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To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for inviting comments to the **Inquiry into Breastfeeding.**

I believe that to improve breastfeeding rates in Australia that a two pronged approach is vital to success that involves *education* and *support*.

I believe the Australian Breastfeeding Association is well positioned to offer both education and support.

Supporting mothers involves education, promotion and protection of breastfeeding/breastmilk, and *equally* supporting parents unconditionally. Many argue that by advocating for the baby that we support all mothers – however it is not *guaranteed* that if every baby is breastfed according to best practice (6 months exclusively, two years and beyond) – that the mother (or father for that matter since men can breastfeed) will feel supported. Indeed they often feel coerced, tricked, suppressed, and this is evidenced by the rapid drop off rate after mother's leave the hospital environment. The Australian Breastfeeding Association advocates *both* for the child and the mother and the qualified office bearers that work for the association either in paid or volunteer positions constantly tread a fine ethical and moral line when they counsel/inform mothers and the needs of the baby and the needs of the mother conflict. As the association works to address the physiological and cultural barriers that bring about this conflict they extensively train their counsellors, community educators and office bearers to sensitively and ethically handle these situations on a mother to mother, case by case basis suspending their personal judgment.

I do believe that all babies have as a basic human right to be breastfed, breastmilk fed their own mothers expressed breastmilk, fed donor breastmilk and as a fourth option human/baby milk substitute. Many parents are not fully informed of their options and prematurely wean without exploring all options.

I believe it is essential;

For human infants to breastfeed or breastmilk fed exclusively for six months and thereafter in accordance with current World Health Organisation Guidelines.

For parents to have access to information, resources and unconditional support to enable them to make informed decisions about normal human infant feeding practices.

Respectfully,

Keryn Foley

Member of the Australian Breastfeeding Association since 1988