



australian
breastfeeding
association

Strategic Directions Our plan for 2009–2012

Introduction

Strategic Direction 2009–2012 sets the framework for the Australian Breastfeeding Association's future. It reflects the legacy of the past 44 years and guides us in setting our priorities for the next 4 years as we pursue our vision

'As the normal way to feed and nurture infants, for babies to breastfeed exclusively for 6 months, with continuing breastfeeding for 2 years and beyond'.

It explains who we are, what we want to be, and what we must do to stay on course and meet new challenges. For our vision to become a reality, we will apply the energy and talents of our entire team of volunteers, paid staff and partners.

The Board of Directors has selected six interrelated key result areas to pursue in the fulfilment of its mission during the period covered by this Strategic Plan. These are similar to the previous long-range plan with the addition of 'Breastfeeding Support'. Each of the six key result areas has a clear objective.

From these targeted priorities, the Board of Directors will develop an annual plan for the Association outlining what we want to achieve for that year. Our Board of Directors, Executive Officer, branch presidents and managers will report against this plan and use it when developing their own plans and activities.



The Australian Breastfeeding Association — Who Are We?

The Australian Breastfeeding Association (formerly the Nursing Mothers' Association of Australia) is a not-for-profit volunteer organisation established to support and encourage women to breastfeed their babies, and to raise community awareness of the importance of breastfeeding and human milk.

The Association was founded by six mothers in 1964 and has since spread to all Australian states and territories to become the country's second largest women's organisation and Australia's leading authority on breastfeeding.

The Australian Breastfeeding Association — What We Do



*North Canberra Group, ACT
Photo by: Karen Gaskill*

The Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) has many strengths, that make it unique in the Australian community, including:

- 1125* trained volunteer breastfeeding counsellors, 298* community educators and 476* trainees who provide a national network of mother-to-mother support for women who wish to breastfeed their babies
- 290* local groups in all parts of Australia. Nearly 50% of ABA's subscribers reside outside of metropolitan areas
- 16,766* subscribers of many diverse backgrounds
- 24-hour, 7-days-per-week free telephone Helpline providing peer support to breastfeeding mothers in each State/Territory. Over 260,000 calls per year are taken through this counselling service which is operated by volunteer breastfeeding counsellors. The majority of the callers to the counselling service are not subscribers to ABA and 50% of calls are received from rural and regional areas
- email counselling service for women who wish to obtain specific and personalised information online
- a website with breastfeeding and related information, and an interactive forum
- easy to read and targeted information about a broad range of breastfeeding issues, in print, online and using emerging technologies such as podcasts
- quality training and ongoing education for volunteer counsellors and

* As at 30 October 2008

community educators ensuring consistency of breastfeeding information across Australia. The Association is an accredited Registered Training Organisation, and offers two accredited Certificate IV courses in Breastfeeding Education with plans to offer diploma level courses

- the Lactation Resource Centre (LRC), providing specialist library services and ensuring counsellors and health professionals have access to up-to-date and accurate information. The LRC has one of the most comprehensive collections of breastfeeding information in the world and provides a scientific basis for ABA's breastfeeding policies to complement the practical experience of breastfeeding mothers
- highly regarded antenatal breastfeeding education classes. Last year ABA offered around 170 of these classes Australia wide
- over 90,000 community education and public awareness events each year around Australia, including preschool to high school talks; presentations to a variety of health professionals; antenatal presentations; hospital visits, community displays and the provision of mother-friendly services at community events
- a professional journal *Breastfeeding Review*
- a high quality magazine *Essence* focusing on breastfeeding and mothering issues that is produced and distributed to all subscribers 6 times per year
- community Baby Care Room awards for facilities that meet ABA standards
- a highly successful Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Accreditation scheme to accredit workplaces which have appropriate infrastructure and human resource policies to support breastfeeding mothers.

Almost all of the Association's activities are carried out by volunteers, assisted by a small number of paid staff.

We estimate that the Association's counselling and group services save the health system a conservative \$3 million in counselling and associated costs; and substantially more in long-term health savings.

The Australian Breastfeeding Association's strong practical support and advocacy for mothers wanting to breastfeed their babies has been credited with increasing breastfeeding rates in Australia since the 1970s when fewer than one in ten mothers breastfed for 3 months or more. However, increased and sustained effort is required to reach international health recommendations for breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding is Important



Photo by: Shae Reynolds

Breastfeeding is the normal and optimal way to feed and nurture infants and young children. Published peer-reviewed research over recent decades has clearly demonstrated the importance of breastfeeding for both maternal and infant health in both the short and long-term.

