

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL BREASTFEEDING STRATEGY – Explained

What is the Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and Beyond (ANBS)?

The *ANBS* is an ongoing strategy that seeks to enable breastfeeding through policies, baby-friendly health settings, health professional education and training, and universal and targeted breastfeeding education and support services.

The ANBS is designed to be used as a tool to protect, promote and support breastfeeding. It can be used as a resource by governments at all levels, policymakers, stakeholder organisations, the public and private health sectors, industry, researchers

and academics, families, and communities. The ANBS provides guidance on evidence-based approaches to protect, promote, support and monitor breastfeeding.

The strategy was developed by the Federal Department of Health and agreed to by all states and territories through COAG processes. It was endorsed by all state and territory Health Ministers on 8 March 2019. The Australian Government launched the ANBS on 3 August 2019, during World Breastfeeding Week.

The objectives of the ANBS are to:

1. Increase the proportion of babies who:
 - Are exclusively breastfed to around six months of age (up to 40% by 2022 and 50% by 2025), particularly in priority populations and vulnerable groups;
 - Continue breastfeeding, with appropriate complimentary foods until 12 months and beyond, for as long as the mother and their child desire
2. Enable mothers, fathers/partners and other caregivers to access evidence-based, culturally safe breastfeeding education, support and clinical care services to make informed decisions on infant and young child feeding.
3. Increase the number of breastfeeding-friendly settings/environments (baby-friendly health services, workplaces, early childhood education and care services, and public spaces).
4. Strengthen the regulatory arrangements for marketing of infant formula and breastmilk substitutes so that inappropriate marketing and distribution ceases.
5. Increase the proportion of health professionals who receive adequate, evidence-based breastfeeding education and training that is free from commercial influence.
6. Raise awareness in the broader community of the significance of breastfeeding (and the risks associated with not breastfeeding) in achieving optimal health for both mother and child throughout the life course.

What is ABA's position on the ANBS?

ABA recognises that the ANBS is a robust and comprehensive document. ABA

provided significant input to its development and fully supports its

implementation. The Australian Government allocated \$10 million to support the activities of the strategy. ABA has a role in delivering outcomes against the ANBS, having received \$8.29 million over 4 years to support our Helpline and related work. A further \$2 million was allocated in 2019 to the Australian Red Cross LifeBlood, to increase access to donor

human milk for premature babies through a centralised donor milk bank service. Further funding commitment to fully implement the ANBS would go a long way towards achieving ABA's vision of breastfeeding being recognised as important by all Australians and culturally normal.

What opportunities are there to support implementation of the ANBS?

ABA's advocacy in the next few years will include supporting the ANBS recommendations and reminding governments to keep them high on their health agendas. Our Advocacy Strategy provides us with guidance for engaging with governments at all levels to discuss the progress against the ANBS priority action areas. We also aim to offer ABA's support and input to government and community initiatives.

Advocacy can happen at all levels of our Association through both formal and less formal or more opportunistic means. In the next 6 to 12 months, ABA's Advocacy

Working Group will develop a range of resources to encourage and enable volunteers and members to take up any advocacy opportunities that arise. They will provide key messages about the ANBS and how these fit with our ABA roles. Working collectively, we can contribute to the success of the ANBS while holding governments ultimately accountable for its implementation.

Please note that we do not expect everyone to take on advocacy activities. The resources we develop aim to support those who have the time, opportunity and interest in undertaking advocacy.

What can you do next?

1. Read the new advocacy resource tools as they come out. This will help you to be informed about the ANBS and increase your knowledge to enable you to speak confidently to others about the ANBS.
2. As they are released, use ABA's advocacy social media tools on your local group social media page/s to educate the community.
3. Take any opportunity to get to know your local Federal/State/Territory MP, and use our advocacy materials to let them know that the ANBS is important to you and tell them about the valuable local work of ABA.