	.5	.5
Total	377	85.7	100.0
No 2 <sup>nd</sup> answer	63	14.3	
Total	440	100.0	

Table 16: Sources of information during trip



S Tw m7gee91 254.698BT591 -5.591 5.591 5.591 358.660 5.843 m378.TT1 158.97T83 305n during trip Tc -0.0027 T

Amongst the

74.1% of the backpackers were aware that parts of Australia are affected by tropical cyclones. The right answer was the upper half coastal area of Australia. Most of these backpackers gave a correct answer to the follow-up question which area of Australia is affected by tropical cyclones, as table 19 shows.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	163	74.1
No	57	25.9
Total	220	100.0

Table 18: Awareness of cyclones in Australia

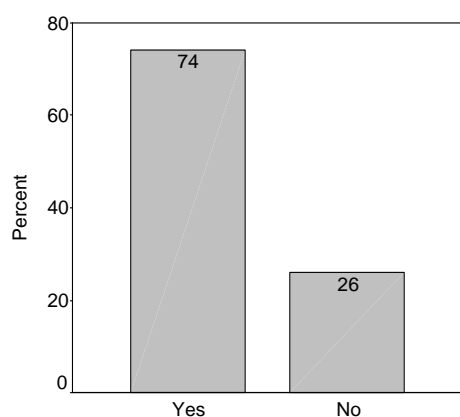


Figure 18: Awareness of cyclones in Australia

	Frequency	Percent
Correct	72	32.7
Partially correct	57	25.9
Incorrect	5	2.3
Don't know	29	13.2
Total	163	74.1
Not aware of cyclones in Australia	57	25.9
Total	220	100.0

Table 19: Knowledge about cyclone-affected areas

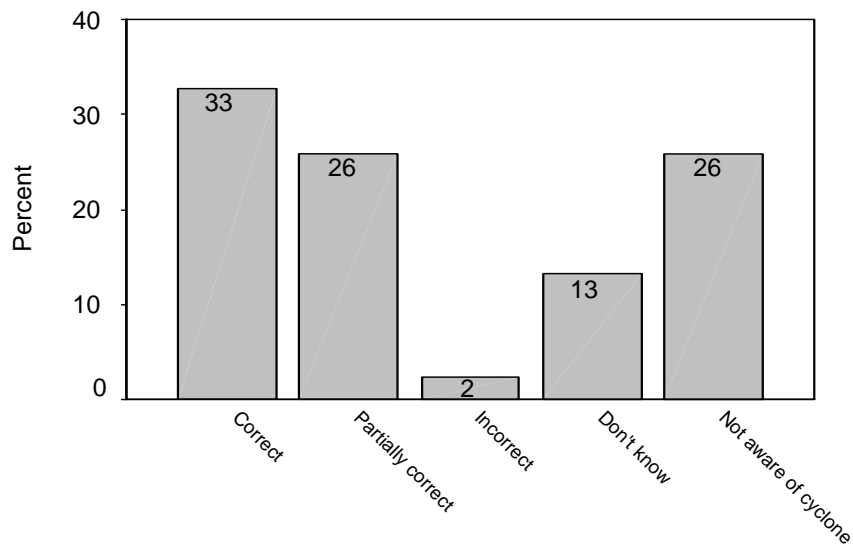


Figure 19: Knowledge about cyclone affected areas

Only 5% of the respondents found information about tropical cyclones before they started their trip, as shown in table 20.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	11	5.0
No	159	72.3
Total	170	77.3
No information about Australia before trip	50	22.7
Total	220	100.0

Table 20: Information about cyclones before trip started

Missing      Yes      No

Only 30.5% of the backpackers got information about cyclones during their trip through Australia, according to table 21. Word of mouth (14.1%) and television (10.5%) are the sources where most of these backpackers got this information, see table 22.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	67	30.5
No	153	69.5
Total	220	100.0

