

Media Release

Naomi to remember this Infant Loss Awareness Week

Thursday, 8 October 2015

Naomi Ferguson knows first-hand the devastation of having a premature baby after losing her daughter Isla, who was born at 23 weeks last year.

Naomi will join thousands of parents across the country who will remember their sons and daughters this Infant Loss Awareness Week (9-15 October). This year she will take strength from her baby boy, Finn.

Eventually delivered full-term and healthy, Finn too was at risk of premature delivery.

"I actually started going into premature labour again in this pregnancy at 23 weeks, but the labour was stopped after I attended the WA Preterm Birth Prevention Trial Clinic at King Edward Memorial Hospital," Naomi said.

"The Clinic is the reason that I now have my healthy baby – it literally saved Finn's life."

Naomi said that it was critical for parents who have lost a baby know that they are not alone and that there is help available to help them with their grieving.

"Mothers and fathers need not struggle alone. Knowing that others have experienced similar loss and grief has assisted in understanding our own journey. This also promoted our healing and healthy mind state which is vital to future pregnancies after loss."

The Preterm Clinic is just one part of the Women and Infants Research Foundation's (WIRF) WA Preterm Birth Prevention Initiative (The Whole Nine Months) which aims to reduce the rate of premature births in the State by 35 per cent over the next five years, which currently stands 2,800 WA births per year.

Chair of the Initiative, Executive Director of the Women and Infants Research Foundation (WIRF) and University of Western Australia's Professor John Newnham has this year been touring Western Australia, informing regional medical professionals of the new clinical guidelines of the Initiative.

"The Clinic is already showing early signs of success and Naomi's story is testament to this," Professor Newnham said.

"Preterm birth remains the single, largest cause of death and disability in children under five years of age in the developed world, but we now know that in many cases it is preventable."

With the exception of the Clinic, the Initiative has been privately funded through public donations, WIRF, The McCusker Foundation and the Channel 7 Telethon Trust.

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"We now need to support of the WA public to help us run a health promotion campaign aimed at raising awareness amongst the general public in WA and those most at risk of having a preterm birth - to be launched in the coming year," Professor Newnham said.

King Edward Memorial Hospital will be lit pink and blue on the evening of 15 October in recognition of Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day.

For more information, and to find out how you can assist the campaign, visit www.thewholeninemonths.com.au/supportus

Media opportunity: Naomi Ferguson is available for follow up interviews. High res images of Naomi and Finn are available upon request.

Media contact: Richie Hodgson, 0408 128 099, richie@wirf.com.au