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To Whom It May Concern

I am 36 years of age and I have four children aged between 8 years and 18 months.

All of my four children were breastfed for varying periods of time. My first experience with breastfeeding came when my eldest son was born. He was quite sick and was airlifted from the NSW Central Coast to Sydney's Royal North Shore Neonatal Unit. For four days I expressed milk until I was able to hold him and feed him myself. During his first 4 days of life he was fed my breastmilk through a tube.

On day 5, I was finally able to feed my baby and I will never forget how I felt to be so close to my baby. It was an intimacy that I can't describe and I will never forget. My son thrived being breastfed and, to this day, he shows no signs of his original condition.

When he was six months old I, unfortunately had to return to full-time work and therefore had to wean him. Here lies problem number one as I see it.

My second child was born without complications and she was breastfed for a total of 12 months. I experienced a number of problems at first with her attaching but we persevered and worked it out. The midwives were excellent and very helpful during my hospital stay.

Child number three was breastfed for a total of approximately 20 months. She eventually weaned herself.

My youngest was breastfed until around 14 months of age. I weaned him mainly because he was very difficult throughout the night and I worked out that he was waking for comfort and a feed, and for no other reason. The day that I decided to wean him was a very sad day for me and I still miss it, four months down the track.

The benefits of breastfeeding for me were many. I am so glad that I gave it a go with my first child. After that, I was hooked. I think that, if more mothers were educated about the benefits and the REWARDS then they would probably give it a try. Perhaps it would be a good idea to have some education material distributed to new Mums that has real-life stories from people like me. They may be able to be persuaded and,

I believe, once tried they will not look back.

There are a number of obstacles to breastfeeding:

1. Women, like me, are forced to return to the workforce before they should for the benefit of their child. This creates a huge obstacle to the successfulness of breastfeeding, among other things. Perhaps the Government could look into models from other countries such as Sweden who provide more paid leave for Mums so that they are able to stay home with their precious babies (at a time when they really need them). After my first child, I was fortunate to find a job closer to home which mean't that I could go back to work but still come home for feeds. This is not a viable option for most Mums.

2. There in insufficient GOOD education material for new Mums as to the rewards of breastfeeding.

3. Perhaps the term 'breastfeeding' could be changed to something a little more socially acceptable. The fact that the word 'breast' is included in the term may make some people uncomfortable. Perhaps a term more descriptive of the benefits of breastfeeding could be found... Just a suggestion!

Thank you for your time. I feel so blessed to have been able to breastfed my four babies. Babies are so precious and the bond that is formed between Mum and Bub has been so evident to me.

Regards

Naomi Sirio