Table 21: Found information about cyclones during trip

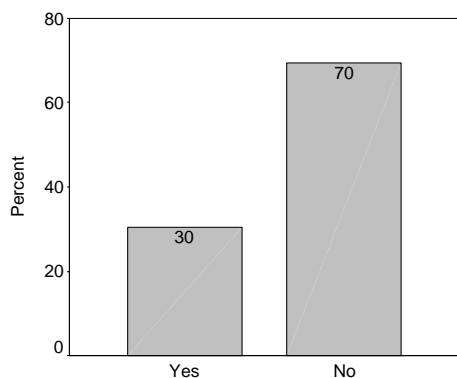


Figure 21: Found information about cyclones during trip

	Frequency	Percent
Word of mouth	31	14.1
TV	23	10.5
Other	6	2.7
Internet	2	.9
Brochures	2	.9
Radio	2	.9
Pamphlets	1	.5
Total	67	30.5
No information found about cyclones during trip	153	69.5
Total	220	100.0

Table 22: Source of information about cyclones

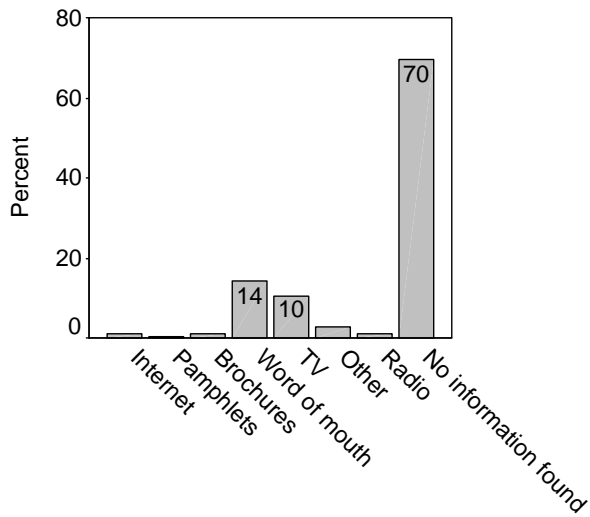


Figure 22: Source of information about cyclones

Generally, the information found about cyclones during their trip was moderate to very useful, as shown in table 23.

	Frequency	Percent
Very	25	11.4
Moderate	24	10.9
Not	14	6.4
No response	4	1.8
Total	67	30.5
No information found about cyclones during trip	153	69.5
Total	220	100.0

Table 23: How useful was the information?

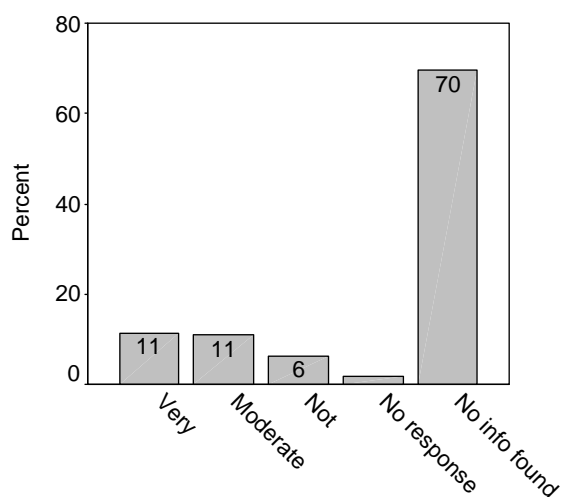


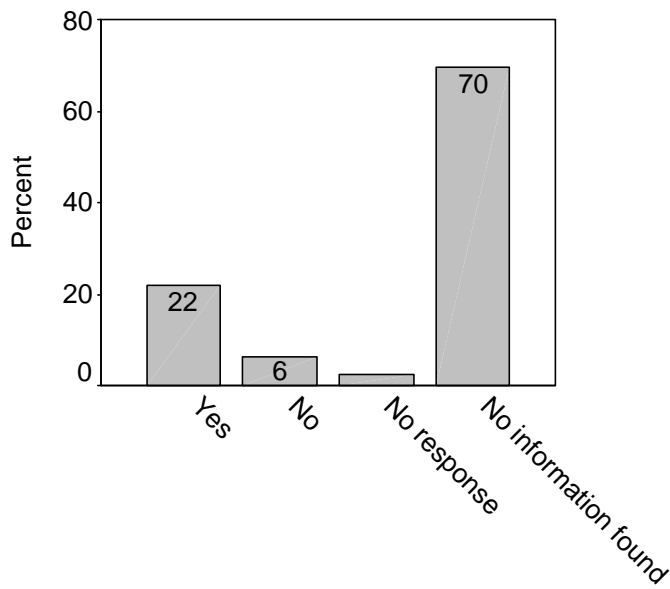
Figure 23: How useful was the information?



