

## **MEDIA RELEASE: Category Five storm Cyclone Yasa devastates Fiji**

Caritas Australia's partners are on the ground responding to the immediate needs of thousands of people in Fiji in the aftermath of Cyclone Yasa, a Category Five storm which slammed into the low-lying Pacific island late December 17.

The storm hit Fiji with wind speeds of up to 240 kilometres an hour and wind gusts of up to 345 kph, making it the most powerful storm to hit Fiji since Cyclone Winston in 2016. Cyclone Yasa is now heading towards Tonga.

Over 23,000 Fijians have been evacuated to shelter from Cyclone Yasa, with one death reported outside of Labasa on Vanua Levu, according to the Fiji Broadcasting Corporation.

Fiji has declared a State of Natural Disaster for the next 30 days as the country recovers and rebuilds.

There are reports of extensive damage to homes, schools and infrastructure and concerns about risk of further damage from flooding as river waters rise.

Families across Fiji are experiencing water and electricity cuts. There is particular concern for the communities living in informal settlements around Suva, many of whom are unable to shelter at home.

The cyclone comes days after Category One Cyclone Zazu hit Tonga on December 14. At the same time, a tropical low has brought heavy rains to Samoa.

Communities across the region are in urgent need of food, water, clothing, hygiene kits, sleeping kits and shelter repair materials.

Caritas Australia is supporting church and NGO partners on the ground with initial funds to support assessments and ensure that communities have shelter, food and clean water.

Caritas Australia is accepting donations through its Pacific Emergency Appeal to provide support for emergencies like Cyclone Yasa. Visit [caritas.org.au](http://caritas.org.au) or call 1800 024 413 toll free to provide much needed support to some of our closest neighbours.

Caritas Australia is a member of one of the world's largest humanitarian networks with 162 agencies operating in 200 countries and territories.

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