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I would like to suggest a couple of ways as to how the Commonwealth government can take a lead role to improve the health of the Australian population through support for breastfeeding.

I think that the the extent of the health benefits of breastfeeding are very widely known and researched.

As well as evaluating the impact of marketing of breast milk substitutes on breastfeeding rates the Government should also look at the inadvertent "marketing" of bottle-feeding through TV and movies. So often, I am frustrated to see shows such as Home and Away and Neighbours showing a newborn baby with a bottle in their mouth and no mention of why the mother is not breastfeeding. I think this would have a devastating effect on teenagers perception of whether the average person breastfeeds or bottle feeds. I think the Government should legislate against any TV program or advertisement in Australia showing a baby being bottle fed. They should show the mother breastfeeding and even bring into the story line the potential issues mothers have when they first start feeding such as having problems attaching the baby, or poor supply, or mastitis, and then how they solve those problems and continue breastfeeding. I think a lot of Australian women are pro-breastfeeding in theory but as soon as it gets difficult they give up as they don't know how to work through these issues and say things like, "I couldn't breastfeed" which is usually not the case, they just couldn't be bothered or didn't know how to work through the problem.

I personally have breast-fed my two children and both times I had mastitis several times throughout my breastfeeding periods particularly in the first few weeks. I also had cracked, bleeding and infected nipples from poor attachment and it was very painful and unenjoyable at first. But I persisted as my mother breastfed us kids extensively and I knew it would get easier and I was determined to keep breastfeeding no matter what. I used the ABA helpline quite a lot to help me through these times.

Other initiatives to encourage breastfeeding could include a home-visit system like I was lucky enough to use in Canberra where a qualified mid-wife visits your home each day for seven days (in my case they extended to 10 days as I was sick) after you leave the hospital to offer you encouragement and support and check the baby and mother's health each day. This was offered because I checked out of hospital early but I strongly beleive this should be offered to all mothers as hospitals are generally sending mothers home at the three day mark which is right when you are due to get your milk in and is terrible timing to be at home alone without any medical help or support.

I also think that these midwives should be able to ring a doctor and get a prescription for antibiotics for mothers with mastitis that someone could pick up from the chemist as it is SO difficult to drag yourself out of bed as well as pack up everything you need to take your newborn with you to get to a doctor to get the prescription for the antibiotics. In my case, the doctor prescribed the wrong type of antibiotics (best for urinary tract infection) and only that the midwife doing the home visits realised after I was still sick three days later. She then rang the doctor ar the hospital who rang through a prescription to the hospital chemist and my husband picked it up half an hour later. I was better

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within 8 hours. I think this proves that the average GP (who are not always supportive of breastfeeding) can actually make things worse.

Please contact me with any queries about this submission.

Regards,

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