

I wish to make a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Breastfeeding.

I am a mother of 4 breastfed children, now aged 21,19,16 and 11. I breastfed my girls for over 8 years, and they are a wonderful example of the benefits of being breastfed. They are all very healthy, intelligent and well adjusted young Australians.

All baby mammals feed on milk from their mother's mammary glands. In the case of human babies the milk that they should be fed is breastmilk from their mother's breast. This is the normal and correct way to nourish our babies. We as a nation need to recognise and value the importance of "Human Milk for Human Babies"

There are mountains of information of the health benefits of breastfeeding. If breastfeeding has defined benefits then to feed a baby artificial breastmilk substitute is to put that baby at an unacceptable risk of poor health both as a baby and later in life.

In Australia we need to see breastfeeding as normal and natural and not as something that a mother may try if she feels like it. The World Health Organisation (WHO) produced the "International Code for the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes" in 1981

The preamble to the International Code notes that, "breastfeeding is an unequalled way of providing ideal food for the healthy growth and development of infants; that it forms a unique biological and emotional basis for the health of both mother and child; that the anti-infective properties of breastmilk help to protect infants against disease; and that there is an important relationship between breastfeeding and child-spacing."

As a member of the WHO I urge the government to fully implement the "Code" and not just to the "MAIF" agreement, which I believe falls very short in fully protecting the health of all babies in Australia. If we are serious about infant health then to continue to allow the importance of breastfeeding to be undermined by pharmaceutical and formula companies is wrong.

In Australia, we are very fortunate to have the Australian Breastfeeding Association who support and encourage women to breastfeed their children.

On the Association's website at www.breastfeeding.com.au there is information which may assist you in your investigations.

I thank you for reading this and wish you well.

Bronwyn Barber

The extent of the health benefits of breastfeeding;

- Evaluate the impact of marketing of breast milk substitutes on breastfeeding rates and, in particular, in disadvantaged, Indigenous and remote communities;
- The potential short and long term impact on the health of Australians of increasing the rate of breastfeeding;
- Initiatives to encourage breastfeeding;
- Examine the effectiveness of current measures to promote breastfeeding; and
- The impact of breastfeeding on the long term sustainability of Australia's health system