



Australian  
Breastfeeding  
Association

# Strategic Plan

2023–2026

The Australian Breastfeeding Association acknowledges the diversity of our staff, volunteers, and members, and of the many mothers, babies, parents, families, and people we work with. We recognise diversity as a strength and aim to share, nurture, and celebrate it.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands known as Australia. We wish to pay our respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging. We also acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who have breastfed their babies on Country for more than 60,000 years, and the partners, families and communities who support them.

## Overview

From its beginnings in suburban Melbourne in 1964, the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) has grown into a national organisation dedicated to the support of breastfeeding.

The Association's history of strong practical mother-to-mother support and advocacy for mothers wanting to breastfeed their babies have been credited with increasing breastfeeding rates in Australia since the 1970s. The Association is recognised as the leading authority on breastfeeding in Australia and enjoys an enviable reputation across the world.

The critical role of breastfeeding in the health and wellbeing of Australians is recognised in the *Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and beyond* (ANBS), the *National Women's Health Strategy 2020–2030*, the *National Preventative Health Strategy 2021–2030*, and the *National Obesity Strategy 2022–2032*. ABA has been a key implementation partner in progressing the objectives of the ANBS and the preventative health outcomes of these strategies. The 2023–2026 Strategic Plan will see the Australian Breastfeeding Association continue to prioritise work and collaboration aimed at implementation of the recommendations of the ANBS.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in huge pressures on Australia's health system and its health care workers, with many maternity face-to-face services closed or reduced, and restrictions placed on

expectant parents, new mothers, and their families. Consequently, ABA saw an increased demand for its services at a time when the volunteer sector was significantly impacted and experiencing reduced volunteering rates, particularly amongst women. ABA relies predominantly on a large volunteer workforce of around 700. While ABA has proved resilient and continued to provide high quality breastfeeding support services and health worker education throughout, the pandemic has taken its toll. It still affects everything we do, with operations impacted and long-term membership further reduced. The 2023–2026 Strategic Plan prioritises actions aimed at broadening impact, rebuilding membership, and ensuring we are relevant to Australian families and the broader community. At the same time, we will prioritise initiatives that reflect principles of the *National Volunteering Strategy 2023–2033* to re-engage and revitalise our volunteer workforce, so they thrive, reach their potential and have a positive volunteering experience.

Through the life of this plan, ABA's WHO Code Taskforce will continue its work towards the longer-term end goal of full legislation of the World Health Organization's *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* and the subsequent World Health Assembly resolutions (The WHO Code). Having provisions of The WHO Code enshrined in law is an important step towards protecting breastfeeding in Australia from exploitative advertising.



### Our Vision

Breastfeeding is recognised as important by all Australians and is culturally normal.



### Our Mission

As Australia’s leading authority on breastfeeding, we support, educate and advocate for a breastfeeding inclusive society.



### In all we do, we aspire to be:

- Inclusive** and **Supportive**
- Respectful** and **Accepting**
- Ethical** and **Trusted**
- Skilled** and **Influential**.



### Our organisation values:

- Volunteering and the contribution of all our people
- Peer support
- Community
- Excellence and innovation in breastfeeding support
- Honesty and integrity
- Effective communication and respectful relationships.



### Key stakeholders

We recognise the value of working collaboratively with all stakeholders to fully achieve our objectives. Our stakeholders include:

- Mothers, parents, babies, children and their families and support networks
- Our members, volunteers, and employees
- Government at all levels
- Health workers and related organisations
- Our funding bodies, sponsors, and donors
- Our partners, supporters, and the Australian community.

### Strategic Framework

These strategic areas have been identified as key to achieving our mission and working towards our vision:

- 1 Breastfeeding peer support
- 2 Breastfeeding education of health workers
- 3 Breastfeeding friendly environments
- 4 Public awareness, and promotion of breastfeeding and ABA
- 5 Advocacy
- 6 Organisational sustainability



## 1. Breastfeeding peer support

Provide mothers and parents with practical mother-to-mother and peer support with evidence-based information and the experience of many mothers, enabling them to make informed decisions on their breastfeeding journey.

### Priorities

- Offer universal breastfeeding education, counselling, information and support services to mothers and parents, and their primary support networks
- Increase the reach of our breastfeeding services to diverse communities\*
- Provide breastfeeding support and social connection to parents of all backgrounds in their local communities
- Enhance provision of interactive, digital breastfeeding education, information, and support services

### Outcomes

- Universally available breastfeeding education, counselling, information and support services
- Resources provided to fathers, partners, grandparents and other carers and support people to support and encourage breastfeeding
- Wider uptake of ABA's services by individuals and groups from diverse communities
- Increased uptake of opportunities for face-to-face social connection as well as digital breastfeeding education, information, and support services



## 2. Breastfeeding education of health workers

Provide health workers\* with evidence-based information and research on breastfeeding and educational opportunities to increase their skills and knowledge to support breastfeeding.

