



**Australian
Breastfeeding
Association**

Annual Report 2019-2020

The year in review

ABA's key impacts in 2019-2020

68,625

calls to the National Breastfeeding Helpline for breastfeeding information and support

6802

'chats' received by LiveChat for breastfeeding information

805

qualified volunteers and

262

trainees provided support to parents

10,430

parents attended peer support, information and social events run by

143

local groups

2477

parents attended a local or online breastfeeding class

866

health professionals reached by our annual seminar program

2.3m

ABA website users

7450

ABA professional website users from March

122

Accredited Breastfeeding Friendly workplaces

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Credits

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About us

Our Vision is that breastfeeding is recognised as important by all Australians and is culturally normal.

Our Mission as Australia's leading authority on breastfeeding is to support, educate and advocate for a breastfeeding inclusive society.

The Australian Breastfeeding Association is the peak body for breastfeeding and Australia's largest mother-to-mother information and support service. From our beginnings in suburban Melbourne in 1964, we have supported millions of pregnant women, new parents and breastfeeding mothers through the transition into parenthood. ABA has continued to partner with health professionals to create a supportive and informed environment for families and has been the unified voice ensuring that the needs of mothers, babies and their families are heard across the nation.

Through a network of 143 local groups and more than 1000 trained volunteers, we provide community breastfeeding and peer support week in, week out. Our LiveChat service and 24-hour National Breastfeeding Helpline provide breastfeeding counselling and information all year round.

Over 800 health professionals attend our annual Health Professionals Seminar series each year. Our nationally accredited Diploma in Breastfeeding Management offers world

class training to those caring for breastfeeding mothers and our website is continuously updated with free and low-cost online professional development modules.

To achieve our mission we focus upon:

Skills and confidence, by providing up-to-date, evidenced-based information and mother-to-mother support both online and in-person, enabling pregnant women, new parents and breastfeeding mothers to make the decisions that are right for them and their families

Social connection by supporting parents to connect with others in their local communities and online for social support and friendship during the transition into parenting and beyond.

Advocacy for a breastfeeding inclusive society through the creation of breastfeeding friendly settings including the delivery of health professionals' education and training and the promotion of breastfeeding-friendly workplaces and public spaces.

Image courtesy Michelle Fulcher Photography



President's 2019-2020 annual report

This year has been a very challenging one, with changes in leadership and major changes to the environment, brought about most notably by the bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite these challenges, our regular work has continued, including local group activities for members, community education, our National Breastfeeding Helpline, LiveChat and the mum2mum app. ABA's online presence in social media continued and increased at group, regional, branch and national levels, and we worked towards better processes and moderation of the national Facebook groups. It has been great to see the training, volunteer support and Breastfeeding Information and Research (BIR) teams all working together with other National Office staff to share ideas and produce resources that enhance ABA's services.

Our annual Health Professional Seminar Series in March 2020 was very well received with good attendances at all venues. Due to COVID-19, one of the keynote speakers presented via Zoom and this was also well received. The seminars were used as a forum to launch the new edition of *Breastfeeding Management in Australia* (5th Edition), edited by Wendy Brodribb and a new package for ABA professional members. We also launched the new health professional website, designed by Steve Miller in collaboration with the BIR team, to support professional members and to provide information and education to health professionals. The training team designed modules that health professionals can access and will continue to introduce more modules over time.

ABA's Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace (BFW) accreditation program saw a change in personnel with Carla Van Hagen being



recruited as program manager. Carla has been looking at how to update and improve current resources and procedures. This program is specifically mentioned in the *Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and beyond* document and has the potential to bring in more revenue for ABA.

ABA has Commonwealth Government grant funding to cover our National Breastfeeding Helpline services and training of our counsellors and community educators. In May 2019, we were offered just over \$2 million p.a. for the 4 years 2019–22, double our previous funding. However, it took the whole of this year to negotiate this extra funding and the first instalment only arrived on 30 June 2020. Nerida Haines (Senior Manager Helpline Services and Volunteer Support) and Melanie Carter (Senior Manager Training and Education) deserve a huge accolade for the enormous efforts they put into this. Thanks also to Jacki McAvenna (Financial Services Consultant) for helping with the associated budgets.

The administration and support of other ABA services through our National Office

The pandemic hit in March 2020, and the focus was on how to continue our work supporting mothers, families and communities during this time, while also looking after our volunteers and staff. Everyone has played a huge role in making this happen.

is funded by revenue such as membership, educational courses and BFW accreditations. Personal ABA memberships continue to decline. We will be looking at the successes of the professional membership bundle to work out how to improve our personal membership base.

There have been quite a few changes to the ABA Board this year. At the November 2019 ABA Board meeting, we farewelled Frieda Maher and Adrienne Picone and welcomed Cate Uhe and Keith Anderson (though Keith had been in an acting position on the Board since May 2019). I was elected as president, Keith as vice president, Cate Uhe was elected as honorary secretary and Steve Miller was elected as company secretary. Karin Collinson had already been elected as honorary treasurer in June 2019.

Helen Hovenga resigned on 6 December 2019, Alex Smith resigned on 31 January 2020 and Steve Miller resigned on 23 July 2020. Sally Eldridge came onto the Board in an acting role on 1 February 2020 and Daile Kelleher, Fiona McClure and Erin Vlasveld were welcomed as appointed directors on 17 February.

I'd like to thank Frieda, Adrienne, Helen, Alex and Steve for their contributions to the Board during their time as directors. This can be a difficult and challenging role, and they each brought their own different skills and talents to the Board.

I have really enjoyed working with the Board during this year. The new directors have each brought something new and as president it's great to be able to draw on the expertise of other directors as needed. It's especially lovely

to be able to look at ABA through the eyes of our three directors who have young babies.

On 3 September 2019, ABA's Chief Executive Officer, Alison Boughey, resigned and the Board decided that the delegated three consisting of the president, treasurer and vice president would oversee the operations at National Office until we recruited a new Executive Officer. Karin, Frieda and I did this for 3 months. Then Keith replaced Frieda for the following 7 months when we welcomed Victoria Marshall-Cerins to the new EO role on 29 June 2020. I would like to thank Alison for her contributions to ABA in her time with us. The delegated three will continue to work with Victoria to support her in the role.

I'd especially like to thank Karin and Keith for working with me so ably in this role over the past few months. Their passion, dedication, common sense and many other skills have made it a pleasure to work with them over such an extended time.

I'd also like to thank the many staff members and volunteers who have brought innovative and inspired ideas to us during this time. I have appreciated the increase in optimism and enthusiasm over the past few months, even while we were thrown into these many challenging situations.

ABA responded to the bushfires by supporting, where possible, affected ABA members and volunteers. We also acted proactively by providing information on feeding in emergencies on the ABA website, social media and other avenues. ABA is very lucky to have experts in this area, Dr Karleen Gribble and Dr Nina Berry. They have played

a large role in producing ongoing papers and resources, in collaboration with Naomi Hull, Senior Manager, Breastfeeding Information and Research and her BIR team.

The pandemic hit in March 2020, and the focus was on how to continue our work supporting mothers, families and communities during this time, while also looking after our volunteers and staff. Everyone has played a huge role in making this happen.

Staff at national and branch offices prepared COVID-19 practice guidelines and ABA groups learned how to offer online meetings and other activities, with the support of group leaders, regional representatives and branch presidents.

This situation has resulted in a huge learning curve for many people in ABA. I have an enormous appreciation and respect for how everyone has rallied to adapt to the ever-changing conditions, despite their own personal circumstances.

The training team rose to the challenge by devising new online interactive Breastfeeding Education Live sessions (BELs) to replace our face-to-face Breastfeeding Education Classes (BECs). While this was planned as a future project, the team responded very quickly and designed the BELs so that parents-to-be could receive the information they needed about breastfeeding during the pandemic.

I was lucky enough to be able to attend the Victorian Branch Conference in February 2020. All other branches had to cancel their

annual conference due to the pandemic, and the Branch Presidents started to plan a national online conference for August.

The ABA Board continued to work on the new Strategic Plan and it was decided in the light of so many changes in the environment to have a more short-term plan over the three years 2020–22. The draft plan was sent out to all ABA members and we received some very useful feedback that we incorporated into the plan.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed in some way to ABA, whether by volunteering in the local group, working as a paid staff member, making a donation, by being a member or encouraging others to become members.

