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# Banks, websites down as wild weather knocks out Amazon Web Services

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What are Cloud Computing Services?

by Patrick Hatch and Tim Biggs

Wild weather appears to be the cause of widespread outages that knocked banks, entertainment platforms and other digital services offline on Sunday.

Experts say the outages should be a wake-up call for businesses whose critical data is hosted on servers in a single location and is therefore susceptible to natural disasters.

Amazon Web Services, which hosts cloud computing servers and other online services, is based in Sydney and started experiencing service problems from about 4pm Sunday as the city was battered by extreme storms.

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Update: ME customers should now be able to make cash withdrawals at ATMs, and make purchases using your ME cards.

Unfortunately, our card transaction services were affected by the same server issues that have affected several banks following the storms on the east coast.

We want to thank everyone for their patience, and again apologise for the inconvenience this has caused customers as they did their Sunday shop, tried to pay for petrol, or headed out for the night if you're ... [See More](#)

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Amazon Web Services declined to discuss whether it would compensate customers who lost business during the outage. AP

AWS allows clients to use cloud and other computing functions for which they would otherwise need their own servers.

Pizza chain Domino's and food delivery service Menulog both crashed, while online streaming service Stan, co-owned by this publication, and Foxtel Go were also affected.

Meanwhile customers of a number of banks complained of being unable to make transactions or access online banking on Sunday in what appears to be a separate outage.

Rajkumar Buyya, director of University of Melbourne's Cloud Computing and Distributed Systems Laboratory, said most businesses hosted their data on a single server rather than backing it up on servers in multiple locations.

"The Sydney problem could have been avoided if they had one [server] in Melbourne and maybe another in Singapore, and then if one of them failed the request would be redirected," Professor Buyya said.

"Most users just rent a server in the one place and hope that nothing happens there."

Professor Buyya said cloud computing was growing rapidly and remote servers would soon host vital digital infrastructure, increasing the potential damage if precautions weren't taken.

"The transport system, signalling systems, critical infrastructure; if they all depend on a cloud environment there's going to be more disaster and danger in the future," he said.

"So I think this is a good wake-up call."

Westpac, Bank of Queensland and ME Bank customers reported being unable to make card transactions and use other services on Sunday.

ME Bank told customers services were down due to "the same server issues that have affected several banks following the storms on the east coast".

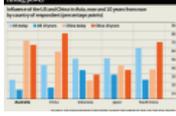
A ME Bank spokeswoman later said the outage was caused by a service crash at First Data, a third-party payment provider. First Data said it crashed due to a power outage

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at the Western Sydney Data Centre, which is owned by Fujitsu.

"First Data is working diligently with our clients and partners to mitigate the impact caused by the outage," a First Data spokeswoman said.

"We also continue to work with the data centre provider to understand the issues."

Amazon would not say if any of its servers were located at the Western Sydney Data Centre.

Westpac customers could not make transactions, use ATMs or log onto the bank's mobile website due during the service outage.

"While we aim to ensure continuity of our systems, the severe storm system created disruptions across our network which impacted our services," a Westpac spokeswoman said on Monday. "We sincerely apologise to our customers for any inconvenience experienced."

Customers of other banks including Commonwealth also complained of being unable to make transactions, but a Commbank spokesman said its services were unaffected and problems were due to merchants using First Data EFTPOS accounts.



**Westpac**  
on Sunday

We hope everyone based in Eastern States is safe in this wild weather. Insurance customers who need assistance, please get in touch on 1300 650 255.

We are also currently experiencing issues with the availability of our Mobile Banking App and are working to have it fixed as soon as possible. Customers can still use Mobile or Online Banking from any device by going to [www.Westpac.com.au](http://www.Westpac.com.au).

We will provide regular updates through this evening and tomorrow. Please stay safe.

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**Stan.**  
on Sunday

Our external vendor AWS has confirmed Stan connection issues are the result of a power outage within AWS. AWS along with Stan are working to restore services ASAP.

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