



Brad Hazzard
Minister for Health and Medical Research

MEDIA RELEASE

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‘LIFE-SAVING’ BREAST MILK BANK PASSES MILESTONE

Hundreds of premature babies across NSW have avoided potential life-threatening infections and disease, thanks to the first statewide donor human milk bank in NSW.

Health Minister Brad Hazzard said as the service nears its first anniversary of operation, almost 700 litres of pasteurised donor human milk has fed at risk infants.

“Since the launch of the statewide milk bank, over 350 vulnerable babies in neonatal intensive care units have received disease-fighting donor milk,” Mr Hazzard said.

“Without this breast milk from generous women, pre-term infants and those bubs with very low birth weights are more susceptible to potentially serious disease and illness.”

Pasteurised donor human milk is recommended by the World Health Organization as a first alternative to infant formula, when there is insufficient mother’s milk available.

The contents of breast milk guard against disease-causing bacteria by forming a protective layer on the mucous membranes of a baby’s intestines, nose and throat.

Donors undergo rigorous screening, including a blood test, which screens for diseases including HIV and hepatitis B and C that could be transmitted through breastmilk.

Donor milk is collected, tested and pasteurized at a purpose-built facility run by the Australian Red Cross Blood Service and distributed to NSW Health NICUs as required.

Neonatal intensive care units at the Royal Hospital for Women, Liverpool, Nepean, Westmead, John Hunter, Royal North Shore, Royal Prince Alfred Hospitals and the two units located in the Sydney Children’s Hospitals Network utilise the milk bank.

Royal Hospital for Women lactation specialist, Patty Everitt, said more than 100 babies and their families in the Royal’s NICU have benefitted from the statewide service.

“We are the largest NICU in NSW and each year we provide specialised care for close to 1000 babies so this service is invaluable for our families and carers,” Ms Everitt said.

“The milk is fed to babies born at less than 32 weeks or weighing less than 1500 grams, whose mum’s own supply does not meet her baby’s feeding requirements.”

The NSW Government is investing \$170 million in additional health services for families as part of the 2019-20 NSW Budget.

For more information on the milk bank go to www.milkbank.com.au.

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