



# Annual report

2021-2022



Australian  
Breastfeeding  
Association

Our impact 2021-2022

 1976

breastfeeding education, information and support events run by local groups

 1666+

parents attending a local or online breastfeeding education class

 119

Accredited Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces


 2,000,130

website users



130 ABA local groups

Our impact 2021-2022 *continued*

 **66,737** calls to ABA's National Breastfeeding Helpline

 **5255** 'chats' received by ABA's real-time LiveChat service

 **765** trained volunteer breastfeeding counsellors and educators

 **236** trainee volunteer breastfeeding counsellors and educators

 **19,169** ABA professional website users

 **2355** health professionals engaged in ongoing education



October 2022  
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### Images

We thank the following photographers and contributors for the use of their images in this report.

**Monica Spillman** page 15 (two photographs)

**Pippa** page 28

**Sharnie** page 31

**Julia Moore** pages 45 (top left and bottom left), 46 (top right)



## President's report

This year has been a period of change and renewal with new projects and innovations being added to our Association's already impressive array of programs and services.

The pandemic still affects everything we do. ABA's volunteer breastfeeding counsellors and educators have done an amazing job of supporting mothers, their families and the community during this time. We continue to develop online meetings, webinars and resources to supplement our face-to-face activities. These will remain relevant as we are finding them invaluable to mothers in remote areas and those not yet confident in taking their young babies out into the community.

ABA paid staff and volunteers have needed to be adaptable and responsive to many changes such as lockdowns, social distancing, mask-wearing and vaccination requirements that have affected our face-to-face activities. With requirements varying between states and territories, it has taken a lot of time and effort to ensure all our events comply with government regulations.

The pandemic has started to take its toll on our volunteers, with a small decrease in the number of volunteers and trainees. Those who have remained have felt further pressure to keep supporting mothers while their own situations have become more stressful.

The Local Group Recovery and Revitalisation Roadmap is a national project designed to support ABA local groups. Together with a change in our local group priorities, this will provide resources to groups and take some pressure off our volunteers.

We are also looking at stemming a long-term decline in our ABA memberships by offering Digital First and tiered memberships with the launch of a new updated ABA website over the next few months. Thank you to all our current members whose fees help support our programs and services. We also have many members who volunteer in their local groups and beyond. Thank you to all who contribute to ABA in this way.

Our new website is currently being built and tested and will offer both the public and our ABA volunteers a more robust and easier to navigate site. The design is also really stunning! This is a huge project involving many hours of hard work by our Executive Officer Victoria Marshall-Cerins, senior managers and their teams, Alicia Ford and a large team of volunteers. Similarly we are also improving our mum2mum app, and together these will be valuable resources for mothers and others who need breastfeeding information and support.

ABA's core business is our mother-to-mother support. We are committed to

being inclusive and offering breastfeeding information and support to all who need it.

We reach out to specific groups with our Breastfeeding Community Mentoring and Deadly Dads courses, and with resources such as booklets translated into various languages, and our collaboration with Rainbow Families NSW for the LGBTQIA+ community. We are also in the early stages of setting up a Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee.

ABA offers health professional education with our annual Health Professional Seminar series continuing throughout the pandemic. The seminars have managed to avoid lockdowns and have continued with some face-to-face and some online sessions. We've been pleased to see very little change in the numbers of attendees.

ABA's diploma course, delivered online, and an expansion of online eLearning modules were also well received, and professional memberships have increased. I thank all those members for supporting our Association and for their commitment to breastfeeding.

During COVID-19, ABA's Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace (BFW) accreditation has been slow to attract new businesses, although renewals have remained steady. We anticipate an improvement in the uptake of new businesses, and one of the strategies in the

## President's report *continued*



*Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and Beyond*, launched by the federal government in 2019, is for all government departments to become BFW accredited.

An Advocacy Working Group was set up to support the enhancement of advocacy work by the Association and enable ABA volunteers to become involved. Victoria Marshall-Cerins, Susan Tawia, Sally Eldridge and I visited the Department of Health and various politicians in April. We received a very warm reception from everyone.

We have also started a WHO Code Taskforce to work towards a long-term plan of incorporating the full International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and its subsequent resolutions into Australian legislation.

With so much change this year, we started a series of Q&A webinars to communicate with our volunteers. These are held around every 6 weeks and give volunteers an avenue to ask questions of the ABA Board and management. This has been especially popular with the advent of our major website redevelopment.

As chair of ABA Board meetings, it is always a pleasure to work with such an interesting and talented team. The directors bring many skills and varied experience to the Board. We also work in close collaboration with Victoria Marshall-Cerins, our Executive

Officer, the National Support Office teams, branch presidents and others to make the decisions important to the viability, culture and wellbeing of our wonderful Association.

I would like to thank all our leaders at every level across the Association for their commitment and hard work, and in particular our branch and national leadership teams for their ongoing support for our volunteers and the work of the Association.

At the 27 November 2021 ABA Board meeting, we welcomed Leila Forde and Katie Cross to fill the positions left by Mary Peterson and Keith Anderson who completed their terms. Mary always brought different perspectives and insights and asked very pertinent questions, all of which are great assets on a board. Keith's skills in IT and his clear and logical thinking were also highly valued. I'd like to express a huge thank you to Mary and Keith and wish them well in their future endeavours.

Dominique Bougoure was appointed to the Board on 1 December 2021 to replace Erin Vlasveld who resigned on 7 July 2021. We wish Erin all the best and thank her for her many insights and skills. We also saw a change in Honorary Treasurer at the end of June 2022 with Dom taking over from Karin Collinson who ably undertook this role for 4 years. Dom will take over as treasurer from Karin on 1 July 2022.

On 17 February 2022, Fiona McClure finished her term as an appointed director and we welcomed Genevieve Finey as an appointed director to replace Fiona. Fiona brought many skills including her expertise in HR. We wish her all the best and thank Fiona for her contributions to the Board.

Daile Kelleher also finished her term as an appointed director on 17 February and the Board reappointed her for another two-year term. Daile brings great expertise to the Board and we're very pleased she is able to continue with us. Daile was appointed as Vice President in November and as part of the delegated three, Karin, Daile and I have continued to work closely with our Executive Officer, Victoria.

While I work most closely with the directors and management in my president role, I also see the invaluable work done by our ABA breastfeeding counsellors and educators in these crucial roles as well as in the many other roles they take on in the Association. This is incredibly impressive considering the huge changes the pandemic has thrown at us. ABA has been able to not only support and educate those who seek our breastfeeding expertise, but to expand our reach with our new innovative online programs.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank everyone, paid staff and volunteers alike, who have contributed to ABA over the past year.

**Margaret Grove, President**

## Board of directors

### Margaret Grove, President

*BA (Hons) Dip Ed MA Certificate IV in Breastfeeding Education Certificate IV in Training and Assessment*

Margaret Grove has been a breastfeeding counsellor since 1983. Her ABA roles over the years have included group leader, branch training manager and director.

Margaret was on the ABA Board from 2001 for 7 years, 3 as National President. She was then the community representative on the Advisory Panel for the Marketing in Australia of Infant Formula (APMAIF) from 2009 to 2013, before returning to the ABA Board in 2018 and has been President since 2019.

Margaret and husband Geoff have three children and three grandchildren, and during her non-ABA time she plays *taiko* (Japanese drums), enjoys Pilates, singing in choirs and writing engaging secondary school textbooks.

### Daile Kelleher, Vice President

In her professional life, Daile manages a not-for-profit focusing on women's health in Queensland.

Her governance experience includes committee membership in Ending Violence Against Women Queensland, ANROWS (Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety) Practitioner Engagement Group, and the Women's Health Services Alliance of Queensland.

Right: The ABA Board and the Executive Officer in February 2022. From left to right: Margaret Grove, Genevieve Finey, Louise Brown, Cate Uhe, Karin Collinson (on screen), Katie Cross, Daile Kelleher, Sally Eldridge, Executive Officer Victoria Marshall-Cerins, Leila Forde, Dominique Bougoure.

Daile has a happy and healthy breastfed baby who attends board meetings with her. She lives in Brisbane with her husband, two stepchildren, her baby and a very grumpy cat.

### Karin Collinson, Honorary Treasurer

*BCom MAdvTax CTA*

Karin has been an ABA Breastfeeding Counsellor since 1992. She has held many volunteer roles in the Association, including group leader, and presently is a trainer and assessor with ABA.

Before retiring, Karin's paid work positions included various senior leadership positions within the Australian Taxation Office. She holds a Bachelor of Commerce from UWA, a Masters of Advanced Taxation from UNSW and is a Chartered Tax Adviser with the Tax Institute.

Karin is a passionate advocate for breastfeeding and the need to provide support to parents and workplaces to encourage and increase breastfeeding rates.

### Cate Uhe, Honorary Secretary

*BSc (Hons) Grad Dip Ed Dip Business Management Dip Breastfeeding Management Cert IV in Training & Assessment Cert IV in Management (Frontline and Human Resources) Cert IV in Breastfeeding Education*

Cate has volunteered for ABA for over 30 years, across local, regional, branch, national and board levels, and within several states.



Cate has very 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.

### Dominique Bougoure

*MBus (Professional Accounting), BBus (Hons), CPA*

Dominique is a financial services professional with over 10 years experience in retail and investment banking in Australia and the United Kingdom.

She works closely with senior executives to develop and execute organisational strategy and successfully deliver key business priorities and goals. She is experienced in financial and business planning, management reporting, operating model design, communications and corporate governance.

Dominique was introduced to ABA through friends and family who have benefited from the Association's support and education services. She looks forward to contributing as a Board member and playing her part in the ongoing success of ABA, for the benefit of its members and volunteers.



## Board of directors *continued*

### Louise Brown

*BSc BDS Sc IBCLC Cert IV Breastfeeding Education*

Louise has been a member of ABA since 2002. She has held roles at local, regional and branch level. Apart from her professional knowledge, Louise also brings to the Board governance skills from serving on management committees.

She is passionate about the role ABA plays to ensure breastfeeding women and their families have access to support and evidence-based knowledge to guide them on their breastfeeding journeys.

### Katie Cross

*Member of ABA for 33 years, was a counsellor for 10 years.*

Currently working as a Maternal and Child Health Nurse in the outer suburbs of Melbourne.

When not at work Katie enjoys spending time with her grandchildren, running and following AFL football.

### Sally Eldridge

*BA Grad Cert Public Sector Administration Cert IV Breastfeeding Community Education*

Sally has been a breastfeeding educator and advocate for ABA since 2003. Leading the Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces program from 2003 to 2007, Sally oversaw its rebranding and growth, and contributed to ABA's campaign for paid

parental leave and the *Parliamentary Inquiry into Breastfeeding in Australia*.

Sally had a 32-year career in the Commonwealth Public Service in policy, program and case management roles across several states and overseas postings.

In addition to her board position, Sally contributes to the Advocacy Working Group and the Breastfeeding Friendly Environments programs. Sally lives in Canberra with her partner and has two adult children.

### Genevieve Finey

*MHealth Management, Grad Cert Diabetes Education, Grad Dip Midwifery, BHealthSc (Health Management), BNursing.*

Genevieve is a registered nurse currently on maternity leave from her position as a Clinical Midwife Manager.

