Annual Report
2015-2016
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More than 50 years ago, on 13 February 1964, Mary Paton hosted a meeting with five other women committed to breastfeeding. These women were the Founding Mothers of the Nursing Mothers’ Association, now known as the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA).

Today, ABA is one of the largest volunteer organisations in the country, with more than 1,300 volunteers providing valuable support, information and assistance to breastfeeding mothers across Australia. Our volunteers are our greatest resource, generously donating their time to ensure that ABA can continue to provide vital services, support and information to mothers and their families. Volunteers are the life-blood of organisations like ABA and their remarkable contribution, as they work to help us achieve our mission, is to be celebrated and acknowledged.

Membership continues to be a focus and this financial year new initiatives were developed and implemented to encourage and promote ABA membership. We trialled new communication models, including targeted membership invitations to National Breastfeeding Helpline callers and to attendees who visited the ABA stand at parent and baby expos around Australia.

Expos are manned by ABA volunteers who are available to discuss a range of topics, provide breastfeeding information and support and share the many benefits of becoming an ABA member. ABA’s three key social media platforms, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram were also well utilised to share with our followers the benefits of becoming an ABA member.

Along with the initiatives above, a Membership Working Group, with representatives from all branches was established in February 2016. This group works closely with the Marketing and Finance teams at Head Office to identify initiatives and promote membership that will assist ABA in achieving and exceeding our annual membership targets.

As we approached the end of 2015, funding for the National Breastfeeding Helpline was only confirmed to June 2016. With more than 80,000 individuals calling the Breastfeeding Helpline in the past year, it was vital that funding was secured to ensure this much-used service could continue to support breastfeeding mothers. A successful community campaign encouraging Government to continue to fund the service saw support for the National Breastfeeding Helpline come from many areas: business, individuals, community organisations, members and non-members. We received formal notification in November 2015 from the Federal Government that funding would be available for another year, through to June 2017. Further to that announcement, we were advised in May 2016 that funding for the National Breastfeeding Helpline is secure until June 2019.

We are committed to ensuring that we achieve our mission to support, educate and advocate for a breastfeeding inclusive society, thus we continue to identify and develop new services and platforms that will support a new generation of mothers. During the past year we piloted a very successful web-based chat service, LiveChat. The aim of this service is to provide real-time, accessible breastfeeding information and support. LiveChat sits alongside the National Breastfeeding Helpline and the ABA website as a complementary service.
To provide further support to our branches, we began the centralisation of branch finances, following significant consultation and discussion. The finance function of each branch — accounts, payroll, reporting etc — will now be brought into Head Office and managed by the national finance team. Branches will remain responsible for budget development and management but will now be able to focus their time and resources on breastfeeding support and education. Head Office centralised the SA/NT branch finances in June 2016 and work will begin on the remaining branches in the next financial year. This will continue until all branch finances are centralised. Significant work has been undertaken to develop and enhance the organisation’s revenue streams, to ensure that we remain viable with long-term sustainable, financial security in the years to come.

This year’s National Mothering Week Campaign, held in the first week of May, was a great success. The campaign was designed to give recognition to the people who support mums on a day-to-day basis — the partners, the family and the friends who are there as a shoulder to lean on when a mum needs it. It provided mums with an opportunity acknowledge and thank those that help them out.

Our advocacy work has been particularly focused on appropriate marketing of infant formula in Australia. ABA played a key role in advocating for a shorter timeframe to be applied to the Infant Nutrition Council’s application for reauthorisation of the Marketing in Australia of Infant Formula (MAIF) Agreement. We continue to work with Government and in the past year we have seen a particular focus on ensuring that a new National Breastfeeding strategy is a priority.

On behalf of the Board, we would like to extend our thanks to all who enable ABA to support mothers to achieve their breastfeeding goals — our national and branch teams, community educators and breastfeeding counsellors and all who work at national, state and local level to support, educate and advocate for breastfeeding.

We would like to thank all the Directors for their contributions to the Board throughout the year. In particular, we would like to acknowledge Alicia O’Donoghue who stepped down from the Board during this reporting period. ABA has been very grateful for her knowledge and commitment during her tenure and we wish Alicia well in her future pursuits. The Board also welcomed two new Directors during this reporting period, Cate Uhe and Louise Pennisi.

