

Queensland
Government

The Secretary
Standing Committee on Health & Ageing
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Queensland Health

Submission no. 351

AUTHORISED: 23/5/07

MC

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Parliamentary Inquiry into Breastfeeding

On behalf of Logan Hospital, I hereby submit the following information for consideration by the Committee regarding the Parliamentary Inquiry into Breastfeeding.

Background:

Logan Maternity Unit is situated on the Southside of Brisbane, as part of the Logan Hospital public health facility. For the 2006 financial year 3359 babies were born, thereby making it the third largest maternity unit in Queensland.

Logan Maternity services a diverse population from both rural and urban environments, and many of the suburbs we service have high levels of social disadvantage. We have fairly high levels of aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (as per data collected in the Infant Nutrition Project), high levels of teenage pregnancy, a growing refugee population and low literacy levels. A significant number of women who birth at Logan Maternity Unit access little antenatal care.

Our organisation felt that the best way we could support breast feeding within our sphere of influence was to implement the World Health Organisation "Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding" and in 2006 we became the largest Baby Friendly Health Initiative accredited hospital in Queensland. Services have been reorientated to ensure that breast feeding is promoted during the antenatal period and women are supported to exclusively breast feed from the moment the baby is born until discharge from our service.

The implementation of Baby Friendly Health Initiative practices at Logan has reflected an increase in breastfeeding initiation rates from 83% to 88%. However, duration of breast feeding remains an area requiring intensive intervention, for while 79% of women leave the maternity unit exclusively breast feeding only 47% of babies are receiving any breast milk at three months of age – this is preliminary data from the Infant Nutrition Project conducted across three health districts including Logan Beaudesert Health Service District (as it was at time of recruitment of cohort). NHMRC target is for 80% of babies to be receiving any breastmilk at 3 months of age.¹

With such short length of hospital stay – currently our data reflects an average length of stay of 2.3 days, breast feeding is just being established when women are discharged from twenty four hour support. Therefore it is critical that breast feeding women are provided with appropriate ongoing support while establishing breastfeeding, ideally by health workers who have been educated to provide evidence based appropriate assistance and advice.

Baby Friendly Health Initiative was implemented at Logan Hospital at a relatively low cost to the organisation (less than \$15 000) it is a multidisciplinary team exercise which also involves consumers and community support groups such as the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

Following on from our experience we have found that it is critical that all staff who provide support and advice for breast feeding women are up to date with the latest breast feeding evidence, this ensures that staff provide consistent evidence based breast feeding information to women.

Although being Baby Friendly is incredibly important for the success of breast feeding, it has been our experience it is the catalyst for ongoing positive change in a range of areas. An example is policies for non separation of mothers and babies, regardless of feeding methods.

We believe that the following interventions will help to increase breast feeding rates in Australia:

- Improved access for mothers and their families to postnatal community care by midwives, child health nurses and lactation consultants.
- Medicare provider numbers for Midwives and Lactation Consultants to provide equitable access to services for all mothers.
- Increased ability for women to access continuity of midwifery care – a known midwife scheme covering antenatal intra partum and at least six weeks post partum – this has been shown to increase breast feeding rates at three months³. Logan Hospital is currently working towards this model of care, and is awaiting advice re funding approval. Our known midwife scheme will target the most vulnerable groups – Aboriginal women, refugees and teenagers.
- Baby Friendly Health Initiative accreditation for all organisations providing breast feeding support and advice – including community child health and pharmacies.
- The full adoption of the WHO code on marketing of breast milk substitutes at government level and appropriate policing of the code for both manufacturers and retailers.



- Public education about the importance of breastfeeding and resources to assist family members who influence the mother, enabling them to support mothers to breastfeed in an informed way.
- Breastfeeding information through school programs – research demonstrates women have already decided how they will feed their baby before they even get pregnant. Intention is an important factor in the commitment to continue breastfeeding.²

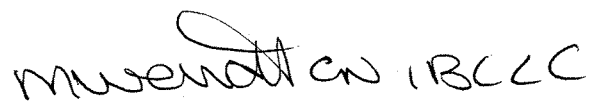
Thank you for your consideration of this material as part of the parliamentary inquiry into breastfeeding. If you would like to discuss any aspect of this submission, please contact either Margaret Wendt Clinical Midwife Lactation Consultant or Hazel Brittain Nursing Director Women's and Children's Services, Logan Hospital, (07) 3299 8899.

Please also find attachments as per requests at the John Flynn Hospital 18th April 2007.

1. Breastfeeding Getting Started.
2. Infant Feeding Information.

Yours Sincerely,


Hazel Brittain


Margaret Wendt

1. National Health and Medical Research Council. (2003) Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia. Canberra.
www.health.gov.au/nhmrc/publications
2. Kools E. Thijs C. Kester A. deVries H. (2006) The Motivational Determinants of Breastfeeding : Predictors for the Continuation of Breastfeeding. Preventative Medicine. Vol.43.
3. Hector D King L and Webb K 2004 overview of recent reviews of interventions to promote and support breast feeding. State of food and nutrition in NSW series, NSW Centre for public Health nutrition University of Sydney.