In her professional role Genevieve has worked clinically providing care to women and their families through pregnancy and into their journey to parenthood.

Additionally, she has had experience in childbirth education, policy development, health service reform and human resource management including change management.

Genevieve has lived in Darwin since 2011 with her husband and her breastfeeding journey started in March 2021 with the birth of her daughter, Imogen.

Genevieve has always been a strong advocate for the Australian Breastfeeding Association and its services for women and health professionals. She is delighted to be a board member and to contribute to the Association she has admired for so long.

### Leila Forde

*Leila Forde (MA, BA(Hons)/Dip Ed, Grad Dip Counselling and Psychotherapy, Dip in Breastfeeding Management, IBCLC, Dip in VET, Cert IV in BE)*

Leila has been a breastfeeding counsellor for 31 years, and is also a breastfeeding educator, trainer and assessor and Learning Programs Manager. She has held a variety of roles in ABA including Group Leader, Regional Rep, and ACT NSW Branch Training Manager.

In her paid work, Leila is a counsellor and psychotherapist, IBCLC Lactation Consultant, and music teacher. She has previously been a secondary school teacher and university lecturer.

In her spare time, Leila enjoys playing the piano and walking her dog. She lives in Sydney with her husband, Kevin, and has two children and one grandchild.

Leila feels honoured to serve as a Director of ABA. She is committed to helping and empowering mothers to breastfeed and to creating a community where breastfeeding is valued and recognised as culturally normal.

## Executive Officer's summary

In 2019, the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments signed up to the *Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and Beyond* (ANBS), a landmark strategy designed to protect, promote, support and value breastfeeding in Australia. In the intervening period the COVID-19 pandemic required the diversion of resources by governments to manage the national emergency, and virtually no progress was made on strategy implementation during 2021–2022.

ABA however has already achieved much against the ANBS supported by our funding from the Department of Health for the National Breastfeeding Helpline and the ongoing education of health professionals. In our 2021–2022 Annual Report we showcase the impacts of our Commonwealth funded Helpline Services and health professional education initiatives, as well as our work and impact in so many of the other areas outlined in the ANBS.

The *Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and Beyond* is focused upon three priority areas. These are structural enablers; settings that enable breastfeeding; and individual enablers. ABA's impact in 2021–2022, reaches across all three priority areas in the support and promotion of breastfeeding.

### Structural enablers

In 2021–2022 ABA breastfeeding education supported more than 1660 parents as they

prepared for one of life's most significant transitions. With many health services' antenatal education programs still unavailable due to COVID-19 restrictions, our online Breastfeeding Education Live webinars continued to fill a gap and meet need during the first half of 2021–2022. As the lockdowns lifted, some ABA local groups were able to offer face-to-face Breastfeeding Education Classes once again. Baby Expos returned in a new COVID-Safe format, and ABA was able to raise awareness of key breastfeeding resources and supports with more than 65,000 expectant and new parents.

Community education activities were also able to resume again in the second half of 2021–2022, with ABA WA Branch's talks to 60 student midwives at Curtin and Edith Cowan Universities amongst the highlights.

Our two annual awareness raising campaigns, World Breastfeeding Week (August) and National Mothering Week (May) took on a heightened significance with the importance of breastfeeding in protecting the youngest members of our communities. Our hugely successful World Breastfeeding Week social campaign, 'A Shared Responsibility' reached more than 680,000 people with one post alone. National Mothering Week focused upon how to support the mums in our lives, particularly during the challenging times of the pandemic and devastating local floods.

## ANBS priority areas

### 1 Structural enablers

- 1.1 Community education and awareness
- 1.2 Prevent inappropriate marketing of breastmilk substitutes
- 1.3 Policy coordination, monitoring, research and evaluation
- 1.4 Dietary guidelines and growth charts

### 2 Settings that enable breastfeeding

- 2.1 Baby Friendly Health Initiative
- 2.2 Health professionals' education and training
- 2.3 Breastfeeding-friendly environments
- 2.4 Milk banks

### 3 Individual enablers

- 3.1 Universal access to breastfeeding support services
- 3.2 Breastfeeding support for priority groups

Source: *Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and Beyond* (ANBS)

The ANBS has a strong focus upon the prevention of inappropriate marketing of breastmilk substitutes. In 2021–2022, ABA launched the WHO Code Taskforce project with the bold goal of seeking the full legislation of the WHO Code into Australian law.

### Settings that enable breastfeeding

Our 2022 Health Professional Seminar series, *A thirst for knowledge* was offered in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth with 846 in-person and online attendees.

Our Diploma of Breastfeeding Management course was re-accredited in 2021–2022 and the online delivery format enabled learners from all parts of Australia and beyond to engage. The Diploma continues to build on the

## Executive Officer's summary *continued*



breastfeeding management skills of health professionals to enable them to support breastfeeding mums more effectively.

ABA offered 10 online workshops over the year, allowing health professionals from anywhere around Australia to upgrade their skills in lactation management and earn professional development points. ABA's eLearning modules were also highly regarded in 2021-2022, so much so that ABA won an international contract to develop a series of eLearning modules for the World Health Organization's WHO Code.

The ANBS recommends that all Commonwealth, State and Territory government departments seek accreditation via ABA's Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces program. As workplace restrictions eased interest in the program grew. In October 2021, BFW launched an online platform enabling organisations to have easier access to BFW resources and information for becoming accredited.

In 2021-2022, ABA's Breastfeeding Welcome Here (BWH) program continued to work to improve community support of breastfeeding in public. BWH encourages community venues to self-identify as welcoming of breastfeeding women and babies. Breastfeeding Welcome Here venues can be anything from a cafe to a hairdresser, community centre or public library.

### Individual enablers

Our essential 24-hour a day, 7-day a week National Breastfeeding Helpline achieved a 95% satisfaction rate from callers in 2021-2022. Over 66,700 mothers and their support people called the National Breastfeeding Helpline in 2021-2022. Our annual caller survey indicated that 21.5% of callers felt that they may have stopped breastfeeding without their call to the Breastfeeding Helpline. Our real-time messaging service LiveChat was similarly valued by users in 2021-2022. With a 94% satisfaction rate, users indicated that their chat with an ABA breastfeeding educator or counsellor supported their mental health and wellbeing as well as assisting with their breastfeeding query.

The *Breastfeeding ... with ABA* podcast went from strength to strength in 2021-2022, with eight new podcast episodes released accompanied by five related blogs. The podcasts now regularly chart highly in the iTunes 'Kids & Family' category and received more than 59,417 plays this year.

ABA's breast pump hire service is delivered by 153 volunteer ABA breast pump hire officers (BPHOs) around Australia and this important service continued using COVID-Safe measures and contactless service throughout 2021-2022. This was just one of the important local services offered by ABA's local groups in 2021-2022, who provide the

cornerstone of ABA's community peer-support for local families. ABA's 130 local groups delivered 1976 breastfeeding education, information and support events in 2021-2022, maintaining community supports and connections when so many new parents were isolated due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The Northern Territory saw the first Deadly Dads workshop in 2021. In the form of a 'Train the Trainer' session, the hands-on workshop was delivered to key elders in the NT community. Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic impacted opportunities for in-person community activity, ABA used the opportunity to successfully re-accredit our 10961NAT Course in Community Breastfeeding Mentoring, designed to raise the capacity of community health workers to support and promote breastfeeding within priority groups.

The COVID-19 pandemic created significant challenges for volunteer organisations in 2021-2022 and yet our Association rose to meet these challenges for a second year. Through difficult times and good, our generous and committed volunteers, staff and Board members dug deep to be there for mothers and their families. I acknowledge their extraordinary contribution to the community, to the Association and to the breastfeeding journeys of Australia's mothers and babies. Thank you as always for all that you do.

**Victoria Marshall-Cerins, Executive Officer**

# Structural enablers

‘Great session, knowledgeable and candid answers, wonderful hosts and engaging presenters. And guest mum and Bub.’  
**Erin, VIC, BEL participant**

‘Thanks for this helpful session. I found it engaging and informative and enjoyed listening to the two presenters and the Q&A mum.’  
**Emily, ACT, BEL participant**

## Breastfeeding Education Classes (BEC)

In the second half of 2021, ABA’s face-to-face Breastfeeding Education Classes were only able to run at a very limited capacity due to pandemic restrictions. With these easing in 2022, ABA’s local groups were able to recommence face-to-face classes with greater capacity. This was warmly welcomed, especially for states such as Victoria which were significantly disadvantaged by the restrictions.

With much appreciated support from ABA’s amazing breastfeeding counsellors and educators, Breastfeeding Education Classes have been able to run seamlessly in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia. As always, the classes have been delightfully received and have helped expectant parents across Australia prepare for the nitty-gritties of breastfeeding and becoming a new parent.



95

local breastfeeding education classes held across Australia

‘We learnt SO much! We left with a great toolkit and the confidence to spot and solve our minor breastfeeding issues! Knowing that high-quality 24/7 support was waiting for us was so reassuring – we didn’t need it, but I loved knowing it was there!’  
**Alice, Blue Mountains**



## Breastfeeding Education Live (BEL)

Despite the challenges faced with accessing antenatal services due to COVID-19, ABA continued to meet the needs of expectant parents by offering online antenatal breastfeeding education throughout 2021 and 2022.

ABA's Breastfeeding Education Live (BEL) sessions were extremely well received throughout the year, with most workshops nearly reaching booking capacity. Sessions were held every Saturday afternoon, and additional midweek evening workshops were scheduled to sustain the growing demand. The increased availability of BELs meant expectant parents were able to attend a session that suited their busy schedules, even if that meant showing up at the last minute.

The mountain of support from ABA's dedicated breastfeeding counsellors and educators enabled ABA to deliver 61 Breastfeeding Education Live sessions in the last year, helping 569 expectant parents to prepare for the avalanche of practicalities of becoming a new parent.

Throughout the year, ABA also facilitated specialised BEL sessions for expectant parents from the LGBTQIA+ community, and those expecting multiples. Participants from these sessions appreciated having the opportunity to attend a workshop that was tailored to

their specific situation and connect with other families who share similar needs.

Feedback confirmed that breastfeeding knowledge and confidence amongst expectant mums increases significantly after attending a Breastfeeding Education Live session. ABA looks forward to supporting many more expectant parents and witnessing a rise in breastfeeding knowledge and confidence across Australia, now and in years to come.

### Breastfeeding Education Live in Tasmania

In Tasmania, expectant parents can prepare for breastfeeding with ABA's Breastfeeding Education Live - which is especially relevant due to Tasmania's regional, low-density population. In Tasmania, ABA groups are refunding the cost of attending to members. Donna, an existing member of Burnie Wynyard Group, said: 'it was fabulous to attend this breastfeeding webinar session online! Having another child and being very pregnant we found it convenient and so safe to do breastfeeding education from home, and we received some of the most helpful breastfeeding and parenting tips I've ever been given. The session made me feel I could do it, like I would succeed.'



569

expectant parents attended  
Breastfeeding Education Live

'I always leave a BEL feeling inspired. Educating expectant parents is a totally different experience to any other ways I am involved with ABA. It's so special to be the person to present information, answer their questions and really make sure they are starting their parenting journey with warm, welcoming support.'