“The ABA Board of Directors is committed to ensuring the Association is well placed to achieve our mission”

Rachel Fuller
President

Rebecca Naylor
Chief Executive Officer
Association overview
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.

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

Our stakeholders include:
- Mothers, babies and their families
- Our members
- Our volunteers and employees
- Government at all levels
- Health professionals
- Our funding bodies
- Our supporters
- The Australian community
- Our corporate partners

The Australian Breastfeeding Association is a voluntary organisation founded by six mothers in 1964. The ABA encourages and supports mothers who wish to breastfeed their babies while creating in the community an awareness of the importance of human milk. Since it was founded, the Association has spread to all Australian states and territories to become one of the country’s largest women’s not-for-profit organisations and Australia’s leading authority on breastfeeding.

ABA is supported by our trained breastfeeding counsellors and community educators who provide phone, online and community support. At the end of June 2016 there were 735 trained breastfeeding counsellors, 398 community educators and 366 trainees. Breastfeeding counsellors are mothers who have breastfed their own children and completed their Certificate IV in Breastfeeding Education or equivalent.

Community educators are trained volunteers who promote breastfeeding in the community. They hold a nationally-recognised Certificate IV in Breastfeeding Education (Community) or equivalent and can be male or female. All ABA volunteers continually update their breastfeeding knowledge and skills through ongoing training.

The Board has completed significant work this year on strengthening the organisation’s governance, structures and processes. This year is the final year of our current Strategic Plan and the work of the Association has continued to support our vision, mission and key result areas. Strategic Planning for the next 3 years will commence in 2016/2017 and will guide us through to 2019.

The CEO and Senior Management Team continue to work closely with volunteers to deliver on the Strategic Plan for the Board, thus ensuring we continue to provide excellent services and support to mothers, babies and their families.
Objectives

Breastfeeding support
Provide mothers with practical mother-to-mother support and information, enabling them to establish and continue breastfeeding.

Organisational viability
Provide for financial security and economic sustainability by diversifying income streams, protecting and increasing the real value of our financial assets, investing well and using our financial and people resources with economy.

Training, education & resources
Provide high quality and accessible training, education and resources to our volunteers, health professionals and the wider community to ensure skilled, knowledgeable and practical breastfeeding support for mothers.

Advocacy
Strengthen the advocacy work of the Australian Breastfeeding Association in order to improve breastfeeding outcomes and through participation in breastfeeding research and policy development, educate the broader community that breastfeeding is normal.

Public awareness & profile
Maintain the Australian Breastfeeding Association as an authoritative, high-profile organisation that is responsive to changing needs to protect, support and promote breastfeeding.

Governance & organisational development
Develop a well-governed, effectively managed, representative and accountable organisation that values and recognises the contributions of its people.
THE YEAR THAT WAS

Community Engagement

ABA continues to build a strong community. There has been substantial growth in traffic to ABA’s website, with more and more women seeking support and information online. The vast majority of women are viewing the ABA website via their mobile devices - therefore the move to implement a mobile responsive site was significant.

Social media continues to be a critical pillar in building presence, awareness and generating support of the ABA. ABA currently has consistent presence on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, with plans develop a strategy and further enhance the ABA Pinterest account in early 2017.

ABA continues to communicate important messages to the community, particularly relating to breastfeeding research and evidence-based information. The website and social media platforms are pivotal in relaying such messages.

Campaigns such as National Mothering Week are important for building public awareness. Success from campaigns throughout the year have indicated that community engagement is at an all-time high for ABA and new initiatives, including a focus on fundraising, will be key in 2017.

At a glance...

80,000+ calls to the Breastfeeding Helpline

1,550 calls were answered per week

1.95 million visits to the ABA website

16% growth in users visiting the ABA website

84% view ABA website on mobile devices

1,000 ‘Likes’ on Facebook per month (average)

78,400 follows on ABA social media accounts

1,300+ active and engaged ABA volunteers
There are four key priority areas for training and education:

1. **Training** of our future and current volunteers to support the work of the Association.

2. **Continuing education** of our volunteers to ensure they keep their skills and breastfeeding knowledge up to date.

3. **Provision of breastfeeding education** to health professionals and community groups.

