



## Parliament launches new inquiry into breastfeeding

Chairman of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing, Alex Somlyay, today announced a new parliamentary inquiry into the health benefits of breastfeeding.

Mr Somlyay said that the Committee will examine how the Australian government can take a lead role to improve the health of the population through support for breastfeeding.

“There is considerable evidence suggesting the health of the Australian population may be improved by increasing the rate of breastfeeding”, Mr Somlyay said. “The committee will be looking at the potential effects on the long term sustainability of Australia’s health system”.

In 2001, approximately 54 per cent of babies were fully breastfed at 3 months of age or less, compared with around 32 per cent of infants by 6 months of age or less. Rates of breastfeeding vary between different population groups.

“It is worth noting that there is anecdotal evidence that new mothers are not being closely supported or greatly encouraged to persist with breastfeeding”, Mr Somlyay said. “The public perception is that breastfeeding is not necessarily accepted as the most desirable way of nourishing young babies or preventing long term health problems.”

The Committee invites public submissions by 28 February 2007 on:

How the Commonwealth government can take a lead role to improve the health of the Australian population through support for breastfeeding, with particular consideration to:

- The extent of the health benefits of breastfeeding;
- Evaluate the impact of marketing of breast milk substitutes on breastfeeding rates and, in particular, in disadvantaged, Indigenous and remote communities;
- The potential short and long term impact on the health of Australians of increasing the rate of breastfeeding;
- Initiatives to encourage breastfeeding;
- Examine the effectiveness of current measures to promote breastfeeding; and
- The impact of breastfeeding on the long term sustainability of Australia’s health system.

**For media interview with the Chairman:** Please contact the Committee Secretary on **02 6277 4145**.

**For a copy of the terms of reference and further information on making a submission:** 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 [www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/haa](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/haa)