



## OUR STORIES

#026 / JANUARY 2014

*Born at 30 weeks,  
Maisie and Rupert  
have arrived home  
in time for Christmas*



**the women's**  
the royal women's hospital  
victoria australia

## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

This festive season is a time for families and friends to celebrate the year that is ending and to look forward to the year ahead.

Some families who had a premature baby this year will have the special joy of having their baby "home for Christmas". For others, the wait to bring their baby home will continue. Sadly, some families will, at this time of the year, feel the absence of a baby who did not survive.

When one thinks of these families it is not hard to understand why we are so committed to improving the survival and long-term outcomes for premature and sick babies.

That is why we ask you to please consider making a donation to our Newborn Intensive & Special Care Appeal to help us meet this commitment.

On behalf of the staff at the Women's, thank you for your continued support. We wish you and your family and friends the very best of the season and look forward to telling you more about the work of the Women's in 2014.



**Dr Sarah White**  
Director  
Communications  
and Foundation

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### WE WELCOME YOUR FEEDBACK AND CONTRIBUTIONS

So please write to us at:

Our Stories  
The Royal Women's Hospital  
Locked Bag 300, Parkville VIC 3052

Or email:

[admin.foundation@thewomens.org.au](mailto:admin.foundation@thewomens.org.au)  
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## IMPROVING BREATHING SUPPORT FOR PRETERM BABIES

### Most babies born too early need support to help them breathe.

The use of simple, small prongs in a preterm baby's nose was becoming a popular alternative to the traditional continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) method, which requires larger prongs and cumbersome tubing wrapped across the baby's head. But was it as effective? It took the Women's Newborn Research Team to come up with the answer.

Our Newborn Research Team provided the evidence, in the world's largest clinical trial of its kind, that a cheaper, more comfortable method of supporting the breathing of very preterm babies, called nasal cannulae, was safe and effective.

The results of the team's two year investigation were published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, one of the world's leading research journals, in October.

Lead author Dr Brett Manley, a Neonatologist at the Women's, said the project had attracted international interest. This is because, said Brett, until the Women's study there was little evidence to confirm the effectiveness of high-flow nasal cannulae.



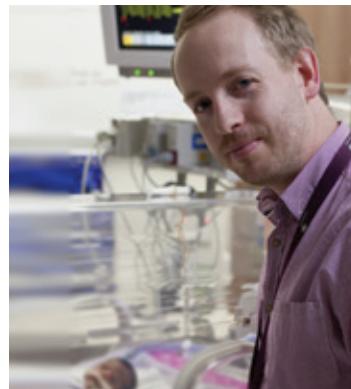
The research showed that when used to support the breathing of very preterm (less than 32 weeks' gestation) babies after coming off a mechanical ventilator (breathing machine), high-flow nasal cannulae were as safe as the CPAP method and also caused less irritation to the skin around the nose.

The team at the Women's was keen to test the nasal cannulae because the CPAP device can be intimidating to some parents and might interfere with bonding between babies and parents.

Professor Peter Davis, the Director of the Women's Newborn Research Centre said high-flow nasal cannulae were easier for the staff to apply and allowed parents to hold their baby more easily. "Importantly, the babies seem to like it," says Peter.

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Pictured below: Left – Dr Brett Manley with Professor Peter Davis. Right – Dr Brett Manley in NISC



A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair smiling down at a baby she is holding. The woman is wearing a white blouse with dark blue polka dots. The baby has light-colored hair and is wearing a onesie with a repeating pattern of small animals like elephants and lions. The background is blurred.

## A WHITE FAMILY CHRISTMAS

Radford and Kristen White have taken their twins, Rupert and Maisie, home in time for a special family Christmas.

Pictured: Kristen and Rupert

*...Carl's idea of setting up the group was to help dads that he often saw trying to juggle so many responsibilities... as well as their partner and a new baby.*

On Father's Day, new dad Radford White was featured in a story for the *Sunday Age* newspaper, promoting a new dad's group for fathers of premature babies.

He was an obvious choice to grace the front page: overjoyed, over-the-moon and, he admitted, a little over-awed at becoming a dad to twins Rupert and Maisie, born in July.

