



# Facing nature's monster

**C**YCLONE Uriah had increased in intensity. With winds gusting up to 290 kilometres per hour it had been upgraded to a category five cyclone, one of the most powerful cyclones to have hit Queensland since records commenced.

It had moved faster than expected and made landfall near Wooloo around midnight. It was a large, strong system with damaging winds and heavy rain.

It was like the sound of a train running straight through the middle of her bedroom.

At least that's what Joanne thought it was that woke her. In fact it was the roar of the wind and the rain hammering against the windows that shook her from her short slumber.

The light from a torch danced across her room casting eerie shadows on the walls and ceiling. A shiver ran down her spine. Above the din Joanne heard her name. A silhouette appeared in the doorway.

It was her mother. The fright-

ened look etched on her face was urging Joanne to move. The house shook as if a large hand was rocking it from side to side.

As she shuffled from her bed she heard shattering glass as a window somewhere in the house exploded inwards. Joanne was now alert to the fact that the unwanted guest had arrived.

Josh huddled under a mattress in the bathroom with his family, listening to the howling wind as it ripped at their house like a child's frenzied attack on the wrapping paper around a present.

The wailing of the wind reminded Josh of a wounded monster in a horror movie. It was amplified by the noise of things crashing on the roof. The window in the bathroom was breathing in and out and looked like it might shatter like so many other windows already had.

Sitting in the darkness, Josh imagined that this is what it would feel like being inside a washing machine. The rain was pelting down and it was hard to

hear one another talk. Then bang! The wind ripped the roof off like a can opener peeling the lid off a tin.

Now there was nothing but the ceiling between them and the fury of the night sky. Water began to drip through this covering. Fear had taken over Josh as he wondered if the onslaught would ever end. He moved closer to his sister.

Josh and Joanne's dad left the relative safety of the bathroom to assess the damage to the house. He wanted to determine if it was riskier to stay or leave.

Even though the family had been listening to the weather updates, they hadn't expected the cyclone to hit so early and were caught out. They hadn't moved to Mr Jones's shelter in time.

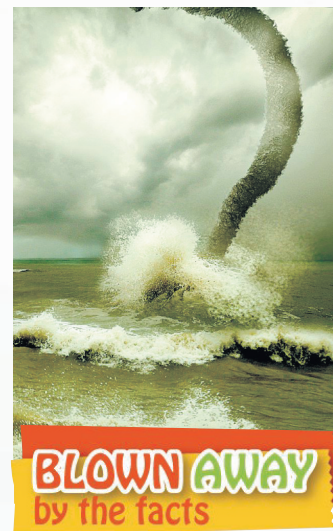
Looking out through a space where a wall once stood he aimed the beam of light from his torch outside. Through the darkness and the sheets of rain he could just make out the river. The wind seemed to reach into it like an invisible hand and with force,

shoot metres of water into the sky. It was difficult to make anything else out but he knew that Cyclone Uriah had already left its mark on Wooloo.

When he returned to the bathroom he was met by a scream. The ceiling had caved in dumping a torrent of water on the three occupants inside. They'd been lucky though. The shower curtain rail had broken the ceiling's fall and it shattered around them. The mattress had acted as a second line of defence and they were left unscathed but very wet and shaken. It was time to move.

The family stayed close together and snaked their way through what was left of their house dodging broken glass and splintered pieces of wood.

Mr Bodman had decided it was safer for them to take the back stairs which were on the opposite side to the direction the wind was coming. The force of the gale hit them as they descended into what looked like a war zone. Four hunched bodies staggered against the wind.



## Cyclone safety

FROM November to April each year parts of Australia can expect a visit from a cyclone. A cyclone can bring with it life threatening situations but there are a number of tips people can follow to help them remain safe. These include:-

- Prepare an evacuation and emergency kit
- Tape windows and secure doors
- Ensure items around the house are secure
- At all times listen to weather updates and follow instructions
- Stay inside in the strongest part of the house and away from windows and doors
- Turn off electricity, gas and water supplies
- Beware of fallen power lines, damaged buildings and flooding
- Know your Community Action Plans

**TOMORROW: CHAPTER 8 – Do the Bodmans make it to safety?**