



CALL FOR NATIONAL BREASTFEEDING ADVOCATE - June 12 2007

A National Breastfeeding Advocate who would report annually to federal Parliament is recommended in proposals put to the federal Parliament.

The recommendation is included in a five year Breastfeeding Leadership Plan presented to the Standing Committee on Health and Ageing at Parliament House in Canberra by the Australian Breastfeeding Association, formerly known as Nursing Mothers.

ABA President Margaret Grove said an Advocate would have responsibility for monitoring breast feeding rates in Australia, drawing federal Parliament's attention to progress on meeting national breast feeding targets, making recommendations on policies to assist mothers breast feed and ensuring an understanding at Government and community levels of the value of mothers' milk.

"Breastfeeding plays key preventative roles in many of our major health issues, including obesity and breast cancer, and yet there is no co-ordinated attempt at federal or state government level to support mothers' breastfeeding their babies," Ms Grove said.

"Obesity for example is now being described as an epidemic. There is sound evidence that breastfeeding mitigates against childhood obesity but, in the face of formidable commercial and labour market pressures, breastfeeding rates in Australia are declining.

"Only one in five Australian babies is exclusively breastfed at six months, despite the NHMRC's recommendation of six months exclusive breastfeeding for all babies. It is in the national interest that we reverse this. An Advocate with access to Government at all levels would play a pivotal role in re-establishing breastfeeding as national best practice."

The ABA Leadership Plan is a five-year strategy for increasing breastfeeding in Australia. The Plan calls for action in four strategic areas involving Government, health professionals, business and family life, including making breastfeeding a priority within the health care system, promoting breastfeeding friendly workplaces and childcare services and countering the commercial pressures for breastmilk substitutes.

The Plan is available on the ABA website. <http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/advocacy/index.html>

Ends.

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