



MEDIA RELEASE
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Australian Breastfeeding Association celebrates 60 years

During 2024, Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) will be celebrating 60 years of trusted breastfeeding support.

“Our 60th year is time to reflect and acknowledge the changes in society that have impacted mothers, babies, and families,” said Ms Marshall-Cerins, ABA’s Executive Officer. “For over 60 years ABA has provided practical mother-to-mother peer support and up to date and evidenced -based information to mums, parents and families.”

The founder of the Australian Breastfeeding Association, Dr Mary Paton AM, had her first child in the 1960s and struggled to breastfeed which made her think about how breastfeeding support could be given to new mothers. She founded the Nursing Mothers’ Association (NMA) in Melbourne in 1964 with the aim to support and educate mothers on a mother-to-mother basis and to educate the community.

“Back in 1964, Mary with five keen mothers met to gather information about breastfeeding, sharing tips and knowledge to form the Association. NMA grew by word of mouth as members started to bring along their friends,” said Ms Marshall-Cerins. “Extensive publicity helped to spread the Association Australia-wide.”

In the early years, the Association talked to 300 Baby Health Centre sisters in Melbourne and arranged introductions to hospitals, medical and nursing schools, made mention of the Association in the Medical Journal of Australia and quietly spread the word in government circles.

“ABA would not be where it is today if Mary and the founding mothers had not had the vision to plan an Association with a Code of Ethics and credibility within the medical and allied professions,” said Ms Marshall-Cerins. “Six decades down the track, ABA remains an organisation with a diverse and dedicated team including hundreds of highly trained volunteer breastfeeding counsellors, breastfeeding educators and office bearers.”

Today, ABA’s reach to mothers and parents across Australia is bigger than ever. In the last year alone ABA volunteers have supported more than 60,000 calls and web-based chats on the National Breastfeeding Helpline and LiveChat services. More than 1.4 million families have used the Association’s worldclass online resource hub of breastfeeding and parenting information. ABA’s 600+ volunteer breastfeeding counsellors and educators also run free local support groups, Breastfeeding Education Classes and provide feeding advice at community events across Australia and so much more.

ABA has adapted to community changes over time but still maintains Association core principles. The recently launched Newborn Virtual Village program connects and supports new families from every corner of the country, and the ABA mum2mum app provides personalised, online breastfeeding information to mothers, parents and families at their fingertips. As Mary often says, “The Association will be necessary for years to come as every new mother requires the shoulder of an experienced mother to nurse their baby.”

The Nursing Mother’s Association of Australia name changed to Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) in 2001 retaining its core aims and clear purpose of being recognised as the authority for breastfeeding information and support in Australia.

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