ABA is a volunteer peer support organisation and the vast majority of our work is done by trained counsellors and community educators. To all these volunteers, I give a huge thank you! Without them, ABA would not exist. I am overawed by the skills, knowledge, passion and commitment of these volunteers.

ABA has seen many changes over the 56 years since Mary Paton and the other founders started the Nursing Mothers' Association. We will continue to adapt to change and evolve our services as needed. This past year has certainly shown that we are up to the challenge!

Margaret Grove
President,
Australian Breastfeeding Association

Image courtesy Vicky Leon Photography



Board of Directors

Adrienne Picone, Director (resigned 29 November 2019)

At the time of her retirement as director, Adrienne Picone was the CEO of Volunteering Australia (VA) and prior to starting at VA, Adrienne was the CEO of Volunteering Tasmania. Adrienne is an advocate for the for-purpose sector and strives to ensure that volunteering is universally acknowledged as being integral to the social, economic and cultural cohesion of our community. Adrienne has worked with volunteers for over 15 years as a volunteer manager, trainer and management consultant. She has qualifications in education and extensive experience with Local and State Government as well as for-purpose organisations. Adrienne was an ABA Breastfeeding Counsellor and Group Leader in the 1990s.

Alexandra Smith, Director (resigned 31 January 2020)

Alexandra has 15 years' experience in research, tertiary teaching, program and project management, and capability and organisational development across the public service and the university sector in Queensland and NSW. She holds a PhD in Medical Anthropology and maintains ongoing involvement in research, writing and advocacy on issues around breastfeeding and women's health, and currently also works in clinical research focused on geriatric oncology. An ABA member since before the birth of her first child in 2011, and qualifying as a breastfeeding counsellor in 2013, Alexandra has undertaken ABA work at

local, state and national levels, including as a Group Leader currently.

Cate Uhe, Honorary Secretary (elected 29 November 2019)

Cate has been involved as an ABA volunteer over the past 29 years across all levels of the Association; local, regional, branch and national level and lived in a number of different states, as well as continuing to work as an ABA volunteer while living overseas. Nationally, she has been involved in the breastfeeding information area and more recently her ABA work has been in the training and education area. She was on the ABA Board previously before moving to live overseas. Cate has strong communication and project management skills and an extensive background in human resources and volunteer management through her work in the community sector as a manager. In addition, she has many years of experience in training, coaching and mentoring.

Daile Kelleher, Director (appointed 17 February 2020)

Daile is an experienced not-for-profit executive specialising in those that are member and volunteer-led and driven. Daile is currently the manager of a Queensland-wide not-for-profit focusing on women's health. Her governance and industry experience include as a current Management Committee member of Ending Violence Against Women Queensland representing the women's health sector, member of the ANROWS (Australia's

Image courtesy Vicky Leon Photography

National Research Organisation for Women's Safety) Practitioner Engagement Group, and as a member of the Women's Health Services Alliance of Queensland. Daile has a happy and healthy breastfed baby who attends board meetings with her and while it can create a distraction for board members at times, also reminds us of why we do what we do! She lives in Brisbane with her husband, 2 stepchildren, baby and a very grumpy cat.

**Erin Vlasveld, Director
(appointed 17 February 2020)**

Erin is an a Chartered Accountant with over 10 years' experience supporting businesses. She likes to ensure fit for purpose resources are in place for her clients. A New Zealand citizen by birth, Erin now lives in Canberra whilst regularly visiting Christchurch. She is a Peer Supporter in Christchurch's Mother4Mother Breastfeeding Support Initiative and is passionate about women receiving support for their infant feeding circumstances.

**Fiona McClure, Director
(appointed 17 February 2020)**

Fiona is an HR transformation consultant with almost 10 years' experience working with senior executives to provide support and strategic advice during a wide range of HR and business transformations. Fiona has broad sector experience across Retail, Telecommunications, Healthcare, Financial Services, Higher Education and Public Sector, and has worked internationally in Asia Pacific, Europe and Latin America. Raised in the UK, Fiona has lived and worked in Melbourne since 2016 and started her breastfeeding journey with the birth of her son in late 2019.

**Frieda Maher, Director
(retired 29 November 2019)**

Frieda runs a strategy and sales consulting firm that uses the best of people and technology to grow our clients' revenue and improve productivity. Her experience includes 20 years in sales and IT leadership roles in global multinationals and ASX100 businesses, before establishing a consulting firm that

transforms the sales and service capabilities of clients ranging from sole proprietors to large corporates. Frieda joined ABA in 2003, shortly after the birth of her first child and qualified as a Breastfeeding Counsellor and Community Educator in 2009. She has been actively involved as a volunteer at all levels, with a particular interest in supporting ABA through social media, as well training and mentoring new volunteers.

**Helen Hovenga, Director
(resigned 6 December 2019)**

Helen has an undergraduate degree in Psychology, a Master's Degree in Human Resources, 20 years of HR experience and 25 years as a people leader. She has worked in multiple industries in large, complex companies including Mars, Toyota, Myer, Coles, Carlton & United Breweries, Cleanaway and Newcrest Mining. She now works as the Executive Director of People & Culture with the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre. Helen is a skilled and accredited facilitator, coach, change manager and strategist and specialises in culture change, organisational design, people strategy, talent management, high performance teams and leadership development. Helen completed her breastfeeding journey in 2015 after 10 years of ongoing feeding through the births of her three children. She is a strong advocate of breastfeeding to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for children.

**Karin Collinson, Honorary Treasurer
(elected 24 November 2017)**

Karin has been an ABA member for more than 30 years, and a volunteer breastfeeding counsellor since 1992. She has held many group, branch and national volunteer roles in the Association, including Group Leader. Karin is also a Trainer and an Assessor with ABA. Karin is a Chartered Tax Advisor with the Tax Institute. Before retiring, Karin's paid work positions in the last 15 years were various senior leadership positions within the Australian Taxation Office, with responsibility for strategic litigation, law design and implementation, strategic decision

making and responsibility for large teams and budgets.

Keith Anderson, Vice President (elected 29 November 2019)

Keith is a retired Deputy Principal having previously taught in WA government and independent schools. He has always had a passion for the benefits of IT in education and was selected as Apple Distinguished Educator in 2004. Keith regularly presented at national and international conferences and has served as a board member with several not-for-profit organisations. Keith's involvement with breastfeeding began in 1975, when teaching reproduction topics to senior students. He actively supported his wife Joy to breastfeed their two children and then for over 30 years, helped Joy (former ABA director and now an honorary member) in her ABA roles. This included initiating and hosting the first email discussion group for counsellors (bcnet), giving talks at ABA branch conferences, and assisting with design, layout and formatting of ABA publications.

Margaret Grove, President (elected 24 November 2017)

Margaret Grove has been a breastfeeding counsellor since 1983. She has held a variety of roles in ABA including Group Leader, trainer and assessor. Margaret was a director on the ABA board from 2001 for 7 years, 3 of these as National President. Margaret was the community representative on the Advisory Panel for the Marketing in Australia of Infant Formula (APMAIF) for 5 years from 2009. In her paid work, Margaret is the author of HSC maths textbooks and is a retired maths teacher. Margaret lives in Sydney with her husband Geoff. They have three children and three grandchildren.

Mary Peterson, Director (elected 23 November 2018)

Mary's background is in public relations with experience across a range of industries including politics, international tourism, secondary and early childhood education. She is a skilled event coordinator having delivered

national workshops, health professional seminars and large fundraising events. Her interest lies in systems changes to protect human rights and is currently completing a Master of Public Policy with Charles Darwin University and a Diploma of Governance with the Institute of Community Directors Australia to develop her skills in this area. Mary has been involved with ABA since 2014, is a volunteer Breastfeeding Counsellor, has served as SA/NT Branch President and is currently serving as Group Leader for Darwin/Palmerston/Rural.

