



Media Release – 17 May 2021

Celebrating 1000 volunteers and 26,400 hours of telephone support Volunteer Week 2021

The Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) is celebrating National Volunteer Week (17 to 23 May 2021) by honouring and thanking its 1000-strong cohort of volunteers who have provided support, information and resources to millions of Australian mothers and their families for 57 years.

ABA's volunteers provide 24/7 mother-to-mother support on the National Breastfeeding Helpline, which recently celebrated a milestone of 1 million calls since it was started in 2008, with 26,400 hours of counselling support provided in 2019-2020. Every month, around 400 trained counsellors take calls on the Breastfeeding Helpline, collectively gifting 2200 hours of their precious time to help other families with their breastfeeding concerns and needs.

Victorian volunteer Leanne, who took the 1 millionth call, says she juggles volunteering with shift work and a busy family life, but she wouldn't have it any other way. 'I volunteer my time because I love to help other mothers. It's incredible hearing the relief in their voices once they are reassured that whatever their situation is, it's quite normal', she says. 'Most calls go for around 10 to 15 minutes, with some callers being overwhelmed with emotion and just wanting to debrief about their parenting situation. Our training is very thorough and the basics of breastfeeding are always the same. If a mum has the right information and supportive people around her, she is more likely to meet her breastfeeding goals', explains Leanne.

The scale of support provided by ABA goes far beyond the National Breastfeeding Helpline, with the organisation's volunteers contributing more than 1 million hours of assistance year on year. 'Many of my non-ABA friends can't wrap their heads around the fact that I don't get paid for what I do but I get paid in different ways other than monetary rewards', adds Leanne.

'I have found the most amazing bunch of women in my local group, I have firm friends whom I know I will keep forever, and I have attained training qualifications that I never thought I would, including a TAE which can transfer to real-world employment. I have also learned more about people, what drives them and that what motivates us as parents is always the same, that is to do what is best for our own families and children.'

A survey of callers conducted in 2020 showed that 39% of callers would have opted to seek and pay for medical support if the Breastfeeding Helpline was not available. ABA's Executive Officer Victoria Marshall-Cerins says this is a testament to how important the service is for mums and their support networks. 'Our volunteers are at the heart of what ABA does and the success of our organisation in being able to provide an essential service to mothers is testament to their skill and dedication', she says.

'It fills me with pride to celebrate our volunteers and reflect on their enormous contribution to the community, not only through the Breastfeeding Helpline but also LiveChat, training for volunteers and health professionals, local support groups, breastfeeding education and trustworthy information and resources. It is thanks to our volunteers that Australian women can have access to the information and support they need to meet their breastfeeding goals.'

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For media enquiries please call the Australian Breastfeeding Association's 24/7 media line: 03 9686 6096 or marketing@breastfeeding.asn.au

About the Australian Breastfeeding Association

The Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) is Australia's largest breastfeeding information and support service, providing assistance to more than 80,000 mothers each year. ABA also provides up-to-date information and continuing education for thousands of health professionals working with mothers and babies. It is our vision that breastfeeding is recognised as important by all Australians and is culturally normal. As Australia's peak authority on breastfeeding, we support, educate and advocate for a breastfeeding inclusive society.

<https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/>