


## ADF sent in as major highways reopen in Far North Queensland

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The Australian Defence Force has been deployed to assist in the flood recovery through hard-hit parts of Far North Queensland as key highways begin to reopen.

More than 30 disaster relief personnel have been sent to help through the regions of Douglas, Cook and Wujal Wujal [after pleas for support from the largest councils in Cape York](#).

Two CH-47F Chinook helicopters and a landing craft will be sent to help move supplies and deliver engineering equipment [into isolated communities](#), including front-end loaders to help clear debris and improve access.

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has secured emergency shelters.

Acting chief executive of Cook Shire Council Heather Kelly said the support would boost recovery efforts in the area.

“We are incredibly grateful for the support that is being offered to communities in Cook Shire,” she said. “We will continue to work with state and federal agencies towards recovery and resilience.”

The commitment coincided with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese visiting the Far North on Wednesday, where he announced a further \$20m to help with the clean-up to both ex-Tropical Cyclone Jasper and the South East Queensland storms and an additional \$24.25m for Far North Queensland tourism operators that were heavily affected.

“We’re also giving a boost to clean-up efforts and focused recovery for primary producers and the councils of Wujal Wujal and Douglas, which will make a major difference for the region,” Mr Albanese said.

The Bureau of Meteorology has warned a “monsoon trough” may again pummel the Far North just a month after ex-Tropical Cyclone Jasper wreaked havoc.

The bureau’s community information officer Daniel Hayes said the system was expected to bring heavy rain and potential thunderstorms to parts of Cairns, Port Douglas and other areas in the Douglas Shire. If a tropical low develops over the next few days, there’s a 25 per cent chance it could intensify into a cyclone.

Since the flooding peaked about three weeks ago, about 30,000 tonnes of mud and debris have been removed from the Captain Cook Highway, which connects Cairns and Port Douglas and up to Mossman. The road between Ellis Beach and Port Douglas is scheduled to reopen on January 20. Guided access is required for essential travel between Ellis Beach and Wangetti.

The Palmerston Highway is uncertain, with the road between Atherton Tablelands and Cairns to stay closed for the foreseeable future. The closure had added [an estimated 15 per cent to transport costs for local producers](#), Queensland Trucking Association chief executive Gary Mahon said.

Speaking in Cairns on Wednesday, Premier Steven Miles said the reopening of highways was a “real focus”. “We know that our roads, our highways are the arteries of our great state,” he said.

#### **MACKENZIE SCOTT, REPORTER**

Mackenzie Scott is a property and general news reporter based in Brisbane. Prior to joining The Australian in 2018, she was the editorial coordinator at NewsMediaWorks, covering media and publishing, and editor at ... [Read more](#)



## MOHAMMAD ALFARES, JOURNALIST



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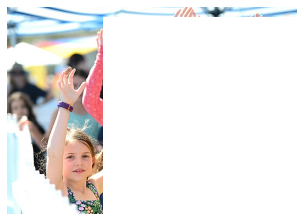


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