

Maureen Kelly

The Secretary of the Committee on the Inquiry into Breastfeeding
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a mother of two children aged 4 years and 13 months. My 13 month old is breastfed and I fed my older child to the age of 20 months. I experienced difficulties in the early days of breastfeeding and with support I chose to continue breastfeeding and developed a successful breastfeeding relationship.

I would like to comment from the Terms of reference on point d. initiatives to encourage breastfeeding.

I consider that I was fortunate to give birth to my first child at a hospital that had an overt policy of supporting breastfeeding.

Some initiatives that encouraged me to breastfeed were:

- posters in every room about breastfeeding – diagrams of attachment and points to successful attachment
- a program about breastfeeding on the educational channel available in the room
- educational group session for the mothers on a weekly or twice weekly basis covering topics such as attachment, engorgement, healthy weight gain, etc.
- midwives explicitly asking about how breastfeeding was going and offering to come to the room to assist with feeds
- midwives being available to help and answer questions
- brochures available from the Australian Breastfeeding Association with written information about breastfeeding that I could take home
- a session in the antenatal classes run by the hospital that covered how to breastfeed

This could have been improved by:

- the antenatal classes covering more information about breastfeeding
- more time available from the midwives to help
- brochures containing relevant information being more readily available to everyone (I collected mine from a stand.)

I have received support from the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

Some initiatives that encouraged me to breastfeed were:

- the 24 hour free telephone counselling service
- group meetings (morning teas) where face to face counselling is available
- group meetings (morning teas) where different topics relating to breastfeeding are discussed and form ongoing education about breastfeeding
- providing an environment where breastfeeding is supported

I received support from my child care provider in continuing breastfeeding while my child was in care. I believe I was supported in my choice because the child carer was informed about the benefits of breastfeeding. She gained this information as a trained counsellor for the Australian Breastfeeding Association rather than in her role and training as a child care provider.

I do not consider that I have always received encouragement from the broader medical and social/cultural environment to breastfeed.

Some factors that I believe discourage breastfeeding are:

- Pharmacies offering a service of baby weighing are frequented by mothers. The pharmacy walls are lined with breast milk substitutes however posters and/or brochures supporting breastfeeding are not displayed.
- Doctors surgeries can have posters and brochures displayed on many health related topics. Breastfeeding information is not available.
- Clear consistent information on breastfeeding aimed at educating the broader community is not available. The role of partners, grandparents, health professionals and child care workers, for example, in supporting breastfeeding is essential for encouraging breastfeeding.

In order to support breastfeeding I believe government initiatives should include:

- producing posters, brochures and publications (e.g audio-visual, print, computer based) that provide clear, consistent and accurate information about breastfeeding e.g. the health benefits, how to, where to get support
- providing these posters, brochures and publications widely
- producing these posters, brochures and publications for target groups e.g. in languages other than English,
- educating the community of the mother and baby about the benefits of breastfeeding and the role as support people ie. the health professionals, child care workers, fathers/partners
- educating the broader community about the benefits of and accurate information about breastfeeding
- producing promotional material about breastfeeding
- overtly adopting the World Health Organisation's stance of supporting exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months and continued breastfeeding to 2 years and beyond in all promotional and educational material

Yours sincerely
Maureen Kelly