According to most of the respondents (21.8%) who found information about cyclones it was enough, 6.4% was not satisfied with this information, see table 24. A few backpackers (1.4%) searched for more information about cyclones as shown in table 25. It can be assumed that “no information found” includes no information being sought, either.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	48	21.8
No	14	6.4
No response	5	2.3
Total	67	30.5
No information found about cyclones during trip	153	69.5
Total	220	100.0

Table 24: Was the information enough?



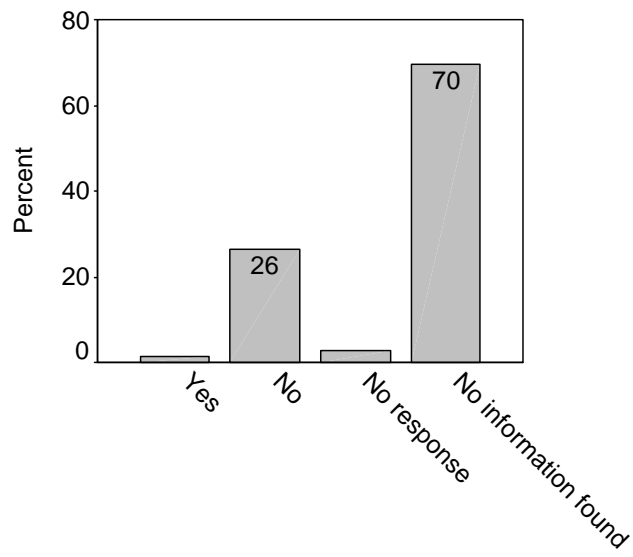


Figure 25: Searched for more information about cyclones

The respondents could give one or two answers to the question where they would search for the most up to date information about cyclones. The most frequent answer was the Internet (61.0%), followed by TV (11.0%) and travel agencies (7.6%). Other backpackers would use newspapers (4.9%) or the library (4.1%) for the most up to date information about tropical cyclones, as shown in table 26. Two responses were recorded from each respondent.

	Frequency	Percent of all responses	Percent of actual responses
Internet	161	36.6	61.0
TV	29	6.6	11.0
Travel agencies	20	4.5	7.6
News(papers)	13	3.0	4.9
Library	11	2.5	4.1
No response	6	1.4	2.3
Local residents	5	1.1	1.9
Don't know	4	.9	1.5
Radio	3	.7	1.1
Word of mouth	3	.7	1.1
Other	3	.7	1.1
Accommodation providers	2	.5	.8
Other travellers	2	.5	.8
Guid			

According to the majority of the backpackers (50.9%) there was no cyclone safety information available in their accommodation in Cairns, and 47.7% did not know whether this information was available or not, see table 27. In total 2 backpackers found

The cyclone season in Cairns is from November till April, during the Wet Season. Approximately half of the backpackers gave either the right answer (23.2%), or a partially correct answer (23.2%) to the question when is the cyclone season in Cairns. On the other hand, more than 40% of them did not know when the cyclone season is and 10.9% gave an incorrect answer, according to table 28. The response underscores a fundamental lack of awareness of the cyclone hazard.

	Frequency	Percent
Correct t	51	23.2
Partially correct	55	25.0
Incorrect		

The destructiveness of cyclones is divided up in 5 categories where category 1 is the least and category 5 is the most destructive cyclone. The backpackers were asked which category they believed is the most destructive cyclone. More than half of the backpackers were correct, but 25.9 percent of the respondents did not know what category is a more destructive cyclone and 17.3 percent gave an incorrect answer, according to table 29.

	Frequency	Percent
Category 1	57	25.9
Category 5	125	56.8
Don't know	38	17.3
Total	220	100.0

