



My name is Sharon Green. I am a mother of 2 gorgeous boys, both of whom I enjoyed a wonderful breastfeeding relationship with.

I am glad to hear of this Federal Inquiry into breastfeeding. I believe the government can do a great deal to improve breastfeeding rates in Australia, and in particular, breastfeeding continuation rates. The majority of people I talk to believe that "breastfeeding is best" but if they have any trouble breastfeeding, it is no big deal to change to formula. Many people don't seem to see any disadvantages to formula feeding, other than possibly the out of pocket costs associated. Formula is seen every day. I see mothers bottle feeding their infants everywhere I go, yet I rarely see any being breastfed. It doesn't appear to be a normal part of life. Almost every time I look through junk mail I see large cans of infant formula with large "special" notices. I see pyramids of formula cans in the doorways and windows of pharmacies and on the end of grocery isles. It is very obvious. I think the government could and should do more to restrict the marketing of infant formula.

I think a national advertising campaign could do a great deal to show breastfeeding as the normal way to feed babies and toddlers. The formula companies seem to have huge amount of money to spend on marketing and advertising. Breastfeeding is not going to make anyone money in the same way and so doesn't get the publicity it needs. However the government should take on board the cost to everyone that non-breastfeeding is having. Just look at the rates of cancers, obesity, heart disease, diabetes and allergies and the money that goes into treatment, when breastfeeding has been proven to reduce rates of these things. The promotion and support of breastfeeding would be so much cheaper.

From what I see, the majority of mothers initiate breastfeeding, but so many give up so quickly. They can't find the support and help they need. Mothers need access to breastfeeding helplines, they need the support of health professionals who know about breastfeeding, and they need accurate information. Many mothers complain about conflicting advice surrounding breastfeeding. Every midwife who sees them in hospital seems to tell them to do something different. Midwives need to be kept up-to-date with breastfeeding knowledge and skills to assist mothers to breastfeeding their babies. I don't think midwives have enough breastfeeding education available to them.

Health professionals such as general practitioners also need to learn more about breastfeeding. I have known mothers who have been told by their GP's to give formula to "fatten baby up", to "help baby sleep at night", to "reduce colic" and so on. Health professionals should be adequately trained to support mothers to breastfeed for 2 years and beyond (WHO code), not to wean when baby gets a tooth or starts solids "because they don't need breastmilk anymore".

Human milk is for human babies. Why do so many mothers trust their bodies to care for their unborn baby, yet once baby is born, they don't trust their body to continue to produce all that is needed for their baby? We are mammals after all. This is what we are designed to do. That is why we have breasts. Society doesn't accept breastfeeding as it should...the normal way to nurture our babies. I hope the government can do something to influence how society views breastfeeding and to help volunteer organisations such as the Australian Breastfeeding Association with funding to support all mothers who wish to breastfeed.

Sharon Green