

# Media Release

## Sarra shares her story of joy and loss

Tuesday, 17 November 2015

Sarra Box's twins, Hunter and Heath were born 15 weeks too soon. With nearly 3,000 preterm births in Western Australia each year, Sara's story of heartbreak and loss is shared by many others.

Delivered at 25 weeks, Hunter was born at just 1015 grams and went on to spend 97 days in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) living day-to-day. Sadly, Heath was delivered stillborn due to severe complications caused by [enlarged ventricles in the brain](#).

Sarra and partner Jarrad will join thousands of parents across the country that will remember sons and daughters and celebrate their own stories of the overcoming of odds this World Prematurity Day (17 November).

After three attempts at IVF, Sarra and Jarrad were thrilled to hear they had finally fallen pregnant. Following a few early struggles, things went relatively smoothly for Sarra up until her 20 week scan.

"At our scan we were told that Heath had enlarged ventricles in the brain. After another scan at King Edward Memorial Hospital (KEMH), the severity of the ventricle sizes on both sides of the brain was explained, as too was the poor outcome if we went to term with Heath," Sarra said.

"We heavily heartedly chose to terminate our baby boy. The risks were explained to us in regard to Hunter and the possibility of early arrival; however the likelihood was slim."

Four weeks later, Sarra was advised to head back to KEMH after experiencing constant stomach pain and gave birth via emergency C-Section on 30 January.

"The whole experience, of having Hunter overcome the odds and Heath being born sleeping, is still very fresh and some days are a lot harder than others," she explains.

"I think as we approach Christmas and the boy's birthday, I find myself thinking about them both a lot more. Some days are a whole lot harder than others, I think we just look at Hunter and feel blessed that he made it through his NICU journey and is doing so well and we are so grateful for that."

In reflecting on her own journey, Sarra has become an advocate for raising awareness of the risks of preterm birth.

"I can honestly say that preterm birth hadn't once crossed my mind while we went through our journey to conceive and even while I was pregnant. I was more fixated on the fact of miscarriage that I didn't even consider early birth," she said.

"Supporting the research, education and community awareness efforts of the Women and Infants Research Foundation (WIRF) is critical to preventing preterm births. The longer

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our babies stay in, the healthier they are and the less support they need in other areas of life.”

Sarra urges others with similar experiences to be open and share feelings of frustrations, guilt and fear.

“I’m still learning to open up, but I’ve found that keeping it in isn’t helpful,” she said.

“When the boys were born we had a lot of people who were not sure how to celebrate Heath. Thanks to my sister in-law, Haley, she found a way that people could let us know that they were there for us in creating the Heath Riddick Memorial Fund which donated to WIRF.

“We were overwhelmed by the number of people who donated and those who had a similar situation or outcome.”

The Women and Infants Research Foundation’s (WIRF) WA Preterm Birth Prevention Initiative (The Whole Nine Months) aims to reduce the rate of premature births in the State by 35 per cent over the next five years, which currently stands at almost 3,000 WA births per year.

For more information, and to find out how you can assist the campaign, visit [www.thewholeninemonths.com.au/supportus](http://www.thewholeninemonths.com.au/supportus)

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**Background:** The Women and Infant’s Research Foundation is Australia’s leading independent research institution dedicated to improving women, infants and reproductive health. We have a proud 40-year history of scientific discovery and public health achievement centred on the eradication of disease and the reduction of illness in women and babies of all ages. WIRF are closely affiliated with King Edward Memorial Hospital (the only tertiary level perinatal centre in Western Australia) and the School of Women’s and Infants’ Health at The University of Western Australia.