'I also love working with and supporting our trainees and other main presenters that are doing BELs for the first time. Watching someone who is nervous begin to relax into a session, show their kind personalities, and connect with the parents is a real pleasure to be witness to.'

'A BEL is often one of the first introductions expectant parents have to ABA, and I feel a great sense of pride being the face to welcome and encourage them.'

**Grace, BEL Tech Host**

## Local community education and awareness raising

### Resources for local groups

Over the year, as ABA branding evolved into a new aesthetic, so did several of the volunteer and community education resources and programs. Significant investment was put into resourcing ABA's volunteer and breastfeeding education programs.

In preparation for the launch of the new website, an abundance of resources and presentations were developed for use in the community by ABA volunteers. This included standard and customised presentations for use at exhibitions with health professionals, early childhood education and care workers, and potential volunteer breastfeeding counsellors and educators. In addition, all resources for

'WOW you have put so much work into this presentation and pulled it into the 21st century, thank you!'

'Thank you again for all the work you do with ABA and especially for me given the tight turn around. I feel very professional giving this presentation.'

**Feedback from ABA volunteers who used a presentation**

the Community Breastfeeding Mentoring programs were updated and revamped.

### Positive social media breastfeeding stories

ABA's nationally coordinated social accounts continued to strengthen. The standout performer for the year was Instagram, with Facebook also performing very well. ABA's Facebook content reached 2,570,926 accounts across the year, more than double that of 2020-2021, and maintained a stable audience base of 119,771. While the extraordinarily successful World Breastfeeding Week 2021 posts bolstered these results, ABA's Facebook reach was up an average of 60% every month throughout the year, attributed to strong copywriting and coordination of ABA's volunteer Social Media Team.

ABA's Instagram engagement has experienced significant growth, to achieve 1,986,824 impressions for the year – from an audience base of 35,670 and counting. For Instagram to achieve 77% of the exposure from an audience 29% of the size of Facebook, this highlights the growing capability and significant opportunity for ABA to be communicating with pregnant and new parents via this channel. ABA's total reach within Instagram was comparable to the size of its full audience every month – an impressive

achievement without any sponsored posts or other advertising investments. Tailored content creation and audience growth strategies will be employed to continue growing this vital engagement channel.

### Student midwife talks

The Western Australia (WA) Branch placed a strong focus on community education in the healthcare sector this year, delivering a number of talks to student midwives alongside the Health Professional Seminar in March. The breastfeeding education for midwives was delivered across five talks at two Perth Universities (Edith Cowan University and Curtin University) to over 60 student midwives and was very well received. Curtin University kindly allowed students from other Universities to attend the talk hosted there in May, which increased the reach further. Of the student midwives surveyed, 80% said they were highly likely to use ABA's Health Professional resources in their practice and studies after the session and 96% said they were now extremely likely to refer families to ABA in their future practice. The WA Branch has also established a Health and Promotion Advocacy Working Group, who are working to build partnerships and connections with the local healthcare community.

Local community education and awareness raising *continued*

What did you learn today that you would like to remember from the session?

*'Midwives are fundamental in breastfeeding planning with mothers not for mothers. Steph's testimonial was so valuable for me, giving me a lot of good clues to help mothers in the future.'*

*'That breastfeeding is an emotional journey and to keep this in mind when supporting a woman, particularly when the baby is being cared for in the NICU. I will also remember baby led attachment and tips for promoting the let-down reflex.'*

**General feedback**

*'This session was amazing at providing me with the support services ABA offer to women and healthcare professionals.'*

*'Thank you for a valuable, informative session! Great, warm, lovely, knowledgeable presenters!'*

*'Great session, so many valuable tips going into midwifery.'*

*'Excellent course with an amazing amount of content.'*

**Student midwife talks attendee feedback**



**A volunteer's story:**

**Student midwife talks**

As a volunteer, presenting to student midwives at Curtin University and Edith Cowan University in WA has been such a fulfilling experience. The students are keen learners and show an enthusiasm to the way they can help support their mothers and babies with breastfeeding. Our focus on multi-dimensional breastfeeding support throughout the presentation, ABA as the peer support and the healthcare professionals providing medical care, helped students reflect on their role to educate, support and empower breastfeeding within our society alongside the work of the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

**Julia Moore, Breastfeeding Educator**

Above: Breastfeeding Education for Midwives talk in May at Curtin University. Photo of speaker Alisya Johar holding baby Riley, and demo mum and trainee Shona Macskasy.



Trainee Emily Koch and baby Oakley at Perth Baby and Children's Market, November 2021

**Perth Baby and Children's Markets**

Building upon an established relationship with event organisers, ABA volunteers engaged with the community at the Perth Baby and Children's Markets. The event again provided parents with breastfeeding support and information, with upwards of 12 people counselled per market. One mother mentioned she 'only breastfed for 6 weeks'. By the end of the conversation, she was celebrating this as a milestone rather than a failure.

A pair of health professionals came to collect magnets, brochures and information on the latest ABA services for a private antenatal class they were providing the following day.

A father came specifically to ask about the ABA podcast and how to access the episodes.



**65,716+**

**expectant and new parents reached at 9 baby expos across Australia**

## National campaigns

### World Breastfeeding Week 2021

As World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) started on 2 August, more than half of Australian families were in lockdown due to COVID-19 restrictions, with that number rising significantly by the end of the week. With the health benefits of breastfeeding to build an infant's immunity against respiratory illnesses well known, this year's WBW's theme: 'A Shared Responsibility' took on a heightened focus, to protect the very youngest in our communities through breastfeeding.

The Northern Territory Katherine Group was able to hold their WBW events within the local maternity ward, with dozens of attendees including doctors, nurses and dads connecting, sharing cake and collectively building the 'breastfeeding village' that is so important to support new mums.

The Canberra Group hosted a WBW high tea, where new parents were able to relax and enjoy a warm beverage and delicious



treats, connecting with members who have been part of ABA for 30+ years!

Masked Chat & Play (outdoor) meetings and artfully socially-distanced breastfeeding photoshoots featured heavily in this year's WBW celebrations, highlighting ABA's always adaptable and pragmatic approach!

ABA broke the internet (somewhat) with our WBW social campaign, with one post alone reaching more than 680,000 people, eclipsing all prior engagement records: our 'My husband is my greatest supporter' post, showing a partner providing attentive support with breast pump set up. We thank Ella Elpalmerr once again for sharing such a powerful image with us.

### National Mothering Week 2022: Nourishing the Mother

National Mothering Week 2022 (2 to 8 May) occurred as many communities were still recovering from devastating floods, the COVID pandemic and extended periods of home-schooling. ABA felt it vital for mums to have access to additional supports in 2022!

Throughout March and April ABA surveyed almost 500 mums to hear exactly what kinds of nourishment and support worked well for them, and that they received or wanted more of, as they became mothers.



Sutherland Shire Group's mothers' brunch

During National Mothering Week itself, dozens of wonderful events were run by ABA's local groups, honouring motherhood and giving mums an opportunity for connection.

The Wagga and Riverina Groups were pleased to return to indoor events, with mums hearing from a local nutritionist explaining the importance (and practicalities) of 'filling your cup'. As the older children delighted in exploring the indoor gymnasium, she gave some ideas for healthy, family-friendly snack and meal ideas, with mums able to enjoy their warm beverage in its entirety and a nourishing (and cute) cookie treat just for them.

The Port Macquarie Group held a 'Mumma Mingle' event, while the Sutherland Shire/St George Group held a mothers' brunch at Cronulla RSL, shouting mums lunch and coffee so they could relax and make new connections.

Further north, the Townsville Group's newest volunteer Margriet put up an impressive National Mothering Week display at the local library. Meanwhile, the Gladstone Group celebrated with a well-attended mums and bubs yoga event.



National campaigns *continued*

What did we uncover for National Mothering Week?

**Mums felt only somewhat supported (6/10)**

**The best ways for a partner or main support person to help a new mum included:**

Cooking/providing food 73%

Taking leave from work to support in the early weeks/months 70%

Thanking her/regularly tell her she's doing a great job 56%

Learning about breastfeeding & early parenting topics pre-birth 45%

**Mums were desperate for the following societal, community and professional supports:**

Increased/affordable access to clinical services (eg lactation consultants, paediatricians) 79%

Increased education for midwives and GPs about breastfeeding 77%

Longer paid maternity leave provisions 77%

More/accessible antenatal supports/follow-up sessions 67%



Port Macquarie Group's 'Mumma Mingle'



## WHO Code Taskforce project

In September of 2021, ABA embarked on an exciting and timely advocacy endeavour, the WHO Code Taskforce project. The end goal of the project is to see full legislation of the Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and the subsequent World Health Assembly resolutions. Having provisions of The WHO Code enshrined in law is an important step towards protecting mothers, babies and breastfeeding in Australia. Mothers deserve to have access to information regarding infant feeding that is unbiased. Formula companies have multi-million-dollar budgets to promote their products and position their brands as superior, when our Food Standards law stipulates that all formula products must merely meet the required standards. Any ingredient found to be useful for a baby's nutrition must be in all formulas.

The call for strengthening of formula marketing regulations is in no way a call to remove these products from sale or to demonise them. It is about protecting families from unscrupulous advertising.

A steering group was formed with key experts from Australia and around the world including Mr David Clarke, Assoc Prof Julie Smith, Dr Jennifer Hocking, Dr Nisha Khot, and Emeritus Prof Jane Scott (Chair).

ABA has embarked on a community education campaign both internally

and externally and now moved on to connecting with key external stakeholders.

This is a long-term project that ties in well with global movements, in particular from the World Health Organization, to increase legislation and drive awareness of the impact of digital marketing by formula companies.

### Campaign mission

Achieve legislation of the WHO Code in full including strong reporting, adequate penalties and comprehensive funding to enable enforcement.

### Campaign pillars

**Awareness** - Improve awareness of the WHO Code and the implications on public health for failing to legislate and enforce the Code - *12 to 18 months*

**Action** - Generate a political will for change through significant pressure from the general public, healthcare workers and professional bodies - *6 months to 4 years*

**Change** - Influence the creation and implementation of legislative change - *2 to 8 years*



'This project is crucial if we are going to successfully prevent commercial interests from influencing parental decisions on baby feeding thus affecting long-term health outcomes.'

**Dr Nisha Khot, MBBS FRCOG FRANZCOG AFRACMA | Clinical Director, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Peninsula Health**



'Lack of proper Code implementation and enforcement leaves Australian families vulnerable to the unscrupulous and manipulative marketing of the commercial baby milk industry. It also prevents women from exercising their right to make an informed decision about how they feed their babies.'

**Mr David Clarke, International public health and human rights lawyer, former Legal Adviser to UNICEF's global nutrition programme**



'This project is important to tackle the inadequacies of the current MAIF agreement which does not cover the actions of non-signatories and retailers, nor does it adequately address issues associated with promotion of formula via social media.'

**Em Prof Jane Scott, PhD MPH Grad Dip Diet BApplSc FDAA | Australian Breastfeeding Association Taskforce Steering Committee Chair and Research Professor in Nutrition and Dietetics in the School of Population Health at Curtin University**



## Collaborations and submissions

### Collaborations

ABA is a key stakeholder on the LifeBlood Milk advisory board. This advisory board is made up of clinicians, microbiologists, researchers, lab technicians, and consumer representatives. Meetings are held 2 to 3 times per year for feedback on guideline changes, updates on research and discussion around general issues regarding donor human milk collection, donations and use.

