

## Baby boom 9 months after Yasi

NATALIE WYNNE | September 22nd, 2011



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**NORTH Queensland is about to experience a baby boom of Cyclone Yasi proportions with obstetricians' schedules booked to overflowing in November.**

While the State's biggest cyclone in living memory was bearing down on the North in February, it appears couples were making the most of their time at home taking shelter.

The Mater Women's Townsville maternity hospital is booked out during November, with births up 40 per cent on a normal month.

The Mater has a record 120 births booked for November, up from the normal monthly figure of 70-80 births.

Obstetrician Dr Kurinji Kannan said she had been inundated with an overflow of patients from other obstetricians in the area for November.

"I started up in September and not many people know about us yet but we have had a great number of bookings for November and December already," she said.

"All the other obstetricians, if they are full, they are directing them to me, as well as the GPs.

"While September and October are normally the busy months with the Christmas babies, this time of year does seem quite busy.

"I guess with the cyclone everybody kept inside the house so that must be it and I guess there was nothing much happening outside so there is a great possibility that that's what happened."

Most homes in North Queensland were without power for between three days and three weeks after the cyclone hit on February 3.

Other obstetricians said there was little doubt the electricity blackouts after Cyclone Yasi sparked the baby boom.

"There wasn't much TV being watched, that's for sure," said a Townsville obstetrician.

"I've never seen a busier November.

"I've been here for nearly 10 years and this is going to be the worst November for me, as in the busiest.

"I'm already planning a holiday to take a break after the baby rush.

"September is usually a very busy month as well because of December babies.

"But I reckon bookings for November/December-due babies is about 25 to 30 per cent more than what I usually would do.

"I guess if the TV isn't working and the electricity was out ... well I think it absolutely contributed."

Townsville Health Service District Women's and Children's Institute acting nursing director Katrina Roberts said there were currently 164 bookings so far for November.

"The Townsville Hospitals maternity unit, birth suite and birth centre are continuing to trend toward more births," she said.

"The hospital's maternity unit, birth suite and birth centre are well equipped to cope with any increase in births. We are delighted with our new, expanded maternity unit which opened in August and since opening, the unit has cared for 326 obstetric patients. We're also currently recruiting more midwives to ensure we can continue to meet future demand as the region grows."

Around 2300 babies were born at Townsville Hospital in 2010.



EXPECTANT PARENTS: Sam Smith and Emily Kelly with obstetrician Dr Kurinji Kannan | Photo: FIONA HARDING

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