Sally Eldridge, Director (appointed as an elected director 1 February 2020)

Sally has been a volunteer Community Educator and advocate with the Australian Breastfeeding Association since 2003 and a member for 20 years. With a passion for supporting women to combine breastfeeding and employment, Sally was the National Manager for Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces program from 2003 to 2007. In this role she oversaw re-branding and growth of BFW and contributed to ABA's advocacy to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Breastfeeding in Australia, and the campaign for paid parental leave. More recently, Sally has been a member of ABA's Advocacy Working Group and supporting Breastfeeding Friendly Environment working groups. Sally had a career of over 30 years in the Commonwealth Public Service and held positions in policy, program and case management in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra, along with several overseas postings.

Steve Miller, Director (resigned 23 July 2020)

Steve is an IT professional with more than 20 years' experience implementing marketing and analytics solutions for some of the leading brands across the UK, ANZ and Asia. He's passionate about the success of his customers and loves to use his technical skills to solve complex problems. Steve lives in Melbourne, is the proud father of four breastfed children and a strong advocate for breastfeeding.

Funders and Sponsors

A Special Thank You to ABA's Funders and Sponsors

Thank you to our valued advertisers, donors, partners and sponsors for continuing to support ABA and our activities. Your support has enabled ABA to provide pregnant women, new parents, breastfeeding mothers and the health professionals who support them, with the breastfeeding information and support they need.

ABA partners with organisations who comply with the World Health Organization's International Code of Marketing Breastmilk Substitutes (the WHO Code).

Grant funding partners

- Australian Commonwealth Government
- NSW Department of Health
- ACT Health Directorate
- ACT Community Services Directory
- John James Foundation ACT
- Queensland Health
- South Australia Health
- Northern Territory Health
- Victorian Department of Education and Training

Bonding partner

- Ardo

Major partner

- Dale Group (My Brest Friend)

Warmth network partner

- Bambooty
- Ubere

Event partner

- Aromababy

Health professional seminar partners

Major sponsors

- Ardo
- Australian Commonwealth Government
- NSW Government
- Victoria State Government
- Queensland Government



ABA 2019 month-by-month

July

We received confirmation from the Australian Commonwealth Government of much needed additional funding to support the National Breastfeeding Helpline.

August

We launched our ABA mum2mum app during World Breastfeeding Week. The app is designed to put ABA's evidence-based information at the fingertips of parents and provides easy access to our National Breastfeeding Helpline and LiveChat services.

October

Our NSW and ACT Branches celebrated their 50th year anniversaries this month. Past, present and future members and supporters gathered in Canberra to celebrate at a special event and current volunteers also celebrated at the branch conference.

September

Our Tasmania Branch delivered their annual volunteer conference on the waterfront at Dodges Ferry, where 25 volunteers enjoyed sessions on early parenting and mental health. The weekend provided a valuable opportunity for re-connecting and re-charging.

November

Our National Breastfeeding Helpline supported 4884 calls this month with 416 qualified ABA volunteer breastfeeding counsellors giving 2121 hours to support new parents and breastfeeding mums.

December

This year we supported 122 organisations to enable their employees to successfully combine breastfeeding and work, as accredited Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces.

ABA 2020 month-by-month

January

We developed new resources for those impacted by the NSW, SA and Victorian bushfires. Our volunteer and paid staff teams shared information for parents about infant feeding during bushfire evacuations and breastfeeding in emergencies on social media and our website.

February

Our Victorian Branch held their volunteer conference, which was attended by 160 volunteers. The conference was presented by the volunteer state conference team around the theme of *Back to the Future: Breastfeeding Past, Present and Future*.

April

We rapidly adapted to meet the needs of breastfeeding mothers and their families due to coronavirus restrictions. ABA local groups moved their activities and events online. ABA volunteers took on extra shifts on the National Breastfeeding Helpline and LiveChat services.

March

We launched our new ABA Health Professional website at: abaprofessional.asn.au and new-look professional membership package to better meet the needs of health professionals. This coincided with the release of the fifth edition of our textbook, *Breastfeeding Management in Australia*.

May

Our response to the global pandemic continued with the development and launch of Breastfeeding Education Live (BEL) online classes. Our volunteers undertook additional training to deliver breastfeeding classes as interactive webinars and parents responded with enthusiasm.

June

Tasmania Branch made a submission to the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council on the importance of breastfeeding to the economy, and the potential impact of coronavirus on breastfeeding rates and duration. The submission has been published on the council's website.

Breastfeeding Helpline services

National Breastfeeding Helpline

ABA's National Breastfeeding Helpline provides mother-to-mother counselling support to breastfeeding mothers and their partners and to health professionals across Australia.

The National Breastfeeding Helpline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. As breastfeeding mothers themselves, our qualified volunteer counsellors know that breastfeeding may not always seem easy. They provide the reassurance and knowledge about how breastfeeding works, that enables women to overcome common hurdles. Through funding support from the Australian Commonwealth Government, ABA's telephone counselling is available free to all callers.

During 2019–2020, more than 68,600 calls were made to our National Breastfeeding Helpline, for breastfeeding support and information. That's more than 5700 calls per month on average. Since the National Breastfeeding Helpline began operation in September 2008, the service has received almost 945,000 calls. We expect to receive our 1 millionth call in early 2021.

In 2019–2020, the ABA National Breastfeeding Helpline was staffed by more than 600 volunteer breastfeeding counsellors. These amazing women supported 83% of all calls and together contributed over 26,400 hours of their time to support the mothers, families and health professionals who access the Breastfeeding Helpline system.



I had such a fantastic breastfeeding counsellor. She took her time to help and reassure me. Breastfeeding is more challenging than I ever imagined, but it is so worth it. It's so important to empower women, and I feel the ABA does that so well.

National Breastfeeding Helpline caller



Image courtesy Monica Spillman

Top 5 reasons for calls to the ABA National Breastfeeding Helpline

- Sore breast and nipples
- Reassurance
- Information on feeding patterns (Too often? Not often enough?)
- Positioning and attachment
- Concern with low milk supply

OUR IMPACT

- 68,625 calls were received by the National Breastfeeding Helpline
- 83% of callers said the support they received helped them resolve their concerns

93%

our National Breastfeeding Helpline caller satisfaction rate

I find the volunteers so lovely, empathic and helpful. In times of vulnerability they are exactly what I have needed to feel supported. I can't believe they're volunteers and this service is free! We are so lucky!

National Breastfeeding Helpline caller

ABA's mum2mum app

This year, ABA released the first version of our mum2mum app. The mum2mum app provides breastfeeding information straight to parents' fingertips. The app allows users to gain easy access to the National Breastfeeding Helpline and LiveChat services, and links them to the ABA website and store. Parents can link into

relevant breastfeeding articles, record baby feeds, sleep and nappy changes and make journal entries for their baby.

