

# MEDIA RELEASE

## For immediate release

From: Kasey McCulloch, Media Officer, Mercy Health

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## Inspirational trek through Aussie outback raises \$50,000 for vulnerable babies

Melbourne mum-of-three George McMahon and her friend Hollie Gooden are celebrating after completing an epic 1,720 kilometre walk and bike ride across Australia to raise money and awareness about premature birth and stillbirth.

George and Hollie set off from Alice Springs on Thursday 1 June 2017 and followed the Tanami Track, crossing both the Tanami and Great Sandy deserts – widely recognised as some of the most isolated and arid terrain in Australia. They finished at Cable Beach in Western Australia on Sunday 2 July 2017.

George and Hollie's walk and ride was inspired by Robyn Davidson's famed 1977 expedition across the Top End, immortalised in the classic memoir and 2013 film *Tracks*.

"Our journey, which we affectionately titled 'Alice to Sea', has been a life-changing experience and a dream come true," George explained.

"Our bodies were challenged every day of the walk/ride which was through some of the most magnificent landscape in the world but also some of the harshest.

"We battled blisters, cramps, sweltering heat and even encounters with brown snakes. We are so proud of our physical strength but even prouder to have raised funds and awareness for such an important cause."

All of the money raised from Alice to Sea will go towards Mercy Health Foundation's fundraising campaign Pram Jam and the Mercy Hospital for Women Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

George is particularly passionate about the cause because her three daughters were all born prematurely as a result of life-threatening pregnancy complications. Hollie also spent time in a Special Care Nursery when she was born, due to a congenital heart disease.

Mercy Hospital for Women Director of Perinatal Medicine Professor Sue Walker said the hospital's researchers, clinicians, nurses and teachers were all inspired by George and Hollie's generosity of time and spirit.

"We can't thank George and Hollie enough for partnering with us as we partner with families to invest in the best possible first nine months of life, and beyond," Prof Walker said.

"It is people like George and Hollie who bring us 'one day closer' to making sure every mother and their baby get to go home safely."

Mercy Hospital for Women Neonatologist Dan Casalaz said the funds raised by George and Hollie will help make a family's time in the NICU as comfortable as possible.

"When a baby is born too early or sick it is an extremely stressful time for their parents and extended family," Dr Casalaz said.

"We are extremely grateful for any fundraising support to make sure our patients and their families not only receive the best medical support but the appropriate emotional and physical support as well."

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For interviews and photo opportunities, please contact:

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