4. **Ongoing maintenance and reaccreditation** of nationally recognised courses to make the Australian Breastfeeding Association the leading provider of breastfeeding education.

Consistently positive results from quality indicator surveys of average satisfaction rates of over 80% and feedback from external auditors indicates that ABA provides high quality training.

To achieve this, more than 90 qualified volunteer trainers and assessors (who also maintain their volunteer roles as breastfeeding counsellors and/or community educators) give their time, expertise and commitment to developing the skills and knowledge of our future volunteers.

Our trainees appreciate the guidance and nurturing they receive during their training from their trainers and assessors, workplace mentors, group leaders and other ABA personnel. ABA thanks all those within the Association who have contributed to their training.

2015–2016 was a significant year for training and education as it marked the 10th anniversary of our registration as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and our re-registration as an RTO until 2022.
Continuing education of ABA volunteers

Each year the training and education team meet with the Branch Presidents and Breastfeeding Helpline Managers to ensure continuing education addresses identified needs. This meeting provides a valuable opportunity to plan and talk about how to best support volunteers in their roles.

The improvements to the volunteer reporting process have continued. Further improvements are planned to assist volunteers with tracking and recording their continuing education activities. This year also saw the release of further online continuing education activities available on the ABA website.

Health professional & community group education

This area provides income-producing quality breastfeeding education products for our external clients.

This year saw the commencement of the 22168VIC Diploma in Breastfeeding Management course being delivered. Feedback from course participants has been very positive and a second group commenced the course prior to the end of the year.

The 2016 HP Seminar series was held in February and March 2016 and featured presentations on the ABA Ember Research Project and ABA’s training of community breastfeeding mentors and Deadly Dads. These presentations received very positive feedback and supported our strategic aim of increasing the profile of ABA a leading provider of breastfeeding education and research.

The 22094 Course in Community Breastfeeding Mentoring expired at the end of 2015 and was replaced by a new version of the course. This has allowed us to revise and further improve course materials and feedback has been very positive about the changes.

A major project undertaken during this year was the development of Deadly Dads, a workshop for Aboriginal men facilitated by an Aboriginal man. This project was done in consultation with Robert Monaghan, an Aboriginal Health Consultant. The pilots for the project received very positive feedback and funding for a continuation of the project has been approved.
Maintenance and reaccreditation of nationally recognised courses

The drivers for this area are ensuring our courses maintain accreditation while meeting organisational and learner needs.

- **10170 Community Breastfeeding Mentoring** replaces the expired course **22094 Community Breastfeeding Mentoring**
  During this year we completed the reaccreditation of this course.

- **10243 Diploma in Breastfeeding Management** replaces the expired course **22168VIC Diploma in Breastfeeding Management**
  During this year we completed the reaccreditation of this course.

- **10006NAT Certificate IV in Breastfeeding Education (Counselling) & 10007NAT Certificate IV in Breastfeeding Education (Community)**
  Due to expire at the end 2016 and currently being revised and validated by stakeholder groups and will be submitted for reaccreditation in FY 2016–17.

ABA would like to acknowledge funding received from the Australian Government that has enabled our Association to maintain its registration as a Registered Training Organisation plus provide support and resources to learners, training personnel and our volunteers.

Thank you to all our ABA mentors and training teams for their dedication.

Melanie Carter
Senior Manager Training and Education

“Our trainees appreciate the guidance and nurturing they receive during their training from their trainers and assessors, workplace mentors, group leaders and other ABA personnel.”
Increasingly, the Breastfeeding and Information and Research team is being recognised as experts in the field and being invited to speak at conferences and professional development days for groups including maternal and child health nurses (MCHN) and lactation consultants. Susan Tawia was invited to speak about iron and exclusive breastfeeding at the MCHN VIC 2015 _Talking about Breastfeeding_ conference and spoke about newborn weight losses and gains at the Monash Health Twilight Lactation Seminar 2015.

**Expert advice, submissions and collaborations**

ABA significantly contributed to public policy by making a submission to the CFAR (Centre for Allergy Research) Infant Feeding Guidelines summit held in Melbourne in May 2016. At the conclusion of the summit, allergists agreed to change their infant feeding guideline around the timing of the introduction of solids from 4 to 6 months to around 6 months, in line with the National Health and Medical Research guideline which ABA endorses.