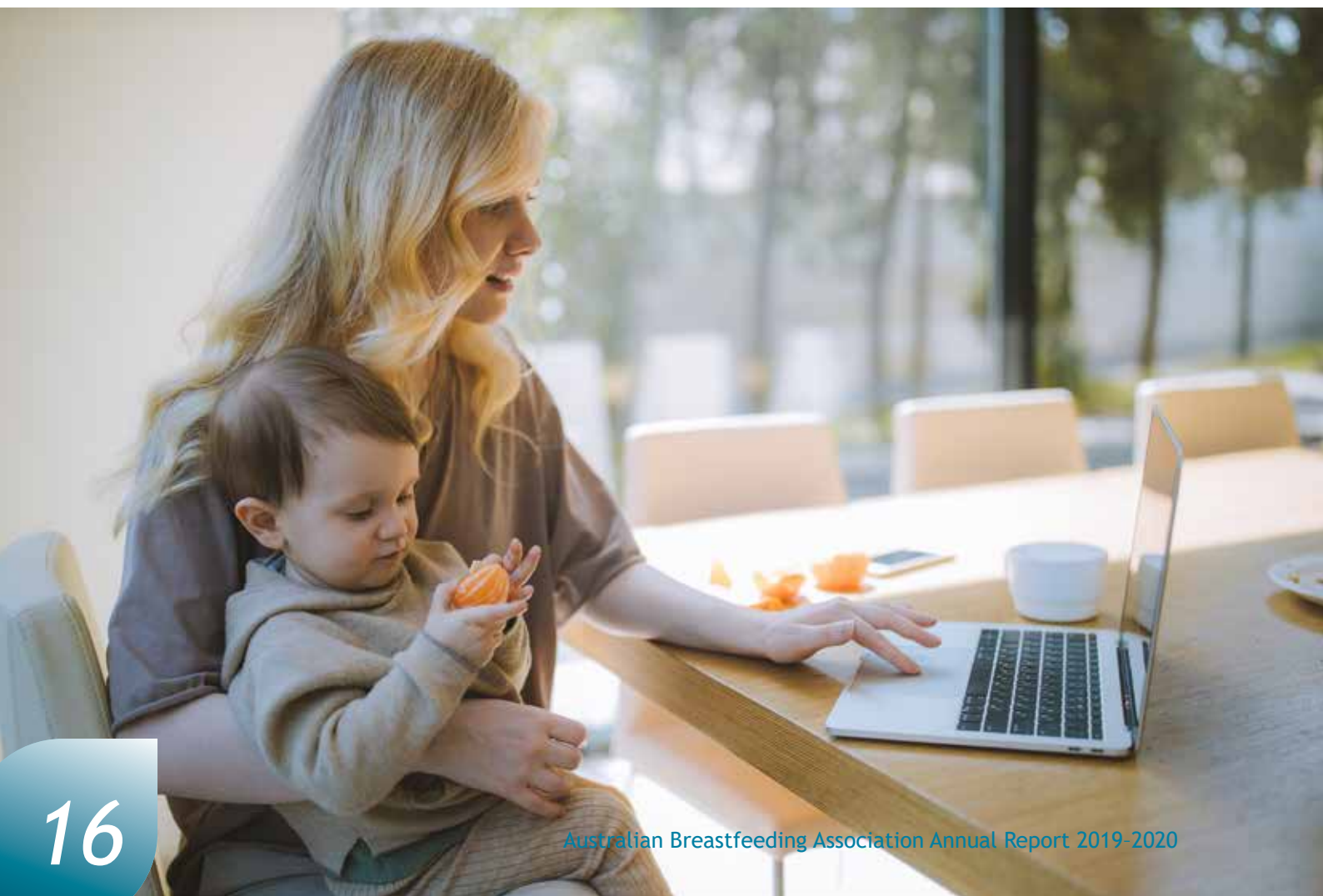
Work has been undertaken on version 2 of the mum2mum app, with a release during in July 2020.

Having someone who knows what I'm struggling with and can put words to things I don't even know how to articulate, makes the whole challenge of new parenting so much easier to work with and work through. I felt validated and understood and by the end it felt like a chat with an old friend.

LiveChat user

Respectful, knowledgeable and kind people to talk to. Outstanding support, my questions answered fully and on ongoing support options discussed.

LiveChat user



ABA LiveChat

ABA's LiveChat service provides mothers, their partners and support people with another option to access the breastfeeding information they need. It is staffed by our fabulous volunteers, including our community educators, and is available via the ABA website. This year, LiveChat operated from 8 pm to 10 pm AEST each weeknight.

When the world changed in March 2020 as the impacts of the global coronavirus pandemic started to be felt in Australian communities, ABA's LiveChat service adapted. Coronavirus restrictions and new health concerns created additional uncertainty and worry. Parents' needs for support were increasing week-to-week. Our volunteers stepped up and the LiveChat service was made available on Monday and Friday afternoons in addition to the weeknight sessions.

OUR IMPACT

- 6802 LiveChats in 2019-2020
- 26% of LiveChat users returned to the service at least once
- 15,000 parents downloaded the new ABA mum2mum app



During 2019–2020, more than 6800 chats were received by ABA's LiveChat service. The LiveChat service was staffed by 108 ABA community educators and these amazing volunteers supported 99% of all chats.

Top reasons for using LiveChat

- Sore breast or nipples
- Information on feeding patterns (Too often? Not often enough?)
- Reassurance
- Concern with the length of feeds
- Positioning and attachment
- Concern with low milk supply

92%

our LiveChat user satisfaction rate

Thank you to our volunteers

During the 2019–2020 financial year, 82% of ABA volunteer breastfeeding counsellors took calls on the National Breastfeeding Helpline and 27% of ABA volunteer community educators gave their time to support mothers and families via LiveChat. This is in addition to all the other activities that ABA volunteers are engaged in at the local, regional, state and national levels, including running group meetings, face-to-face support of members, supporting pregnant mothers and their partners in our

breastfeeding education classes, advocacy and breastfeeding promotion activities. The Australian Breastfeeding Association wishes to acknowledge our amazing volunteers who give their time to undertake our extensive accredited training and then who give their own time week after week, to support families across Australia.

Nerida Haines

Senior Manager, Helpline Services and Volunteer Support

Training and Education

Despite the challenges faced during 2019–2020 with widespread bushfire emergencies and the COVID-19 pandemic, the training and education team was able to achieve significant outcomes across our four key priority areas in the Strategic Plan for 2019–2020:

- Training future and current volunteers to support the work of the Association
- Providing continuing education to volunteers to ensure ongoing skills and knowledge currency
- Providing breastfeeding education to health professionals and community groups
- Maintaining our status as an RTO and the accreditation of our nationally recognised courses in breastfeeding education and management to make ABA the leading provider of breastfeeding education.

Training ABA volunteers

As always, the training team and our trainees have been working hard throughout this year. We are fortunate to have training personnel who care so deeply about the future of the Association and give so much of their time and expertise to us. A big thank you to our Branch Training Managers who lead and support their teams. The quality of the work they and their teams do is exceptional. This is recognised in the high levels of student satisfaction reported each year in the Quality

Indicator Surveys to the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA).

This year also has seen the complete implementation of our new online Learning Management System (LMS). The LMS has enabled us to readily navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and continue training our new volunteers without significant interruption. The learning materials and resources developed and maintained on the LMS are the product of



The most satisfying aspect of the volunteer training was... Learning evidence-based information regarding breastfeeding and gaining skills to assist mothers to breastfeed their babies. Great support and advice was provided during my training. Very accommodating and flexible.

Zofia Roxon-Hunter



The most satisfying aspect of the volunteer training was... The constant support I had through my entire training. I had so much support, guidance and motivation from the team that it helped me stay on path even with many distractions. I also love the level of knowledge we have been taught, with the opportunity to learn more.

Rachael Sanderson

a highly committed team. A very special thank you must be given to Claire Fraser, Alicia Ford, Cate Uhe, Leila Forde, Janet Sullivan and Laura Hughes for the work they have done during the year with the LMS. In addition, our thanks also go to our new assessor allocators, Jenny Prowse, Pixie Endacott and Kathryn Barwick for the work they have been doing with the changes to the assessment process. Feedback from our assessors and learners indicates that the changes to the assessment format and processes

have made completing the work that each group needs to do much easier.

As always, we work closely with the National Breastfeeding Helpline Services team as trainees complete their course and transition to qualifying as breastfeeding counsellors and community educators. We would like to acknowledge the fabulous job the Breastfeeding Helpline and LiveChat mentors do in providing a final polish of our newly qualified volunteers!

OUR IMPACT

- 262 aspiring ABA volunteers enrolled in our Cert IV Breastfeeding Education course.
- We supported 68 trainees to become qualified volunteer breastfeeding counsellors and community educators.

92.1%

our trainee volunteers' overall satisfaction score for the Cert IV

Continuing education of ABA volunteers

During 2019–2020 we have continued our focus upon increasing access for all volunteers to the continuing education opportunities available at ABA branch conferences by filming and uploading presentations to our online continuing education space. This has resulted in over 18 new activities being made available to very positive feedback.

Volunteer take-up rates for the online recording mechanisms for continuing education/professional development activities continue to be very satisfactory and it is always pleasing to see the depth of self-reflection and learning being expressed about the resources provided.

Health professional training

Diploma in Breastfeeding Management

The fourth cohort of the 10243NAT Diploma in Breastfeeding Management worked steadily through the course. As always, they gave very positive feedback. There is significant interest in the course and enrolments have steadily grown. However, cost and time factors do limit growth of the course. Options for participants

to attend course workshops, complete individual modules and gain professional continuing education points are available. Uptake for these is increasing in accordance with the improvements in ABA's capacity to promote these workshops.

