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## A walk to remember

Launceston Examiner, Launceston

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**BY JESSICA WILLARD**

WHEN Nicole Burton's twins were born, they were small enough to both fit in one hand. But it would be more than a week before she could hold her babies at all.

Conceived through IVF, after a difficult pregnancy twins Emily and Angus were born premature at 30 weeks.

With the combined weight of about 2.6 kilograms, they were about the size of a small cabbage - each.

After being flown from Launceston the twins were born at the Royal Hobart Hospital. They would go on to spend two months in the neonatal intensive care unit, where each day was touch and go.

Describing the experience as surreal, Ms Burton said she was still coming to terms with it.

"I still don't think I have allowed myself to actually recognise the trauma of it, because if I open up those flood gates I don't think they'll close," she said.

"It had been such a huge journey to get pregnant, then suddenly I was facing losing it all.

"When they were born, Angus wasn't breathing. That was the most terrifying moment of my life.

"I just remember seeing his arm be lifted up, and it just flopped down. I was looking at him saying, 'for the love of God breathe'.

"They whipped Emily away straight away and I

wasn't allowed to touch her. It was a brief moment and they were both gone. Off to intensive care."

Now four years old, Emily and Angus are among the 48,000 premature or sick babies born in Australia every year.

Accounting for about 8 per cent of all births, premature births are on the rise - something largely attributed to increasing maternal ages, more multiple pregnancies with assisted reproduction and higher rates of maternal diabetes.

On October 27 the Burtons will take part in their fifth Walk for Prems - the largest annual fundraiser for the Life's Little Treasures Foundation.

Dedicated to supporting the families of babies born sick or prior to 37 weeks gestation, the event has raised more than \$1.8 million for the foundation since its inception in 2009.

With walks taking place simultaneously across Australia including Hobart, Ms Burton said it was a powerful experience to be a part of.

"It's a wonderful organisation to support, and it's great to just be there on the day with people who have shared the same experience," she said.

"The reason we do the walk every year is to thank everyone who got us here today."

For more information or to register, visit [walkforprems.org.au](http://walkforprems.org.au).



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**FAMILY:** Mother Nicole Burton with twins Angus and Emily, 4, of Summerhill, ahead of this year's Walk for Prems event. **Picture:** Scott Gelston