

# Don River

This brochure describes the flood risk and previous flooding in the Don River catchment, last updated in June 2025.

## Flood Risk

The Don River drains an area of about 1200 square kilometres, rising in the Clarke Ranges and flowing in a northerly direction to its mouth at Bowen. The river falls about 250 metres in the 60 kilometres from its source, near Mt Roundhill, to Mt Buckley. Downstream of Mt Buckley, the bed gradient remains steep until the Bowen delta area is reached. The upper catchment is used for beef cattle production while the rich soils of the lower Don delta are extensively used for cropping.

The lower Don River can experience rapid stream rises and very high velocities following heavy rainfall. Serious flooding occurs in the Queens Beach and Bowen delta areas and dwellings can be at risk.

Major flooding requires a large-scale rainfall situation over the Don River catchment. Catchment average rainfall over 200 mm in 24 hours may cause moderate to major flooding and traffic disabilities to develop, particularly in low-lying areas of the Don River catchment downstream of Reeves and extending into the Don River delta area. Catchment average rainfall over 300 mm in 24 hours may cause serious major flooding and traffic disabilities to develop, particularly in low-lying areas of the Don River catchment downstream of Reeves and extending into the Don River delta area.

## Previous Flooding

Since settlement in 1861, historical records indicate that major floods occurred in 1869, 1870, 1884, 1910, 1916, 1918, 1928, 1940, 1946, and 1955. The highest recorded flood was in 1946 with rises to 9.70 metres on the historic flood gauge at Warden Bend. Following Warden Bend's closure major flood events in Bowen have been recorded in January 1970, February 1979, January 1980, March 1988, February 1991, and February 2008.

The Don River flood of record in January 1970 resulted from headwater rainfalls exceeding 800 mm in 24 hours, and average catchment rainfalls likely to have exceeded 200 mm in a 2-hour period. At Bowen Pump Station, the highest recorded river level is 7.25 m in January 1970.

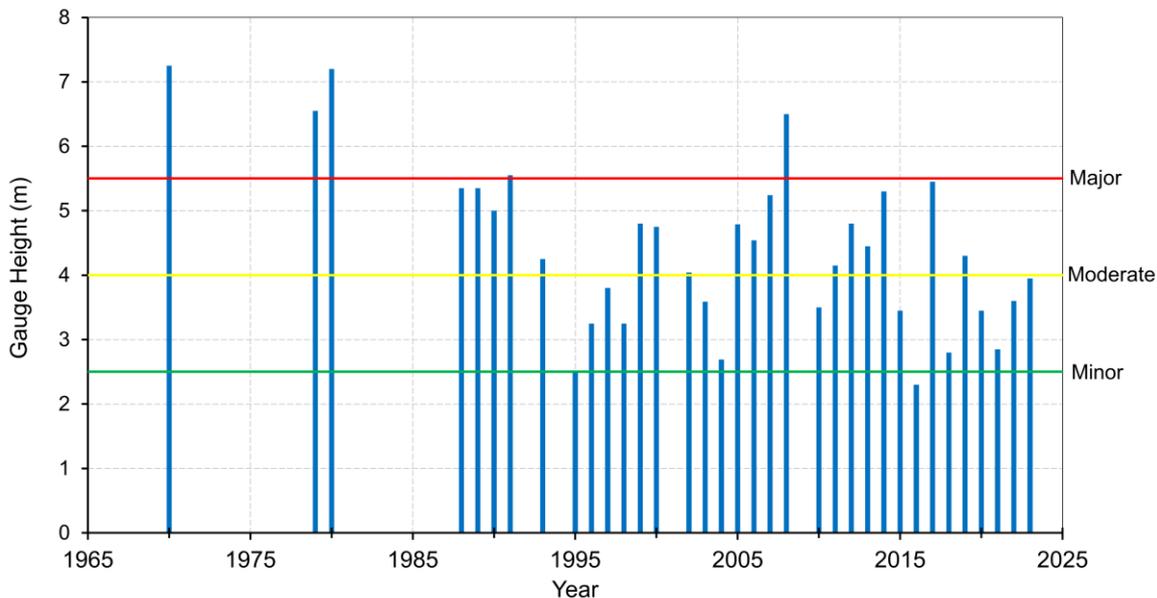
The January 1980 Don River flood resulted from point rainfall intensities of 500 mm in 3.5 hours and catchment average rainfalls of about 300 mm in 3 hours. The highest recorded river levels occurred at Ida Creek (8.27 m) and Reeves (10.38 m) in January 1980.

At Mt Dangar, the highest recorded river level is 9.4 m in February 2008.

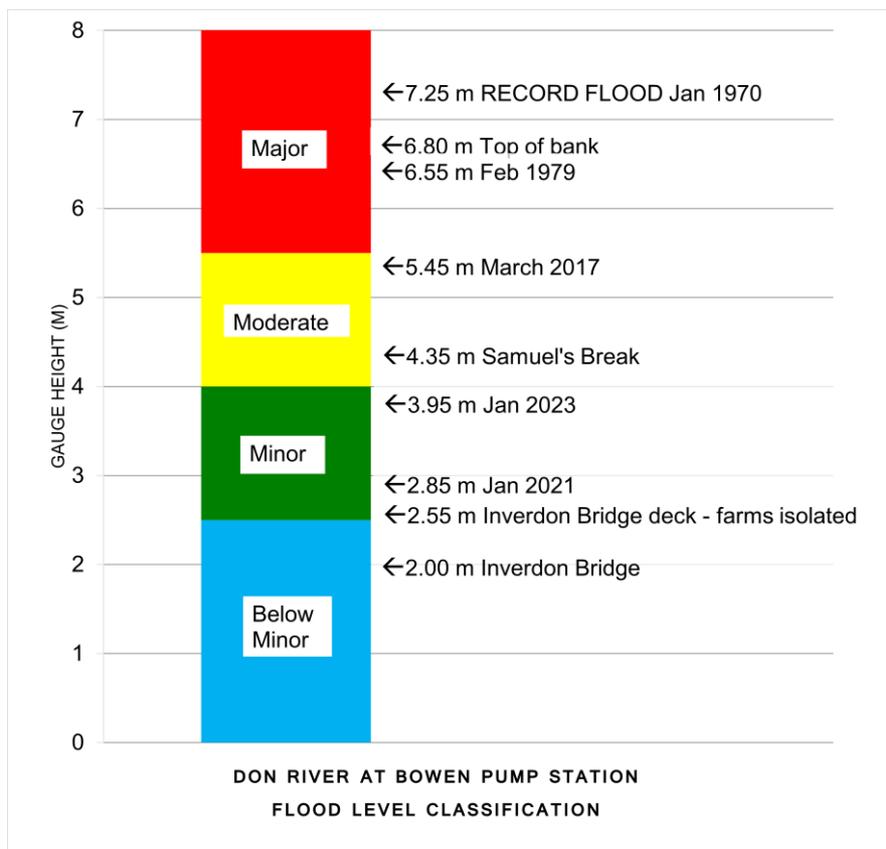
Flood Event	Bowen Pump Station
Jan 1970	7.25
Jan 1980	7.20
Feb 2008	6.50
Mar 2017	5.45

All heights are in metres on flood gauges.

### Don River at Bowen Pump Station Highest Annual Flood Peaks



Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology



## Further Information

- [Latest rainfall and river heights](#)
- For information on the flood warning service for the Don River: [Queensland Service Level Specification](#)
- Catchment map: [Don, O'Connell, Proserpine and Gregory Basins map](#)
- [National Arrangements for Flood Forecasting and Warning](#)