ABA is happy to continue as a 'core team' member in the Australian team of the World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative. We have contributed to the second assessment of Australia. The first assessment was completed in 2018 prior to the launch of the Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy 2019, so we are looking forward to seeing how Australia's score may have progressed since then.

In May 2022, ABA participated in the Australian College of Midwives 'Working with Women' series of webinars sharing with midwives how ABA and midwives can work together to support mothers to reach their breastfeeding goals.

ABA's partnership with the School of Midwifery, Nursing and Paramedicine at the Australian Catholic University (Melbourne campus) has continued. Joint initiatives to support student midwives include an ABA portal on the university intranet, extensive

awareness-raising with students of ABA's services, sharing research project topics and engaging students to strengthen their knowledge in the field of lactation. In 2021 ABA provided a graduation prize to a student who had shown commitment to her education in breastfeeding and supporting mums.

Students are kept up to date with the full breadth of development and changes in ABA's programs and initiatives.

They can pass this information on to the women they support in the Continuity Program of the course as well as those they care for on clinical placements.

Students are encouraged to join ABA as professional members to take advantage of the current and evidence-based information and opportunities for professional development.

Students who are also ABA breastfeeding counsellors have the opportunity to share their experience with other students.

In future we hope to collaborate in opportunities for breastfeeding research, supervision of higher degree students and public advocacy for breastfeeding mothers and babies.

### Submissions

Preparing evidence-based submissions to consultations is critical to ABA's advocacy



'The affiliation agreement between ABA and ACU means we are working together to prepare our Bachelor of Midwifery students for excellence in the provision of breastfeeding support.'

**Dr Jennifer Hocking, BA BN GradDipMid MMid PhD RN RM, Bachelor of Midwifery Course Coordinator & Lecturer**

work. The Breastfeeding Information and Research (BIR) team and the Advocacy Working Group made five submissions on behalf of ABA in 2021-2022:

- Review of the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012
- Review of the Maternity Leave (Commonwealth Employees) Act 1973
- Australian Parliamentary Enquiry into the *Provision of general practitioner and related primary health services to outer metropolitan, rural, and regional Australians*.
- Two consultations by Food Standards of Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) re: Proposal PI028 which aims to revise and clarify standards relating to infant formula comprising category definitions, composition, labelling and representation of products.

## Research

The Breastfeeding Information and Research (BIR) team is focussing on evaluating ABA services and presenting the research results at health professional conferences. BIR team members attended the Lactation Consultants of Australia and New Zealand (LCANZ) conference in May and made two oral presentations: 'Why do tens of thousands of mothers call the National Breastfeeding Helpline each year?' and 'The Australian Breastfeeding Association's response to new mothers and breastfeeding women during emergencies in Australia'.

The BIR team facilitates research into human lactation and breastfeeding by assisting external researchers to recruit participants for their research projects. Research assistance can include posts on ABA's social media platforms, inclusion in branch newsletters and permission to approach ABA local support groups directly. In 2021–2022, ABA approved and provided support for six external research projects, ranging from: 'Motherhood, discrimination and job loss' to 'Constructing parenthood in digital spaces'.

### Community Protection for Infants and Young Children in Bushfires Project

ABA was awarded \$684,000 under the highly-competitive Commonwealth's *Preparing Australian Communities - Local Stream* grant program, which aims to improve the

long-term resilience of Australian communities to natural hazards. This grant will fund the *Community Protection for Infants and Young Children in Bushfire Emergencies Project*, which will run until November 2024. The project will firstly establish an evidence-base for planning for infants and young children in bushfires. The development of resources to

support emergency responders and parents will follow. Organisations and individuals in Eurobodalla Shire (NSW) will also be supported to develop bushfire plans for infants and young children. The project has strong support from the local community and will also have broader benefit to families with infants and young children across Australia.



# Settings that enable breastfeeding

'Being a student of ABA was a longstanding dream for me. Every single person from ABA has shown the highest of human qualities and have been inspirational.'

**Diploma graduate**

## Diploma course

ABA was pleased to achieve re-accreditation for the 10960NAT Diploma of Breastfeeding Management in 2021-2022. With one slight change to the course code, the content remained the same and evidently just as relevant and engaging, as it saw a new cohort join a growing pool of ABA qualified lactation experts. The Diploma continues to build on the breastfeeding management skills of health professionals to enable them to support breastfeeding mums more effectively. This year's learners came from a vast span of professions, from midwives, nurses, and general practitioners, to physiotherapists, dietitians, speech pathologists, chiropractors, and occupational therapists.

Learners tuned in from all parts of Australia, including metropolitan, regional, and remote areas. ABA was especially excited to add offshore delivery of the Diploma to its scope and is now able to have learners complete the course from New Zealand and Singapore! The course was again delivered in an online format using virtual workshops, the Learning Management System, and individualised support for learners.

Feedback showed that health professionals valued gaining theoretical knowledge and evidence-based strategies for management of breastfeeding issues that they can go on to use in their clinical practice. ABA was once again proud to have highly knowledgeable and

'The unit content and presentation were comprehensive. Good selection of reading materials. It would be great if all learners could use this unit to increase awareness and advocacy for environmental support.'

**Diploma enrollee**

skilled internal and external guest speakers who eagerly facilitated this year's workshops.

## Health professional workshops

ABA saw 10 online workshops delivered over the year, allowing health professionals from anywhere around Australia to upgrade their skills in lactation management and earn professional development points. However, with growing pressures on health professionals over the reporting period, registration rates were lower. There were 94 registrations, with 27 of those not enrolled in courses with ABA. Over the year, workshop participants maintained access to the Learning Management System where they could retrieve recordings of the workshops and other resources. *Take lactation histories and conduct breastfeeding assessments* and *Manage breastfeeding situations and problems* continued to be the most popular workshops this year.

## 2022 Health Professional Seminar Series

In 2022, ABA once again managed to circumvent the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic to successfully deliver the Annual Health Professional Seminar Series, face-to-face, in four states. It was particularly fortunate that Western Australia's border reopened one week prior to the commencement of the series.

*Breastfeeding: A thirst for knowledge* was very well received by delegates at all four venues in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, and Perth, and those who tuned in online. This year's online webinar program obtained the highest number of participants out of all ABA's Health Professional Seminar Series, as around the time of the series, several employers were discouraging staff from attending face-to-face conventions. Nevertheless, technology enabled ABA to reach more health professionals in an online format than previous years and ensured convenience and accessibility for everyone.

The presenter line-up for the series included an array of state-wide and international

**'The ability to join the conference online was incredibly flexible. A great selection of speakers & fantastic networking opportunities.'**  
**2022 Seminar delegate**



825

in-person attendees registered

health experts from backgrounds in infant psychiatry, diabetes, social work, research science, microbial ecology, nutrition and food safety, pharmacology, and of course breastfeeding and lactation. A noteworthy mention to Associate Professor Campbell Paul, Dr Katherine Carroll, Dr Treasure McGuire, Dr Debbie Noble-Carr, Dr Lisa Stinson, Dr Nina Chad, Dr Susan Tawia, Gina Kennard, Brianna Myors and Gemma MacDonald, for devoting their time and expertise to the delegation of health professionals in attendance. All speakers received overwhelmingly positive feedback, with over 80% of attendees evaluating the presenters and their content as excellent or very good.

Feedback from the series indicated attendees appreciated the high level of organisation and planning that was put into the event. ABA is excited to see what next year's seminar series brings.



**'The ABA Health Professional program is always fantastic to keep abreast with current evidence-based research. The program always has excellent keynote speakers and relevant content to clinical practice.'**  
**2022 Seminar delegate**



### Attendance statistics

Brisbane	112
Melbourne	187
Perth	72
Sydney	114
Total	825
Online registrations only	340*

\*7% increase from previous year

## eLearning modules and resources for health professionals

### eLearning modules

ABA's eLearning modules were highly regarded in 2021-2022, so much so that ABA won an international contract to develop a series of eLearning modules for the World Health Organization's WHO Code. The modules will be available internationally and will be offered by the WHO as their official eTraining on the Code.

ABA's range of eLearning modules in the store expanded over the year to include



21

eLearning modules now available



1006

participants from 37 countries accessed 1506 eLearning modules

21 different modules. They cover a broad spectrum of breastfeeding topics that learners find interesting, engaging, and relevant to the current world. No matter your health profession, there is an eModule for you! Topics range from breastfeeding counselling skills, impacts of tattoos and cosmetic injectables on breastfeeding, fathers' roles in breastfeeding, COVID-19 vaccination and breastfeeding, and wellbeing and self-care.

All presenters of the eModules are highly knowledgeable and skilled experts in their fields, and once again in 2021-2022, the eModules were praised by participants. Over the year they were accessed by 1006 participants from 37 countries, who completed 1506 modules - that's over 2000 hours of health professional education!

'Structure and function of the breast was a good module and a great refresher.'

Professional member

### Resources for health professionals

Members enjoy a monthly digital newsletter providing access to a feature article on an interesting breastfeeding topic. They are invited to peruse the full back-catalogue of our peer-reviewed journal, *Breastfeeding Review*, at their convenience. The ABA professionals website hosts an extensive searchable library of research summaries which is expanded each month, providing members with a concise overview of the latest research in lactation. Over 60 copies of ABA's respected textbook, *Breastfeeding Management in Australia* (5th edition), were also purchased in 2021-2022.





## Professional website

Our professional website is a central repository for health professionals to access worldclass resources and professional development opportunities that enable them to engage in best-practice breastfeeding support for mothers and families. Our total professional member-base grew to 764 in 2021-2022.

Although visitors to the site are modest (around 5000 individual users per quarter), they arrive from far and wide (with the UK, USA, and Canada in the top five countries) and typically spend time delving into the available resources. Fact sheets continue to be the most popular pages visited, with our one-of-a-kind eLearning Modules, Resources and *Breastfeeding Review* also featuring in the top 10 most visited pages.

### Fact sheets

Fact sheets on topics related to breastfeeding are available for instant download to all users of the website, including members and the wider public. In 2021-2022, there were 12 new or revised fact sheets published on lactation topics relevant to health professionals, including tongue-tie, COVID-19, alcohol, medications and fertility. The three most frequently downloaded titles were *Night-waking of infants and toddlers*, *Tongue-tie*, and *Positioning and attachment*, reflecting the common concerns of many parents.

### Breastfeeding Review

*Breastfeeding Review*, ABA's peer-reviewed academic journal, publishes original research, case studies, reviews, letters, commentaries and discussions. In 2021-2022, original research papers were published from research groups in Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Portugal and the United States.

ABA's Mary Paton Research Award 2021 winning research paper was published in the March 2022 edition: *'It was a shared duty': bereaved fathers' perspectives*,

*experiences and practices in relation to their partner's lactation after infant death* by Debbie Noble-Carr and her colleagues from the Australian National University.

Two case studies were written by members of ABA's Breastfeeding Information and Research (BIR) team: *'Exclusive expressing: a woman who achieved an abundant supply'*, and *'A mother's experience of tongue-tie diagnosis and management: her concerns and lessons for others'*.



## Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces

In 2021–2022, the pandemic and continuing lockdowns did not stop ABA’s Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace (BFW) program from supporting women combining breastfeeding and employment. Over the year, the BFW program saw an increase in the number of organisations submitting an expression of interest for becoming accredited, 26% more than the previous year. With workplace restrictions easing and many workers returning to the office, there is growing



117

accredited Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces



38

organisations achieving ‘Best Practice’ standard.

interest among organisations to become breastfeeding-friendly accredited.

The BFW program had 117 organisations become accredited with 28 organisations still in the accreditation process. Of the 117 accredited organisations, 33% have achieved ‘Best Practice’ standards by enabling exceptional work options with lactation breaks, private and comfortable spaces for women to breastfeed and express, and an embedded breastfeeding-friendly culture within the workplace.

### Accredited Organisation Expansion

In early 2022, Peninsula Health expanded its BFW accreditation to all its worksites across the region. It gained initial accreditation in 2009 at the Frankston Public Hospital but made the choice to expand and now supports a further 7000 employees and 750 volunteers.

### BFW eToolkit

In October 2021, BFW launched an online platform enabling organisations to have easier access to BFW resources and information for becoming accredited. The eToolkit includes solutions to common problems and provides templates to help make the accreditation process more straightforward.



## Breastfeeding Welcome Here (BWH) and Baby Care (BCR) Room Awards

In 2021–2022, ABA's Breastfeeding Welcome Here (BWH) program continued with the objective of improving community support of breastfeeding in public. BWH encourages community venues to self-identify as welcoming of breastfeeding women and babies. Breastfeeding Welcome Here venues can be anything from a cafe to a hairdresser, community centre or public library.

Over the year, a review was conducted on both BWH and BCR initiatives to align all Breastfeeding Friendly Environment programs with the same values as BFW: **time**, **space**, and **supportive culture**. Over the year, BWH venues were contacted to identify whether they would like to continue as Breastfeeding Welcome Here locations and have their contact details updated for the new website.



# Individual enablers

'Such a relief to have this service available. At a time when emotions are running high and we're all feeling sleep deprived and a little lost, this service is a blessing! THANK YOU!!'

**Natalija, Helpline caller**

## A caller's story



'I had a fantastic call with one of your volunteer breastfeeding counsellors. In this current COVID climate it can be so difficult to see a GP, and having a service like the ABA Helpline is invaluable for mums, especially new mums like myself. I was actually quite nervous to call, however my call was answered promptly and the volunteer was extremely helpful with her advice. I felt heard, supported and reassured in my breastfeeding inquiry. To have received such a friendly understanding voice on the other end of the phone helping me with my problem just truly made me feel 100% better and so supported. I was provided with lots of information in a really easy to understand way. I will definitely be using this service again.'

**Pippa, Helpline caller**

## Breastfeeding Helpline

Throughout the 2021-2022 year, 489 trained peer-to-peer breastfeeding counsellors each volunteered an average of 49 hours of their time to support mums, families and health professionals via ABA's National Breastfeeding Helpline.

ABA's 2022 survey of callers to the National Breastfeeding Helpline indicated that 97% of all calls were made by mothers with one child (73%). Most often these mothers were aged between 30 and 34 years (40%) and calling about their baby who was between 2 and 4 months of age (19%).

89.5% of callers were from metropolitan areas across the country with the remaining 10.5% from remote and rural Australia.

The National Breastfeeding Helpline continues to support mums, babies,

'Fantastic service. I feel a lot more empowered now and feel like I have more strategies under my belt to help when things get hard.'

**Lucy, Helpline caller**

families and health professionals, with a 95% satisfaction rate (2021-2022 National Breastfeeding Helpline Services survey).

Of the callers, 97% would recommend the Breastfeeding Helpline to others; 90% noted that their call helped them to continue breastfeeding; and 79% said the support that they received actually helped to resolve their issue or concern.

If the Breastfeeding Helpline was not available, 21.5% of callers said that they may have stopped breastfeeding altogether, and 42% of callers noted that they would have needed to access medical support without the free call service being available to them from the comfort of their own homes.

After the call, 73% felt more determined to continue breastfeeding, and 81% felt

**Breastfeeding Helpline** *continued*

more knowledgeable. A mother’s wellbeing was also well supported through their call to the Breastfeeding Helpline with 87% saying that the call left them feeling less worried and 85% feeling less stressed.

The support provided by volunteers was highly rated with 95% stating that the volunteer empathised with them and 97% of callers saying the volunteer was welcoming and approachable.

‘The volunteer that helped me was so empathetic, listened and really tried to reassure me as she supported me in understanding and giving sound advice that really made me feel at ease. After hearing so many differing opinions previous to my call, I found that I left the call feeling heard, understood and a lot more sure of myself going into the next plan of action for my journey as a breastfeeding mum. It really was nice to talk it out and I am a lot less anxious about it all. Thank you so much!’  
**Hannah, Helpline caller**



66,737

**calls made to the National Breastfeeding Helpline**



489

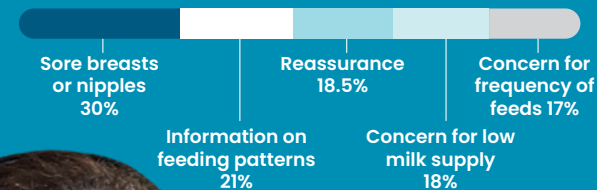
**trained peer-to-peer breastfeeding counsellors volunteering on the National Breastfeeding Helpline**



23,800

**hours volunteered on ABA’s Breastfeeding Helpline**

**Top five reasons for calling the Breastfeeding Helpline**



\*Data from the 2022 Breastfeeding Helpline survey. Multiple reasons could be selected.

## LiveChat



**5255**  
chats initiated

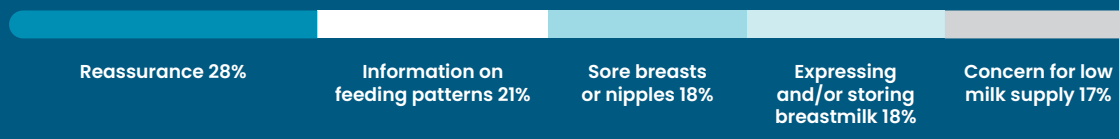


**98%**  
of chats supported



**88**  
volunteers gave their time to supporting mums and their families on LiveChat

## Top five reasons for contacting LiveChat



\*Data from the 2022 LiveChat survey. Multiple reasons could be selected.

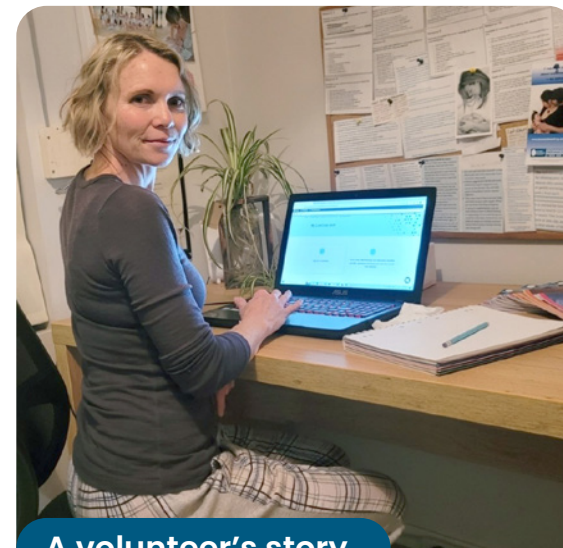
ABA’s LiveChat service is consistently rated highly amongst mothers and their families as a support service available every weeknight 8 pm to 10 pm AET and each Monday and Friday midday to 2 pm. LiveChat connects visitors with evidence-based, mother-to-mother support and links visitors in with the Association’s thousands of articles, videos and images, providing all-round breastfeeding support.

In the 2021–2022 survey of LiveChat visitors, the service was rated extremely highly with a 94% satisfaction rate.

97% said that they would use the service again if needed and would recommend the service to others.

The survey indicated that the chat with an ABA volunteer assisted the visitor not only with their breastfeeding query (81% saying the chat helped them to resolve their concern/ challenge) but also with their own mental health and wellbeing, with 89% noting they were less worried after their call; 83% saying they left the call feeling less stressed; 81%

*‘This service is so helpful for practical advice but also for mothers’ mental health! Thank you!’*  
Kylie, LiveChat user



### A volunteer’s story

*‘I really enjoy LiveChat to talk to new families and their support people. Everything from quick queries about storing breastmilk, to lengthier chats with dads about how they can support their partners, and mums looking for reassurance. It’s a great medium to share article links and direct them to their local support networks.’*  
Corinne, ABA volunteer

### LiveChat *continued*

more confident about breastfeeding and 87% feeling reassured. In fact, 72% noted that, after their chat, they were more determined to continue breastfeeding.

#### Who contacts LiveChat?

The annual survey of LiveChat visitors indicated that 96% of all visitors are mums, aged between 30 and 34 years (37%) with one child (71%). The most common age of the baby whom the mother is contacting our volunteers about is 1–2 months and 6–9 months (16% of all chats respectively). Fourteen percent of mums noted that they live in rural or remote areas of Australia.

*'I cannot express how amazing it is to have this resource available to breastfeeding mums. I was really concerned about my supply prior to my chat and after speaking with a volunteer I've gained so much confidence back with breastfeeding. All of my questions were answered with empathy and knowledge. Continuing my breastfeeding journey with confidence, thanks to ABA!'*  
Emma, LiveChat user

### mum2mum app

ABA's mum2mum app is free to download and is a parent's one-stop shop for breastfeeding support. The app links parents directly into the Breastfeeding Helpline and LiveChat services and provides information relevant to a baby's current age and stage of development. There is a place for the recording of feeds, nappy changes and a baby's sleep. ABA's members have access to premium content in the app, including videos and relaxation pieces for those busy times of day, as well as receiving premium articles sent straight to their phone at a time when they need it most.

In the later part of 2022 ABA's mum2mum app will be undergoing a major revision and look, to bring families greater connection with others and even more premium articles to support their breastfeeding journey.

The most used feature of the app in 2021–2022 was recording a baby's feeds, followed by viewing the many lifestage articles within the app that support families in understanding common baby behaviour at different ages, preparing families for what to expect in the coming weeks and months.



14,276  
downloads



136,005  
feeds recorded



2696  
families accessing  
the app each  
month



2200  
links directly to LiveChat;  
1074 to the Breastfeeding Helpline

## Breastfeeding ... with ABA podcast

*Breastfeeding ... with ABA* is a podcast and blog about breastfeeding, made by parents, for parents. Covering the questions listeners want answers to, our volunteers and experts talk about what to expect in the early days, supply, sleep, poo and much more in 10 to 30 minute podcast episodes, and blogs that are a 3 to 5 minute read.

Backed up by evidence from a source listeners can trust, *Breastfeeding ... with ABA* aims to provide support through breastfeeding and beyond. It is offered in inclusive and accessible formats, through stories from real parents and grandparents, sharing their challenges and triumphs.

In 2021–2022 a further 8 new podcast episodes were released, with 5 accompanying blogs on a related topic. These new episodes were a great addition to the existing library of 12 podcast episodes from 2020–2021. The new episodes featured diverse voices of mums, dads, grandparents and LGBTQIA+ parents across a variety of interview and conversation formats.