The babies, the first for Radford and wife Kristen, were born at the Women's after an emergency caesarean just before 30 weeks' gestation when a scan showed complications for tiny Rupert. Both babies were then cared for in our Newborn Intensive & Special Care (NISC) unit.

Radford agreed to be interviewed for the story because he wanted to help promote a new dads' group, an initiative of the Clinical Director of Neonatal Services, Associate Professor Carl Kuschel. Carl had seen that NISC dads needed to be able to share their experiences with other dads going through the same thing: to help each other negotiate what was, after all, a whole new world.

Radford said he wasn't too sure about the group at first, but attended a meeting a couple of days after the twins were born to see what it was like.

He likened it to a football game, describing the group as a bit like a half-time address. Dads got that.

Carl also liked the analogy. He said the idea of setting up the group was to help dads that he often saw trying to juggle so many responsibilities including caring for other children, members of the extended family as well as their partner and a new baby.

Pictured: Radford and Maisie



## KYLIE AND SAM'S STORY



**Kylie Carmichael took up running when her son Sam, born prematurely at 26 weeks, died five years ago. In October she ran the Melbourne Marathon in Sam's memory and also to raise money for other newborns needing care in our world-class Newborn Intensive & Special Care (NISC) unit.**

There was a point in the race, around the 25km mark, when Kylie looked ahead and saw family and friends urging her on: "Including my three lovely children, Charlie, Holly and Chloe," she said.

It worked. "I managed to push through it with a lot of positive reinforcement, and thinking about my family including, of course, Sam and the reason for doing this run." Kylie said.

"It was to achieve a personal challenge and to raise money for such a good cause in Sam's honour."



The day after the race, Kylie said in the *Herald Sun* that she had taken up running after her son Sam, born a tiny 440 grams and 14 weeks early, passed away after surviving three weeks.

"I just started running and it really helped me physically recover and mentally get through a really difficult, dark period," Kylie said.

With the help of family, Kylie and husband Tim then set out to help raise more than \$100,000 to buy a neonatal ultrasound machine for the Women's NISC unit.

Her dad, former Melbourne and Carlton star Greg Wells, also got behind them with mates from the Virtually Forgotten Legends (VFL) Club. The former footballers now hold an annual golfing event to raise money in Sam's memory.

**Pictured:** Kylie Carmichael with husband Tim and their children Charlie, Holly and Chloe

**A TEAM EFFORT  
FOR OUR  
NEWBORN INTENSIVE  
& SPECIAL CARE**

*“Our girls wouldn’t be here today without the amazing work of the team at the Women’s NISC.”*

It was Frank and Robyn’s appreciation of the around-the-clock care provided to their twin girls, Lara and Shelby, which inspired them to raise money for the Newborn Intensive & Special Care (NISC) unit at the Women’s.

In November, the couple – with colleagues from Frank’s company SFG Investments and Associate Professor Carl Kuschel, the Clinical Director of Neonatal Services at the Women’s – ran the City2Sea in Melbourne.

“We wanted to buy some equipment for the NISC unit,” Frank said. “We were told a portable X-Ray machine, costing about \$20,000, was needed so our goal was to raise the money for that.”

Frank, through SFG Investments, kick-started the appeal with the first \$10,000 and then ran the City2Sea to raise awareness and the remaining \$10,000.

Appropriately, the run was held on World Prematurity Day, which helps raise awareness of the one in 12 babies born premature in Australia each year.

Of his SFG team’s commitment to help raise the money, Frank said many of them went through the journey with them and experienced what the Women’s had done for them.

That journey started in January 2010 when Robyn was admitted to hospital with complications, 19 weeks pregnant with their precious twin girls.

Her Obstetrician, Associate Professor Mark Umstead, provided expert care for Robyn and she remained on bed rest at the hospital until at 32 weeks, Lara and Shelby arrived. They were tiny, but perfect.

“The girls wouldn’t be here today without the care we received at the Women’s,” Frank said.

