Media Release

John Elferink
Minister for Children and Families

Robyn Lambley
Minister for Health

**NEW EQUIPMENT TO HELP BABIES LIVE HEALTHY, HAPPY LIVES**

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The Minister for Health Robyn Lambley and the Minister for Children and Families John Elferink have welcomed new hearing equipment for Royal Darwin Hospital that will test thousands of babies each year.

“4051 babies were born across the Territory last year, with 2060 at Royal Darwin Hospital,” Mrs Lambley said.

“The Territory already screens the hearing of more than 3000 newborns each year.

“In 2013, 65 babies failed the newborn screening and had to be further assessed.

“It is difficult to test babies for hearing, and it requires highly specialised technology to assess hearing levels without the need for the baby to respond.

“This amazing new audiology equipment means audiologists will be able to easily and quickly diagnose babies while they’re asleep, or in the operating theatre.”

Minister for Children and Families John Elferink said he was very pleased to receive the new $48,000 equipment on behalf of Royal Darwin Hospital today.

“The new equipment will ensure Territory children get the best medical care possible,” Mr Elferink said.
“Research shows that hearing problems among Indigenous children is one of the most serious health problems faced by kids in remote communities.

“69% of Indigenous Territory children tested had at least one middle ear condition and hearing loss, while 14% had moderate, severe or profound hearing impairment.

“The technology means babies can be diagnosed and treated for hearing issues at the earliest moment, giving them the best start in life to communicate and learn.”

Variety NT General Manager Wendy McCallum said the funds were raised through events such as the Variety Bash, Corporate Sponsors and generous donations.

“Having funded audio diagnostic equipment at Royal Darwin Hospital 17 years ago, we are pleased to be assisting the hospital to again help children live healthy happy lives,” Ms McCallum said.

“Variety NT has been fundraising in the community for 23 years and we then channel these funds into practical equipment, resources and experiences for sick, disadvantaged and special needs children all throughout the Territory.”

Mrs Lambley said that in addition to hearing assessment, the new audiology equipment also provides an innovative and unique method for assessing vestibular (balance) disorders which can improve rehabilitation outcomes for dizzy patients.

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