

= Cyclone Rosita =

Severe Tropical Cyclone Rosita was a tropical cyclone that affected northern Australia from 15 April through 21 April 2000 . Rosita was one of the most intense tropical cyclones to hit the west Kimberley coast in the last century . Crossing the coast as a Category 5 about 40 kilometres (25 mi) south of Broome on 20 April , Rosita caused severe damage in the Eco Beach resort and the vegetation around Broome . Its region of very destructive winds (gusts exceeding 170 km / h) passed south of Broome by only 15 kilometres (9 @. @ 3 mi) . Cyclone Rosita was the first cyclone to directly hit Broome since Cyclone Lindsay in March 1985 .

= = Meteorological history = =

A weak low in the Timor Sea formed on 14 April , initially moving west south @-@ west and turned southward during 16 April and 17 April . The low slowly strengthened and was named Rosita on 17 April , while located approximately 670 kilometres (420 mi) to the north of Port Hedland at about 6 p.m. WST (1000 UTC) . On the morning of 18 April , a ship reported a relatively high pressure of 997 hPa while passing very close to the centre of Cyclone Rosita , however , near @-@ storm @-@ force winds were reported .

Rosita then entered a very favourable environment which allowed rapid development to occur . On 19 April , Rosita turned to the east @-@ southeast and intensified rapidly to a Category 5 severe cyclone , with an estimated central pressure of 930 hPa . Wind gusts near the centre were estimated at about 290 km / h (180 mph) . Rosita turned slightly to the southeast , crossing the coast at peak intensity , 40 kilometres (25 mi) south of Broome at around 1 a.m. WST on 20 April (1700 UTC 19 April) . Cyclone Rosita was a small cyclone , but nevertheless was very intense and powerful . Its radius of gale @-@ force winds was just half the average for cyclones in Australia , and its core of very destructive winds extended just 25 kilometres (16 mi) from its centre . This meant that Rosita ? s region of very destructive winds missed Broome by only 15 kilometres (9 @. @ 3 mi) to the south . Once over land , Rosita accelerated to speeds of up to 30 km / h (19 mph) into the Great Sandy Desert , only weakening gradually . Rosita passed close to the community of Balgo at around 10 p.m. WST (1400 UTC) on 20 April , about 700 kilometres (430 mi) from the coast . Rosita was still estimated to be at Category 1 intensity when it passed near the community . Rosita ? s remnants continued to bring flooding rains to central Australia .

= = Preparations = =

The Bureau of Meteorology predicted Rosita to hit near Broome at around midnight WST on 20 April (1600 UTC 19 April) . Towns around the area were warned to prepare for one of the most powerful cyclones ever to threaten Australia . Very destructive winds with gusts to 260 km / h near the cyclone 's centre were expected . Residents of coastal towns were warned to expect dangerous storm tides ? local emergency officials said an 8 metre (26 ft) high tide was expected at that night . Tourists in the area were warned not to try to reach Broome . Chevron Australia said a tanker due to arrive on 18 April was asked to delay its arrival till 22 April because of the cyclone . Iron ore miners in Port Hedland and Dampier monitored Rosita 's approach .

Blue Alert warnings , which indicate that a cyclone may affect the warning area within 48 hours , were issued for Cyclone Rosita on the morning on 19 April . They were upgraded to a Yellow Alert ? an indication that a cyclone appears inevitable to affect the warning area in 12 hours ? at 1 pm , then to a Red Alert ? meaning the cyclone is imminent ? at 8 pm . In general , residents were well informed of the warnings through the radio . Residents from the low @-@ lying downtown areas evacuated to homes in more elevated locations . Two of the three available evacuation shelters were opened and co @-@ ordinated by the Department of Family and Children 's Services . 280 people took shelter in schools , while 78 residents from Bidyadanga were evacuated to Port Hedland or Broome . The people that stayed in the settlement sheltered in the church and family homes . Staff and guests at the Eco Beach tourist resort received warnings from Rosita early on 19

April and made a timely return to Broome before the cyclone hit .

= = Impact = =

The largest impact occurred near the core of very destructive winds about 40 km (25 mi) south of Broome . The main homestead on the Thangoo station , 28 km (17 mi) to the south @-@ southeast of Broome , received only minor structural damage , however the station was in the region of the dangerous storm surge . Reports from the Thangoo station , situated 2 @-@ 5 km (1 @-@ 6 mi) inland from coastal mangroves , showed that the station ' s front gate had debris laid up to the second shoreline , about a metre (3 @-@ 3 ft) above mean ground level . Another station homestead , 7 km (4 @-@ 3 mi) west , was covered by coastal dunes but escaped major damage to its structure .