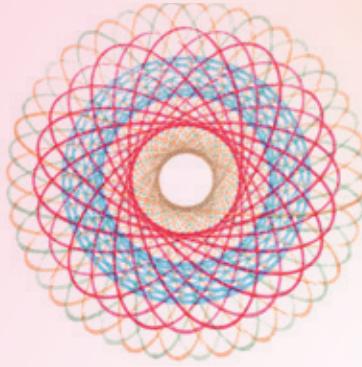
“Today they are happy and healthy,” Robyn said, “Such gorgeous little girls. We have so much to be thankful for.”

You can visit

[https://www.thewomens.org.au/  
GiftstohelpPrematurebabies](https://www.thewomens.org.au/GiftstohelpPrematurebabies) to read more of the family’s amazing efforts for our NISC.



Frank and Robyn  
{pictured with twins  
Lara and Shelby}  
ran the City2Sea  
to raise money for our  
Newborn Intensive &  
Special Care unit



## HELP FAMILIES TAKE HOME A HEALTHY BABY

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### **The earlier a baby is born, the more critical the situation.**

At the Women's, we are working day and night to look after more than 1,500 premature and unwell babies every year, who come to us to receive the highly specialised care required for their survival.

We are raising funds to purchase a highly specialised ultrasound machine, that will allow us to detect internal bleeding and visualise internal organs in premature babies.

The Sophie Rose Fund has challenged us. If we can raise \$12 000, they will match it.

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*Please donate to the Women's and help us give premature babies the best possible chance of survival and a high quality of life.*





INTENSIVE &  
SPECIAL CARE FOR  
PREMATURE AND  
UNWELL BABIES



*Maisie, born at  
30 weeks, spent  
71 days in our  
Newborn Intensive  
& Special Care unit*



**AFTER 100 DAYS,  
DANIEL IS HOME**

*After 100 days at  
the Women's, baby  
Daniel Liorentas is home  
for the festive season*

New mum Deanne Brandellero can't get over how perfect her son Daniel is. He has beaten the odds again and again.

Indeed when he went home, 100 days exactly since his birth at the Women's via an emergency caesarean, Daniel Liorentas had won many hearts in the Newborn Intensive & Special Care (NISC) unit.

Deanne told the Herald Sun that her baby obviously wanted to be here because he had beaten the odds again and again.

Deanne and partner David Liorentas live in Wodonga and were told at 20 weeks it was unlikely their baby would survive. In fact, a scan at 24 weeks revealed he was half the size he should have been. A week later Daniel had put on several hundred precious grams and his parents took that as a positive sign.

Deanne was admitted to the Women's to try to prevent her going into early labour. She described the following weeks as a rollercoaster when four times her son was almost delivered via emergency caesarean.

"His heartbeat kept plummeting," Deanne said. "When it really was time to deliver Daniel, 10 weeks early, I didn't believe it was happening."

Daniel arrived, in his mother's words, perfect.

**Pictured: Daniel with mum Deanne and dad David. Image: Ian Currie, Newspix**





## MEET DEBBIE BLACK



*"I'm passionate about my role because it empowers parents. They are the parents, we are the care-givers and we work together to get that family home."*

**Debbie Black is known affectionately as the mother of the Newborn Intensive & Special Care (NISC) unit at the Women's because she is always making sure everyone and everything is okay.**

As Floor Coordinator, Debbie is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the busy NISC unit; from its 240 nursing staff – every one of whom she knows personally – to the arrivals and departures of some of Victoria's most fragile babies.

If it happens on the NISC floor, you can be certain Debbie has somehow been involved.

"It is a unique role because of our excellent Model of Care, which involves the family in their baby's care," Debbie said. "It can also be very sad at times."

Debbie said the unit celebrated when a baby went home, but equally, was moved by the death of a baby in NISC.

"We are all mothers, sisters, members of families," Debbie said. "Our work does have an impact. It does make you happy and sad. But our care is something we do very well here."

If the parents had a special request for a baby, Debbie said, she tries to make it happen. "And if it can't, I need to understand why."

She said her role was to support staff so they could keep doing what they do best.

She started her own nursing training as a teenager and today, as she prepares to go on leave to get married, she is still as passionate about her profession as then.