**Research**

When ABA undertakes its own research, and collaborates with breastfeeding researchers, it allows ABA to achieve its strategic priority of contributing to the evidence base for breastfeeding information and mother-to-mother support.

**ABA Research: The EMBER Project**

The Engaging Mothers: Breastfeeding Experiences Recounted (EMBER) project studied information obtained from ABA volunteer lactation histories.

The results showed that 64% of EMBER women exclusively breastfed their babies to around 6 months compared with around 15% in the general Australian population. Of the few infants (35) in the study who had weaned, 69% fed to 1 year and 20% to 2 years. In the general Australian population, only 28% of children are fed to 1 year and 5% to 2 years. Almost 72% of EMBER women consulted with an ABA counsellor at some stage and 93% found the counselling helpful.

The results of the EMBER study were presented at the ABA health professional seminar series in March 2016 in Perth, Adelaide and Sydney and online by Susan Tawia.

Thank you to the Ian Potter Foundation for their support of the EMBER project.
The RUBY study consists of mother-to-mother peer support in a proactive manner for mothers who may not easily have access to, nor readily seek, such support themselves. Telephone support is provided by volunteer peer supporters who have received training from the Australian Breastfeeding Association and RUBY staff in how to provide empathy and encouragement to new mothers in the study.

Over the past 3 years, 237 RUBY volunteers have been trained to provide breastfeeding support to those new mothers in the RUBY study who have been allocated to receive telephone support. The RUBY volunteer called mothers frequently in the early weeks after birth, when women were more likely to stop breastfeeding, with less frequent calls up to 6 months after birth.

Recruitment of all 1152 participants concluded in December 2015, with over 1000 follow-up interviews completed so far and 356 surveys received about women’s experiences of peer support. We expect to finish collecting all the study data by September 2016.

Two conference abstracts have been accepted for oral presentation to the 31st Triennial Conference of the International Confederation of Midwives in Toronto 2017.

Two new collaborations commenced with researchers from the Judith Lumley Centre, La Trobe University in the last year: (1) Rural and city design workshops to promote breastfeeding in public and (2) Cochrane generic protocol for breastfeeding reviews.
Mary Paton Research Award

The Mary Paton Research Award is presented by ABA to stimulate Australian research in breastfeeding. The 2015 competition was finalised and the winner announced. Nicole Bridges from Western Sydney University won $5000 for her research into the support offered to breastfeeding mothers on closed ABA Facebook pages.

An article entitled: The faces of breastfeeding support: Experiences of mother seeking breastfeeding support online was published in the March 2016 edition of Breastfeeding Review.

Dr Susan Tawia
Manager Breastfeeding Information and Research
Breastfeeding-friendly Workplace Program
BFW year in review

It has been a year of consolidation for the Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace (BFW) program after the review and restructure of the program in 2014/2015.

We know that increasingly Australian women are returning to work within the first year of their baby’s life, with around one in four returning to work in the first 6 months.

ABA firmly believes that breastfeeding mothers, with the right support, can successfully combine breastfeeding and paid work if they would like to do so, but our experience is that many organisations are not sure how best to support their employees.

The BFW program helps employers put the right support in place for their employees in two ways.

1. BFW TOOLKITS

The BFW toolkits contain all the information an organisation needs to become breastfeeding friendly:

1. Setting up a breastfeeding and expressing room in your organisation
2. Developing a breastfeeding policy and communications strategy for your organisation
3. Preparing for Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Accreditation.

These toolkits are available for any organisation to purchase and work through independently. They also prepare an organisation for BFW accreditation.

To find out more about the Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Program, visit: www.breastfeeding.asn.au/workplace

Sash de Silva
Team Leader – Breastfeeding Friendly Environments

2. BFW ACCREDITATION

Eligible organisations can apply to be officially accredited as a Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace with all the benefits that accreditation brings, including demonstrating a commitment to gender equality and workplace diversity, optimising recruitment and retention strategies, and building their reputation as a family-friendly employer.

This year, the BFW team worked hard to streamline the accreditation process further, developed many new resources for both working mothers and employers and promoted the BFW program in the media during International Women’s Day and World Breastfeeding Week. Thanks to the support of ABA volunteers around Australia, we have conducted 77 site inspections at workplaces throughout the year.

