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**The Milk Bar – providing breastmilk for babies**

Human breastmilk is the perfect first food for human babies, containing everything required for optimal growth and development plus short and long-term protection from illness and disease. Unfortunately, not all babies have access to breastmilk, for a variety of reasons. Currently the only option is formula baby milk, with evidence showing an associated increased potential for adverse health outcomes and early weaning.

A donor milk bank is the perfect facility, able to provide babies with human breastmilk as a superior alternative to formula baby milk. Studies show that women want access to donor milk when they are unable to provide their own breastmilk to their baby. Lactating women want to be able to donate their milk for babies other than their own for a variety of reasons. Donor milk banks are heavily linked to promoting and supporting breastfeeding and evidence shows they increase breastfeeding longevity.

This policy aims to offer the families of the ACT surrounding areas access to a human donor breastmilk bank. This new facility would be located in The Canberra Hospital, close to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) and special care nursery (SCN). Breastmilk donated at this facility would also be provided to Calvary Public Hospital in Bruce. Having a donor milk bank in the ACT will increase breastfeeding rates and duration and reduce the need of babies being given artificial formula milk as currently is the only alternative. Having access to human breastmilk will result in better health outcomes for babies and their mothers.

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