Table 29: More destructive cyclone

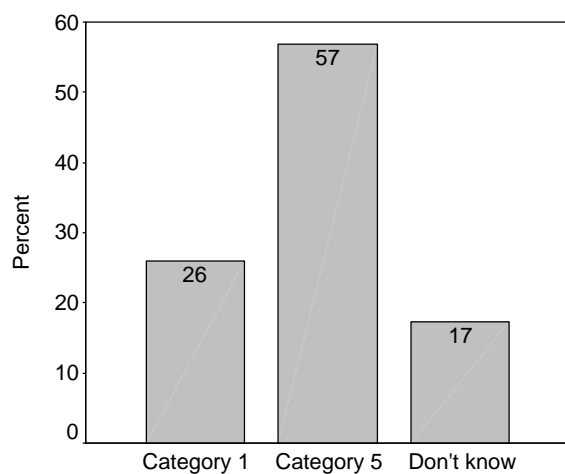


Figure 29: More destructive cyclone

A storm surge is a raised dome of seawater caused by a cyclone, which could inundate the coastal area. The description of a storm surge of the respondents created a clear view of the knowledge of backpackers about this phenomenon, as 73.6% did not know what a storm surge is and 19.1% gave an incorrect answer, see table 30. Virtually all of the backpackers interviewed in this survey were staying within the most vulnerable storm surge zones at the time. In the event of a severe cyclone these regions would need to be evacuated.

	Frequency	Percent
Correct	12	5.5
Partially correct	4	1.8
Incorrect	42	19.1
Don't know	162	73.6
Total	220	100.0

Table 30: Description of a storm surge

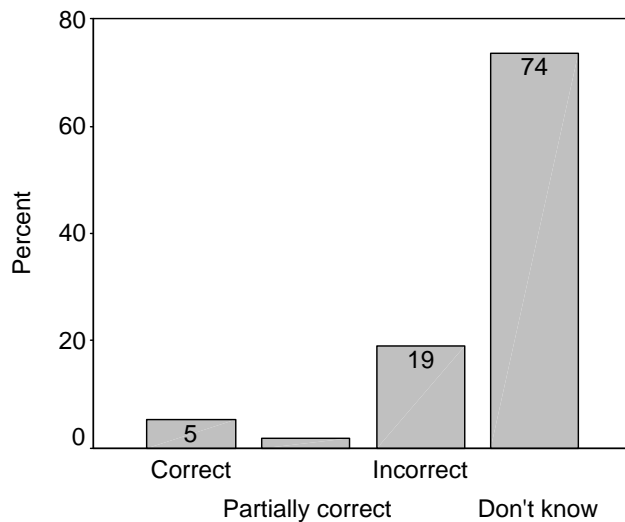


Figure 30: Description of a storm surge

The preparedness of accommodation on tropical cyclones only had an impact on a minority of the respondents. Only 22.7% of the backpackers stated that the preparedness of an accommodation provider would influence their choice of accommodation, as shown in table 31.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	50	22.7
No	164	74.5
Don't know	6	2.7
Total	220	100.0

Table 31: Influence of cyclone preparedness on choice of accommodation

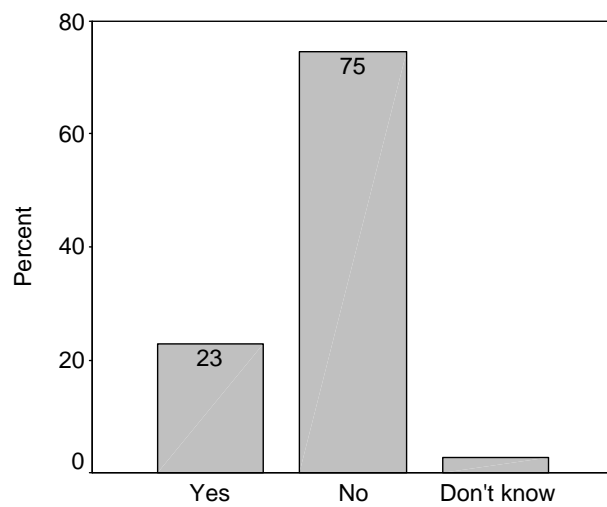


Figure 31: Influence of cyclone preparedness on choice of accommodation





The attitude of the people in case of a cyclone was varied. The biggest part of the

Opinions about the threat of cyclones differed widely. The most frequently given answer was that respondents had no idea what the threat of cyclones is in Cairns (25.4%). Apart from this answer the most common response was that a cyclone could cause severe damage (15.8%) or severe building damage (13.6%). Other kinds of damage were vegetation damage (9.3%), water/electricity failure (3.1%) and infrastructure damage (1.7%). Some (4.5%) of the backpackers thought that a cyclone could cause victims. The majority of

