



*Fertility Society of Australia  
2018 Annual Scientific Meeting, Melbourne 9-12 September*

Media Release, Monday 10 September

## Former sports star stresses need to be a 'team player' in emotional journey of infertility treatment

Couples experiencing infertility and who choose IVF to achieve their dream of parenthood should enter the emotional rollercoaster of treatment with a clear strategy and understanding about possible outcomes, says netball champion Liz Ellis.

The former Australian netball captain and winner of Commonwealth Games gold medals and world titles actually faced some of her greatest personal battles off the court where she played a record 122 games for her country.

After having their first child, Evelyn, through natural conception in 2011, Liz and her husband, Matthew, endured a five-year period of anxiety over infertility, and then the ultimate joy of having the baby they strived so long to conceive.

*Liz, who wrote a book about her experiences, entitled [If At First You Don't Conceive](#), will deliver the opening address at the 2018 annual conference of the Fertility Society of Australia starting at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre today (Monday 10 September).*

As she endured cycle after cycle of IVF with miscarriages and heartbreak, Liz recognised the challenging journey of assisted reproduction was actually a "team game."

"My career in sport was built around structures and plans to achieve ultimate goals," she explained.

"As we worked to address infertility, we realised the need to be well educated and informed about treatment choices and likely outcomes. Initially, we were fazed by medical talk, data and detail.

"But then we asked questions, worked to interpret the facts and recognised the importance of being active players in the process rather than just passive recipients of treatment.

"Put simply, you need a good doctor, but you also need to be a good patient. And by making informed choices, you become more relaxed with more likelihood of success."

That was the outcome for Liz and Matthew. Just when they had all but given up hope of success through IVF – even considering an egg donation from her sister as a last chance – their son, Austin, was conceived naturally.

This intensely emotional period of her life inspired Liz to write the book to help the one in six Australian couples who experience infertility, which is defined as the failure to conceive after a year of unprotected intercourse, or the inability to carry pregnancies to a live birth.

“The book emphasises the importance of being well educated about infertility treatment and being empowered by informed decision making,” she said.

“Infertility specialists are not created equal, and the detail about treatment and statistics can be confronting and confusing, and that just adds to the anxiety.

“My book seeks to unravel the detail of assisted reproduction by addressing aspects of treatment in non-medical terms that people can easily understand.

“It encourages people seeking treatment to ask questions, find the doctors who provide the answers they can understand, and seek out mentors who have gone through their own journeys with infertility treatment.

“IVF involves significant financial and emotional costs. There are feelings of failure and guilt, questions about whether you have looked after your body, and concerns about the feelings if your partner.

“There also needs to be recognition that things may not work out as you hoped and the importance of creating a strategy to let go of your dream of parenthood.”

Liz said one of her key messages to delegates attending the Fertility Society of Australia conference would be to listen to their patients and help them make informed choices about treatment.

Leading fertility specialists from Australia and overseas are attending the conference at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre to explore latest developments to help people experiencing infertility, which is defined as the failure to conceive after a year of unprotected intercourse, or the inability to carry pregnancies to a live birth.

In Australia, an estimated one in six couples experience infertility, the causes of which are equally shared between male and female partners.

For more information on speakers and the program for the 2018 annual scientific meeting of the Fertility Society of Australia, go to [www.fsaconference.com](http://www.fsaconference.com)

**Interview:**

**Liz Ellis will deliver the opening address at the Fertility Society of Australia conference at 8.40am today (Monday).**

**To arrange an interview, please contact Trevor Gill, FSA Media Relations, on 0418 821948 or e-mail [lighthousepr@adelaide.on.net](mailto:lighthousepr@adelaide.on.net)**