Breastmilk by itself contains all the nourishment needed to promote healthy growth and development in babies for at least the first 6 months. While many babies begin to have other foods and drinks from 6 months or more, breastmilk is still the most important part of a growing baby's diet for the first year and will continue to contribute to the infant's nutrition, development and health beyond 12 months and as long as mother and baby continue to breastfeed.

Breastfeeding is an important preventative health behaviour with implications for infant and maternal health, national health costs and the environment. Breastfeeding helps protect against a range of illnesses, infections and allergies, and in the long term, reduces risks of chronic diseases and obesity.

Cognitive development, IQ, central nervous system development, visual acuity, and speech and jaw development are other factors improved by breastfeeding. Breastfeeding helps protect mothers against breast and other cancers of the reproductive organs, osteoporosis and type 2 diabetes. Breastfeeding also helps strengthen the mother-child relationship through

its hormonal effects on mother and baby and through promoting extended contact with the baby.

By promoting the normal and healthy development of infants, breastfeeding reduces health and other costs for families and the community. Through giving their milk to their babies, mothers make a significant, and economically valuable, contribution to the nation's food supply and food security.

Most women in Australia want to breastfeed their babies. Nearly 90% of Australian mothers now begin breastfeeding. However, these rates are not sustained. About 54% of babies are fully breastfed up to 3 months of age. Many Australian infants are not exclusively breastfed to 6 months of age, contrary to the recommendations of the National Health and Medical Research Council and the World Health Organization.

Australia is currently burdened with the health costs associated with poor breastfeeding practices. Investing in breastfeeding is investing in the health of our nation. The Australian Breastfeeding Association is committed to contributing to the promotion, protection and support of breastfeeding, and supporting women and families in parenting.



Photo by: Vicky Leon



Vision

As the normal way to feed and nurture infants, for babies to breastfeed exclusively for 6 months, with continuing breastfeeding for 2 years and beyond.

Mission

As Australia's leading authority on breastfeeding, to:

- Educate society and support mothers, using up-to-date research findings and the practical experiences of many women.
- Influence society to acknowledge breastfeeding as normal and important to skilled and loving parenting.

Values

- Mother-to-mother support
- Skilled and loving parenting (in society)
- Excellence and innovation in breastfeeding support
- The wellbeing and diversity of our people
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Honest, open and respectful communication
- Clear and transparent processes.



Photo by: Cindy Blaney



Key Stakeholders

We recognise that it is only by working collaboratively with all stakeholders that our objectives can be fully achieved. Our valued stakeholders include:

- Mothers, babies and their families
- Our members and subscribers
- Our volunteers
- Our staff
- Government at all levels
- Health professionals
- Our funding bodies
- Our sponsors
- The Australian community
- Employers
- Other breastfeeding and parenting support organisations.

Australian Breastfeeding Associations

Key Result Areas

Key Result Areas have been identified to help achieve our mission. These are:

Key Result Area 1: Breastfeeding Support

Provide mothers with practical mother-to-mother support, enabling them to establish a loving relationship with their babies through breastfeeding, and educate the broader community that breastfeeding is normal

Key Result Area 2: Financial Viability

Provide for financial security and economic sustainability, by protecting and increasing the real value of our financial assets, investing our assets well and using our financial and people resources economically

Key Result Area 3: Training, Education and Resources

Provide high quality and accessible training, education and resources to ensure skilled, knowledgeable and practical breastfeeding support for mothers

Key Result Area 4: Advocacy, Policy and Research

Strengthen the advocacy, policy and research work of the Australian Breastfeeding Association and our partners, in order to improve breastfeeding outcomes

Key Result Area 5: Public Awareness, Profile and Marketing

Maintain the Australian Breastfeeding Association as an authoritative and high profile organisation and ensure public awareness of the importance of breastfeeding and how to protect, support and promote it

Key Result Area 6: Governance and Organisational Development

Develop an effective, representative, well-managed and accountable organisation

Breastfeeding Support

Provide mothers with practical mother-to-mother support, enabling them to establish a loving relationship with their babies through breastfeeding, and educate the broader community that breastfeeding is normal

We will continue to:

- Provide a range of accessible and inclusive options for mother-to-mother and peer support
- Engage in a variety of community education activities on an individual basis or in groups to provide appropriate information and support
- Embed National Breastfeeding Helpline into ABA culture
- Ensure quality and currency of breastfeeding information in all publications and resources
- Improve access to special groups — young mothers, indigenous, culturally and linguistically diverse
- Increase recognition of ABA and improve access to ABA services for pregnant women in last trimester