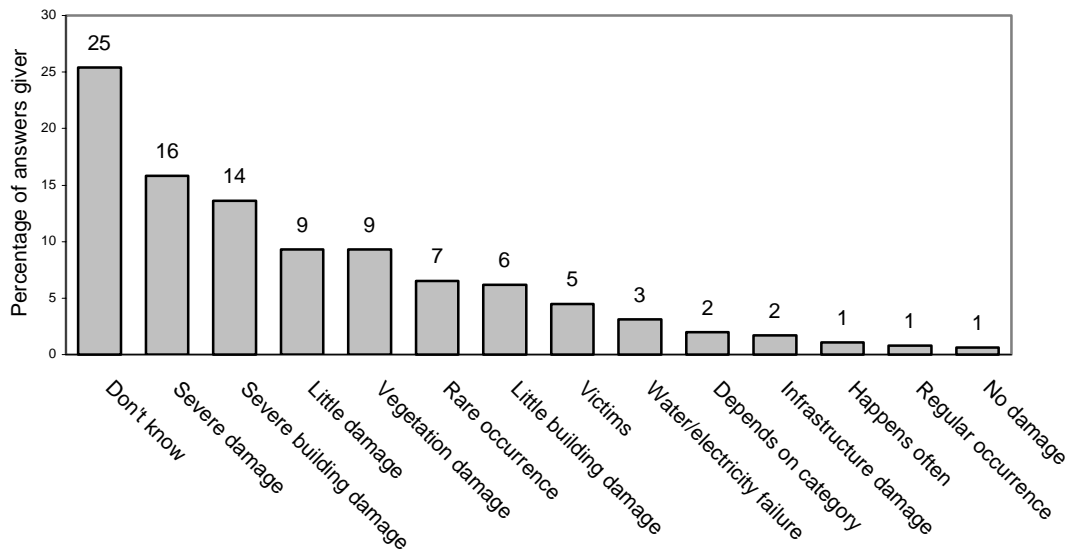


Figure 34: Threat of cyclones

Beside Australia, cyclones can also exist in other countries and locations. Questions were asked if backpackers have ever lived in a cyclone prone area or travelled in a cyclone prone area before. A few backpackers (5.9%) have lived in a cyclone prone area before they came to Australia as shown in table 35. Nearly a third of the respondents (30.5%) had travelled to a cyclone prone area before, as shown in table 36.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	13	5.9
No	207	94.1
Total	220	100.0

Table 35: Lived in a cyclone prone area

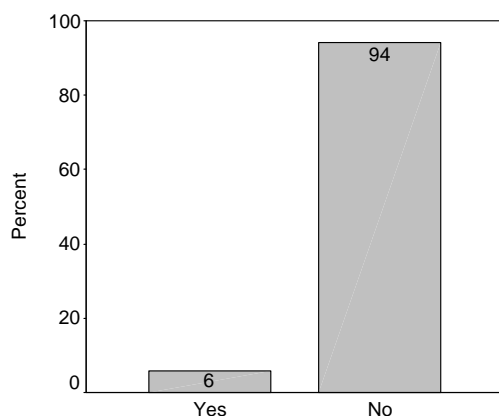


Figure 35: Lived in a cyclone prone area

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	67	30.5
No	151	68.6
Don't know		

Several questions were asked to create understanding about the way backpackers use the Internet during their trip. Some of the questions could be answered with one or two answers.

The Internet was very popular amongst most of the backpackers with 96.4% of them having used the Internet during their trip though in Australia, as shown in table 37. Most of the backpackers (39.2%) spent between 1 and 2 hours per week on the Internet, according to table 38.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	212	96.4
No	8	3.6
Total	220	100.0

Table 37: Internet use during trip

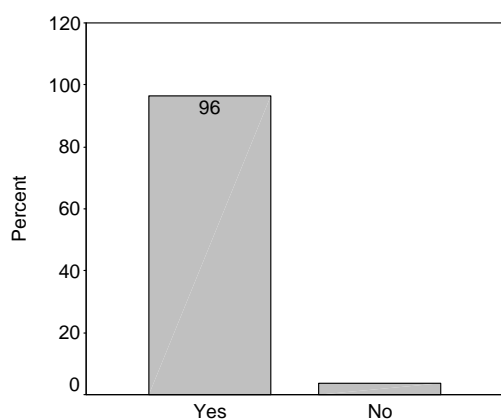


Figure 37: Internet use during trip

	Frequency	Percent
< 1 hour	50	22.7
1 - 2 hours	82	37.3
2 - 3 hours	34	15.5
3 - 4 hours	20	9.1
> 4 hours	25	11.4
No response	1	0.4
Total	211	96.3
No internet use during trip	8	3.7
Total	220	100.0

