

Submission no. 473

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To Whom this may concern,

I breastfed my daughter until she was 15 months old, exclusively until she was 5 1/2 months. I felt very proud to be able to do so and believe that I have given her the best ever start in life. The main negative comments I had were from people telling me that I would have to look at weaning her, this was from she was 6 months old and mainly older women. I never had any problems feeding in public and found that most shopping centers provided very nice baby rooms. I was happy to feed my baby anywhere (and did!) and although I would get the odd look, I was never criticized.

I returned to work when my daughter was 9 months old. I only return 3 days a week for the first 4 months. My main reason for only working the three days, was the need to express. My employer was very supportive of my decision to continue breastfeeding and allowed me two 40 min lactation breaks each day. Unfortunately they didn't really have a suitable room for me to be able to express comfortably and I had been told that previous women had in fact expressed in the toilets. I was able to make arrangements to use the first aid room which, while less than perfect, was adequate.

I am expecting my second child and I have decided not to return to work until my child is 1 year old, the main reason for this is so I will not have to express at work.

I was very lucky in being able to breastfeed, but I do feel that women should have the choice to do what is right for them, their child and family situation. Not every one has all the support they need and are made to feel very guilty by child care/ maternal nurses for choosing to bottle feed. In my opinion, women should have all the information and be able to make an informed choice.

As women feel more comfortable to breastfeed were ever, then young women will see this as the normal way to feed your baby. I had never seen a baby being breast fed before I feed my own (other than the pre natal education). This meant that I didn't know what to expect and had no first hand knowledge of what was involved.

I hope this parliamentary inquiry will help to influence the community and attitudes towards breastfeeding. The more supportive the community, and the more aware they are of things like the recommendation to exclusively breast feed until 6 months etc, the more likely a mother will be to continue doing so.

I would like to see a series of advertisements discussing the feeding of infants to provide this education. However, this education should not exclude discussion on bottle feeding, many young mothers don't understand the importance of sterilizing and how long to a bottle of formula is good for etc.

Thank you for your time

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