

Media Release

Triathlon for Premmie Zac

22 January 2014

Vanessa Jeffery of South Perth will be competing in the TriEvents SunSmart Women's Triathlon on Sunday 16th March, in the name of her baby Zachary who was born almost two months prematurely less than a year ago.

Born in July 2013, Zachary is one of nearly 3000 babies born prematurely in Western Australia each year. Zac's mum Vanessa is thankful for the Women and Infants Research Foundation (WIRF) whose research has made the early delivery of babies such as Zac, much safer. Vanessa will be raising funds from her triathlon for the Foundation's preterm birth research.

It was during her 29th week of pregnancy with Zac that Vanessa developed a liver condition called obstetric cholestasis. By 33 weeks it was too dangerous for Vanessa to continue the pregnancy and Zac was delivered seven weeks early via caesarean section.

"Zac required assistance from a C PAP machine for his breathing as his lungs were not fully developed when he was born", said Vanessa. "He spent four weeks in the Neo Natal Nursery and some time in a humidicrib, and was fed through a nasal gastric tube. I would spend 12 to 14 hour days at the hospital trying to bond with him and care for him through all the cords and tubes".

WIRF's Executive Director, Professor John Newnham said "We have spent the last two decades researching how to make early births safer, and now babies born as early as 23 weeks can survive. However, early birth is still the single major cause of death and disability in young children in our society. Premature births have an increased rate of cerebral palsy, learning and behavioural difficulties and lung disease".

WIRF is working to discover what causes early labour and how it can be prevented, through the combination of research with clinical care. "It is a priority of the Foundation to discover how premature birth can be prevented altogether, and we think this is something we will achieve in the coming years", said Professor Newnham.

The Foundation relies on grant funding and community support to conduct their vital research and will benefit from funds raised at the Women's Triathlon. Vanessa is encouraging women to register for the triathlon and raise funds for WIRF. "Zac is my motivation for completing the triathlon for WIRF. Without their research he may not be the healthy 6 month old he is today" said Vanessa. You can support Vanessa in her triathlon by visiting her My Cause page at www.mycause.com.au/page/vanessajeffery

To enter a team into the Women's Triathlon for WIRF, visit www.wirf.com.au/triathlon. Participants, who raise at least \$50 for WIRF by 28th February 2014, will receive a complimentary runner's pack including a WIRF running shirt and GESB hat. The highest fundraiser will also win a day spa voucher.

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Zac in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit



Vanessa with Zac in the NICU