Table 38: Time spent on the Internet in a week

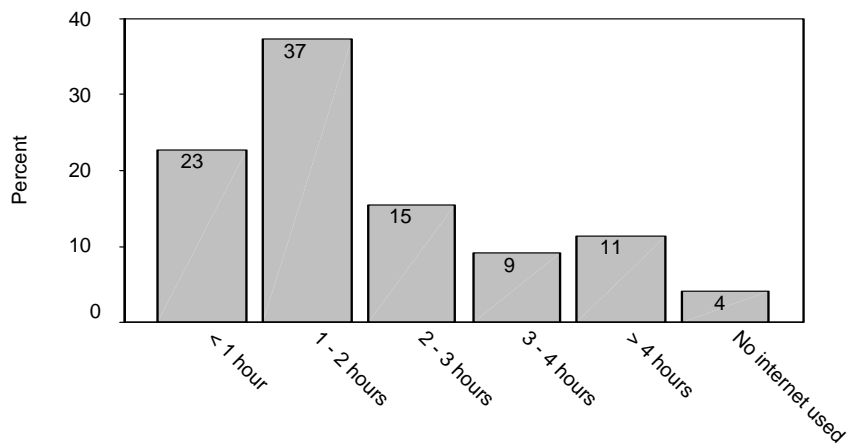


Figure 38: Time spent on the Internet in a week

According to table 39 most of the backpackers use the Internet at Internet cafés (54% of the answers) or their accommodation (42.2% of the answers). Some of the respondents accessed the Internet either at locals' places (2.9%) or on laptops (0.3%).

Frequency





The respondents who used

The following questions were asked to get an indication about general characteristics of the accommodation providers: the number of beds of the facility and the occupancy rate during the cyclone season.

Three accommodations accommodation0.978254

To determine the concern about cyclones amongst accommodation providers, questions were asked about the effect of a cyclone on the accommodation, and the level of cyclone risk for the accommodation.

Accommodation providers could give one or two answers to the question on what way they thought a cyclone would affect their facility. The most frequently given answers were storm surge (4) and damage from flying debris (4), followed by severe winds (3) and power failure (1). One of the accommodation providers meant that a cyclone would not affect the facility.

	Frequency	Percent
Storm surge	4	25.0
Severe winds	3	18.8
Damage from flying debris	4	25.0
Power failure	1	6.3
Wouldn't	1	6.3
Other	1	6.3
No second answer given	2	12.5
Total answers given	16	100.0

Table 44: Damage at facility

Half of the accommodation providers (4) had the opinion that cyclones posed little risk to their properties, whereas the other providers thought that a cyclone meant no risk to a significant risk, as shown in table 45. The low end of the risk scale dominates.

	Frequency	Percent
No risk	1	12.5
Little risk	4	50.0
Average risk	1	12.5
Quite significant risk	1	12.5
Significant risk	1	12.5
Total	8	100.0

Table 45: Property damage

Concerning personal safety, most of the providers (3) considered there was little risk, and two accommodation providers thought there is not any risk. Two other providers had the opinion a cyclone could cause average risk to personal safety. See table 46.

	Frequency	Percent
No risk	2	25.0
Little risk	3	37.5
Average risk	2	25.0
Significant risk	1	12.5
Total		

To get an overview about the cyclone information provided by accommodation providers question were asked about cyclone information that is available for guests at the accommodation, how often visitors asked for it, and in what form cyclone information most valuable is for the visitors according to the accommodation providers.

Four of the accommodation providers used pamphlets as the cyclone information mode for visitors and two of them also supplied brochures. The staff of one of the accommodation locations provided cyclone information to the tourists, and three hostels did not provide any information about tropical cyclones, as shown in table 49. Two of the accommodation providers provided the cyclone information in English and Japanese and one of them provided the information in the English language only, see table 50.





Accommodation providers

More than 60% of the backpackers are using the Lonely Planet during their trip through Australia, according to the results of this project. The Lonely Planet covers two examples of cyclones, cyclone Tracy in Darwin and cyclone Vance in Exmouth. The part about cyclone Tracy that hit Darwin on Christmas Eve 1974 is only information about the devastation the cyclone caused. The description of cyclone Vance that hit Exmouth is also about the devastation and rehabilitation.

