

Submission no. 278AUTHORISED: 17/4/07 *R***What Would Help**

Legislation to ensure ethical marketing of breastmilk substitutes, bottles, teats and dummies, and ensuring no food is labeled suitable from 4 months

Education of Health professionals.

Due to inadequate training and /or less than optimum breastfeeding experience, many health professionals hinder rather than help in enabling breastfeeding. Many health professionals are not aware of the new growth charts showing appropriate growth rates for human babies, and are still using outdated, inaccurate charts based on formula fed babies. These old charts promote obesity. We need for formula companies never to be involved in any way with training of HP's in infant feeding. Governments and their bureaucracies who make legislation and administer the health system, as well as health professionals are susceptible to the forces of commercial lobbying, which has at its disposal millions of dollars for advertising and promotion, for their own benefit, not for the health and welfare of Australia's mothers babies.

As the experts in breastfeeding in Australia, the Australian Breastfeeding Assn, should have a major role to play in the government funded education of our health professionals.

Public Health Campaign

This should be targeted at people other than mothers, to change attitudes which are disadvantageous to breastfeeding.

Damaging attitudes which are pervasive in Australia are : disapproval of frequent breastfeeding (which is essential for adequate infant nutrition); disapproval of breastfeeding in public (so that bottle feeding is most frequently seen); pressure to wean babies after a few months, despite WHO's recommendation of at least 2 years breastfeeding. The campaign should NOT talk of the benefits of breastfeeding, but of the importance of breastfeeding, and the risks of early weaning from the breast

Funding For Breastfeeding Support

We need adequate funding for breastfeeding support (much more than the present \$100000 for Aust Breastfeeding Assn's 2000 volunteer community health workers). Resources should be put into enabling women to breastfeed, so that resources don't have to be put into treating illnesses caused by premature weaning. Eg new rota virus vaccine, funded by govt, would be largely unnecessary, if most babies were exclusively breastfed for 6 months. The incidence of otitis media with its ongoing effects on hearing and learning abilities would be greatly lessened with long term breastfeeding. Maternity leave provisions rather than childcare should be a priority, and family friendly workplace practices need to be promoted.