

# ABC NEWS

## Cyclone Donna: Schools closed, flights cancelled as category four storm eyes New Caledonia

Updated Tue 9 May 2017, 6:22am

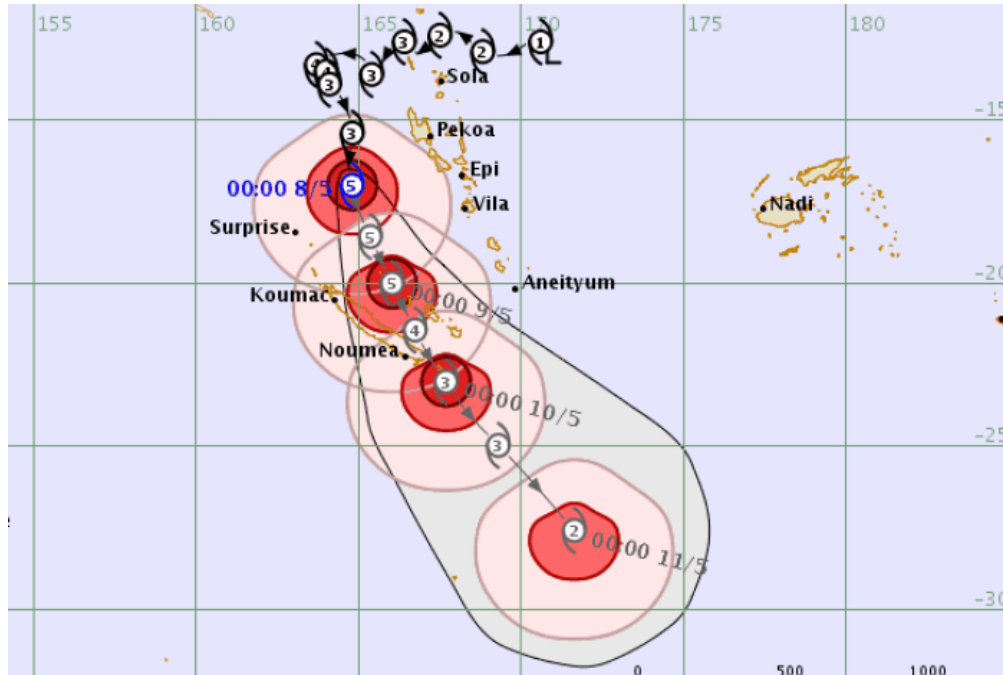


PHOTO: The forecast path and intensity of Tropical Cyclone Donna. (Supplied: Fiji Meteorological Service)

**Tropical Cyclone Donna appears to have weakened slightly after briefly becoming the strongest out-of-season storm ever recorded in the Southern Hemisphere.**

The severe cyclone is still at the second strongest level, a category four, as it heads towards New Caledonia's outer islands — it is expected to make landfall late on Tuesday.

"There is enormous uncertainty about the speed and trajectory of Donna at the moment," Olivier Ciry, from the Civil Defence and Risk Management Agency, said.

"We are unable to tell people how long they will have to stay at home for."

The storm has whipped up huge swells in the Coral Sea, with the centre roughly 200 kilometres north of New Caledonia, and 280 kilometres south-west of the Vanuatu capital, Port Vila — it was moving south-east at about 12 kilometres per hour.

On Monday, gusts close to the centre of the storm were estimated to be as strong as 300 kilometres per hour according to the Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-hazards department.

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### Key Points:

- The cyclone is heading south-east in the direction of New Caledonia
- Winds of up to 300kph have been recorded at the centre
- It is the third late-season cyclone to hit the Pacific



**PHOTO:** There was tremendous uncertainty about the trajectory of Cyclone Donna. (Supplied: Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-Hazards Department)

Schools in New Caledonia have closed for a public holiday on Monday and will stay shut on Tuesday.

Domestic flights in New Caledonia and further north in Vanuatu have been cancelled.

Over the weekend the storm skirted to the west of Vanuatu, sparing the most heavily populated islands from any significant damage.

Locals said Port Vila had been hit with torrential rain and hotel staff had given guests candles and matches in case there was a blackout, as well as a sheet to cover windows that might shatter in the gales.

Donna is the third late-season cyclone to sweep through the Pacific, after storms Debbie and Cook pounded Australia and New Zealand.

Stephen Meke, a senior forecaster at the Fiji Meteorological Service said it was "very unusual" to see such a powerful storm well after the summer months have passed.

#### **ABC/Reuters**

**Topics:** cyclone, weather, new-caledonia, pacific