I've listened in depth to all 6 videos from Unit 1. I found these videos to be very interesting and extremely informative. The presenter was really easy to listen to and she seemed very knowledgeable, so if she wants feedback... it's two thumbs up from me. I'm now making my way through the recommended reading.

Diploma course participant

2020 Health Professionals Seminar Series

Despite the looming COVID-19 pandemic and our international speaker electing to present via Zoom video conferencing, the 2020 Health Professional Seminar series in March, *Breastfeeding: Sustaining a health future* was a success. Our speakers, Professor. Mary Renfrew, Dr Treasure McGuire and Amanda Donnet, were all positively received. We would

like to thank everyone in the Association for their contributions to the success of this year's series. Although we are uncertain of how COVID-19 restrictions will impact in 2021, planning for the 2021 Health Professional Seminar series *Breastfeeding: Cues for success*, is already well underway with the inclusion of COVID-19 contingencies.

I highly recommend the ABA Health Professional Seminars and the valuable professional development they provide in a day which is well organised yet covers six speakers on a range of important topics which education and health professional and breastfeeding counsellors alike.

2020 Health Professional Seminar attendee



Community Breastfeeding Mentoring Workshops

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic we were able to deliver a series of Community Breastfeeding Mentoring workshops (10170NAT Course in Community Breastfeeding Mentoring) to Aboriginal communities for NSW Health.

Re-accreditation of this course in 2021 is a priority, as course outcomes align well with the initiatives for priority groups described in the *Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and beyond*.



The workshop provided us with a good range of activities. My favourite part was coming together to create a support group. Excellent course!

Community Breastfeeding Mentor course participant, Coonamble

It was a very practical and easy to understand workshop. My favourite part was the scenarios. Thank you for the opportunity.

Community Breastfeeding Mentor course participant, Birra Li



OUR IMPACT

- Our training and assessment team supported 29 students in the Diploma in Breastfeeding Management.
- We welcomed 866 participants to our 2020 Health Professional Seminar series.
- Our Course in Community Breastfeeding Mentoring enhanced the capacity of 27 community leaders and healthcare workers from Aboriginal communities to support breastfeeding women and new parents, before COVID-19 restrictions put a halt to in-person delivery.

92.7%

employers' quality indicator score for ABA's training and professional development services for health professionals

Antenatal breastfeeding classes

The COVID-19 pandemic provided ABA with the opportunity to push a long-planned initiative forward to develop an online version of a Breastfeeding Education Class (BEC). To maintain ABA's point of difference, an interactive 1.5 hour webinar version was developed with rapid turnaround by an enthusiastic team. Our special thanks must go to Antonia Norton, Megan Fox, Nicole Bridges, Jessica Edquist and Heather Miller for the work they did in the development and trialling of our new program, Breastfeeding Education Live (BEL). Feedback from parents attending BELs has been extremely positive and evaluations show that participants feel their breastfeeding knowledge and confidence has significantly improved by the end of the session.

Maintaining our RTO registration and the accreditation of nationally recognised courses

As a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), ABA is required to maintain its compliance with the VET Quality Framework which includes the Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015. This work underpins our provision of nationally recognised courses to our volunteer base, community groups and health professionals. It forms a significant part of the ongoing work performed by training personnel, paid and volunteer. We appreciate all the efforts of ABA volunteers, paid staff and stakeholders who assist with our validation and industry consultation processes and thank you for these.

Finally, ABA would like to acknowledge funding received from the Australian Commonwealth Government that has enabled our Association to maintain its registration as an RTO and provide support and resources to learners, training personnel and our volunteers.

Thank you to all our ABA training personnel and mentors for their dedication.

Melanie Carter
Senior Manager, Training and Education

OUR IMPACT

1996

parents attended our antenatal breastfeeding classes in their local communities, before coronavirus restrictions commenced in March 2020

481

parents attended our new Breastfeeding Education Live classes when the service went online in May 2020



Breastfeeding Information and Research



ABA booklets categories: breastfeeding, special situation, and parenting information series

This year has been a period of change and renewal for the Breastfeeding Information and Research (BIR) Team. Naomi Hull commenced as the new Senior Manager in early August, when we said thank you and farewell to Liz McGuire who had been part of the team for almost 20 years as the Scientific Information Officer. Renee Kam was appointed to this role in November.

The Breastfeeding Information and Research team plays a key role in ensuring that the information provided to ABA personal and professional members is current. This year the team has provided input into and overseen a number of publications and communication projects, including ABA's mum2mum app and the ABA's new podcast series due to launch in late 2020.

ABA booklets

ABA publishes 22 topic-focused booklet titles, including supporting the new mother, sleep, crying babies and returning to work. Designed and edited by our talented volunteers, our booklets are reviewed every 3 years as a minimum. They are available for sale in our online shop at: shop.breastfeeding.asn.au/.

ABA information hub

The ABA website hosts over 180 pages of breastfeeding information for parents. Resources include videos and brochures

for download that provide the information pregnant women, new parents and breastfeeding mothers need in order to make the choices that are right for them and their families.

New webpages added this year included:

- Breastmilk and air travel
- Lactation after loss
- COVID-19
- Breastfeeding and influenza.

ABA's health professionals website

This year saw the launch of our new dedicated Health Professionals website: abaprofessional.asn.au, in conjunction with an update of our professional membership package. The new website hosts our free to download breastfeeding information factsheets. The website also connects health professionals with member-only content such as feature articles and research summaries. We are delighted to have welcomed so many new professional members to ABA this year.



Publications for ABA members and volunteers

Essence is ABA's member magazine. It is written, edited and designed by our extraordinary volunteers. It is published four times a year and includes breastfeeding and parenting articles and features member stories and news from around the Association.

Breastfeeding Review, our peer-reviewed journal has had a makeover this year. The editorial team is working hard to increase the profile of the journal. We now have it stored in CINAHL Complete, EBSCO, Informit, and ProQuest.



As an early academic breastfeeding researcher, I fully recognise the niche that ABA's Breastfeeding Review represents in the world of breastfeeding-related peer-reviewed journals. Peer support for breastfeeding is increasingly recognised as a powerful and sustainable element in increasing a nation's breastfeeding initiation and duration rates as well as women's enjoyment of this relational activity. But this journal extends beyond the issues of peer support with a wealth of coverage of important and new perspectives on breastfeeding - relevant both to Australia and to the global context. It is unique in its attention to research that matters to women who breastfeed and those who support them to do so.

ABA Professional Member



Health Professionals eNewsletter connects our professional members with breastfeeding news and research updates every month. A new factsheet is included with the eNewsletter ahead of being uploaded to the Health Professionals website.

The Australian Breastfeeding Association's 'For Health Professionals' website has marked an exciting new development in the journey toward strengthening peer-professional relationships around breastfeeding support for Australia's breastfeeding women and families. It was with great pride that I shared the link for the site with my midwifery colleagues on social media and with my undergraduate Bachelor of Midwifery students on their electronic learning system. When a student responds with 'this is AMAZING!!!!' you know that ABA is doing something right.

Jennifer Hocking M.Mid, Midwifery Course Coordinator and Lecturer, Australian Catholic University



In March 2020, we celebrated the print publication of *Breastfeeding Management in Australia* (5th Edition). The last time this important text for health professionals was published was 2012.



Wendy Brodribb, Margaret Grove and Naomi Hull

ABA's Breastfeeding Management is an undisputed recommended text in the postnatal care unit I teach to Bachelor of Midwifery students. The new edition maintains its solid theoretical basis with the addition of relevant and important new research directions. One of the most attractive features of this text is, and always has been, its commitment to helping women to breastfeed! This means that every element of the book is strongly relevant to the midwife's important role in supporting the initiation and early experience of breastfeeding. Such a gift to our profession.

Jennifer Hocking M.Mid, Midwifery Course Coordinator and Lecturer, Australian Catholic University

Research

The Breastfeeding Information and Research (BIR) team facilitates research into human lactation and breastfeeding. ABA has provided support for nine external research projects this year. One of those projects, 'Organisational support for return to work whilst breastfeeding', at Western Sydney University, aimed to explore organisational support for women who plan to maintain breastfeeding after return to work. This research is still in progress.

