

## Getting the Balance Right in Weather Reporting

Recent coverage of Tropical Cyclone Maila has raised questions across our community and beyond.

Accurate and timely information is critical, particularly when it comes to safety. It is equally important that information reflects the level of certainty in official advice and draws from trusted sources such as the Bureau of Meteorology. At this stage, the Bureau of Meteorology has advised that the system's path remains uncertain, with forecasts still evolving and no warnings in place for our region.

Far North Queensland is a vast and diverse region, and there is often a misconception that impacts in one area translate across the entire north. In reality, distances are significant. For context, the distance between Port Douglas and Coen is around 500km, comparable to the distance between Melbourne to Canberra.

We saw the impact of this firsthand during TC Narelle just a few weeks ago. While the system crossed the coast north of Coen, Port Douglas did not experience cyclone conditions and had already been removed from the watch zone, based on official Bureau of Meteorology advice. Despite this, reporting from Port Douglas contributed to a widespread perception that the destination was directly impacted. The result was hundreds of cancelled room nights within a very short period, along with ongoing enquiries from visitors questioning whether the destination is open and operating, despite perfect conditions in the days that followed. This highlights the importance of ensuring reporting is grounded in official sources and reflects the most current advice.

How weather events are communicated is important. When uncertain forecasts are presented as a likely or imminent impact, it can quickly shape perception beyond the region. Local stories are often picked up more broadly, and in today's media environment, that perception can travel quickly and have real consequences for businesses, jobs and community confidence.

For visitors, the most reliable source of information remains official advice from the Bureau of Meteorology, which provides the most up-to-date and accurate guidance.

This is not about limiting coverage, it is about ensuring that reporting is balanced, contextualised and aligned with official guidance, particularly in headlines and how stories are shared.

A local business owner and Tourism Port Douglas Daintree board member will be appearing on ABC News this evening, speaking to the real impacts that sensationalised reporting can have on businesses across the region.

We all have a shared interest in this - keeping our community informed while ensuring visitors have clear, accurate information to make confident travel decisions and avoid unnecessary fear and cancellations.