

Mr P & M Valente
P.O Box 5236
Macs Cove VIC 3783

Dear Alex Somlyay

Re: Parliamentary breastfeeding inquiry

We are first time parents of a four month old baby boy. We strongly believe that breastfeeding needs to be more encouraged in Australia. We were fortunate during our pregnancy to have found a very supportive private midwife that was well informed of the variety of support groups in our local area. She informed us of the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) and the Births and Babies Group (initiated by Maternity Coalition). We were also fortunate to have the option of a maternal health nurse and/or a lactation specialist visit us in the comfort of my own home. Our midwife and the support groups were essential for us to understand the female body thus enabling confident breastfeeding.

Advertising plays a major role in the way women perceive breastfeeding. Advertising for formula feeding far outweighs that of breastfeeding. Women are led to believe that formulas are more convenient and better for their children. These campaigning strategies aim at the parent's guilt and fear as no parent wants to have their child on second rate food. Commercial enterprise feeds off women's self conscience depriving our mothers of their womanhood and further distancing the bond between mother and child. We need to encourage women to embrace the notion that 'breast is best' and that there is support for all women Australia wide.

As we have experienced this invaluable support, we firmly believe these modalities should be accessible to all women both in hospital and at home. To enable this, more constructive networking is required between midwives, maternal health nurses, ABA, and other support groups. These support groups by their very nature promote a healthy upbringing of our children provided mentors such as experienced midwives are able to empower women with positive and practical knowledge. This in turn will facilitate successful breastfeeding of children, thus becoming an essential and enjoyable experience for both mother and child.

As parents we can only reiterate our support for the promotion of breastfeeding and the connection between mothers and their children.

Thank you for your time.

Regards,

Paul and Maja Valente.