Another valuable project underway is, 'Using medications or other substances to boost breastmilk supply' at the University of Adelaide. This aims to explore women's awareness, attitudes and experiences towards the use of medications to increase milk supply. The project will look at medications prescribed by a doctor or those purchased without prescription, such as herbs and foods.

This year ABA made submissions to the Royal Commission on National Natural Disaster Arrangements in April 2020 and to the Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 in June 2020.

We were invited to present a paper at the international, 'Gold Lactation Online Conference'. Our thanks to Heather Miller who presented a very well received session on breastfeeding babies with Down syndrome.

During the early months of COVID-19 a volunteer survey was instigated to help ABA understand the impact of COVID-19 on our volunteers and on the mothers who were calling the National Breastfeeding Helpline. The results were analysed and written up for publication. Initially the paper was published on a 'pre-print server for Health Sciences' called *medRxiv*. It has now also been submitted for publication in *Breastfeeding Review*.

Mothers are responsive to awareness of heightened risks to infants in emergencies and are willing to change feeding practices as a result. Mothers were negatively impacted by the reduction or removal of formal and informal supports for breastfeeding and mothering during the pandemic. However, ABA services continued to provide support and were able to rapidly deploy key information to mothers, ABA volunteers, and health professionals.

Hull, N., Kam, R., Gribble, K. (2020)

The 2019 Mary Paton Research Award winner, Roni Cole, *Reducing sleep-related infant mortality through understanding factors associated with breastfeeding duration: A cross-sectional survey*, was presented at the 2020 Health Professional Seminar in Brisbane and published in the March 2020 *Breastfeeding Review*.

Professional collaborations

ABA has representation in the 'core group' of the World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative-Australia (WBTi) team. As a follow on from their 2018 assessment of Australia report, the WBTi team has spent this year presenting a series of free webinars, along with the ANU Gender Institute and Save The Children. These webinars drew attention to the key gaps in Australian policy and linking the recommendations of the WBTi Australia report with the key 'Priority Action Areas' in the Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy 2019. The focus has been on Infant and Young Child Feeding in emergencies (IYCF-E) planning and preparedness, and maternity services, health professional education and breastfeeding friendly environments.

ABA also joined the Red Cross LifeBlood Milk Advisory Board earlier this year as a consumer representative. ABA will be able to contribute the perspectives of our members and provide expertise and advice on emerging issues and research priorities as required.

The BIR Team acknowledges and thanks the following volunteers and their teams: Renee Kam (Breastfeeding Information), Judy Gifford (Proof Reading and Approval Working Group), Joy Anderson (Booklet Review Working Group), Querida David (Visual Images Working Group), Jenni James (*Breastfeeding Review* Editor), Kathryn Barwick (*Essence* Editor) and Debbie Court (Design) for all their hard work and dedication to their portfolios.

Naomi Hull

Senior Manager, Breastfeeding Information and Research

Reference

Hull, N., Kam, R., Gribble, K. (2020) Providing breastfeeding support during the COVID-19 pandemic: Concerns of mothers who contacted the Australian Breastfeeding Association. *medRxiv* 2020.07.18.20152256; doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.07.18.20152255>.



Amy, Sharni and Amelia. Photography by James Courtney

Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces



Despite its complexities, 2019–2020 has been an exciting year for the Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace (BFW) Program. Our motivation to continue to support women combining breastfeeding and work is as strong as ever. We see this same drive in our BFW accredited organisations and are proud to have supported 30 organisations to achieve our recently introduced ‘Best Practice’ standard. These organisations have shown ongoing commitment to supporting their breastfeeding employees through the BFW program and have been recognised as going above and beyond to help staff balance work and family commitments.

In response to pandemic related restrictions, we have found new and innovative ways to work flexibly with our accredited organisations through the reaccreditation process. With most organisations forced to manage significant unforeseen challenges, including having many of their employees working from home, we have responded by tailoring our support to each individual organisation. From offering virtual site visits, to providing extended timeframes and more intense support, our processes and procedures have been adapted continuously to ensure continuity of the BFW program. Communications to all workplaces provided up to date coronavirus related information to share with breastfeeding employees and suggestions for ways to support staff despite them not being onsite. We remain grateful for the ongoing commitment to the program

by so many organisations and heartened by their continued support of their employees.

In 2020, our team of BFW paid staff has been strengthened by the input of trained ABA volunteers as ABA continues to prioritise support for the growing number of Australian women returning to paid employment at a time when the World Health Organization recommends exclusive and ongoing breastfeeding. This has allowed us to review and plan for exciting projects ahead, including identifying ways to digitise processes and hard copy resources, a priority for the year ahead.

To find out more about the BFW program, please visit: breastfeeding.asn.au/workplace.

Carla van Hagen
Program Manager Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces

OUR IMPACT

120
accredited Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces

30
organisations achieving ‘Best Practice’ standard



Credit: Erina Kilmore, Director of Sales, Australia Zoo

Due to our breastfeeding policy I have been able to return to work earlier than expected, and this benefits me as well as Australia Zoo.

Australia Zoo employee

National Mothering Week 2020



‘We’re in it together’

When we were discussing the theme for National Mothering Week (May 4–10) in early 2020, we had no idea how pertinent the tagline ‘in it together’ was going to become.

We had endured the summer of fires that devastated so many. Then, in March, the challenges and uncertainties that came with the coronavirus left us all once again in a state of collective grief and anxiety.

For expectant and new parents, the challenges of restrictions were amplified with the restrictions to access to their usual pillars of support, from antenatal hospital classes to grandparent visits. But ABA’s community came together — on social media, over text messages and in Zoom meetings — to lift them up and support them.

This is why National Mothering Week felt particularly important this year, even as we were unable to carry out our usual events and activities. With the theme ‘We’re in it together’, ABA encouraged mothers to reach out to one another and check in, to let mothers know that they are never alone. Local groups held their meetings over Zoom and Facebook, to great success.

As an example, the North West Metro Region in ACT/NSW had a paediatric clinical

psychologist speak to mothers on the topic of self-care and support networks. One of the benefits of holding the meeting online was that mothers with really new, newborns were able to attend. New parents around Australia benefited from ABA’s local group events going online and the opportunity to be able to jump in from the comfort of home. The group talked about the transition to motherhood, resilience, boundaries, self-compassion, and exercises on identifying support networks.

Throughout National Mothering Week, ABA held a social media competition asking mothers to share how they were, ‘in it together’. Jessica wrote, ‘I’m just taking each day as it comes. I only have 3 weeks until I meet my second baby, so I’m taking life easy. Life doesn’t stop but I’m getting through this time with family support. I really miss and appreciate the little things’.

Jessica won a gift voucher from our National Mothering Week sponsor, Ripe Maternity & Nursing. Her baby was born on Mother’s Day, at the culmination of National Mothering Week.

Thanks for being creative in providing us with support in these bizarre times.

ABA North West Metro Region Group Member

World Breastfeeding Week 2019

Empower parents, enable breastfeeding

World Breastfeeding Week is a global celebration of breastfeeding, held annually on 1–7 August. For ABA, the week is a valuable opportunity to raise awareness of the Association and the work we do within the community. The theme for World Breastfeeding Week in 2019 was *Empower Parents, Enable Breastfeeding*. The focus was on empowering the mother and the people around her with the information and support she needs to breastfeed. We know that when a mother feels supported by her partner, family, workplace and the wider community, she is more likely to achieve her breastfeeding goals.

This theme beautifully complemented the work of ABA volunteers around Australia and their efforts to protect, promote and support breastfeeding. The week was celebrated with gatherings around the country, from morning teas to hospital visits. Inner Metro Sydney Group (ACT/NSW Branch) joined with Sydney Local Health District staff and families at Canterbury Hospital to celebrate with a morning tea, talking to families,

staff and hospital visitors about ABA. In Queensland, Sherwood and Surrounds Group celebrated their 45th anniversary during World Breastfeeding Week. They had a morning tea attended by Joyce Smith, a former Group Leader of Tarrigindi Group from the 1970s, Jan Tovey, Sherwood and Surrounds member from the 1980s and MP Milton Dick, Federal Member for Oxley, with over 20 local mothers.



