

Mrs Karina Ryan

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The Secretary of the Committee on Inquiry into Breastfeeding
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir / Madam

Inquiry into Breastfeeding

I am a working mother with a 3½ year old daughter. I returned to work when my daughter was 7 months old.

When I fell pregnant I researched information available regarding child birth, parenting and breastfeeding classes. I was fortunate enough to attend a Basics of Breastfeeding seminar run by the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

This seminar focussed solely on breastfeeding – the how, who, what and why. The information I received from this seminar assisted me with my decision on how to feed my daughter and enabled me to have an opinion when others decided to tell me what was right and wrong when feeding my child.

As a new parent you seek and receive information from so many people – your own parents / grandparents, friends, family members, doctors, work colleagues, midwives, etc and it is difficult to sort through what is correct and what isn't.

I believe that the government should be taking steps to ensure that all new parents receive correct information about feeding prior to birth and that it is a consistent message based on the WHO guidelines that babies should be breastfed until they are 6 months old. This information should be passed onto all health professionals and followed-up by consistent advertising and promotional material in the media.

The benefits of breastfeeding for both mothers and children should also be promoted and facts provided such as weight loss for mothers, brain development for children, increased immunity, etc.

Whilst I acknowledge that not everyone chooses to breastfeed it is not encouraged enough and certainly in today's society it is all too easy to provide milk substitutes such as formula. Access to formula for children under 6 months of age should be by prescription only and given after extensive counselling or based on medical reasons.

Due to a number of factors I returned to work when my daughter was 7 months old. I still continued to breastfeed and was fortunate enough to have an employer that provided lactation breaks and to also find a childcare centre that understood the benefits of breastfeeding and how to care for a breastfed child.

My daughter was breastfed until she was 2 years old.

In order to encourage breastfeeding the government needs to:

- Educate the population about the benefits including doctors, nurses, school students, child care workers, etc.
- Have a consistent message.
- Develop promotional material with reference to bodies such as the Australian Breastfeeding Association.
- Assist employers to be flexible for working mothers.
- Provide some level of assistance so that mothers can stay home longer with their children and continue breastfeeding.

Yours sincerely

Karina Ryan