Within the description of the climate of Queensland a comment is made about the possibility of cyclones and ensuing floods in Cairns from January till March, which can block the Bruce Highway. The description of the climate in Western Australia contains a description of the monsoon development from January onwards, followed by the occasional tropical cyclone.

Although tropical cyclones are mentioned multiple times in the Lonely Planet, there is no separate paragraph that supplies backpackers with more in-depth information about this phenomenon, or what is appropriate behaviour during its passage.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) in cooperation with Emergency Management Australia has produced a couple of information folders about cyclones. These brochures gave background information about tropical cyclones, the physical hazards of it and preparedness and safety procedures. Cairns City Council has produced similar brochures. The Department of Emergency Services provides some brochures in regards to storm surges and the standard emergency warning signal. Also the energy supplier Ergon Energy has produced a cyclone safety brochure.

TNT Magazine is a magazine specially designed for backpackers and tourists, which has a special chapter about safety and emergency essentials. However, there was no information about the risk of cyclones in that magazine. It is probably reasonable to state that adequate brochures and pamphlets have been produced, but the survey suggests there may not be enough, and that they are not sufficiently widely available. (Editors note: I have stayed in an extensive range of hostel, hotel, caravan park and unit accommodation in Cairns over the last 13 years, and have only encountered cyclone information in 2 caravan parks at the reception desk.)



The airport doesn't provide any information about tropical cyclones for tourists. During a meeting with the commercial airport manager of the Cairns Port Authority Mr Jeff Broomfield mentioned that he was willing to place brochures and pamphlets in the terminals, if governmental departments would provide them. This suggests a wider problem. He, like many accommodation providers is clearly willing to make information available, but he is not going to seek it out. The assumption we can make is that if someone brings information to the location, management will make it available. While we may desire to tourist operators to take responsibility for emergency education, it seems most likely that their co-operation will remain passive and that emergency managers, council etc. will have to take the active role of bringing information to them.

The gender of the respondents was almost equal which corresponds with the earlier CDS report (2001). The majority of the participants were between 20 and 25 years old and most of the respondents have attained education at university or high school. The respondents in the 2001 CDS report were young, well-educated people, similar to the respondents of this study.

Most of the backpackers originated from the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe; together they covered more than 85% of the respondents. Almost three-quarters of the backpackers considered their competency level of English fluent, which is partially caused by the fact that many backpackers had English as their first their85%90% the backpackers ori





(Berry, 1996). The fact that more backpackers would consult the Internet instead of local residents to gather the most up to date information about cyclones is therefore a good development. Almost all of the respondents either didn't know if there was cyclone safety information available at their accommodation

One of the main aims of the project was to determine how and where backpackers acquire information about the tropical cyclone risk. Therefore they were asked questions about the use of the Internet. It turned out that more than 95% of the backpackers used the Internet during their trip.

The majority of the backpackers spent less than three hours a week on the Internet, and the two most popular places to use the Internet were accommodation and Internet cafes. The respondents used the Internet mainly for mailing, whereas other purposes were planning the trip and checking for news. It is interesting that amongst backpackers the Internet was used for communication rather than as a source of information. The respondents was asked if they had visited one of the following Internet sites: Tourism Queensland website, Cairns City Council website, other governmental websites or other industrial websites. More than three-quarters of the respondents had not visited one of these websites. Some backpackers visited a government website, and an even smaller group had looked at the Tourism Queensland website.

Only a small sample of accommodation providers provided information, so that the findings are indicators rather than being representative of the whole group. The main part of the accommodation had between 40 and 200 beds. The occupancy rate during the previous study outside of the cyclone season was higher in comparison to this study. The CDS report (2001) stated that this difference is likely to be caused by the higher rainfall and temperatures, which discourage people from visiting the area.

Most of the accommodation providers thought that a cyclone could cause damage to

respondents did not answer. The CDS report (2001) showed that 83% of the provided information is only available in English. Only half of the respondents stated that they are willing to provide the visitors with cyclone information pamphlets, whereas this was 90% in the CDS report. Most of the providers thought that an Internet-site is the best mode to provide information about cyclones to backpackers.

Two of the accommodation providers used the Internet to get information about cyclones during the cyclone season, while the others used television and the weather fax of the Bureau of Meteorology.