Fundraisers

The theme for the 2019 Festive Appeal was *Reaching more mums than ever before*. The appeal raised awareness of the many different services offered by ABA that enable more parents to access our services each year. Our National Breastfeeding Helpline is available all year-round, 24 hours a day, including throughout the holiday season when many other support services are not available. The 2019 Festive Appeal raised \$13,443.

The 2020 Tax Appeal, *More than just a phone call*, shed a light on all of the incredible work that goes on behind the scenes at ABA — from the training of volunteers to the research that sits behind our evidence-based, up-to-date breastfeeding information to mothers, families and health professionals. A simple phone call to ABA is so much more than that, with hundreds of volunteers dedicating thousands of hours to ensure mothers are getting the information and support they need

to breastfeed. The 2020 Tax Appeal ran during an incredibly difficult time for many families and yet our wonderful supporters were able to donate \$39,000 to ABA.

On behalf of ABA, we would like to thank all of our generous donors for your contributions. Your donation enables ABA to provide thousands of families with breastfeeding support, information and encouragement, when they need it most.



Australian Capital Territory/ New South Wales Branch



It has been a hectic and stressful time for many of our volunteers and groups this year. Emergency level bushfires were widespread — from the north in early spring, right through to the southern NSW border over the summer period, followed by flooding in some areas. And all this occurred before COVID-19! These challenges have impacted the number of activities held across the Branch, with many volunteers and trainees taking periods of leave from ABA as a result. Thank you to our dedicated team of volunteers and staff who provide support to families in the ACT/NSW and advocate for breastfeeding within our communities.

Progress continues with our project to update the *How Breastfeeding Works* booklets, supported by funding from the NSW Department of Health. These booklets will be available in 14 community languages and Easy English, expanding ABA's resources in languages other than English.

Training workshops were conducted regularly to enable trainees to progress with face-to-face support until March 2020. These workshops have been made possible thanks to Federal Volunteer Grants received by groups and regions.

For the first time in many years, our Branch has seen the re-opening of a group. We welcome the Dubbo Group back to the Western Region and look forward to offering regular local connections in one of our state's largest

regional cities. Following several years of group consolidations, we now have 41 groups across the Branch and 331 volunteers.

We continued to deliver a wide range of services across ACT and NSW, including 65 Breastfeeding Education Classes around ACT/NSW, in addition to an estimated 750 general workshops/discussion groups — some face-to-face, and others online. It has been interesting to notice the increased level of engagement with mothers of very young babies with our online discussion groups compared to face-to-face gatherings. We hope that this trend will continue so we can support mothers and families on their steep learning curves as new parents.

Nicole Bridges

ABA Australian Capital Territory/New South Wales Branch President

Founder Mary Paton celebrates 50 years of NMAA/ABA in the ACT



ABA Queensland Branch continues to benefit from the Community Benefit Fund provided by Queensland Health. This money provides us with the funds to cover the cost of running our office to support our volunteers, along with a portion of our training costs. In the 2019–2020 financial year, the grant was underspent, largely as a result of the pandemic that saw a decrease in resources required for many of our normal activities, such as hospital visits and expos.

We held a successful Regional Teams weekend in November, enabling our training and branch teams to rejuvenate and plan for the following year's activities. However, coronavirus restrictions meant that we had to cancel our Branch conference.

Branch Office breast pump hire has not been as profitable in the last 12 months but continues to tick along. The Branch was successful in securing a special COVID-19 grant which will be directed towards improved technologies for volunteers and translation of Breastfeeding Basics videos into community languages.

Queensland Branch has several community partnerships and collaborations and continues

to establish more. We have representatives attending the meetings of the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital Infant Feeding Resource Group, Child and Youth Community Health Service Breastfeeding Workgroup, and the Young Parents Program within Brisbane.

2019–2020 has been a difficult year and has sadly seen the resignation of some very experienced and highly valued counsellors and community educators. However, we have retained many excellent volunteers who are worthy of reward after their resilient efforts in a year of enormous change. We are incredibly proud of them all.

Kath Angus
ABA Queensland Branch President



South Australia and Northern Territory Branch



ABA's South Australia/Northern Territory Branch (SA/NT) is a geographically dispersed ABA branch of 84 volunteers, including 21 trainee volunteers. SA/NT Branch has continued to function with strength and commitment throughout 2019–2020, adapting quickly in March 2020, to offer far-reaching and authentic services in response to the challenges of coronavirus. The immense effort and creative expertise put in across all ABA groups and regions has been outstanding and inspiring, and gratefully accepted by many.

Branch Meetings held via Zoom have been well attended and ensure connection across our large state and territory spaces.

Child and Youth Health (CaFHS) generously provided space for our Branch Office in Adelaide. We are grateful for funding from the Women's and Children's Health Network (SA), and NT Health, which collectively provided ongoing and essential financial support for the provision of office staff and project work.

Community liaison relationships continue to strengthen. With CaFHS (SA) being reaccredited as a Baby Friendly organisation, the working model has expanded to build stronger and regular links with ABA, largely through their Breastfeeding Champions program.

Networks and services that have creatively and effectively converted to online platforms have flourished and have been greatly welcomed. These include volunteers working on the ABA National Breastfeeding Helpline, Breastfeeding Education Classes (BECs) and

Breastfeeding Education Live (BELs) online classes, promotion of ABA Health Professional website and resources, and various and varied group and regional connections.

The SA/NT designed and published postcards have been re-ordered by CaFHS for distribution by all SA child health clinics. The postcards now include a direct link to the new ABA app.

2020 marks the 50th year of ABA in South Australia. In-person birthday celebrations are being planned for 2021. SA/NT Branch was proud to acknowledge the service, dedication and mighty commitment of nine ABA volunteers this year, marking milestone years ranging from 5 to 45 years. Special congratulations and thanks go to Helen Slater for her passion for NMAA/ABA over the past 45 years.

Wendy Burge
ABA South Australia and Northern Territory Branch President



Thank you to all the dedicated volunteers in Tasmania Branch for your work during the year — and what a year it turned out to be. Just like parenting, 2020 turned out to be full of surprises, but we showed that we can adapt and meet the challenges with passion and compassion. We may be small but what we lack in numbers, we make up for in commitment.

We currently have 26 trained volunteers and 3 trainees. One trainee qualified during the year and is now actively working for ABA and enjoying shifts on the National Breastfeeding Helpline. At the opposite end of the spectrum, two Hobart volunteers, Janet and Helena, completed 40 years of service as breastfeeding counsellors. Thank you for all you have done and continue to do for ABA in Tasmania. Generally, there is a pattern emerging of volunteers resigning earlier than in the past and we also had some volunteers moving on at the 5-year mark.

We held a successful Tasmania Branch seminar, *Breastfeeding: Supplying the Answers*, during World Breastfeeding Week in August 2019. It was very well attended with more than 80 local (and some interstate) health professionals attending. Our seminar is independent of the national seminar circuit and organised largely by local volunteers. A highlight was hearing from Associate Professor Wendy Ingman on the biology of lactation and how it reduces breast cancer risk.

In April all activities moved online and we all became experts in Zoom. One of the benefits of meeting this way was that members and volunteers could attend

discussions outside their area, with a greater choice of topics and times.

Our branch membership promotion whereby all new and renewing members in Tasmania are eligible for 50% cash back continues and has helped numbers remain stable, largely due to renewals. We plan to continue this. Breastfeeding Education Classes (BECs) were offered face-to-face in Ulverstone until March. This was our fourth year offering them and the 50% rebate also applied to them. Two of our volunteers took the plunge and did the training for the new online Breastfeeding Education Live (BELs).

In June, we made a submission to the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council on the importance of breastfeeding to the economy, and the potential impact of coronavirus on breastfeeding rates and duration. If women are supported to breastfeed, then Tasmanian families will have more money in their pocket to spend as the economy recovers. There would be less pressure on the hospital system, due to the reduced burden of illness.

Charlotte Fielding
ABA Tasmania Branch President



Victoria Branch has over 300 volunteers from 26 different groups and regions. The Branch Office, also known as the Breastfeeding Centre, is located in Dandenong, South East of Melbourne. The branch is funded by the Victorian Department of Education and Training to provide three major activities as part of the funding model:

- Provide mothers with practical mother-to-mother support and information, enabling them to establish and continue breastfeeding
- Provide high quality and accessible training, education and resources to our volunteers, health professionals and the wider community
- Strengthen the advocacy work of the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

These activities are demonstrated in the work across the state from ABA local groups and regions, with the Branch overseeing the operations.

