

Media release – for immediate release
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New Zealand’s new role in global Tropical Cyclone preparedness

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has named Chris Noble from New Zealand’s MetService as the Chair of the Tropical Cyclone Committee for the South Pacific and South-East Indian Ocean.

Tropical Cyclones are among the most devastating of natural hazards. As seen last year with the effects from Severe Tropical Cyclone Gita, their potential for wreaking havoc caused by the violent winds, torrential rainfall and associated storm surges is exacerbated by the extent of the areas they affect, and the frequency of occurrence.

The Committee is one of five regional bodies charged with coordinating activities to ensure that the loss of life and damage caused by tropical cyclones globally is minimised through effective warning systems and international coordination and cooperation.

Chris Noble, the newly appointed Chair and MetService’s Manager of Severe Weather Services, is honoured to be selected to Chair the Committee, of which he has been a member for the last four years.

Looking forward, Chris Noble says that the Committee’s role becomes even more important as the impacts of climate change hit.

“Advice from climate scientists via the International Panel for Climate Change suggests that while globally the number of cyclones may remain essentially unchanged, they are expected to become more severe under a warming climate, producing stronger winds and more intense rain.”

“I’m honoured to lead this Committee and continue its important work which covers a total of 21 countries including Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Australia, New Zealand and all other South Pacific nations.

The Tropical Cyclone Committee is made up of representatives from each of the countries in the region. They work to a multi-year plan under the Global Tropical Cyclone Programme which is part of the World Meteorological Organization's Weather and Disaster Risk Reduction Services Department.

“Working collectively with a global network of national meteorological services and other international agencies to improve forecast and warning services for tropical cyclones and other high impact weather events, results in the best possible risk mitigation,” says Chris Noble.

Chris Noble takes over as the Chair from Mike Bergin, Bureau of Meteorology Regional Director (Western Australia) who retired recently.

Peter Lennox, Chief Executive of MetService says the national meteorological organisation has a proud association with the Tropical Cyclone Committee. Steve Ready, a former MetService employee who retired in 2014, was the chairperson for the Committee for an unprecedented 16 years.

“We’re very proud of the appointment of Chris, and even more so that MetService is playing this vital role in our region.”

“Chris is a very fitting appointment. He has more than 20 years’ experience here at MetService and is a specialist in tropical cyclones and severe weather. He has represented New Zealand on the Committee and managed Tropical Cyclone Warning Centre (TCWC) Wellington, which MetService operates, since 2015. Chris was endorsed for the role by peers and other Met Offices in the region.”

“Chris’ work with the Committee aligns with the work of many of the MetService team who are involved in various regional and global governance roles in meteorology and oceanography under the WMO framework. “

Tropical Cyclones

The Tropical Cyclone season in the South Pacific runs from 1 November to 30 April, although cyclones can form out of season. The average number of tropical cyclones (called hurricanes in the Atlantic and typhoons in the northwest Pacific) annually worldwide is around 80. About 30% of those occur in the Southern Hemisphere. Closer to New Zealand, in the South Pacific and Coral Sea we see an average of about nine tropical cyclones every year, with at least one ex-tropical cyclone passing close to New Zealand annually.

About Chris Noble

Chris got serious about watching the weather as part of a job at Hokitika Airport whilst still at High School. He went on to study physics and mathematics at the University of Canterbury, completing a Master of Science degree.

Chris joined MetService in 1998 and completed a World Meteorological Organization (WMO) certified training course that same year. He then worked as an operational forecaster for 16 years in various forecasting roles, including services to the public, marine and aviation sectors, as well as producing warnings of tropical cyclones in the South Pacific, and severe weather and thunderstorms in New Zealand.

He moved into a management role at MetService in 2014, and now leads the Severe Weather and Tropical Meteorologist teams who are tasked with national forecast policy, public warning services for New Zealand and operation of Tropical Cyclone Warning Centre (TCWC) Wellington.

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For more information or to request an interview please contact:

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Notes to Editors

Image of Chris Noble attached.

For more information on Tropical Cyclone Monitoring see:

<https://about.metservice.com/our-company/national-weather-services/tropical-cyclones/>

For more information on the global Tropical Cyclone Programme see:

http://www.wmo.int/pages/prog/www/tcp/index_en.html