

Standing Committee on Health and Ageing  
House of Representatives  
P O Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

**Re: Inquiry Into Breastfeeding**

I write to express my support of this Inquiry and hope that it will lead the way to improving the knowledge of the community at large, of the importance of breastfeeding and breast milk to our nation's health.

I believe that most mothers want to breastfeed, but society lets them down in many instances. As a new mother 9 years ago, I 'hoped' to breastfeed my baby 'if I could.' I believed at the time that there was simply a choice in feeding methods as I had grown so accustomed to seeing bottle-fed babies, and thought that whatever way I chose would be suitably ok for my baby's health. However, once my baby was born, some part of me became determined to breastfeed this baby to provide him with what was 'best' for him.

I was not aware of the problems I would encounter with an act that is often perceived will just come naturally. Before my baby was 48 hours old, I had such nipple damage that I couldn't bear to have clothing touch me, or to have the shower running on my breasts, or to hold my baby to my breast without excruciating pain. I dreaded every feed, and a newborn baby requires feeding often. I needed help from the very busy nursing staff, but they didn't have the time to spend with me that I needed. They showed me videos and books. I needed someone to sit with me and help me practically. I wanted to scream....."I want to breastfeed my baby, but you aren't giving me the help I need to do it!!!" I was told I shouldn't have to suffer like this, it was alright to put my baby on the bottle, he would be just fine and healthy if fed this way. I consented to 1 bottle of artificial baby milk. I still regret that to this day.

How many mothers give up breastfeeding at this stage? I thank my stubborn and persistent nature for giving me the drive to stick with it. After 6 long weeks of tears and toe-curling agony, and a cranky and low weight-gaining baby, a friend suggested I contact the Australian Breastfeeding Association (then the Nursing Mothers Association of Australia.) I attended a group gathering and met the most wonderful group of support people I could hope to meet, and found the help I needed. From there, breastfeeding improved and my son continued to feed until he was 21 months.

I have gone on to breastfeed my second son, and currently my daughter, and I know that breastfeeding relationships are not always problem free, but the knowledge that most problems are fixable with the right information and support helped me to make it through the tough times. Also the knowledge of what I am providing them with for their (and my) future health is so rewarding, and the love and joy I receive from this special bond is priceless.

I hope to see all mothers get the help, time, and support they need from the very first time they hold their baby, and for this support to continue for as long as the baby continues to breastfeed. Please help to change our society's value and knowledge of breastfeeding to help us all - the future generations of our country are surely worth it.

Sincerely,  
Janelle De Lacey,

Qld 4869