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HEALTH

Step in the right direction on SIDS

World-first safety standards being introduced to protect the lives of little ones are a ‘step in the right direction’, says a mum who lost her four-month-old son to SIDS.

By [HOLLY TRUELOVE](#)



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World-first safety standards are being introduced in Australia to protect the lives of little ones, and for Alex Hamilton, who lost her four-month-old son to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), it's a step in the “right direction”.

When Ms Hamilton's baby, River, died, “he was on his back, he was in his cot, there was nothing around him”. She added: “They don't know why [he died].”

The co-founder of River's Gift, an organisation dedicated to researching SIDS and its advocacy, said removing external stressors around infants could put them in a “much better place of survival”.

“An external stressor ... could be overheating, could be being face down in a cot that isn't firm, could be that build up of CO2,” she said.

Overly soft surfaces such as pillows, mattresses and adult beds already undergo firmness testing under the existing standards that were a world-first in 2013, but they will be enhanced to include baby loungers and comforters.

“It means we can test a wider variety of products more accurately and make sure that we're not missing any products that a baby may sleep on,” Infant & Nursery Products Alliance of Australia safety ambassador Kellee Eriksson said.

Carbon dioxide build-up will also be considered in the new standards, with improved product design requirements being introduced, making it necessary for sleep surfaces to have a CO2 impermeable membrane on top of it to reflect carbon dioxide from the surface.

“If you have, for example, a mattress that can hold carbon dioxide and doesn't allow it to dissipate properly, if a baby was to roll over face down and breathe in and out into that mattress ... the carbon dioxide can actually build up,” Ms Eriksson said.

“The concentration of carbon dioxide that that baby's breathing in becomes higher and higher, which then becomes a suffocation risk and a risk of SIDS.”

Ms Eriksson, who founded Little Human Linens and worked as an emergency nurse, said the new standards would “significantly” improve the pre-existing standards surrounding the reduction of infant mortality rates.

The new safety standards published by Standards Australia will work to expand product testing to minimise these external stressors, and will also simplify communication and advice about baby products for parents.

“What these standards are doing now is adding more stringency around the test methods, and they also expand the scope of products to be tested,” Standards Australia chief operating officer Kareen Riley-Takos said.

“The standard is going to provide very clear labelling and communication for parents to be able to make decisions.”

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