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Standing Committee on Health and Ageing  
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To Whom It May Concern:

I am a mother of two daughters aged 11 and 8 and I volunteer as a Counselor for the Australian Breastfeeding Association in Australia. (ABA)

In Australia as I am sure you are aware we have appalling Breastfeeding rates and I feel this largely due to the attitude that Australians have towards parenting and the importance of human milk. My experience would have been far different if I did not have the support of an association like the ABA. Far into my pregnancy I had the offer of attending a Breastfeeding Education Class and was basically given the information that led me to make an informed choice about breastfeeding my baby. I had intended somewhat naively to feed for six months as I thought "that's what you did". The result of attending the class and being involved with the association is that I not only fed my daughter for 3 and half years I fed through the pregnancy of my second and went on to feed her for over four years. Fanatical you might say. Informed, educated and empowered is what I say. Human milk is not only a child's birthright but is a natural living fluid that sets any child onto a path of good health. It's a life long gift.

Along the way through my journey of motherhood I did encounter some criticism over feeding older children and through pregnancy. Some negativity came even from my own family. My conviction to keep going came from my self education and sometimes even to "walk the good walk" to defy my critics and the blatant ignorance of the people I came across.

Being a Counselor as well as being a mother in the community I have understood that there is a definite lack of knowledge, coming from the public, the medical practitioners, and child health support about the facts that govern the day to day handling of the breastfed baby. Women like myself, who contact the ABA gain that understanding and will go onto become successful breast feeders. Our association fills a huge gap in our community providing education and support for families, and I must say we do a good job. Constantly we are up against ill informed advice stemming from the very departments in which you would think that we should support and support us. Our society needs to examine the importance of feeding a baby human milk, the implications and out comes that increasing breastfeeding rates will have on infant and child health, and the education of not only the general public but all the groups that will support women and there decision to breastfeed. This education should include all

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children at school, all doctors, nurses and specialists that have anything to do with pregnancy, birth and child health. Its time we have directed policy on breastfeeding and an awareness campaign that will encompass all facets of breastfeeding. It's also important that the availability and marketing of artificial formulas are examined as a part of this process and decrease the role they play in the decision of how a mother chooses to feed her baby.

Thank you for your time  
Kate Taylor  
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