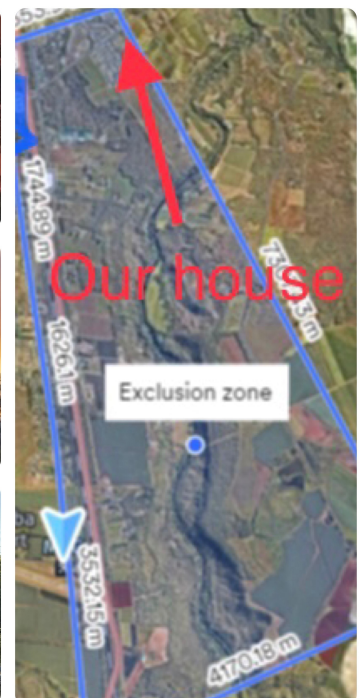


So it turned out that 2023 wanted to go out with a bit of a bang. To say this caught by surprise would be a bit of an understatement.

The end of October and November saw the whole of Queensland in the grip of extreme bush fire conditions. These was the result of high temperatures combined with very dry conditions. A couple of the farms around us had terrible fires and one of these triggers a watch and act notice (One down from an evacuation order). We had our camper hitched and ready should we need to depart however the wind took the fire in the other direction and it burned out harmlessly, not without giving emergency services volunteers a couple of sleepless nights.

During the first two weeks of December I headed off to Arnhem Land for my last operational tour of the year. I've helped out during this period for the last three years as it tends to be one of the busiest period for the program. There are a number of factors that cause this. Names the local boarding school students needing to get back to their homelands and all of our local partners madly trying to get their affairs in order before everyone heads South. It also happens to be a tough season to operate in due to the oppressive heat, humidity and regular storms. Needless to say, and extra helping hand is always appreciated. I had a ball, I flew loads and almost sweated my own body weight on a daily basis.



Midway through my tour reports started coming in that there was a cyclone building in the Coral Sea. I watched on somewhat disbelievingly as Cyclone Jasper made it's slow yet inevitable way through to Cairns. I wasn't so much worried. Emma and the kids are resourceful, capable and prepared. I more felt guilty that the only cyclone we've had make landfall within the vicinity during the last 8 year decided to show up while I was a state away.



On Wednesday 13th December, Jasper coasted about 80km north of us as a category 2 cyclone during early hours of the morning. It passed with little incident and by the Thursday the airport had reopened and the far north began to breathe a collective sign of relief. I got back into Cairns on Friday and the family drove down to pick me up on Saturday. We elected to stay Saturday night as we'd made plans with friends and had accommodation booked. However, despite not being forecast the rain just kept coming and coming and coming. By Saturday night the flood warnings started to appear.

We awoke Sunday morning find Cairns cut off in all directions. Some places on the coast received over a meter of rain. One of our local river rose by over 13 meters causing the worst flooding event in 100 years. Several communities were cut off and hundreds of people had to be evacuated. Blessedly the only impact it had on us was that we had to extend our staying in Cairns by 3 days. The same cannot be said for many others.

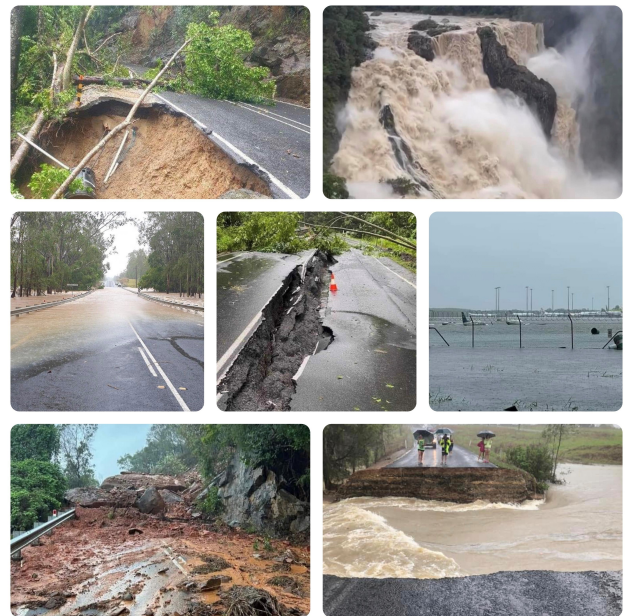
During our extended stay in Cairns our neighbourhood in Mareeba received 800mm of rain in 4 days. Thankfully we returned to find our home unscathed. We feel very blessed to have been largely untouched as some many have lost everything. We then settled in for a very low key family Christmas and new year.

First on my to-do list for this year it to get our permanent VISA applied for. Although have the uncertainty of temporary residence lifted will be a massive relief for us that isn't the main reason for us wanting this. The children have now spent most of their lives living here. One day in the future, should they wish to live work or study in Australia we want this to be open to them. There does appear to be a pathway open for us but as always I'm sure thing will prove more complicated than we expect. Due to this I've instructed an immigration lawyer to proceed on our behalf. Please continue this goes through smoothly.

We'll be back in the UK from the last week in August until the first week of October. Please pop these dates in your diary as we'd love to catch up with as many of you as possible.

To all of you that keep us in your thoughts and prayers and support us on our way, thank you. We feel truly shielded.

All our love J, E, Z & B xx XX xx



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*Save the Date*  
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