

BA

Summary

I would find the following support to be the most useful for continuing to breastfeed:

- Priority: an advertising campaign to increase general public support for breastfeeding babies older than 12 months.
- Funding a toll-free telephone help line for the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA).
- Funding antenatal courses specifically about breastfeeding.
- Funding initiatives for increasing men's support of their partners to breastfeed.
- Emphasising the role of employers in providing suitable facilities and paid lactation breaks.
- Classifying breast pumps and accessories as tax deductible items.
- The ability to take unpaid leave in a block or in several installments, within two years of giving birth.

My experience

My son is six months old. Due to a complication while giving birth, I had only a little breastmilk initially and had to use formula supplements while rebuilding my breastmilk supply. The following months were a physical ordeal as I relactated; one that is difficult to explain to those who have not experienced it. It is mainly thanks to the members and counsellors of the ABA, and my supportive husband, that I am continuing to breastfeed. I have phoned the ABA's telephone help on many occasions and would find it helpful if this was a **toll free telephone help line**; I'm often short of time and would prefer to be automatically redirected to the ABA counsellor, rather than having to note the second phone number and redial a local or interstate number.

While relactating, I learned a great deal about the health, emotional and economic benefits of breastfeeding for at least two years. In retrospect, I was ignorant about breastfeeding problems at the time of giving birth, and would have benefited if my husband and I had attended a subsidised **antenatal course specifically about breastfeeding**. This would have been particularly helpful to emphasise **men's support**, which has been an important factor for me to continue breastfeeding.

My employer is supporting me to combine breastfeeding with work by providing flexible work conditions, **suitable facilities for expressing breastmilk such as a fridge and a private office, and paid lactation breaks**. I hope that these good conditions will become widespread because they are very important for continuing to breastfeed after returning to work, and will probably reduce the amount of sick leave that my child and I would need over our lifetimes. Considering that a breastfed population would reduce the load on our health system, and that breastfeeding is women's work, I call for **breast pumps and accessories to be tax deductible items**. A difficulty with paid employment is that, even with suitable facilities for expressing breastmilk, it can still impact adversely on breastfeeding and the population's health; I ask for the opportunity to take **unpaid leave within two years of giving birth**, whether as a single block of leave or in several instalments as necessary to fit in with a partner's leave, in line with the recommendation by the World Health Organisation to breastfeed for at least two years.

As I intend to continue breastfeeding for at least two years, my next challenge will be to face possible disapproval by breastfeeding an older baby or toddler in public. I would like to see an **advertising campaign to increase general public support for breastfeeding babies older than 12 months**. This is a priority for me.