

Cyclone chaos up north; California's super sticky traffic jam; a planet made of lava; and is that a mountain-climbing lion?

Hello and welcome to Squiz Kids Today ... your fresh take on what's happening in the world around you.

I'm Christie Kijurina -

It's Thursday, March 19

In Squiz Kids Today ... Cyclone chaos up north; California's super sticky traffic jam; a planet made of lava; and is that a mountain-climbing lion?

That's what's making news, kids' style ...

THE LOWDOWN

You know how most storms hit one place... and then move on? Well... this one might not.

Tropical Cyclone Narelle is building up power out in the Coral Sea, about 1,000 kilometres off the coast of Queensland — and it's expected to slam into Far North Queensland tomorrow morning, near Cape York. I've stuck a link with a map in the episode notes. And this is not just any old cyclone... but possibly a Category 5 — the strongest kind — with wind gusts that could reach 250 kilometres or 155 miles an hour.

But here's where it gets even wilder. Forecasters say this system could cross Australia not once... not twice... but three times — something that hasn't happened in more than 20 years.

It could hit Queensland... then keep going out across the waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria and hit the Northern Territory... and maybe even swing back to Western Australia next week.

And that's a big problem — because northern Australia is already soaked.

Weeks of heavy rain from slow, drenching weather systems have left rivers full and the ground like a sponge that can't soak up any more. So when this cyclone adds even more rain, it could mean bigger floods, evacuations, and towns being cut off again.

The good news? Communities in the north are used to preparing — stocking up, securing homes, and looking out for each other. But this could be one of the biggest weather events in years — and its long path means it could affect food supplies, transport, and even prices right across Australia.

Stay safe up there top-enders!

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-03-18/cyclone-narelle-wild-weather-qld-nt-wa/106465696>

And in some extra big news in the football world...

The Matildas (Australia's women's soccer team) are through to the final of the Asian Women's Cup after knocking off reigning champs China in a thrilling win on Tuesday night!

The big game will be played in Sydney this Saturday — and after last night's penultimate (second-to-last) match, we now know their opponent will be Japan / South Korea.

Final locked in... opponent loading... game on.

SPIN THE GLOBE

Each day we give the world globe a spin and find a news story from wherever it stops — and today we've landed in the United States... on a highway in California, that turned into one very sticky situation. Earlier this week, a semi-trailer truck overturned on the freeway in a place called Fontana, spilling hundreds of litres of syrup across the road.

Yep. Syrup.

Within minutes, it had spread into an inch-thick, super-sticky layer across multiple lanes — bringing traffic to a grinding halt.

Crews tried everything to clean it up. First, they used sand and absorbent materials... no luck. Then they tried dissolving it with chemicals... still too sticky. Even blasting it with water didn't work. In the end, they had to bring in giant vacuum trucks to literally suck the syrup off the road.

The clean-up took nearly nine hours, and some frustrated drivers tried to escape by driving on the footpath — which, as you can imagine, didn't exactly help the situation. Now that's what you call a jam-packed freeway.

SPACED OUT

We just heard about a sticky freeway, but what if the whole planet was like that?

Astronomers have discovered a strange new world, with the very exciting name, L98-59d, and it's about 35 light-years from Earth— and it doesn't behave like the planets we're used to.

At first, scientists thought it could be covered in water... like a giant ocean planet. But new data from the James Webb Space Telescope suggests something far more extreme. Instead of water, this planet may be covered in super-hot, melted rock — think thick, gloopy lava stretching across the entire surface, hotter than anything on Earth at around 1,900°C — or 3,500°F.

Scientists think the whole planet could be one giant magma ocean, with waves of lava rolling across its surface. There might not even be solid ground — just rolling waves of molten rock, sloshing around the planet.

Now remember that game “the floor is lava”? On this planet... it actually is. No jumping to safety. No couch. No table. Just a scorching, squishy world that smells like rotten eggs — and is about as unlivable as it gets.

NEWSHOUNDS

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Every Thursday, Squiz-E the Newshound sticks his snout into Squiz Kids HQ to report back on fishy things he's sniffed out on the internet ... and today his nose is twitching because of a very strange video doing the rounds online.

It shows what looks like a lion walking through snow on a mountain — with some people claiming it's a rare “Tibetan snow lion”... or even a lion climbing Mount Everest.

Sounds amazing, right? Too good not to re-share??

Well... wait just a moment...

Squiz-E has been sniffing around — and this one, sadly, is fake.

The first clue: lions don't live in snowy mountain regions like that. Second clue: the "Tibetan snow lion" isn't actually a real animal — it's a mythical creature from stories and legends like Nessie or dare I say it... Drop Bears (though the jury's still out on them).

And when experts traced the video back to its source, they found it was made using artificial intelligence.

So remember, Newshounds — if something online looks wild or unbelievable...

Stop. Think. Check.

And teachers — if you'd like to help your class become expert Newshounds too, you can sign up for the whole program, for free, right now, at the Squiz Kids website.

THE S'QUIZ

This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening ...

1. What is the name of the tropical cyclone currently threatening the Queensland coast?
2. What is the name of the telescope that spotted the lava planet, L98-59d?
3. How many hours did it take to reopen the road after syrup spill on a California freeway?

SHOUT OUTS

It's Thursday, March 19 ... Today is Close the Gap Day — a national day that highlights the differences in health and life outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians.

The "gap" includes things like life expectancy, healthcare, education, and living conditions — where, for a long time, outcomes haven't been, and in many cases are still not, equal.

Each year, a Close the Gap Report is released to track how Australia is doing — what's improving, what still needs work — and to help guide better decisions for the future.

It's also a special day for these Squiz Kids, celebrating a birthday today... Louie from Canberra, Eloise from Westbury, Ida from Horsley Park, Pippa from Adelaide, Anthea from The Rock and Zoe from Hobart.

A belated shoutout goes to... Tiany from Mackay.

Classroom shoutouts go to... class 5/6F with Mr Baker at Arundel State School, class 5/6G at Lucas Heights Community School at Barden Ridge, the students with Miss Gillespie at St Francis of Assisi Primary School, classes 3-6 Bearded Dragons with Miss Macartney and Mrs Conibear Corowa South Public School, class 3/4 with Miss Petts at Coolgardie Primary School.

The S'Quiz Answers:

1. Narelle
2. James Webb Space Telescope
3. nine

Don't forget .. if you've got a birthday coming up and you want a shout out - or, if you're after a classroom shout out- drop us a line at squizkids@thesquiz.com.au or fill out the form on our website.

Well - that's all we have time for. Thanks for listening to Squiz Kids Today - we'll be back again tomorrow.

In the meantime ... get out there and have a most excellent day ... over and out.