In total, podcast episodes received 59,417 plays during 2021–2022. The most popular episodes were 'Early days: what do you need to know?', 'The 4-month-old baby', and 'Mastitis ... are we just like cows?'.  
 midwives and child health nurses across their personal social networks, a key objective in developing the podcast.

Release date	Podcast episode	Companion blog
15 July 2021	Supporting the new mother – How dads, partners, grandparents and loved ones can support new mums and babies.	Supporting the new mother: How dads, partners, grandparents and loved ones can support new mums and babies.
29 July 2021	Supporting the LGBTQIA+ community – How we're supporting LGBTQIA+ families to feed and nourish their children.	Supporting the LGBTQIA+ community: How we're supporting LGBTQIA+ families to feed and nourish their children.
5 August 2021	World Breastfeeding Week – Protect breastfeeding, a shared responsibility: Breastfeeding isn't just up to mums! Support from everyone is vital to success.	
12 August 2021	The 4-month-old baby – Talking about the changes as newborn babies develop and grow.	The 4-month-old baby: The changes newborn babies go through as they develop and grow.
26 August 2021	Mastitis ... are we just like cows? Talking breastfeeding with special guest Prof. Wendy Ingman.	
20 April 2022	Breastfeeding stories ... super leftie – Adele's story of one sided breastfeeding.	Thank you Big Boob, thank you Little Boob: Jess's story of one sided breastfeeding.
4 May 2022	Breastfeeding stories ... first-time breastfeeder, third-time mum – Pam's story of breastfeeding her third child.	
18 May 2022	What is a breastfeeding counsellor? Find out more about what a breastfeeding counsellor does.	Better Together – Volunteering with ABA: Celebrating National Volunteer Week 2022.

The podcast regularly charts highly in the iTunes 'Kids & Family' category and is consistently rated 4.8 to 4.9 on Apple podcasts (the main podcast player service to publish ratings and comments). It's shared broadly by members, non-members,

midwives and child health nurses across their personal social networks, a key objective in developing the podcast.



## Breast pump hire

The hire of a hospital grade breast pump from ABA continued to be part of the breastfeeding journey for more than 1000 mums in 2021-2022.

Hiring a quality breast pump was nominated as the main reason for joining by some 14% of ABA's members. In addition to this, there was strong demand for short-term hires, where a mum may need to express due to a hospital or NICU stay, and a growing number of hires to community support organisations working with vulnerable mothers.

With ABA's traditional maternity ward visits restricted due to COVID, breast pump hire remained a highly active and effective referral pathway to ABA from hospitals, NICU/neonatal specialists and midwives.

COVID-Safe measures and contactless hire continued to operate smoothly, with ABA's 'community collection' approach proving invaluable as much of Australia suffered through protracted postal delays, a barrier to new parents wanting to purchase a pump from online suppliers.

ABA also undertook a comprehensive review and update of our hiring and lending processes and documentation, including a detailed OHS audit and adapting best-practice localised activities for widespread adoption at both state and national levels.



153

**breast pump hire officers providing local pick-up across Australia**



14%

**of new ABA members joined to access discounted breast pump hire**

ABA's 153 breast pump hire officers, spread out across Australia, continue to be highly valued providers of specialist information about breast pumps and expressing support, free from commercial influence and with experience across multiple brands and pump systems.



## Breastfeeding with ABA Facebook Group

The National Facebook Group, Breastfeeding with ABA (BWABA), more than doubled from 4555 to 9245 members over the year ending June 2022. A team of 15 moderators, with support from two team leaders, manage this busy group, which boasts over 3000 active members on an average day and anywhere from 10 to 20 posts.

Many ABA volunteers are active participants, helping to answer questions, directing members to appropriate services and providing support. The hard work of our volunteers is paying off as we see so many of our members, some of whom have had little or no interaction with ABA previously, thriving and helping to support others.

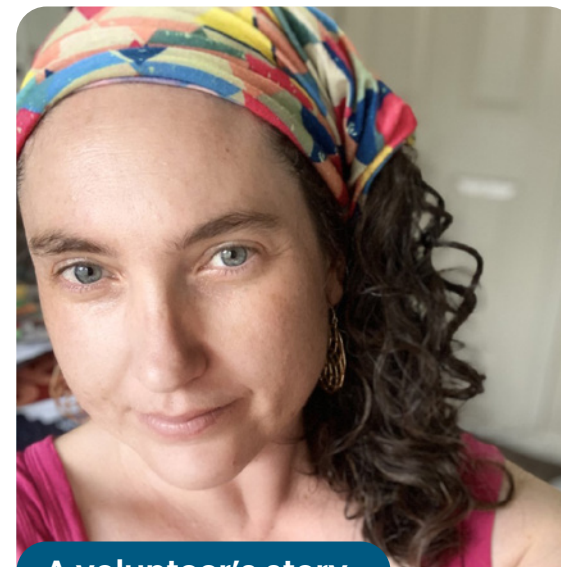
The most popular posts in the group, which can reach up to 5000 to 6000 people, are usually either member celebrations of breastfeeding milestones, or calls for help by new mums.

'The culture of kindness, while it can take a little getting used to, the Code of Ethics really helps keep suggestions focused and kind. The no recommending products or bad-mouthing health professionals makes such a difference. The moderators are incredible in their thoughtful suggestions and linking further information. I don't post much but I learn so much from reading.'

**Rebecca, BWABA member**

'I'll be celebrating 1 year of exclusively breastfeeding my baby next month and that's possible only because of this group. I feel so blessed that I have found this amazing platform. I still remember when I used to scroll a lot through the group in those early days and search queries related to mine. I was amazed by the responses of lovely members on my questions. I had zero knowledge when I joined this group and now I feel much more educated about breastfeeding.'

**Maryam, BWABA member**



### A volunteer's story

What I love about this volunteer role is the flexibility it provides. I can jump in during breaks in work and family life. These short interactions are helpful to keep the group moving. The culture of the group is like a giant group meeting with interactions and support happening all day and night. I love to read the comments from mums about the difference the group has made to them over the past two years. I love the connection with the Association this group has developed for its members. It's provided me with an alternative way to connect with ABA while working.

**Natalie Richards, breastfeeding counsellor with Southern Highlands Group, ACT/NSW Branch**

## ABA local support groups

Local groups are the cornerstone of ABA's peer-support in the community and provide incredible opportunities for connection and engagement to mums, parents and families. The movement in and out of lockdowns and the associated restrictions caused many challenges for ABA local groups. However, our incredible volunteers continued to ensure that breastfeeding information and support remained available for mums and families. Many groups continued to offer monthly meetings either online or in-person depending upon the COVID restrictions in their jurisdiction.

As restrictions eased local groups came back to in-person activities with outdoor events such as pram walks where social distancing and good ventilation were easy to achieve. Café meet-ups also provided great opportunities for families to reconnect in COVID-Safe public settings and access local breastfeeding counsellors and educators for information and support.

The WA Branch continued to offer face-to-face local group meetings throughout the year,

ensuring volunteers and attendees were aware of all relevant precautions to protect against COVID-19. Each group found new ways of bringing mothers together in these challenging times: the Albany group offered Walk and Talk sessions at a local beach, shouting their members coffee to nurture a sense of community. Guest speakers joined sessions at many groups on a number of topics, from finances, to librarians discussing the benefits of books for babies, to dietitians helping mothers care for their own bodies during their breastfeeding journeys. All sessions focussed on warmly welcoming mothers into ABA, supporting them through their parenting journey and creating that village atmosphere ABA is so well known for.



Crystal Brook Group, SA/NT Branch

'I began attending the Applecross Group meetings when my baby was 3 months old; he's 16 months old now, and the group meet-ups are still a regular fixture in our calendar. We have no family living locally (most are overseas), so they couldn't come visit or meet our baby while the borders were closed. Spending time with generations of mothers at our meetings in such a nurturing environment was a lifeline for me in those times. When other mums in my mothers' group began to wean, the group meetings kept me in touch with other mothers who either had or were currently breastfeeding well into toddlerhood, which really helped normalise it and make it seem attainable for me. I am so passionate about ABA and the work that they do that I have now signed up as a trainee, so I can help other mums with their breastfeeding goals.'

**Trainee, Applecross Group**

**ABA local support groups** *continued*

**Group story: Adelaide Northern Suburbs Group**

The Adelaide Northern Suburbs Group have had a consistent year of local meetings with high attendance.

During COVID, we switched to online and outdoor catch-ups, but soon were back in a socially distanced indoor space. Our gatherings see between 8 to 20 mums consistently, with strong social media, follow-up texts to attendees, and special events a big factor in our maintaining attendance.

Mums in the group are supported by two active breastfeeding counsellors and four very active and involved trainees.

Our group also attend Child Family and Health Services (CaFHS) staff meetings and an annual local 'Welcome to Baby' Expo.

**Corinne Reynolds**



Adelaide Northern Suburbs Group's pot plant party

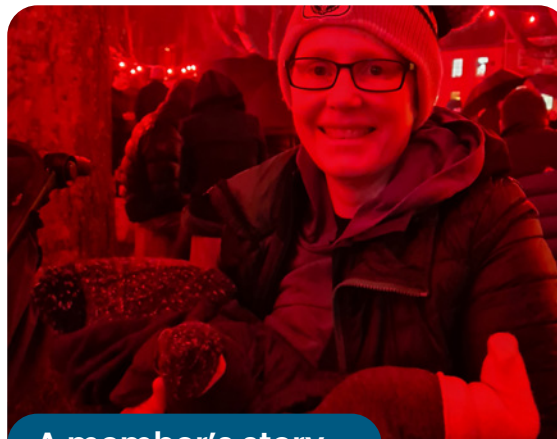


**ABA local support groups** *continued*

**Group story: New Pram Walks  
- Burnie Wynyard Group**

Over the past year, each of Tasmania's ABA groups have offered pram walks for the first time. In the Burnie Wynyard Group, these have become a recurring event for the community. The first of these was organised by the group's trainees during the winter months. Not to be deterred from combining cooler temperatures and outdoor activities, Jess said: 'We wanted to start pram walks in our group so local mothers had a physically active way to meet and connect in our community – pram walks are a great way to meet mothers where they are at – since there are many of us aiming to maximise our steps – and doing so while interacting with ABA is a win-win for everyone! We also enjoy a short stop at our local playground, which is a lovely break for the toddlers, and a chance for some mothers to sit down and breastfeed in the shade.'

**'It has sometimes been a challenge to work around unappealing weather forecasts some weeks, but our pram walks are providing an opportunity for increased physical and social wellbeing.'**  
**Jess, Trainee, Burnie Wynyard Group**



**A member's story**

'Don't get me wrong, I have loved being able to breastfeed and wouldn't have had it any other way, but it has not been an easy journey. We've battled through undersupply, then oversupply, cracked and damaged nipples, reflux, refusal, blocked ducts and mastitis, vasospasm in the Tassie winter, and now he has teeth...

'As a first-time mum, at times it has been tricky to know what to do, or have the confidence to stay on track, but throughout it all I have had incredible support from my family and my ABA local counsellor. The ABA website, social media and resources (eg *Breastfeeding ... Naturally* book) have also been invaluable sources of information and inspiration to keep going. Next week we will hit 12 months on this crazy ride, and with ongoing support, will be able to continue for a while until hopefully a gentle (and mutual) end.'

