

**Submission no. 64**

AUTHORISED: 21/03/07



Original message  
From: Kelley Stewart  
Sent: Friday, 21 February 2007 10:00 AM  
To: Committee MPH  
Cc: Committee MPH (PEIC)  
Subject: Breastfeeding in the military

I am pleased that the Howard Government is conducting an inquiry into breastfeeding. I have breastfed three children whilst also being a RAAF Officer, weaning my third child on the day I left on deployment to the Middle East last year.

There currently is no policy in the Australian Defence Force regarding breastfeeding mothers in the military (from either a health or a management perspective); although I believe there is some arrangement in the current Defence public servant employment conditions. The Defence Equity Organisation distributed the Commonwealth Department of Health's Breastfeeding at Work pamphlets which were produced in 2000 (in collaboration with the then NMAA), but there has been no follow up within the Australian Defence Organisation. These pamphlets are a good guide to help women in any application to breastfeed (or take lactation breaks) at work but there is nothing definitive in this document which binds this policy to any of the Departments, and I expect the ADF would be granted an EEO exemption anyway.

I am completing my Masters of Public Health (Defence) dissertation this year and have tentative approval for my research question to be: "In ADF women who have taken Maternity Leave in the last five (?) years, what issues have influenced their duration of breastfeeding". I believe this will be a benchmarking endeavour upon which a breastfeeding policy can be developed which could cover issues such as medical fitness (including physical fitness testing), deployability, lactation breaks and workplace support, recruiting/retention, occupational health and safety (eg. mastitis risks), occupational hygiene (eg. hazardous substances exposure to mother and secondary exposures to the child through the breast milk), etc.

I hope to get Defence ethics approval to conduct this research in the near future and I have not sought Defence approval in writing this submission.

Please keep me on the mailing list. I look forward to the results of the enquiry.

**Kelley Stewart**

Squadron Leader (on Long Service Leave)  
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