Most of the providers had an emergency safety plan, all consisting at least of an emergency manager. The CDS report indicates that the accommodation providers had more precautions, like a means of securing business records and emergency supplies of water and food.

The awareness of the existence of tropical cyclones was high amongst the backpackers, as most of them did know Australia could be affected by cyclones and that they could cause severe damage. However, the general knowledge about cyclones was low. In spite of the high general awareness, the behaviour of the backpackers was not influenced with regards to the dangers of cyclones. For example, the cyclone safety preparedness of their accommodation only influenced a small number of the respondents. The opinions about how to act in case of a cyclone were varied, but all of them were plausible. Almost every backpacker had an idea what to do in the case of an emergency. In comparison with the previous study, there was no significant difference during and outside of the cyclone season.

The biggest part of the backpackers travelled in small informal groups, and the most used kind of transport was the bus. Therefore they have to gather the information about the trip by themselves.

The most popular information sources before and during the trip were the guidebooks. Before the backpackers went to Australia, they also used the Internet often as an information source. The respondents did not find much information about cyclones before and during their staying in Australia.

Most of the backpackers used the Internet during their staying in Australia. The main purpose of using the Internet were emailing and looking for news. They had not used the Internet for information about cyclones. On the other hand, nearly every respondent would search for the most up to date cyclone information on the Internet.

According to the backpackers, there was no information about cyclones available at the use



The Lonely Planet contained information about cyclones, but this information was only about facts of some cyclones that hit Australia in the past. This guidebook did not contain any cyclone safety information. Some governmental departments and Cairns City Council provided cyclone brochures with clear safety information; however, the distribution of those brochures is inadequate.

As a result of the fact that backpackers had a low initiative of gathering cyclone related information, the government and accommodation providers are responsible for the information transfer.

Cyclone information should be provided in a visually attractive and easy-reference mode specially directed to backpackers, because they were not interested in complex detailed cyclone information. A pamphlet could cover the most important topics about cyclones in a distinct manner. The interests and behaviour of the backpackers has to

In addition, the following areas are proposed to conduct further research:

- The way the Internet can be used to inform backpackers about tropical cyclone precautions
- The way travel agencies can be used to inform backpackers about tropical cyclone precautions
- The way tourism publications can be used to inform backpackers about tropical cyclone precautions
- Compare the way Australia copes with vulnerable tourist communities within cyclone prone areas and the way other countries with cyclone prone areas cope with this aspect of tourism.

As a final recommendation, it is suggested that the above recommendations form the basis of a detailed proposal to Cairns City Council and Emergency Management Australia to jointly fund a project to address these issues before the next cyclone season.

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- 1) Where are you from?
- 2) What is your competency level of written English?
- 3) What is your competency level of spoken English?
- 4) What is your age?
- 5) What is the highest level of formal education that you have achieved?
- 6) How long are you staying in Australia?
- 7) Did you search for information about Australia before you started your trip?
  - a) If yes, 016 you havkdermal tion about Australia before westartedlookAuston Tc 0 Tc 0 Tw 10.9782



- 14) Do you travel mostly alone or in a group?
- 15) How long have you been in Cairns already?
- 16) How long will you stay in Cairns?
- 17) Where will you go after you leave Cairns?
- 18) Where are you staying in Cairns?
- 19) Is there any information on cyclone safety available at your accommodation?
  - a) If yes, have you looked at / read this information?
  - b) If yes, how useful is that information?
  - c) In what form was this information provided?
- 20) If you knew that an accommodation was well prepared for cyclones, would that influence your choice of accommodation?
- 21) When is the cyclone season in Cairns?
- 22) Did you plan your trip to Cairns with this in mind?
- 23)





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1. How many beds do you have in this accommodation facility?
2. What is the average occupancy rate during the cyclone season (November till May) in %?
3. How do you think your facility would be affected if a cyclone crossed the coast at Cairns?
4. How do you rate the cyclone risk in terms of:  
1 = no risk      5 = significant risk

	1	2	3	4	5
Property damage					
Personal safety					
Financial risk					
Damage caused by a worse reputation of the area					

5. How often will visitors of your accommodation request information about cyclones?
6. What cyclone emergency information is available at your facility for visitors?
  - a. And in what languages
7. Would you be willing to have information pamphlets provided in your accommodation facility?
8. What types of information do you think would be most valuable to visitors?
9. Where does the facility management get information about cyclones during the season?





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