



Forecasters watch cyclone off coast

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TROPICAL cyclone Guba could intensify into a category two cyclone as early as tomorrow but is still showing no sign of threatening coastal communities, forecasters say.

The season's first cyclone was tonight 395km northeast of Lockhart River and moving in a slow southerly direction over the Coral Sea.

Bureau of Meteorology senior meteorologist Ann Farrell said it was expected to slowly intensify over the next few days and forecasters were keeping a close eye on which way it would move.

"There's no real strong indication of its likelihood of moving in any direction," she said.

"Certainly we're not anticipating that it's likely to affect the coast in the next 24 hours but should it pick up a westerly movement again then there is the potential for it to impact on the coast."

A cyclone watch is in place for coastal and island communities from Thursday Island to Cape Flattery.

Meanwhile, meteorologist Brett Dutschke, of weather consultants Weatherzone, said Cyclone Guba could be a sign of bigger things to come.

He said it was the first to occur in the month of November since 1977.

His comments come a week after UK-based Tropical Storm Risk (TSR) warned Australia should brace for the worst tropical cyclone season since 1998/1999 when the region saw 16 tropical storms, 10 of which developed into severe tropical cyclones.

The catastrophe forecaster predicted 13 tropical storms this year, seven of which would develop into severe tropical cyclones.

The reason for the higher cyclone activity is La Nina conditions in the tropical Pacific Ocean, pushing sea surface temperatures there to their coldest since 1999, which helps create above-normal tropical storm activity, TSR said.

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