BFW Statistics 2015/2016

5 new accredited organisations
106 reaccredited organisations
4 accredited organisations 10 years +
77 workplace site inspections completed

50 Accreditation EOs received
46 toolkits sold
7 accredited organisations 5 years +

Sash de Silva
Team Leader – Breastfeeding Friendly Environments
National Breastfeeding Helpline
In the past year the National Breastfeeding Helpline has continued to provide breastfeeding information and support to callers. ABA was excited to secure funding with the Department of Health for a further 3 years and will continue to make the case for an increase rate of funding from previous years.

In the 2015–2016 financial year, the service received an average of 1,550 calls per week with most callers indicating they would call the service again and recommend the National Breastfeeding Helpline to others.*

The overall value of the volunteer contribution to the service is more than one $1.5 million per year. For every $1 spent on the National Breastfeeding Helpline, $6.29 is returned to the community.

We are continually reviewing the service to make improvements and to ensure we are meeting the needs of all callers. This past year has seen two key developments: a triage system on the National Breastfeeding Helpline and the pilot of a web-based chat service.

The triage system supports callers to access answers to those ‘quick’ questions easily. Callers are provided with a few options including to receive an SMS message sent to their mobile phone with the contact details for their local ABA group so they can attend local meetings or contact details for the local breast pump hirer, details of how to call the Medicines Line and the option to speak to a volunteer breastfeeding counsellor. The new triage system is seeing an increase in the number of callers supported via the National Breastfeeding Helpline.

* Caller statistics from 2015 caller survey

During the 2015-16 Financial Year...

647 volunteer breastfeeding counsellors staffed the National Breastfeeding Helpline

almost 31,000 volunteer hours were dedicated to the Breastfeeding Helpline

67 newly qualified volunteer counsellors completed the counsellor practicum and volunteered on the service
A new web-based chat service, LiveChat, has been piloted to complement the service provided by the National Breastfeeding Helpline. People are increasingly searching online for information and the ABA website receives over a million visitors per year. LiveChat is accessible via the ABA website and the pilot has been very well received by the volunteer community educators and breastfeeding counsellors staffing the service and the over 300 users of the service during the 6-month pilot.

* Caller statistics from 2015 caller survey

Counsellor Feedback

Two breastfeeding counsellors share their experiences on training with ABA and volunteering on the National Breastfeeding Helpline.

Deb, SA

Deb lives in SA and has a daughter who is 15 and a son 11. Deb works part-time as a community dietitian and is her local ABA group’s treasurer. She completed her training as a breastfeeding counsellor in mid-2016 and shares some thoughts on her training with us.

“I originally did the community educator training under the old scheme, when my son was about 6 months old. After being involved at this level for a number of years, I decided to do the counsellor training. I really enjoyed training and found online study groups a way I could study ‘with’ others from the comfort of my lounge room and without the need to travel. I also attended training days where I was able to complete many units.

After training I completed the counsellor practicum on the Breastfeeding Helpline. I found this really helpful. I loved empowering mothers to trust in their bodies, supporting them in their breastfeeding and then also having someone to call to at the end of my shift to discuss how the calls went. It was great to get reassurance from my mentor and even better, being able to pick her brains for other ideas. The practicum was an enjoyable and practical way to boost my confidence. I am looking forward to hitting the rosters and supporting the mums of Australia, in my role as breastfeeding counsellor.”

Deb

Belinda, VIC

Belinda lives in VIC with her partner, 3-year-old daughter, two neglected guinea pigs and a chilli plant that has survived the most recent frosts. Belinda qualified a little over a year ago and has been taking calls on the Breastfeeding Helpline since. Here, Belinda shares with us a little about her volunteering on the Breastfeeding Helpline.

“I was over the moon when I could finally jump on the Breastfeeding Helpline after training. I completed the supported practicum, experiencing different shifts and different times to see what each was like. It really helped me find the shifts that were going to work best for my family. Volunteering on the Breastfeeding Helpline is different every shift. The most common calls I receive in my later afternoon/early evening shifts tend to be around the early days and supply. There is also a call about mastitis or biting somewhere in the mix.

