



# Breastfeeding - the Best Start

## *Report into the health benefits of breastfeeding*

In celebration of World Breastfeeding Week a new report tabled today (9 August 2007) by the House of Representatives Health and Ageing Committee recommends new ways to lift rates of breastfeeding to ensure the youngest and most vulnerable members of the community get the best start in life.

The committee's report, ***The Best Start: Report on the inquiry into the health benefits of breastfeeding***, makes a total of 22 recommendations. Chair of the committee, Alex Somlyay, said "Australia's breastfeeding rates are not at the level recommended by both the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) which aims for 80 per cent of women exclusively breastfeeding for the first six months of a baby's life".

"Although 83 per cent of women initiate breastfeeding in hospital, the rates drop dramatically after the first few months." Mr Somlyay said. "The committee looked at the reasons why there is this drop in breastfeeding rates and has made recommendations to ensure Australian children receive the best start to life they can possibly have."

"The Committee considered that it was important to make a statement on importance of breastfeeding for Australia and take steps to protect it and for this reason it has recommended the adoption of the WHO Code." he said. "The Committee has also proposed a range of initiatives such as the funding of the Baby Friendly Health Initiative and issuing provider numbers for International Board Certified Lactation Consultants."

The Committee's 22 recommendations include:

- adopting the World Health Organisation's International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes;
- funding the Australian Breastfeeding Association's breastfeeding helpline to become a 24 hour toll-free number;
- increasing the monitoring of breastfeeding rates in Australia; and
- investigating the establishment of a network of breast milk banks across the nation.

"Breastfeeding is the normal way to feed a baby, it should be widely accepted in the community and we need to be supportive of women breastfeeding in public," Deputy Chair of the committee, Steve Georganas, said. "This report recognises that there is still some way to go before breastfeeding is seen as a natural, normal part of life. This report recommends that leadership at all levels, particularly nationally, is needed to achieve this."

The Committee received 479 submissions and spoke to a wide range of individuals and organisations at 10 public hearings around the country.

**For media interview with the Chairman:**

Please contact Mr Somlyay's office on (02) 6277 4727

**For further information on the inquiry:** Contact the Committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4145 or email [haa.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:haa.reps@aph.gov.au) or visit the website at

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/haa/breastfeeding/report.htm>