

I wish to submit the follow to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Breastfeeding.

My daughter was born in a very breastfeeding friendly hospital of for this I am very grateful, the midwives I dealt with were encouraging but very busy. I had a great deal of trouble attaching my daughter, which led to frustration and pain. With 48 hours my daughter had improved her suck and was feeding well, however I was not able to attach her alone, a different midwife was assisting me at every feed and as they all have differing opinions and preferred techniques I was getting more confused, increased frustration and shedding many tears. As she was born on Friday evening there was no lactation consultant working over the weekend and by Monday my frustration was increasing. The midwives continued to assist with my attachment, resulting in me loosing confidence in my ability to continue breastfeeding upon my release from hospital. Fortunately due to an unrelated health issue I was not released on the Tuesday, that night a particularly helpful midwife took it upon herself to help me get it right. After a few hours working together we found a position that worked and I was able to successfully attach without assistance. During the night I had two more successful solo feeds and finally felt able to go home with confidence.

Upon release I also contacted the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) via their Website. There I found a community of mothers who had more information than any other party I had come across, including health professionals, they were supportive and patient. I was determined to feed my child breast milk as I know I is the best source of nutrition for an newborn child, until I contacted the ABA I was unaware of the WHO guidelines to feed until two years of age, I now plan to follow these guidelines. Many mothers I am acquainted with did not contact the ABA and are unaware of these guidelines. I belong to a mothers group consisting of 10 women, our babies are between the ages of 4.5 and 6 months, of these 10 women only 3 are still breastfeeding, at least 3 went straight onto formula.

It is my belief that more mothers would be breastfeeding longer if they had access to correct and updated information, in my group I have corrected misinformation upon hearing it however most of it has fallen on deaf ears as many mothers honestly believe that formula is nutritionally equal to breast milk, after all this is what their mothers were told 30 years ago and what retailers and manufacturers are still letting us believe. My local Child and Family Health Centre runs a breastfeeding drop in day once a week, I have often visited to talk to the staff and have my daughter weighed, the staff are very encouraging and do have all the up to date information and this service is well promoted in the local hospitals yet still many women continue to ignore this service, again I believe this is due to community perception that formula is a viable alternative to their own milk.

At the beginning of this submission I stated the hospital was pro breastfeeding, yet during my stay of the 7 women in my room 2 went straight to formula, the midwives assisted with preparing bottles and advising on how much to give. I believe that mothers should be offered counselling if they do not attempt to breastfeed or a visit from a lactation consultant. A young girl in

the bed next to me was not at all aware of how she lactated, I overheard her say to a friend that she could not have feed her baby anyway as she had no milk, no one had educated her about colostrum. Training more lactation consultants and having all expectant mothers visit one upon booking into hospital would go a long way in educating all mothers on the benefits of breastfeeding and ensure the WHO guidelines are promoted. The lactation consultant in my hospital only worked part time, I was unable to see her due to the high number of women in need of her services, as stated earlier there was no service available on the weekend.

I also wish to highlight my experience of parent's rooms in public areas such as shopping centres. Most parents rooms are equipped with microwaves ovens for the heating of baby food, however many nutrients in breast milk are destroyed when heated this way. As many working mothers express milk for carers to feed their babies, I would like to see guidelines set for all parents rooms, including a sign advising not to heat expressed breast milk in the microwave and the availability of warm water to correctly heat expressed breast milk.

In summary my observations are that formula continues being promoted by retailers and manufactures, who's sole interest is commercial gain, as a viable alternative to human milk. Women who give up breastfeeding continue to do so due to misinformation and lack of support from health professionals and workplaces, as well the support that is available is being under utilised by mothers. Many of women feel that they have failed their families for giving up and changing to formula. More lactation consultants are needed in the greater community for follow up visits to mothers at home. Women need to be educated on breastfeeding prior to giving birth at the time of booking into hospital, this education needs to be universal, up to date taking in the WHO guidelines and multilingual.

Regards
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