Victoria Branch has achieved the following in the 2019–2020 financial year:

- The Breastfeeding Centre continued to offer a free drop-in each Wednesday throughout the year supporting over 100 visitors. Many of the visitors were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, with 28 different languages spoken at home by families who visited.
- 511 parents attended our in-person and online breastfeeding classes.
- Training days were held in August 2019, October 2019, November 2019, January 2020 and March 2020 to support trainees who are completing 10280NAT Certificate IV in Breastfeeding Education.
- Groups, regions and the branch worked with local hospitals, schools, health

organisations including maternal and child health centres to build and strengthen our relationships with these stakeholders whilst providing and promoting ABA resources and services.

- ABA local groups continued to hire breast pumps around the state. The state manages almost 200 pumps in total.
- Over 740 local group meetings took place at various locations across Victoria and online.
- Victoria Branch contributed significant funding to version 2 of the ABA mum2mum app, due for release in July 2020. The ABA mum2mum app is an informative tool supporting users with information according to their baby's age and development.

I'd like to thank the volunteers of Victoria Branch for their dedication and hard work this year. It is an honour to work with you.

Kathleen Mather
ABA Victoria Branch President



Western Australia Branch



The Western Australia Branch celebrated our 50th birthday in September 2019 with an extravagant gala dinner. Both past and present volunteers were invited and it was truly a memorable experience for everyone who attended.

We were fortunate to host the Health Professional Seminar series in Perth again this year and just managed to get this in as restrictions were coming into place due to COVID-19. The effects of COVID-19 were challenging for everyone. Mothers lost access to many services and face-to-face support networks. Our amazing volunteers continued to ensure that families were supported during this time. Volunteers from Western Australia worked in teams with volunteers from around the country, to ensure the fast development and delivery of the new online Breastfeeding Education Live program and online group get-togethers.

In the first half of 2020 we saw many people come forward with an interest in training to become a qualified breastfeeding counsellor or community educator. Our volunteer base in Western Australia still stands consistently more

than 100 volunteers strong. Our volunteers are located throughout the Perth metro region along and scattered throughout regional and remote areas of the state. This means that our Branch can provide much needed support to families who have less access to services in more populated areas.

This year has been a significant challenge and I am incredibly proud of the WA volunteers for giving so much extra time and care to support some of the most vulnerable people in our community — all while navigating the complexities of the COVID-19 impacts on their own personal circumstances and families. The WA team is a dedicated and amazing group of volunteers and it has been an honour to lead such a supportive team for the last 6 years.

Emma Hitchens
ABA Western Australia Branch President



Looking ahead

2019–2020 was the final year of the current strategic plan. Our work together to craft the new strategic plan continued throughout the year. The development of ABA's strategic plan for 2020–2022 is almost complete, with the final step being its approval by the Board early in the new financial year. The Strategic Plan 2020–2022 will include additional areas of focus, offering a renewed framework for the work of our Association:

1. **Breastfeeding peer support** — Provide mothers with practical mother-to-mother support and evidence-based information, enabling them to make informed decisions on their breastfeeding journey.
2. **Health professional education in breastfeeding** — Support health professionals in their work with mothers and families by providing evidence-based information and research on breastfeeding.
3. **Advocacy** — Strengthen advocacy by engaging with key decision makers within the community, government and other organisations.
4. **Community education** — Educate the Australian community to normalise breastfeeding and understand its importance.
5. **Public awareness and promotion of ABA** — Ensure the Australian Breastfeeding Association is known as an authoritative, well regarded organisation that proactively responds to the ongoing need for protection, support and promotion of breastfeeding.
6. **Organisational viability** — Provide for financial security and sustainability by diversifying income streams, protecting and increasing the real value of our financial assets, investing well and using our financial and people resources effectively.
7. **Training, education and resources** — Provide high quality and accessible training, education and resources to our volunteers, health professionals and the wider community to ensure skilled, knowledgeable and practical breastfeeding support for mothers.
8. **Governance and organisational development** — Develop a well governed, effectively managed, representative and accountable organisation that values and recognises the contributions of its people.



ABA branches, regions and groups

Branch	Region	Groups
ACT/NSW	ACT Southern NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bega-Valley • Canberra • Eurobodalla <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snowy Monaro • Wagga and Riverina
	Central Coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Coast
	Far North Coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lismore
	Holiday Coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coffs Coast • Hastings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manning-Great Lakes
	Homebush Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bankstown <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strathfield
	Inner Metropolitan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bondi Junction • Citywest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marrickville • Randwick
	Macarthur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camden-Wollondilly • South Western Sydney <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southern Highlands
	Nepean Blue Mountains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue Mountains <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hawkesbury-Nepean
	Newcastle/Hunter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake Macquarie • Lower Hunter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcastle • Upper Hunter
	North Shore/Warringah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern Sydney
	North West Metro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blacktown • Hornsby-Berowra <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hills
	Northern NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armidale <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tamworth
	Remote And Rural NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Far Western
	South Coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illawarra <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoalhaven
	Southern Metropolitan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sutherland Shire
Western	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bathurst • Dubbo • Lithgow <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mudgee • Orange • Parkes-Forbes 	
QLD	Capricornia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gladstone • QLD Correspondence Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rockhampton-Capricorn Coast
	Far North QLD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atherton Tablelands • Cairns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cassowary Coast
	Logan /Gold Coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gold Coast Central • Gold Coast North <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logan South-Scenic Rim • Springwood
	Mackay-Hinterland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mackay
	North Brisbane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspley • Everton <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gap-Bardon • Wavell Heights
	North Moreton Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Albany Creek-Caboolture and Surrounds
	South Brisbane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mt Gravatt • Redlands • Tarragindi <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West End • Wynnum
	Sunshine Coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunshine Coast
	Townsville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Townsville
	West Moreton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ipswich • Karana Downs-Bellbowrie • Kenmore • Sherwood and Surrounds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Springfield and Surrounds • Tenterfield-Granite Belt • Toowoomba
	Wide Bay / Burnett	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childers • Gympie • Hervey Bay <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kingaroy • Maryborough

Branch	Region	Groups
SA/NT	Central Metro	• Adelaide Central Metro • Le Fevre
	Flinders & Eyre	• Whyalla
	Hills	• Blackwood-Coromandel Valley • Mount Lofty District • Mount Barker and District
	Limestone Coast	• Lower Limestone Coast • Upper Limestone Coast
	Lower North	• Adelaide Northern Suburbs • Riverland
	Mid North	• Clare • Crystal Brook
	Northern Territory	• Alice Springs • Katherine • Darwin-Palmerston and Rural • Nhulunbuy
	Southern Region	• Onkaparinga and Fleurieu • South West Metro
TAS	Northern	• Burnie Wynyard • Tas Central Coast • Devonport
	Southern	• Hobart and Surrounds
VIC	Barwon	• Greater Geelong
	East Metro Vic	• Blackburn-Mitcham • Boroondara
	Gippsland	• Gippsland
	Goldfields	• Ballarat • Castlemaine and District • Bendigo
	Maroondah	• Knox • Yarra Valley and Surrounds • Ringwood
	Mornington Peninsula	• Mornington Peninsula
	Nepean	• Inner South East Melbourne
	Northern Victoria	• Murray
	Plenty Valley	• Banksia • Diamond Valley • Darebin
	South Eastern	• Casey-Cardinia • Dandenong Ranges • Dandenong • Waverley
	Tullamarine	• Inner Urban • Sunbury-Macedon • Pascoe-Hume
	Western Districts	• Hamilton • Warrnambool • Portland • Wimmera Mallee
	Westgate	• Western Melbourne
	WA	North Metropolitan
Outback		• Albany • Kalgoorlie-Boulder • Isolated Members North-West
South Metropolitan		• Applecross • South Eastern Suburbs • Rockingham • Southern Lakes
South West Coastal		• Capes • Warren-Blackwood
Wheatbelt		• Midwest and Wheatbelt



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