

Clare Bell

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Main Points of my Submission:-

- Breastfeeding Training for all Health Care Professionals needs to be consistent and thorough.
- Advertising of Infant formula and Toddler Milks needs to be carefully monitored so that the general public is receiving accurate information.
- Breastfed babies are sick less often so lets support Breastfeeding Mums as much as possible:
 - Better workplace conditions that promote and support Breastfeeding
 - Government funded paid maternity leave so that mums can stay home in the early days and establish breastfeeding
 - Training for childcare workers so that they know how to support breastfeeding mothers
- Government funding to the Australian Breastfeeding Association, so that they can continue with, and increase the wonderful work they are doing in our communities.
- Incorporate Breastfeeding into high school curriculum so that the next generation of parents know of all the wonderful benefits

I am writing in regards to the parliamentary inquiry into breastfeeding.

I am 33 years old and the mother of a 5 year old Girl Lilly and a 4 year old boy Noah. Both of my children were breastfed (Lilly to 10 months and Noah to 13 months) and are healthy, happy little individuals.

I have had my share of ups and down with breastfeeding and the main thing that helped me to get through the hard times was support. From my Husband, Family, Doctor, Midwives, Child Health Nurses and the best encouragement and support came from the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

Breastfeeding my second child seemed so much easier as I had the information and the confidence that I lacked the first time.

I did find a lot of conflicting advice from Health Professionals and have since found out that they only receive very minimal training in breastfeeding. Some gave totally conflicting advice and almost forced infant formula onto me. I had read a lot before my children were born and knew that exclusively breastfeeding for the first six months with no other foods introduced was optimal with breastfeeding to a minium

of age 2 as recommended by the World Health Organisation. I did not make it to the 2 year mark with my children as I felt under pressure to wean once I became pregnant again. I think if more mothers breastfed in public, were supported to breastfeed in public and if it was seen in advertising, in television shows, movies and advertising it would be accepted and therefore just part of life.

I have noticed an increase in formula company advertisements on TV, in magazines and Newspapers. They advertise these formulas as "follow on" and best for your toddler, containing all the essential vitamins and minerals when they won't eat anything. They are also full of sugar and preservatives and a total waste of a mother's money. Toddlers that are still breastfed still get all of the benefits of breast milk. They also start to have other foods that the family is eating – not substituting with a milk drink from a can. I think governments need to take some responsibility and stop these advertisements and replace with ads stating the benefits of breastfeeding for babies and toddlers!

My children have been sick less often than friends who chose not to breastfeed. That meant fewer trips to the doctor or hospital and so less drain on the public health system. My friends that did not breast feed; have had their children in hospital with Asthma, Bronchitis, gastro bugs and other illnesses. They had to stand by and watch IV drips being inserted into their babies because they were so sick. I also took better care of myself whilst breastfeeding, so I too was healthier.

A lot of mothers start out breastfeeding their babies; however stop after a few months. Any breast milk is great; however extended breastfeeding has been proven to lower the risks of diabetes and becoming obese later in life. It also helps prevent breast cancer and ovarian cancer in mothers.

I think many mothers give up breastfeeding when they return to work. It can be difficult expressing breast milk. A mum needs a clean, private environment (not a toilet) to express breast milk when she is away from her baby. She needs a childcare arrangement where she will be supported in her breastfeeding

- Being able to take breaks to breastfeed or express.
- Having childcare facilities close to her work, so she can take breaks to go to her baby and breastfeed.
- Having a child carer (either day care centre or day-care mum) that has had training in the benefits of breastmilk and is supportive.

I was lucky enough not to work outside of the home, my husband and I made a decision for me to stay home until our children went to school. So this was not an issue for me, but again I have seen many mothers give up. Perhaps government funded maternity leave would enable mums to stay home longer. Breastfeeding can then be well established by the time mum returns to work.

Giving more financial aid to the Australian Breastfeeding Association. This network of dedicated, caring women is an invaluable resource. They give their time freely, running a 7 day, 24 hr Breastfeeding Helpline. They have small support groups in all areas and hold discussion mornings covering many parenting topics especially breastfeeding. They offer breastfeeding counselling to mothers at no charge. I have

heard that lactation consultants cost between \$65 and \$85 per hour. They run Breastfeeding Education classes for pregnant women. Many women today lack a support network to help them when they make the major change of having a baby. Many do not have mothers close by and some of those mothers had their children in the 1960's when bottle feeding was more popular and so do not have the knowledge to help support Breastfeeding. The Australian Breastfeeding Association is a great support network. I do not think I would have continued to breastfeed without their help, encouragement and support.

If breastfeeding was more talked about, seen more it would be the "Norm", not something unusual. If breastfeeding education was taught as part of a "Life skills" program in schools our next generation of parents would be that much better informed to make the right choices about their children's health.

In closing I think we all need to support breastfeeding. It needs to be seen more and supported more. Breastfeeding has been proven to produce healthier individuals, so let's help increase the long term Breastfeeding rates.

Thank you for your time taken to read my submission.

Regards,

Clare Bell