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Big chill hits Queensland

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Article from: **Robyn Ironside and Brian Williams**

June 21, 2007 12:00am

BONE-chilling winds of up to 75km/h have blasted through southeast Queensland, bringing down trees, powerlines and even a brick wall.

The southwesterly winds saw Brisbane record its lowest June temperature on record.

A maximum of 13.1C was recorded at the airport but the wind chill factor dragged this down to only 5.6C.

At a Fortitude Valley construction site, a freestanding wall collapsed on to a neighbouring unit block at about 5am, hammering the roof with up to 80 concrete bricks.

Builder Ivano Berlese said it was a "freak of nature".

"It really must have come through here hard, because the wheelie bins were all blown over and there was a power line down in another street," he said.

Five people were evacuated from the top floor of the building at about 5:30am and allowed back in briefly a few hours later, to pick up some belongings.

The wind was also blamed for halting train services on the Cleveland line, after blowing debris on to overhead wires.

Queensland Rail said buses were organised to transport passengers between Lindum and Cleveland, during the morning peak.

Fallen trees and branches also caused disruption to traffic and power supply. More than 4000 homes and businesses were blacked out across southeast Queensland throughout the day.

The Lockyer Valley, Gatton, Dayboro and the Sunshine Coast fared the worst. Brisbane escaped relatively unscathed from blackouts.

The cold snap pushed southeast Queensland electricity usage to its highest this winter as people turned on power-hungry reverse cycle airconditioners and heaters.

Weather bureau statistician Ann Farrell said the previous June record for the airport was 13.9C in 1958 and the coldest overall was 10.6C in August 1954.

Toowoomba was worse off, recording a wind chill temperature of -9.3C overnight, with parts of the Darling Downs reporting a blast of early morning sleet and snow.

At noon it had risen to -3.8C.

All of the Downs and Granite Belt reported extremely cold conditions, with Warwick 1C at 2pm and Applethorpe -1.2C, thanks again to the wind.

Overnight Brisbane dipped down to -2.5C, allowing for the wind factor.

Ms Farrell said overcast conditions had caused the temperature to be about 5C lower than predicted.

"Once cloud cover comes over and it combines with cold air, the temperatures won't go up," she said.

Better conditions are predicted for today although it will remain cold, with clear skies.

Moreton Bay was no place to be with gusts recorded to 76km/h at the Inner Beacon, about halfway between the mainland and Moreton Island.

The winds that developed out of a low off the NSW coast pushed big deep-sea swells north, with an Environmental Protection Agency buoy off North Stradbroke Island recording one wave at 4.8m. Inshore swells were much smaller.

Forecaster Tamika Tihema said strong winds caused the most discomfort.

Wind chill factors varied according to wind speed, humidity, air temperature and whether or not the sun was out.

"All you can do is keep a heavy coat on. I'm terrible. I've got about five scarves on," Ms Tihema said.

A maximum of 18C is expected today and tomorrow, with moderate west to southwesterly winds easing in the afternoon.

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CRAIG Gillies, right, and Jacqueline Myburgh braved the cold weather along the jetty at Manly. / News Limited picture

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