**T'Meika, ABA Member Hobart**



Crystal Brook Group



Crystal Brook Group

## Booklets and website

### Booklets

In 2021–2022, ABA revised and updated eight of our existing booklets, each titled *Breastfeeding:*

- *relactation and induced lactation*
- *using a supply line*
- *an introduction*
- *and crying babies*
- *women and work*
- *babies with a cleft of lip and/or palate*
- *expressing and storing breastmilk*
- *your baby with Down syndrome*

Work also began on a new iteration of *Breastfeeding: caesarean birth and epidurals*. This important new booklet, *Breastfeeding: and your baby's birth*, is also being expanded to include the effects of other birth interventions on breastfeeding.

The top five booklets purchased in 2021–2022 were *Breastfeeding:*

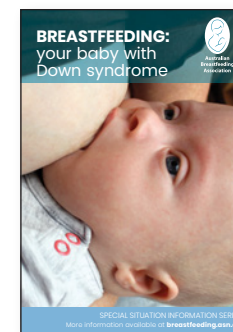
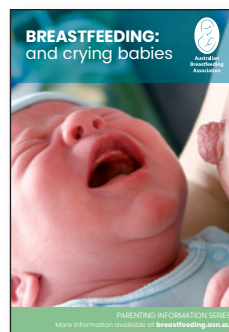
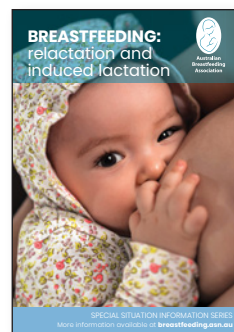
1. *expressing and storing breastmilk*
2. *and sleep*
3. *and your supply*
4. *and crying babies*
5. *and reflux*

In total, 400 hard copy booklets were purchased in 2021–2022 compared to 2853 digital downloads. The continuing preference

for digital booklets gives an insight into the needs of families to access timely information and support and reaffirms our efforts to keep improving our offerings within the digital landscape; offering mums and their support people interactive and engaging resources that are accessible and available at their fingertips.

### New ABA website

As work on our brand-new website continued throughout 2021, the Breastfeeding Information and Research team continued to keep the existing website up-to-date with the latest evidence-led information for today's families. Revisions were made to research and information pages on a wide range of topics that impact breastfeeding mums including *health outcomes, environmental toxins, smoking, alcohol, radiology, and breastfeeding resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families*.



'I have been involved as a volunteer at the national level with ABA publications for over 20 years. I enjoy keeping up with the latest research in breastfeeding and get a lot of satisfaction from translating this to ABA resources in conjunction with the Breastfeeding Information and Research team. This is mostly through revising the ABA booklets, but also books and webpages when the opportunity arises, so volunteers and the public have access to the best information available.'

**Joy Anderson,**  
Booklets Coordinator, WA

## Member magazine and eNewsletter

### Engaging with members and expectant families

ABA's member eNewsletter has enjoyed steadily growing open and click through rates throughout the year, reaching an all-time high of 55% unique opens. Achieved through tight copywriting and analysis of the best delivery times, we're delighted to connect our members to ABA's best-practice breastfeeding research, informative fact boxes, upcoming events, and details of ABA's many campaigns to better support Australia's families.

As in-person engagement events have returned, we have redoubled our post-baby expo event engagement activities. We reached out to some 2473 mums and families about the importance of antenatal breastfeeding education, information and support for their parenting journey and connected them with their ABA local group. Similarly, our digital engagement has soared, at a time when many other in-person education and support opportunities were restricted. We look forward to further expanding this work in 2022-2023.



### Essence

ABA's iconic publication, *Essence*, continues to enjoy strong readership from thousands of families (and health professionals) every quarter.

Essence features a collection of informative articles, relatable accounts about the diverse breastfeeding experiences of mums, and evidence-led articles geared toward busy parents. Light-hearted content, such as breffies from our social media accounts, baby and toddler activity ideas, recipes and key events from across the Association, are also peppered throughout.

Unsurprisingly, COVID-19 related articles featured throughout the popular articles for 2021-2022, including:

- *Coping with Lockdown: stories from mums, families and volunteers*
- *Breastmilk can contain COVID-19 antibodies*
- *The importance of mothers and infants to one another in the COVID-19 pandemic*
- *Sharing the wealth: A mum's donor experience*
- *Measuring and Valuing Women's Productivity: The Mothers' Milk Tool*
- And of course, the most mentioned and reshared article, *Thank you Big Boob! An account of a mum's success story of exclusively breastfeeding several children via one breast.*



6710

copies of *Essence* landed in letterboxes



11,386

copies of *Essence* delivered online, direct to members.

## Community programs for priority groups



### 10961NAT Course in Community Breastfeeding Mentoring

ABA's course in Community Breastfeeding Mentoring (CBM) has been empowering communities for close to 10 years. Running over two consecutive days, the nationally recognised course covers mentoring skills and basic breastfeeding information for culturally and linguistically diverse groups, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, and the individuals and groups that work with them.

Prior to the pandemic, CBM workshops were able to run every year. Unfortunately, due to restrictions, ABA was unable to facilitate any CBM workshops over the 2021 to 2022 financial year. Be that as it may, the time was wielded to revamp a number of training materials.

'... excellent way of learning. The program allows me to feel confident about empowering women in my community.'  
**CBM attendee**



### Deadly Dads® Workshops: yarn and learn about being a Deadly Dad

*Deadly* - an Aboriginal English word for 'fantastic', 'great', or 'awesome'.

Although the seed of this CBM workshop hybrid was born in NSW, the Northern Territory saw the first Deadly Dads workshop in 2021. In the form of a 'Train the Trainer' session, the hands-on workshop was delivered to key elders in the NT community. Focusing on sharing knowledge and having meaningful conversations about becoming a dad whilst looking after yourself, the session was reciprocated with valuable feedback.

Over the year, the Deadly Dads Recipe Cards were also developed. These cards were a key piece of training material for workshops, not only by acting as a lamppost for discussion, but also by providing workshop participants with useful tools they could refer to long after the workshop had finished.





Community programs for priority groups *continued*

How Breastfeeding Works

The ACT/NSW Branch range of *How Breastfeeding Works* booklets now total 13 languages plus Easy English. The purpose of the booklets is to provide breastfeeding information in languages that reflect the diversity of our community.

These unique booklets are available in Easy English (US Letter), Plain Language English (A5); and full size Arabic, Bengali, Burmese, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Nepalese, Punjabi, Spanish, Tibetan, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese.

They are presented in side-by-side English/translated language and feature over 35 full colour illustrations.

The project, funded by NSW Health, allowed for the cost of producing the booklets and providing them free of charge to all NSW funded health professionals.

The aim was to create both print and electronic easy-to-read booklets in 14 languages with a pictorial emphasis. In consultation with multicultural and disability support officers, it was decided the booklet text would be produced as Easy English – a simplified written English. The final copy formed the basis of the booklets, along with the colour illustrations and a large font format that was then translated into 13 languages as well as the Easy English version.

‘We love having the translated booklets for our families ... it really helps us to support them.’  
Nepean Hospital NSW

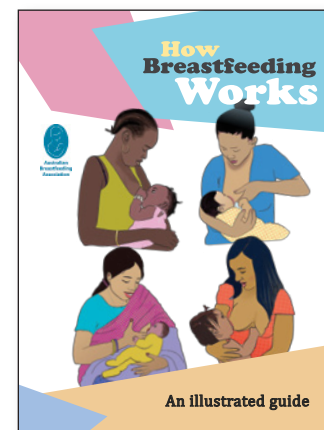
A new development this year is the availability of a smaller size booklet that can fit easily into health services brochure racks and display stands.

When ACT and NSW Health reported the majority of recipients did not need the larger font of the Easy English layout, the Branch produced an A5 version of the booklet referred to as the Plain Language booklet.

Due to high demand, the Branch recently produced 15,000 copies of the Plain Language booklet in addition to 23,197 hard copies of the other booklets distributed to health services across ACT and NSW in the past year. Contact with numerous health professionals report that the booklets are extremely popular.

The Branch also recently provided the booklet files to the Victorian office to produce a selection in their priority languages of Arabic, Chinese, Hindi and Vietnamese plus Easy English.

In addition to the online PDF and EPub versions, it has been the case that the hard copy versions have been very popular with health services. The tactile nature of the booklets and their side-by-side layout with illustrations make them very easy to share and discuss. For example, a health professional can take a mother through the booklet and read one side in English while the mother



reads in her language, or grandparents can bond with parents as they read together.

Written in English and non-English languages, these booklets are a useful resource for both health professionals and non-English speakers, covering the main aspects of breastfeeding and how to manage possible problems. They are user-friendly with English printed on one page and the non-English language on the opposite page.

# Volunteer training and support



**89.9%**  
satisfaction rate  
with ABA accredited  
courses

## Volunteer training

It was going to take more than a pandemic and inclement weather conditions to stop the ABA training team from shining this year. Amongst lockdowns, event cancellations, isolation periods, not to mention floods and global instability, the training team took it in their stride, accomplishing a significant number of notable achievements along the way.

ABA saw the expiration of all three of its accredited courses this year. With an incredible amount of behind the scenes work, all courses were successfully re-accredited and added to ABA's scope of registration. Fortunately, the new accredited courses were equivalent courses with equivalent units. This ensured that the learner transition process was relatively seamless for those involved.

The training team also took the opportunity to develop and implement a range of new and enhanced course materials and resources for learners and training personnel, continuing to improve the way things are done.

Fortuitously, the training team were able to run a Training Residential Meeting in Melbourne with a range of key ABA training personnel in attendance. These sessions were extremely effective as moderation and validation sessions were able to occur for the new course materials, as well as an industry consultation session.



**256**

total ABA learners supported

With no shortage of activity, trainers and assessors also had to recertify to demonstrate they had valid qualifications and the industry experience required to deliver and assess ABA courses. Although experiencing a small decline in the number of trainers and assessors recertifying, several new trainers and assessors have joined the team.

Once again, extremely positive satisfaction rates were seen in the Learner Quality Indicator Survey report. Despite such a turbulent year, learners continued to value the amazing support of ABA trainers, with 93.3% satisfaction. Similarly, overall satisfaction levels with ABA courses sit at an impressive 89.9%!

As a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), ABA is required to maintain its compliance with the VET Quality Framework which includes the Standards for RTOs. This work allows ABA to deliver nationally recognised courses to its volunteer base, community groups and health professionals, and forms an important part of the ongoing work done by training personnel, both paid and volunteer. The Employer Quality Indicator Survey results indicate ABA courses and training services are effective in developing the competencies required (89%) for which ABA is so grateful. Without the stellar effort of ABA volunteers, paid staff

### A volunteer's story

The lifeblood of the Association is the next generation. Watching new trainees discover all the different roles in ABA and choose the ones they love most shows how ABA can meet a variety of support needs and can inspire other young mums to train with ABA.

Caitlin is a new trainee who has just joined her local group in Hawkesbury-Nepean. She is currently up to the counselling cluster but she is keen to get stuck into every aspect of ABA life.