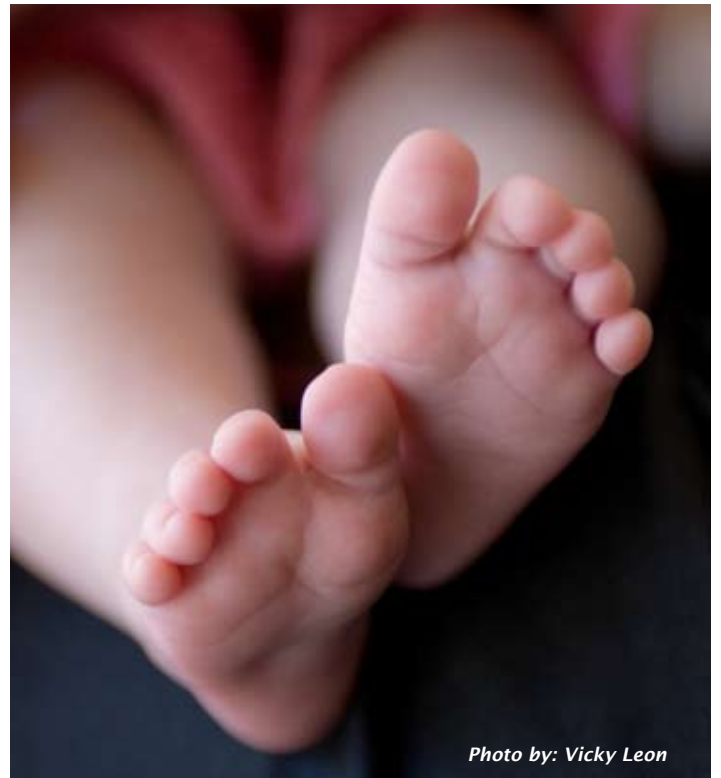


Photo by: Vicky Leon

Financial Viability

Provide for financial security and economic sustainability, by protecting and increasing the real value of our financial assets, investing our assets well and using our financial and people resources economically

We will:

- Align the budget with strategic priorities
- Protect and enhance the real value of ABA net assets
- Ensure accurate and timely advice on ABA's consolidated financial position and performance
- Increase revenue from existing income streams
- Expand membership
- Achieve adequate government funding levels
- Build the Financial Resources Development Team
- Increase sponsorship income
- Maintain strong national and branch financial systems and practices

Photo by: Michele Fulcher



Training, Education and Resources

Provide high quality and accessible training, education and resources to ensure skilled, knowledgeable and practical breastfeeding support for mothers

We will:

- ☀️ Grow and maintain a volunteer team of qualified trainers and assessors
- ☀️ Grow and maintain ABA's trained volunteer work base
- ☀️ Make ABA the leading provider of nationally recognised courses in breastfeeding education
- ☀️ Maintain accreditation as a registered training organisation
- ☀️ Increase knowledge of breastfeeding among health professionals
- ☀️ Seek sources of income generation for training and education
- ☀️ Improve accessibility and capacity of Lactation Resource Centre as a national ABA resource



Photo by: Veronica Webster

Advocacy, Policy and Research

Strengthen the advocacy, policy and research work of the Australian Breastfeeding Association and our partners, in order to improve breastfeeding outcomes

We will:

- Raise awareness of the importance of breastfeeding for society, the economy and the environment
- Demonstrate leadership in advocacy for breastfeeding and mother-to-mother support
- Strengthen ABA's advocacy capacity
- Develop strategic alliances with relevant and influential health, community, family, men's and women's organisations
- Focus on protecting and implementing WHO and NHMRC guidelines and related infant food marketing issues
- Contribute to the evidence base for breastfeeding information and mother-to-mother support



Photo by: Vicky Leon



Governance and Organisational Development

Develop an effective, representative, well-managed and accountable organisation

Strategies

- ☀ Reflect national strategic directions in ABA's activities
- ☀ Comply with all statutory and Corporations Act requirements
- ☀ Improve risk management systems
- ☀ Maintain and improve financial systems and strategies
- ☀ Have clear, fair and efficient processes in place for people management
- ☀ Promote ethical practice
- ☀ Regularly review the governance practices of ABA
- ☀ Have a cooperative, business-like and integrated relationship with Mothers Direct

Public Awareness, Profile and Marketing

Maintain the Australian Breastfeeding Association as an authoritative and high profile organisation and ensure public awareness of the importance of breastfeeding and how to protect, support and promote it

We will:

- ☀ Develop a proactive approach to public relations and media
- ☀ Strengthen ABA's public relations capacity
- ☀ Develop and disseminate approved key messages and position statements throughout ABA
- ☀ Promote ABA as an organisation publicly representing the interests of breastfeeding women and families

Photo by: Vicky Leon





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