### Priorities

- Offer a range of resources for health workers to support breastfeeding dyads
- Provide and promote a range of evidence-based educational services for health workers that support best-practice in breastfeeding management
- Provide high quality training and ongoing education of Australian Breastfeeding Association volunteer breastfeeding counsellors and educators

### Outcomes

- Increased health worker uptake of ABA breastfeeding education opportunities and resources
- High levels of satisfaction of ABA volunteers with their training and ongoing professional development



### 3. Breastfeeding friendly environments

Educate and resource Australian organisations, communities, and individuals to see breastfeeding as normal, understand its importance and facilitate a breastfeeding friendly Australia.

#### Priorities

- Offer access to community education and breastfeeding friendly recognition to community organisations and small businesses
- Provide high quality training and resources to businesses and organisations to support formal Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace (BFW) accreditation
- Offer services and resources to enable early childhood education and care (ECEC) providers to meet quality standards for the care of breastfed babies and children

#### Outcomes

- Increased number of breastfeeding friendly environments in Australia
- High levels of satisfaction of employees in BFW accredited workplaces with the level of organisational support for breastfeeding
- Have services and resources fit for purpose in ECEC settings



### 4. Public awareness, and promotion of breastfeeding and the Australian Breastfeeding Association

Ensure the Australian Breastfeeding Association is recognised as Australia's peak body for evidence-based breastfeeding information and support, education, research, and promotion.

#### Priorities

- Strengthen the Association's approach to strategic communication\*
- Promote the Australian Breastfeeding Association as Australia's peak breastfeeding organisation representing the interests of breastfeeding mothers, parents, and their families
- Develop strategic alliances with relevant organisations, research teams and individuals\*

#### Outcomes

- Increased awareness and positive perception of the Australian Breastfeeding Association amongst the media, Australian families, health workers and the wider community
- Increased use of the Australian Breastfeeding Association's breastfeeding information resources and services
- Increased involvement in initiatives that protect and promote breastfeeding



## 5. Advocacy

Strengthen advocacy by engaging with key decision makers within the community, government, and other organisations.

### Priorities

- Engage with key policy and decision makers to advocate for improved protection and promotion of breastfeeding and breastfeeding support
- Advocate for full implementation of the ANBS by federal, state and territory governments
- Advocate for greater breastfeeding education in the training of health workers and their continuing professional development

### Outcomes

- Increased advocacy and engagement with external organisations, key policy and decision makers and stakeholders
- Increased implementation of ANBS recommendations by all levels of government
- Increased engagement with education providers to expand the breastfeeding content of health workers' training and WHO Code compliant ongoing professional development



## 6. Organisational sustainability

Provide for financial security and sustainability, good governance, risk and organisational management.

### Priorities

- Attract and engage a diversity of membership
- Attract, engage, equip, acknowledge and retain volunteers
- Build income streams to secure overall financial performance
- Ensure policies, processes and systems are fit for purpose, transparent, effective and provide accountability
- Manage technology platforms and channels for relevance, performance, and suitability
- Embed post-pandemic revitalisation at all levels of the Association

### Outcomes

- Increased membership (personal and professional)
- Sufficient trained personnel, including paid staff and qualified volunteers, to deliver our key services
- Majority of volunteers are active and engaged
- Sufficient income and secure financial reserves
- Risks are mitigated and managed
- Technological resources adequately serve the needs of the Association and its stakeholders

## Definitions

**Diverse communities** include but are not limited to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)
- low socio-economic background or low education level
- young mothers (aged under 25 years)
- LGBTQIA+
- people with a disability.

**Strategic communication** describes the communication principles, strategies, and initiatives used to further an organisation's goals, mission, or values.

**Health worker** includes health professionals and ABA qualified volunteers who are health workers under the *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* (the WHO Code), bound by the requirements of the Code to encourage and protect breastfeeding.

**Relevant organisations, research teams and individuals** include but are not limited to other not for profits/for purpose organisations and volunteer involving organisations, health departments, professional organisations, and care facilities including hospitals, other organisations with interests in breastfeeding, women's organisations, universities, researchers, and journalists.



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