#### What volunteer activity do you enjoy spending your time on most with ABA?

It's so hard to choose just one! I love it all!

#### What else have you tried out in ABA to see if you like it?

I volunteered at the PBC Expo and as a Q&A mum for BELs.

#### In what ways can you empower mothers in your ABA role?

Spreading breastfeeding awareness, being supportive for the mothers and helping mothers to feel empowered to make their own choices and feel confident in their breastfeeding journey.

#### What aspects of training did you enjoy most?

I'm still currently training. I'm in the counselling cluster. I personally enjoy training workshops, live sessions & practical tasks the most as I get to meet all the wonderful supportive trainers and volunteers.

**Caitlin Sabjan (Vaughan),  
Hawkesbury-Nepean  
Group**



and stakeholders, ABA would not be able to provide the exceptional services it does.

Finally, ABA would like to acknowledge the funding received from the Australian Government that has enabled our Association to maintain its registration as an RTO plus

provide support and resources to learners, training personnel and our volunteers.

Thank you to all ABA training personnel for their outstanding work and dedication.

## 2022 Volunteer reporting - a snapshot

716 volunteers and trainees completed this year's volunteer reporting. Volunteers were asked what ABA activity they enjoyed the most. Nearly 80% of breastfeeding counsellors indicated counselling as their most enjoyable activity and over half of all volunteers listed providing breastfeeding information and education as their preferred activity.

Volunteers and trainees were asked how many hours a month on average they spent volunteering for ABA:

- 25% spent 2-5 hours
- 30% spent 6-10 hours
- 13% spent 11-15 hours

A third of volunteers and trainees reported spending 2-4 hours a week volunteering.

Nearly 80% of volunteers felt valued or very valued in their role:

- 71% were satisfied
- 77% felt supported by the Association
- 66% felt their volunteering time was manageable
- 75% reported their family were positive and supportive of their ABA volunteer role.

## Volunteer ongoing education

Over the year, ABA saw 17 volunteers achieve their Certificate of Practice for completing at least 60 hours within 12 months on the Breastfeeding Helpline and LiveChat services. With the launch of the new website, a new home was found for volunteer professional development (PD), making it easier for volunteers to keep track of their PD record and find PD activities to participate in. New professional development resources were evolved to support volunteers with new initiatives and services. Eleven issues of *Talkabout: Association and News* were published, along with four editions of *Talkabout: Research and Practice* articles to keep volunteers informed of the latest information, research, and activities across ABA.

### Branch conferences and other volunteer continuing education

#### WA Branch conference and continuing professional development morning

The WA Branch offered their volunteers a variety of professional development opportunities this year, including a residential conference in November and a continuing professional development morning in early April. The residential conference helped foster a sense of community following the isolation and separation experienced by many in 2020, with

‘Live stream was great even though I attended in person. At times I needed to pump or take my baby out of the room but I was able to watch from my room or outside. Thank you!’

**WA Branch conference attendee**

a number of volunteers and their families flying in from rural WA to join the activities. Attendees praised the new venue, as well as the range of ABA and breastfeeding topics provided, with 91% of attendees giving the conference an overall rating of ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’. The continuing professional development morning was praised for the breadth of topics provided, and their relevance for the ongoing growth of our volunteers. Both events were offered in person and via live stream, opening the opportunity to a wider range of volunteers; one volunteer who attended in person at the residential conference praised the live stream as it allowed her to continue listening to the talks when she needed to pump or tend to her baby in her room.

The Australian Breastfeeding Association WA Branch residential conference runs every second year bringing together volunteers from all over the state to participate in a two-day conference. A Lotterywest grant supports the ongoing training of over 80 volunteers from around WA. The weekend provides opportunity for education, connection and networking between volunteers, ensuring they can deliver important support to their local families.

The grant is critical to ensuring that all volunteers have the opportunity to attend

‘I LOVED the continuing professional development presentation this year. You absolutely nailed the variety of presentations. It was so incredibly worthwhile. I felt like the breadth of topics were really valuable and the information shared has helped me immensely since. There was not a single one that I haven’t reflected on from the day. I still have Joy’s handouts on my fridge for reference.’

‘Thank you for your expertise and time in putting this together.’

**Continuing professional development morning attendee, Monica Spillman**

conference and are not disadvantaged by distance or restriction on funds to pay travel costs. It is vitally important to continue supporting the ongoing needs of these volunteers, so they can continue providing much needed services in the community.

‘As a regional Noongar volunteer, it is important to come together, connect and learn, like our elders before us, so we can share the *katitjin* (knowledge) to present and future generations.’

**Kerry Morrison, Australind, Capes Group, Trainer and Assessor, Breastfeeding Counsellor, Breastfeeding Educator and Breast Pump Hire Officer**

Volunteer ongoing education *continued*



Lynsey Colquhoun, Breastfeeding Counsellor and Caroline Smalley, Trainee, both of the Southern Lakes Group, attending the WA Branch conference



WA Branch conference



Tasmania Branch had its conference in September 2021



SA/NT Branch conference

### SA/NT Branch conference

After 3 years of rescheduling, our committee-run branch conference went ahead in April 2022. We opted for a one-day offering, after 2 years of cancelled two-day events, which made it impractical for our Northern Territory volunteers to attend.

We were joined by our Executive Officer, Victoria, as well as the National Helpline Coordinator, Nerida, and Professional Development Support Officer, Heather. Predictably, up to 25% of our registered attendees could not attend at the last-minute due to COVID isolation. We enjoyed the company of approximately 35 volunteers.

We hosted two wonderful guest sessions. Jody Holdback/Sarah Cleggett presented on Disability and Inclusion. We also heard from Dr Luke Grzeskowiak and Grace McBride from Flinders University on 'Using galactagogues to boost breast milk supply - evidence vs hype'.

We celebrated our branch's overdue 50th birthday with a round-up of historical

photos and enjoyed many milestones and branch president's awards.

A wonderful Communications and Counselling Workshop, hosted by the LiveChat/Helpline team, was a valuable exercise in reviewing and discussing counselling and LiveChat experiences.

Our evening meal was hosted at a nearby hotel, with more than 20 volunteers staying back to mingle and network.

**Corinne Reynolds**  
**SA/NT Conference Committee Chair**  
**Group Leader Adelaide Northern Suburbs Group, Breastfeeding Counsellor**



## Volunteer support

### Local Groups Revitalisation Roadmap

Local groups are central to the delivery of ABA's community peer support and provide incredible opportunities for connection and engagement. The movement in and out of lockdowns and the associated restrictions caused many challenges for local groups at ABA. Our incredible volunteers provided online support, to ensure we remained available for mums and families.

We know the high value mums in our community place on their village of support, and the face-to-face support that local groups can offer, in their parenting journey. But once we were able to return to face-to-face activities, ABA's overall engagement did not rebound.

ABA was determined to revitalise our local groups and conducted an internal needs analysis and external market research to understand how to go about this. Along with these results and co-designed with ABA volunteers, a Local Group Revitalisation Roadmap was developed. It sets out a 3-year plan for ABA to develop and provide the resources and supports required by local groups to support breastfeeding mums and their families, and advocate for a breastfeeding-friendly community.

Seventy deliverables, encompassing streamlined administration, breastfeeding support and advocacy and marketing



Adelaide Northern Suburbs Group's 4-month-old baby meet

and membership engagement have been targeted to be implemented, starting in 2022.

As at the end of June 2022:

- support processes have been developed to assist the group leader in their role. This includes developing a model to enable increased participation of members in the running of local groups
- new promotional materials have been developed for group social activities
- the Transition to Volunteering program has been launched to support trainees in their volunteering, and ensure that they are connected to and able to provide support to their group leaders and local groups. The program supported 58 trainees from 47 local groups between September 2021 and June 2022
- ABA local groups 'Presentation for Health Professionals' is available
- The new website is under development

ABA looks forward to enabling our volunteers to support local communities – the grassroots of our organisation.



WA Branch President Julia Moore feeding her youngest child Minabelle at the WA Residential Branch Conference

### Volunteer manual

The work to redevelop the ABA website saw a vast collection of resources for volunteers collated into an online manual. Each area of volunteer work has its own landing page from where all related policies, guidelines, procedures etc are effortlessly located. Volunteers can keep up with their own individual responsibilities, maintain professional development, and find resources for their Breastfeeding Helpline or LiveChat shifts, next local group activity, or any activities and events relating to their unique role or working group.

## Thank you

### Appeals

ABA's two major fundraisers of the year, the Festive Appeal and the Tax Appeal, were a great success, despite COVID-19 continuing to challenge the economy, social supports for families and our healthcare system. This highlights the unwavering dedication and commitment of ABA's donors, and their profound understanding that ABA's breastfeeding support, improves such a wide range of health and social outcomes.

The theme for the 2021 Festive Appeal was *Support our village*, which shone a light on ABA's vital role in forming that 'village of support' so desperately needed by parents in our increasingly disconnected society. Supporting our revitalization of ABA local groups (among other projects), the appeal raised more than \$18,500.

With the pandemic shuttering many antenatal and postnatal services for a second year, *Educate to empower* was a very fitting theme for the Tax Appeal, which raised more than \$47,000. Donations have enabled ABA to continue to offer our popular online breastfeeding education classes, develop the Newborn Virtual Village program, and to fuel our powerful WHO Code Advocacy work to end exploitative infant milk marketing.

ABA's strength has long been its networks, illustrated in one way by the 1320+ individual

donations made to ABA throughout the year. Thank you, we would not be able to do what we do without your support. We would like to extend a special thanks to the following individuals and foundations who have provided significant support this year.

Agata Guz	Alison Limb
Andrew Wandel	Anna Schell
Bettina Stewart	Catherine Warburton
Claire Frew	Gay Hull
The Drummond Foundation	Heather Bryde
Helen Henry	Helen Oakes
Helen Wilson	Hilke Dalstra
Jackie McAvenna	James Williams
Jan Oatway	Jane Franklin
Jenny Davies	Judy Bowman
Judy Burton, SC	Judy Campbell
Judy Emerson	Judy Gifford
Judy Jan	Judy Njanja
Lyle Foundation	Katrina Campbell
Lyndall McCormack	Mary Webb
Naomi Cuthbert	O'Toole
Rachel Smith	Rebecca Sonsie
Roslyn Miles	Ruth Thomas
Sally Carratt	Susan Gillard



### Corporate and pro bono partners

ABA has been partnered in our support of Australian mums and families by a tight knit family of corporate sponsors and partners. Proudly WHO Code-compliant, and subject to our stringent evidence-based assessment, ABA is delighted to continue our association with ARDO Medical (Laborie OB), as our Technology Support Partner.

We worked collaboratively throughout the year with our promotional parenting partner, the Pregnancy, Babies and Children's Expo, enabling ABA to connect and present to some 65,000+ parents throughout the year.

Majestic Computer Technology have continued to support ABA's ICT strategy needs, as we transform our volunteer communication and resource provision channels, overhaul our website and support a largely remote volunteer and staff workforce.

ABA is also deeply appreciative of the pro bono legal counsel provided by Russell Kennedy Lawyers, supporting ABA in the emergent areas of social media law, in addition to contract law and other matters.



Australian  
Breastfeeding  
Association