



Riding out the storm

THE foursome kept low to the ground and zig-zagged their way towards Mr Jones's farm, covering under a blanket stretched above their heads to give them some protection from any flying objects.

Even though authorities recommended staying inside during a cyclone the risk of injury would have been far greater if they had remained in the house that was being torn apart by the monster.

It was slow going like wading through thick mud. With only 800 metres to go the wind seemed to drop a little and the rain eased.

Suddenly Josh broke away from the group, like a stray sheep from a flock. He turned and began to retrace his steps. His dad tried to prevent him from going back but Josh showed great determination to return to the house.

He'd left his precious fishing book in his bedroom. Six years of dedicated work compiling a record of all his fishing trips was not going to be lost in this mayhem.

He reached the stairs and pulled himself up using the handrail as support. The howling wind was definitely abating and Josh was able to make it to his room without too much difficulty. Surprisingly the book was where he had left it under his bed. It was in one piece having survived the onslaught of the cyclone.

He tucked it under the rain jacket he was wearing and sur-

veyed his room. Except for a small hole in the ceiling, it remained untouched. His sister always joked with him that his room always looked like a cyclone had hit it so perhaps it was bit hard to tell if anything was different.

As he turned to make his way back, Josh's tackle box that was perched on top of the cupboard in his room toppled off and struck Josh in the head, knocking him out cold. His mother had been telling him for days to take it downstairs or to the marina hut. She said it reeked of fish and didn't belong in the house. Now it had come back to bite him.

When he came to, his head throbbed and he felt disorientated. Josh's dad had followed him and found the unconscious body. He'd scooped Josh up and taken him to the shelter where the others waited anxiously.

They'd been lucky. The eye of the cyclone had passed over. The stars appeared in the night sky, the rain stopped and a gentle

breeze blew. It had given them all a chance to reach cover in the bunker.

It had been hard to tell how long the eye had taken to pass over Wooloo as the bunker was like a soundproof room but the adults understood that it was just the calm before the storm.

They knew that after the eye passed the other side of the cyclone would hit. The wind would blow with equal strength but in the opposite direction. All they could do was listen to the radio and wait for the official word that it was safe to leave.

Joanne looked around the small room at the drawn faces of the four adults and the two other kids. No one had had much sleep.

They had made hot chocolate on the camp stove and had played some card games to distract them from the reality of what was happening outside.

Mr Jones told them a few stories of growing up in Wooloo and Paolo's dad reminisced about life in

Italy, not that he could remember much as he was only four when his family had emigrated to Australia.

His dad had decided to have a go at cane farming and had been quite successful providing his large family with a good life in the "lucky country". Paolo's dad was the youngest of the family and had chosen to go out on his own as farming wasn't his thing. That's how he ended up in Wooloo.

Joanne was fascinated with the stories that were told and thought that she probably wouldn't have heard them if Cyclone Uriah hadn't forced them to take shelter.

Josh was unusually quite. The bang on the head had knocked the wind out of his sails. He'd drift off to sleep now and then but found it difficult to get comfortable in the cramped room. When he did doze off, his sleep was filled with strange frantic dreams. The worst though wasn't a dream. It was the knowledge that one of the down-sides of cyclones was that they whip up big seas and high tides and stuff up the fishing – his worst nightmare.

Hours passed before they received the all clear. It was early morning – around four thirty. The sun appeared on the horizon spreading its glow across Wooloo.

It was unusually quiet. No birds singing. No cicadas chirping. The group wandered out from the shelter and stopped fast in their tracks.



BLOWN AWAY
by the facts

EYE OF THE CYCLONE

THE eye is in the centre of the cyclone and can vary in size, from 10km to 100km, depending on the severity of the storm.

Due to the least amount of air pressure in the eye, it produces clear weather with light wind, no clouds, no rain and some sunshine. But, the storm is not over yet. This is only the middle of the storm. Depending on the wind gusts, the eye may pass in a few minutes or in a few hours.

www.ema.gov.au/www/ema/schools.../Get_The_Facts_Cyclones

Italian migration

Italian migration to Australia in the late 19th century and much of the 20th century was motivated by the need for work, the search for new opportunities, and the deprivations caused by war, poverty, crop failure and natural disaster.



TOMORROW: THE FINAL CHAPTER