



15<sup>th</sup> February 2007

The Secretary of the Committee of Breastfeeding  
House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

I am the mother of a 1 year old and although my experience with babies and breastfeeding may seem limited I am constantly hearing mothers struggling with the same breastfeeding problems or bottle feeding guilt.

My daughter who has lived the normal life of a 1 year old.... sucking on trolley handles, eating things off the floor, playing with children of various ages some with colds and sniffles, has never been sick. I believe this is mainly because she has been fully breastfed since birth. It is my belief that being breastfed has given her immune system such a boost that she is able to ward off sickness easily.

I know many babies through community friends, church friends and mother's groups. Of the babies that I know, the breastfed babies are seldom sick whereas the bottle fed babies are often sick. In fact the mothers of bottle fed babies seem to live in trepidation of a shopping trip, childcare centre day or sick cousins coming over for fear that their baby will get sick and there will be another lot of sleepless nights and doctors bills. However my friends with breastfed children as old as 2 and 3 have no such fears and can happily take their children with them everywhere.

Another thing that I want to share is that in my experience breastfed babies seem to get a full set of teeth earlier whereas many babies who have been on solids from 6 months have only 2 or 4 teeth even though they are as old as 12 -16 months. I believe this is because being breastfed gives a baby's digestive system a chance to develop unhindered. A baby's eye teeth are an indication that their digestive system is ready for solid foods. It seems to me that weaning babies off breast milk and putting them fully on to solids before their eye teeth come through is slowing the development of their digestive system down. It would be very interesting to have some research done on this.

My suggestions to the inquiry into breastfeeding are as follows;

***d. initiatives to encourage breastfeeding***

1. Face to face personal care & help in a private setting, preferably in the mother's home or at least somewhere more private than a chemist full of people waiting for prescriptions.

This care needs to be readily available to everyone whether they are private or public patients or whether they live in the cities or rural areas.

2. Government support for the Australian Breastfeeding Association financially and through promotional advertising.

The work the ABA does is fantastic but they are not able to keep up with the demand. For example there needs to be more places for breastfeeding mothers to feed their babies at public events. Years ago there were Nursing Mothers tents easily found at nearly every show, market, festival etc. Now it is hard to find a place to breast feed a baby privately even at major events.

3. Getting breast milk banks up & running for mothers who are unable to breastfeed. This needs to be available to all mothers whether in the city or country, whether covered by private health cover or not.

4. Providing Medicare and private health fund subsidies for mothers who need help paying for lactation consultants, milk banks, milk expressing equipment etc

*e. examine the effectiveness of current measures to promote breastfeeding*

1. There needs to be more research and public awareness of the negative effects of not breastfeeding. There is a lot of info out there promoting breastfeeding but this does not seem to have done much to encourage a positive view of breastfeeding in society nor increase the length of time that babies are breastfed. I think that society needs to be made more aware of the negative effects of not breastfeeding and not breastfeeding for longer. I am not suggesting this as a scare tactic just that there needs to be more information readily available so mothers can make an informed choice. We are able to get information on the risks of not immunising or the risks of not eating healthily but it is hard to find information on the risks of not breastfeeding an infant.

I know many people who are bottle feeding their babies and are feeling guilty about it. Some are bottle feeding as they have a genuine reason for being unable to breastfeed however most have resorted to bottle feeding after frustration, tears & anguish over minor issues such as attachment problems, colic, sore nipples or lack of milk supply. Issues that could very easily be overcome with the right help.

The Mums with genuine breastfeeding problems also need help so that they know they have tried everything they can and can now receive the help and sympathy that they need instead of criticism and feelings of inferiority.

If we can give all these new Mummies the help that they need we will have happier, healthier Mummies and happier, healthier babies.

Thank you for reading my submission.

Angie Christoff