

MEDIA RELEASE
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Mental health support for mums: anywhere, anytime.

Birthing classes, mothers' groups and community support programs all around Australia have come to a sudden stop due to COVID-19 requirements. While this has helped to keep new mothers and babies well, it hasn't helped their mental health.

Margaret Grove, President of the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) says, 'Babies are still being born, new parents are still needing support but we are hearing that, under current restrictions, new parents are finding it hard to access postnatal, breastfeeding and mental health services. We are getting lots of calls, emails and messages from new parents who don't know where to turn. What should be one of the happiest time of their life has turned into a very anxious experience and they are turning to the ABA for help.'

'ABA has a number of free programs that support mothers and fathers and those supporting them to look after their babies. Our qualified counsellors can help mums and dads with questions not only about breastfeeding but also about sleep, settling, play and baby-friendly foods', says Margaret. 'ABA's National Breastfeeding Helpline and online *LiveChat* service are staffed by dedicated volunteers who aim to empower parents everyday by providing evidencebased support to every parent who contacts these services for help.'

'As well as this, we have developed online Breastfeeding Education Live classes to respond to parents' needs to learn more about what to expect when they have their newborn and bring them home. These classes are for expectant parents and they cover everything from what to expect in terms of baby poo, number of nappies a day to basic breastfeeding information.'

ABA has also developed online mothers' groups to help combat the feeling of isolation that some mums are currently experiencing. Margaret believes that, 'Mums want to keep their babies safe but they have also told us that they still want to be able to talk to other mums and have a chat to a qualified expert if needed. Our virtual ABA meetings provide exactly that — a friendly environment where mums can relax and just talk about what they are experiencing without feeling judged. Mums can find out more about what online sessions are running by visiting our website and searching for their local group under the contact tab.'

The National Breastfeeding Helpline is provided with funding from the Federal Government and is a resource that Australian parents can access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week if they need breastfeeding support or have a question. 'Give 1800 686 286 a call if you need to talk to someone who can support you and help you with your new baby', says Margaret. 'It is staffed by highly-trained ABA volunteers, who are mothers themselves. Every caller to the Breastfeeding Helpline can count on high quality peer support from someone who is empathic and understands the challenges that can come with having a baby. If you need someone to talk to in these uncertain times, give ABA a call. We are here to help.'

ENDS

National media enquiries (staffed 24/7) – 03 9686 6096 or marketing@breastfeeding.asn.au