

Submission no. 61

AUTHORISED: 21/03/07



From:
 Date: Monday, 12 February 2007 3:13 PM
 To: Committee, HAA (2007)
 Subject: submission to breastfeeding inquiry

I believe the Australian citizens of the future, our newborn babies, deserve the best start in life that they can be given, parents need awareness that the feeding choices they make today will impact their baby both as a child and an adult.

TO INCREASE BREASTFEEDING RATES IN AUSTRALIA

1. Education for students and the public on the risks of feeding babies foods other than breastmilk as per the WHO Code.
2. Health professionals advising correct information and be up to date with latest research from unbiased sources.
3. Mothers receiving support, especially during the learning period, the best support is other mothers who have successfully breastfed, ie Nursing Mothers support groups run by the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

Would any intelligent society deprive new-borns of their optimum IQ, or to allow statistically higher incidence of heart disease, diabetes etc increasing the chance of being hospitalised with consequent health problems into adulthood.(1) For the small percentage of mothers and infants unable to breastfeed there is the alternative of Manufactured Baby Formula which should only be available with informed consent. This should be made available when clinically necessary, like an emergency caesarian is available for the mother who fails to give birth naturally.

PARENTS SUPPORT AND EDUCATION Australian babies are unable to fully communicate their needs, in our society, they need advocates. The Government can be instrumental in encouraging support for parents by offering continuing support to the non profit organisation, the Australian Breastfeeding Association who for over forty years have trained counsellors to support mothers with face-to-face and group meetings, with a 24 hour telephone counselling service by volunteers with up to date information and trying to correct society expectation and attitude to babies. (Disclosure:Though speaking purely on my own behalf I have been a member and a Breastfeeding Counsellor of ABA for more than 25 years)

HEALTHCARE FOR MOTHERS AND BABIES Our health system would save many dollars by being proactive, as breastfeeding not only improves the growth, development, and health of the infant but it also decreases the frequency of lower respiratory infections, ear infections, diarrhea, and urinary tract infections while providing the infant protection against other chronic diseases.(3) The risks of formula feeding are well documented, however not all health professionals give up-to-date professional advice. Their training appears to be given by formula manufacturers and more factual data should be given both during their Medical Course and for further updating as their career progresses. Parents are bombarded by images of babies artificially fed as being healthy. Mothers with new baby's came away from health professionals with no idea that formula is cows milk, or that babies digestive systems can be damaged by introducing foods other than breastmilk prematurely.

MOTHERS IN THE WORKPLACE Employers need education about the importance of babies being breastfed, to our society. Mothers of breastfed babies need leave to establish breastfeeding and then facilities at the workplace to enable them to provide the milk for a caregiver to offer the infant, thus furthering the aim of a healthier society.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT Australian parents have been duped, for too long. Society and the profit driven manufacturers have sold them a bill of goods. Research needs to be undertaken, but not sponsored by those same profit driven companies. Research that pays lip service to breastfeeding does not give informative data. Babies that are given formula in the early days have been compromised, research needs to differentiate between 'fully breastfed' meaning no other food or liquid being introduced into the babies mouth and partially breastfed. (2) Mothers feel guilty about failing to breastfeed despite the fact that society has let her down. They have the right to be angry. The accusation about guilt is common yet this tool is commonly used when discussing many health preventatives, for example; limiting use of tobacco and alcohol. Mothers are given the facts about drinking during pregnancy. Parents are advised of the risks of smoking. Parents are told of the risks of not using car restraints, but manufacturers of Artificial Baby Milk maximise their sales of ABM, with gifts, specials and advertising campaigns in spite of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, which applies to artificial milks, follow-on milks, feeding bottles and teats.

21/02/2007

I am impressed that my government is taking this topic seriously and will be thrilled when mothers and babies are given the facts, and supported by the whole of Australian society.

Julie Weller -

References-

(1) Health risks of not breastfeeding, from US Dept of Health and Human Services downloaded Feb 14, 2007
<<http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/index.cfm?page=519>>

(2) "Just One Bottle Won't Hurt"---or Will It? Marsha Walker, RN, IBCLC <[Supplementation of the Breastfed Baby](#)>

(3) Specker BL, Tsang RC, Ho ML, et al. Low serum calcium and high parathyroid hormone levels in neonates fed humanized cow's milk based formula. Am J Dis Child 145: 941-945, 1991