The most severe structural damage occurred near Cape Villaret , 40 km (25 mi) south @-@ southwest of Broome . The Eco @-@ beach tourist resort and the Yardoogarra station were devastated . The area around the homestead was totally devastated . A caravan parked nearby was blown away and crumbled , and a semi trailer was blown to its side . The vegetation , which used to be very lush , was stripped of all leaves by the destructive winds which carried airborne salt and sand . The damage to the vegetation seemed to be worse than the tree damage seen in Exmouth caused by Cyclone Vance in March 1999 . About 60 km (37 mi) of fencing was pushed over , all windmills were destroyed , and about 200 head of cattle were lost , mostly due to drowning from the storm surge . However , the path of destruction to the vegetation was estimated to be just 15 to 20 km wide , reflecting Rosita ' s small size .

The Eco Beach tourist resort was only built to resist wind gusts of Category 3 strength . Only about 10 of the 40 accommodation huts were left standing . Some of the huts were removed from their concrete foundations , and were carried by the winds and smashed into other buildings . Showing how strong Rosita ' s winds were , a sea container weighing 2 @-@ 5 tonnes (5500 lb) and filled with 2 to 3 tonnes (4400 to 6600 lb) of equipment was blown 700 m (0 @-@ 4 mile) across sand dunes . The magnitude of the devastation to the vegetation in this area resembled a place being destroyed by bushfires .

In the town of Broome , the maximum wind gust recorded was 153 km / h (95 mph) , recorded at the Broome aerodrome , as well as recording 163 @-@ 8 mm (6 @-@ 45 in) of rain for the 24 hours up to 9 a.m. WST (0100 UTC) on 20 April . Vegetation in this area were badly damaged , particularly the African Mahogany trees which were either snapped off or uprooted . Parts of Cable Beach were severely eroded . An area which used to be covered with sand was completely covered by rocks . The eastern side of Roebuck Bay had evidence of severe erosion of the coastal terrain . At Broome ' s only banana plantation , almost all crops were completely lost , with 10 out of 18 @-@, @ 000 plants left surviving . Fortunately , most buildings in the town of Broome remained unharmed , although power supplies were cut to many parts of Broome for several days . The Broome power station was initially shut down at approximately midnight on 20 April amid fears of damage to the power reticulation infrastructure .

Some damages to trees and property were reported in the community of Balgo Hills , located in the Great Sandy Desert approximately 700 km (430 mi) inland from the coast .

= = Aftermath = =

The extended period of power outage was a major problem for the residents in Broome . Residents had to wait for days for the power supply to be restored . As all of the distribution lines were above ground , Broome was particularly vulnerable to power outages during cyclones . Linesmen from Western Power were called in from afar to inspect all high voltage distribution lines before these could be re @-@ energised . Western Power inspectors were also flown in from around the state to commence disconnections of properties suspected to have suffered water intrusion . These properties had to be tested before having supply reconnected . The majority of residential properties had power restored back on 30 April , 11 days after Rosita struck . Television and radio were limited

to transmissions from Perth , and this proved difficult to access information about any available supplies in the town . People had difficulties purchasing food and supplies because supermarkets were closed or had no power and there was no fresh produce arriving . However , power was restored a few days after the cyclone hit . There were only minor interruptions to the water and sewerage infrastructure .

The Western Australia State Emergency Service (SES) was responsible for responses relating to the damage from Rosita . SES workers worked to help the community recover , tarping damaged roofs and clearing debris from roads and around houses where it limited access from residents . Most work involved clearing vegetation from power lines to enable Western Power to begin repairs . Volunteers from other Western Australian cities and towns such as Perth , Bunbury , Karratha , Derby and Tom Price had arrived to assist with requests for help . During the recovery period , the SES earned huge public respect , and residents were pleased with the quick response of the SES .

The damage from Rosita made a large impact on the tourist industry . The time of impact happened just before the Easter and ANZAC Day Holiday period . Easter is considered to be the beginning of the tourist season , so it is usually expected that there will be an increase of visitors into Broome at this time . Many visitors delayed or cancelled their trips , and some cut short their holiday . Car hire companies that had been booked out for the holiday period had people returning vehicles early .

The impact of Rosita has alerted residents to prepare for any cyclones that may threaten the town in the future . Many people were surprised that Cyclone Rosita was going to hit , as cyclones are rare in Broome , and many thought the cyclone season was already over . However , many residents also thought that the cyclone 's impact strengthened the community as a whole and " brought people closer together " .

= = = Retirement = = =

The name Rosita was removed from the official list of tropical cyclone names set out by the Tropical Cyclone Warning Centre in Perth . It was replaced with the name Robyn .