

MEDIA RELEASE
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Urgent action needed to support maternal health and deliver Government's national Breastfeeding Strategy

The Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) is calling for urgent implementation and funding of the Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy (ANBS) to enable women to reach their breastfeeding goals and achieve optimum maternal health outcomes during and beyond the global health pandemic.

In 2019, the Council of Australian Governments agreed to the ANBS, which provides a framework for action to help develop informed government policies and programs that support mothers, babies and their partners through their breastfeeding journey.

The ANBS outlines priority areas that address the structural and cultural enablers that impact breastfeeding and help to develop a supportive and inclusive environment for breastfeeding. Focused on empowering women and ensuring high-quality and accessible support is readily available, the ANBS aims to enable 40% of Australian babies to be fully breastfed to 6 months of age by 2022.

Naomi Hull, ABA Senior Manager Breastfeeding Information and Research, says implementation of the ANBS is crucial to improving maternal health outcomes - particularly during the global health pandemic - and developing a breastfeeding friendly society.

"Breastfeeding is a significant part of maternal health. Unfortunately, our current environment sees structural and cultural factors negatively affecting many women's ability to breastfeed," Ms Hull said.

"The ANBS is an important step to addressing these – but more funding, information and support is needed to improve outcomes.

The Australian Breastfeeding Association is eager to see follow through on the ANBS action areas over the coming years and continue to support improvements in maternal health. ABA is here to empower women wherever they are in their breastfeeding journey."

Breastfeeding has an ongoing, positive effect on women's health. Women who breastfeed are less likely to have endometriosis, have reduced rates of some cancers, including breast, ovarian and endometrial, and are less likely to develop Type 2 diabetes later in life. Breastfeeding for over 3 months also helps to reduce visceral fat, which is thought to be linked with a reduced incidence of metabolic syndrome, and high cholesterol. This means less cardiovascular disease in women who breastfeed.

However, many women find it impossible to continue breastfeeding beyond the first few weeks and only 15% of babies are fully breastfed to 6 months in Australia, marking an area for critical improvement to boost maternal health.

ENDS

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