



Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Health and Ageing
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Submission no. 341

AUTHORISED: 30/5/07

MC

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to provide the following information to be considered by the Inquiry into Breastfeeding.

I am a mother of four children and successfully breastfed my first two children without any problems. When my third child was three months old, supplementary feeding with formula was necessary. I encountered phrases from health professionals and consultants such as "three months was better than nothing" and "at least you tried". I felt that all the support was geared towards the fact that I had breastfed my baby and very little toward the feeding with formula. Being a third time Mum I coped with this situation despite the lack of support.

When my fourth child was born there were feeding difficulties from the start. I was instructed and encouraged by health professionals, specialists and consultants to do everything possible to breastfeed. Formula was only used as a last resort. The early weeks with my baby that were meant to be so special and joyous were, instead, filled with anxiety, distress and a feeling of failure as I was unable to feed my child the only acceptable way.

I spent many weeks of heartache and pain, using breast pumps and other devices, to assure myself and others that my baby had to have formula as there was no possibility of breastfeeding. The distress and total disruption to the rest of my family from trying to achieve what was expected of mothers then, and I believe today, was a very unnecessary experience. The guilt still remains.

That formula can be used instead of breast milk is essential whether through choice or not and mothers should be supported and encouraged if doing so. Regulations should ensure that formulas are as safe as possible and education should also include some positive information on formulas which allows parents to obtain a broader perspective on feeding. I wish I had received this information – it would have made a difference to me and therefore, most importantly, to the baby I was trying to feed.

Thankyou for considering my submission.

Sally Barnett

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sally Barnett".