

Cyclone Yasi's baby legacy

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When the house starts rocking, don't come knocking – not in north Queensland at least.

Obstetricians in Townsville are preparing for a bumper month of births in November – nine months after Cyclone Yasi devastated the region.

Townsville's Mater Women and Children's Hospital CEO John Gilmour said the hospital's maternity unit had received a significant spike in bookings in November.

On average, the unit receives about 90 bookings a month with 105 considered an exceptionally busy month but come November around 120 women are expected to give birth in the hospital.

Yasi, the biggest east coast cyclone in 100 years, struck north Queensland on February 2.

It is unsure whether relief at having survived the blast sent north Queenslanders into the loving arms of a partner or whether the days without electricity that followed caused bored couples to find creative ways to pass the time.

However, Mr Gilmour said the timing of the spike in bookings was "interesting".

"The jump is certainly more than we would see in a normal monthly variation," he told AAP.

"I can't tell you for sure whether it's associated with Yasi but it's interesting that it's coming at this time."

Mr Gilmour said all of the obstetricians who worked with the hospital had reported an increase in the number of expectant parents on their books.

"Our private obstetricians in town are all commenting on the significant booking increase they have had, they're all quite full," he told AAP.

However, the city's public hospital has not received a rise in bookings at this stage.

In fact, a Townsville Hospital spokeswoman said the maternity unit had received 164 bookings – compared to 183 births last year.

A spokeswoman for Cairns Base Hospital, which was evacuated as the category five cyclone approached, said their maternity unit had not experienced a bookings boost.

Townsville-based Obstetrician Dr Kurinji Kannan said a November spike in births was unusual.

"We do usually get a rush in September–October from babies received around Christmas time but it's unusual to get a spike in November."

Dr Kannan said it was unlikely a similar spike would have occurred around Tully or Cardwell, around 200km north of the city, where many residents were left homeless as a result of the cyclone.

"When you are in the middle of the eye I don't know if anybody would be thinking of having a baby."



The aftermath of cyclone Yasi as it crossed the Far North Queensland coast. Photo / AP