



**Vital support:** Julia Toivonen, with Ronan, and Fiona Holloway, with Amber, celebrate National Premmie Day at Clarekirk Early Parenting Centre.

Picture: Rob Car

# Life's little wonders

By Will Wright

FOR a long time parents of premature babies in Wantirna had little support to cope with complications involved in raising their child.

The Parents of Premature Babies Support Group was set up 18 months ago so struggling families did not feel alone and could talk to other parents who had been through similar experiences.

Last Tuesday, the group celebrated the first National Premmie Day in Victoria.

Lian Tunks, a Knox maternal and child health nurse, said the group was supported by Knox Council, but run by members.

"Ten families meet at Clarekirk Early Parenting Centre once a month for a two hour meeting where children can play together."

Ms Tunks said many premature children had significant

complications. "Some are born after 24 weeks, when full term is 40 weeks," Ms Tunks said.

"Long-term lung complications, speech delays, vision and hearing difficulties are some of the problems children face.

"Parents are so fragile because they wonder whether their child will live. A lot of women suffer from postnatal depression, which can have a big impact on the family."