



The Hon Tony Burke MP

Shadow Minister for Finance
Manager of Opposition Business
Member for Watson

Mr Andrew Southcott MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Procedure
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Southcott

**INQUIRY INTO PROVISIONS FOR BREASTFEEDING MOTHERS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's inquiry into provisions for breastfeeding mothers in the House of Representatives.


My response to the Committee's terms of reference is as follows:

- Prior to the Leader of the House, The Hon. Christopher Pyne MP, writing to this Committee seeking an inquiry into this matter, the Leader of the Opposition, The Hon. Bill Shorten MP, made clear in statements reported in the media in September 2015 that Labor supports women MPs being able to breastfeed wherever and whenever they want, including on the floor of the House of Representatives.
- Mr Shorten stated Labor's position: *"Women MPs should be able to breastfeed wherever and whenever they want - that includes on the floor of the Parliament [...] Women should have the option of using the current proxy voting arrangements or bringing their child onto the floor of the Parliament [...] I want more women in Parliament and a big part of that is ensuring it's a family-friendly workplace."*
- Parliament should seek to ensure women MPs have the flexibility they need to balance both work and family responsibilities.
- More than a decade ago, the Senate implicitly recognised that the practice of preventing women MPs from breastfeeding on the floor of Parliament was – as Mr Shorten has described the current House practice – *"archaic"*. In 2003, Senate Standing Orders were amended to allow a Senator to breastfeed an infant on the Senate floor. It is overdue that the House of Representatives also reflects community standards on this issue.

- For these reasons, Labor believes Standing Orders should be amended as soon as possible to allow women MPs the flexibility to choose at any time the arrangement that suits them – either current proxy voting arrangements or breastfeeding their infant on the floor of the House of Representatives. Both options should be available to women MPs at all times.

I look forward to the outcome of the Committee's inquiry.

Yours sincerely


10 November 2015