

Storm Chase 21st March, 2003

The day started off very cloudy with high level cloud making up most of the cover. This quickly cleared leaving cumulus that would build up and then die out quickly. The temperature was fairly consistent with it reaching the high 20's by early morning and a maximum of 29 with high humidity. The synoptic chart revealed a trough that caused thunderstorms in the Grafton area yesterday responsible for possible severe storm development today here in south-east Queensland with a line stretching from Grafton to just past Gympie.

By mid-day, there was no sign of any activity on the radar and the sky had almost completely cleared up leaving the odd cumulus. At around 1.30 some cumulus incus shot up to my south towards Ipswich but quickly died off with smaller cumulus taking its place. All was not looking good on the radar however, I was still hopeful as the dewpoint remained extremely high. At around 4.30pm a weak storm cell appeared just north-west of Grafton. The anvil was very thin and low based. The radar echo showed the cell in the green area but like everything else, it quickly died off.

The sun started to set and by 7.00, the radar revealed some good falls in the green area just south west of Warwick. These lasted longer than the previous cells and moved in a north easterly direction but ran out of puff just before Amberley. I decided to go and fix up my intercom system as nothing was happening on the radar and it appeared that nothing would happen this late at night. This is where I was wrong. I came back in to check the radar and was surprised to see a line of thunderstorms moving in from the west from Dalby moving generally in an easterly direction. I kept an eye on the line and it intensified past Oakey with the main cell of the line moving east-south-east.

This line of storms had a good chance of reaching the coast as there was no signs of it weakening at this stage. As the line of storms passed Toowoomba, the system became more distinct with 2 cells clearly visible. One to the east of Toowoomba and another to the south of Kingaroy. The whole line was extremely lightning active with strikes around every few seconds. I was a bit worried that the echoes the radar was showing was the storms dying stages as the energex lightning tracker was showing fewer current lightning strikes. I agreed that the storms would just move eastwards slowly at about 30km/h and dump heavy rainfall as it was getting late and I had to get up early the next day to go to Caloundra.

As the storms ran into the Toowoomba ranges, they did die down a lot as to be expected but reintensified as they headed over Brisbane. The line of storms hit Brisbane but were brief lasting no more than 20 minutes at most. Most areas of Brisbane lasted for around 10 minutes.

Another day of storms is predicted again late tomorrow and they could possibly be severe

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Written by Mike Manning

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as well.

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