

Media Release

Monday 26 October 2020

Urgent action needed to support maternal health and deliver Government's National Breastfeeding Strategy

The Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) is calling for urgent implementation and funding of the Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy (ANBS) to enable women to reach their breastfeeding goals and achieve optimum maternal health outcomes during and beyond the global health pandemic.

In 2019, the Council of Australian Governments agreed to the ANBS, which provides a framework for action to help develop informed government policies and programs that support mothers, babies and their partners through their breastfeeding journey.

The ANBS outlines priority areas that address the structural and cultural enablers that impact breastfeeding and help to develop a supportive and inclusive environment for breastfeeding. Focused on empowering women and ensuring high-quality and accessible support is readily available, the ANBS aims to enable 40% of Australian babies to be fully breastfed to 6 months of age by 2022.

Naomi Hull, ABA Senior Manager Breastfeeding Information and Research, says implementation of the ANBS is crucial to improving maternal health outcomes - particularly during the global health pandemic - and developing a breastfeeding friendly society.

"Breastfeeding is a significant part of maternal health. Unfortunately, our current environment sees structural and cultural factors negatively affecting many women's ability to breastfeed," Ms Hull said.

"The ANBS is an important step to addressing these - but more funding, information and support is needed to improve outcomes.

The Australian Breastfeeding Association is eager to see follow through on the ANBS action areas over the coming years and continue to support improvements in maternal health. ABA is here to empower women wherever they are in their breastfeeding journey."

Breastfeeding has an ongoing, positive effect on women's health. Women who breastfeed are less likely to have endometriosis, have reduced rates of some cancers, including breast, ovarian and endometrial, and are less likely to develop Type 2 diabetes later in life. Breastfeeding for over 3 months also helps to reduce visceral fat, which is thought to be linked with a reduced incidence of metabolic syndrome, and high cholesterol. This means less cardiovascular disease in women who breastfeed.

However, many women find it impossible to continue breastfeeding beyond the first few weeks and only 15% of babies are fully breastfed to 6 months in Australia, marking an area for critical improvement to boost maternal health.

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For information on ABA's support services: <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bf-info/aba-services-downloadable-flyer>

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 leading authority on breastfeeding, we support, educate and advocate for a breastfeeding inclusive society. <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/>

About the Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and Beyond (ANBS)

The Department of Health, on behalf of the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, developed the Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and Beyond to support breastfeeding within Australian communities. Developed in collaboration with all states and territories through the Breastfeeding Jurisdictional Senior Officials Group, a Breastfeeding Expert Reference Group, and public consultation, and using recent research on effective strategies to support breastfeeding, the ANBS seeks to provide an enabling environment for breastfeeding. More information at: <http://www.coaghealthcouncil.gov.au/Portals/0/Australian%20National%20Breastfeeding%20Strategy%20-%20FINAL%20.pdf>