



1 in 10 babies are born premature
How else can you help?



Miracle Babies Foundation advocates for families with a premature or sick newborn baby. Help us achieve positive change in health care and family support so all babies reach their full potential.

We are advocating three key areas that would make a significant difference to vulnerable families;

Family Integrated Care (FICARE)

Family Integrated Care (FICARE) involves parents and family members to be the primary carers of their baby during their hospital stay. The care is provided in partnership with doctors and nurses.

For this to be possible, hospitals need to have the everyday comforts and amenities available at home. These include kitchen areas, accommodation and rest/quiet rooms, child care facilities, bathroom amenities, parking permits and transport assistance.

These facilities must be close to the Neonatal Unit.

"After FiCare, I felt like I am the mum. It made us an integral part of his care over being bystanders watching from the sideline." – Melinda Cruz, Founder Miracle Babies Foundation

Research has found that Family Integrated Care improves weight gain, reduces infection, increases breastfeeding, reduces length of hospital stay and parental distress.

Extended Parental Leave

A premature baby can spend up to a year in hospital. When baby finally comes home parents may be required to return to work shortly after.

There is currently no extended leave offered for families in Australia who have had a baby born early or critically ill.

In addition, the Fair Work Act also prohibits unpaid leave to commence after the date of birth. This limits the time spent together during a critical time of transition from hospital to home.

Other countries have recognised additional financial needs of parents of premature babies when drafting their parental leave schemes.

Mum, Rachel had baby Estelle at just 26 weeks gestation, she shares how the experience impacted her family.

“When we neared discharge from NICU, the day we had waited for, for so long, my husband applied to use his parental leave. Unfortunately, he was denied on the belief that daughter Estelle was no longer a newborn. Our baby was 38 weeks gestation, younger than some babies are when they are born. She was most certainly a newborn. She barley weighed 3 kgs at this stage. How could the outside world not see this? I was devastated. We were now to miss out on this time together, after already missing out on so much. My husband had gone to work when I was still in ICU. He had missed so much of her NICU journey because he wanted to be home when she was finally home, so we could adjust to our new normal. Because taking home an extreme prem isn’t like taking home a newborn, there are a lot of additional challenges.” – Rachel, mum to Estelle

Breast Milk Support

Provision of exclusive breastfeeding support in hospitals:

Breast milk is important for premature and sick newborns. Sadly, many new mothers stop breastfeeding too early or are unable to provide breastmilk to their newborn.

“Breastfeeding results in better brain development and lowers the risk of infections in premature babies.”

- Children’s National Health System

Today, some hospitals do not have lactation consultants, nor midwives available to spend time with new parents to help establish breastfeeding. Introducing breastfeeding as early as possible (within a few hours after birth) increases the chance of successful breastfeeding. Parents of premature and sick newborns need greater support to establish breastfeeding.

‘I had a preemie and was lucky enough to be able to breastfeed. I remember when pregnant taking it for granted that I would obviously breastfeed my baby. However, when you have a preemie breastfeeding suddenly becomes something that isn’t to be taken for granted. I met so many mothers in the nursing room desperately trying to produce enough milk to feed their little ones.’

- Dawn B.

When mother’s own milk is not available, babies must have access to donor breast milk. This is best provided through donor human milk banks.

We have a solution, the Australian Red Cross Milk Bank in South Australia has commenced. Access to these Milk Banks is limited due to a variation in the Human Tissue Acts.

Another area of regulation which should be addressed is unnecessary separation of mothers and their babies.

Babies are routinely separated from their mother unnecessarily. A change in regulation that force premature babies to be separated from their mothers would result in improved breastfeeding rates, reduced length of hospital stay and parental distress, by keeping mothers and their newborns together.

Our mission is to *achieve better, healthier outcomes for premature and sick newborns and their families.* Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,
Kylie Pussell
CEO and Co-Founder
Miracle Babies Foundation