*"I'm passionate about my role because it empowers parents. They are the parents, we are the care-givers and we work together to get that family home."*

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**Pictured: Saisanith and Vilathong Southavilay with their premature baby Anasai in the Women's NISC**



## OUR VOLUNTEERS



*This is Helen Morse,  
with husband Max.  
Helen, a volunteer,  
has been knitting  
booties for babies in our  
Newborn Intensive &  
Special Care unit for  
nearly three decades.*

## **Helen Morse has been knitting booties for babies in our Newborn Intensive & Special Care (NISC) unit for almost three decades. Here she explains why not even fractured hands could stop her.**

For almost three decades Helen Morse has brought comfort to many families in the NISC unit at the Women's. She is one of the hospital's 65 volunteer knitters; her trademark booties are popular because they are more like snug little boots that do up with a button.

"I'm told mothers like them," modest Helen says. "They are also sold at the stall at the hospital."

Helen donates not only her time to knit hundreds of pairs of booties for our premature babies, but also the wool and the buttons needed to produce them.

Her husband of almost 64 years, Max, does his bit, too. "When I want to do some knitting, he cooks the meal," Helen said.

Now aged 84, Helen said she had slowed down on her knitting a little this year after she had a fall that fractured both hands. Still, she managed to deliver more than 125 pairs.

Helen and Max have been catching the train to the city several times a year since 1986 to make that special delivery. It started when they heard of a friend's grandson, born prematurely at the Women's, and the need for booties and bonnets for small babies.

Helen organised a knitting group and together they produced 48 bonnets that first time.

"I like doing something for someone else," Helen said. "You know, I don't like promoting myself, but I agreed to do this because I hope it might give someone the incentive to do something for the hospital.

"It gives me a lot of satisfaction knowing that I am doing something for someone else."

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**Pictured: Booties knitted by Helen Morse**



## THANK YOU

2013 is very quickly drawing to a close and once again this year we have been blessed with the support of many people.

To the more than 1,500 donors that have very generously supported us this year we offer our heartfelt thanks.

Donations of money have enabled us to purchase special equipment, pursue vital research and run pilot projects to develop better ways to care for women and newborns.

Teaching aids and baby bundles have also been made available for needy families through the donation of goods and handmade items.

To each and every one of you – thank you so very much.



**Pictured:** A visitor making a donation into a decommissioned humidicrib, which was converted into a donation box thanks to Form A Sign

### **The VFL Club set out to continue the camaraderie of football days and along the way has become a charitable supporter.**

They are big-hearted blokes who played with a lot of courage at the height of their football careers. Now they are members of the VFL Club (Virtually Forgotten Legends).

Alex Marcou (Carlton), Phil Maylin (Carlton and Footscray), Peter McConville (Carlton), Nick Theodossi (Collingwood) and Greg Wells (Melbourne and Carlton); big names and now VFL Life Members.

Greg Wells is dad to Kylie Carmichael, also featured in *Our Stories* (p6–7).

"Our family was devastated when Kylie lost Sam prematurely and through this very tough period we were able to learn more about the great work done by the Newborn Intensive & Special Care (NISC) unit at the Women's," Greg said.

"I discussed this with my fellow VFL Club committee and we agreed to support the NISC, and it has now become a solid partnership."

Mr Wells said: "We believe we have found a partner in the Women's who can help us make even greater achievements in the future."

"We couldn't do this without the help and dedication of Sharni Wells from Fullcircle Management."



**Pictured:** Left to right – VFL Club members Rod Grinter, Marty Pask, Ian Bremner and Brent West at the Women's



STAY IN TOUCH

### PLEASE STAY IN TOUCH, IT IS EASY

At the Women's, we want to share with you what is happening at our hospital; whether it is life-changing research or the remarkable fundraising activities of some very special people who have been touched by our work.



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*Social Worker  
Amanda Styles  
attending a  
consumer workshop  
at the Women's*





This is Charlie,  
Holly and Chloe.  
Their mum Kylie ran  
the Melbourne  
Marathon to raise  
money for the Women's  
in loving memory  
of their brother Sam.

There are many ways you can support us.  
Please visit [www.thewomens.org.au](http://www.thewomens.org.au)

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