I love being able to be there for parents who need good information and support. Knowing that I can provide parents with evidence-based information, free of judgement is important to me. There are shifts when I so look forward to jumping on roster and taking calls and then other times I feel like my own cup is empty and I don’t know how I’ll get through, giving so much of my time and energy each call. But either way by the end of my shift I am so thankful that I made a difference. To know I have really helped someone feels pretty darn good.”

Belinda

Debbie Yates and Nerida Haines
Managers, Breastfeeding Helpline
Promotion & Events
Each year in May the Australian Breastfeeding Association celebrates National Mothering Week. This initiative recognises parenting in all its forms, in the lead up to Mother’s Day. The dates for 2016 were 1–8 May.

This year’s theme ‘Who’s taking care of mum?’ took a different approach to previous years by acknowledging extended family, friends and community. As statistics show that a mother is more inclined to continue breastfeeding if she has a solid support network, National Mothering Week aimed to reach out and thank those who support mum on a daily basis. This included fathers, partners, mothers, sisters, grandparents, friends and more.

National Mothering Week encouraged community engagement through the use of social media. The social campaign requested that the community ‘shout out’ to their support network by tagging people and voicing a personal thank-you message.

ABA also engaged the help of one of our supporters to assist in running a National Mothering Week competition. The competition called for participants to share who their greatest support is, what they have done for them and how they would use the prize to treat their loved one/s. Over 200 people responded, sharing their amazing stories. The winner of the competition was ABA member Jacqueline Jones. Below is an extract of Jacqueline’s story:

“My mother died beside me in a car accident two and a half years ago and I then became a parent to my 12-year-old sister. I didn’t really have the opportunity to grieve until I fell pregnant 18 months later. Knowing that I would not have my mum around for support or to share in the excitement during my first pregnancy, knowing that she would never get to meet her grandchildren and that our children would never get to know her was so hard. But my partner supported me through my grief and was incredible throughout my pregnancy.

National Mothering Week 2016 was very successful and demonstrated the importance of breastfeeding, support for new mothers, the role that those around her play and also in driving community engagement and awareness of the ABA and the services we provide.
World Breastfeeding Week

World Breastfeeding Week is a universal initiative held annually in August every year. ABA marks this occasion by sharing an important message with our community and celebrating the beauty of breastfeeding.

World Breastfeeding Week 2016 was held from 1–7 August and aimed to raise awareness of the links between breastfeeding and the Sustainable Development Goals. The goals were developed in 2015 to help end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity. In support of these goals and in line with the 2016 World Breastfeeding Week theme, ABA opted to celebrate Goal #11 — Sustainable Cities and Communities.

ABA ran a viral campaign to celebrate breastfeeding, its contribution to the planet and the importance of community support for breastfeeding mothers. By utilising the social media hashtag #anytimeanywhere ABA encouraged the community to share photos and stories to inspire and instil confidence in other mums. This proved to be highly successful, as we received over 1300 social media shares throughout the week-long campaign and more than 200 photos were shared to the ABA Facebook page. With the assistance of another of ABA’s supporters, we had a prize donated for the occasion and the ABA was able to drive a high level of mother-to-mother support throughout the week.

Kathy Farrell
Senior Manager, Income Development and Marketing

Anytime.
Anywhere.

See some of the beautiful photos we received during World Breastfeeding Week on the next page.
News from our branches
Last year our Branch worked closely with NSW Health Kids & Families on some fantastic projects. Even though this year our funding situation changed and we did not receive project funding through the Department, we continued to provide our current services to the very limit of our abilities and funding. We look forward to being able to extend our reach even more in the coming years as the Ministry of Health’s new Service Funding Agreements begin to take effect.

Some of the great work undertaken by the ACT & NSW Branch in 2015–16 included:

- Our merger with ACT/Southern NSW Branch is now complete. There has been a lot of communication with the ACT members through the Branch Teams Conference and regular Branch Meetings and we are sharing some great ideas for the future of the Branch.

- The initial pilot of the Deadly Dads program, funded by NSW Health, continued in the second half of 2015. This innovative program was developed by ABA in consultation with Robert Monaghan, an Aboriginal Health Consultant. The workshop program provides Aboriginal men with breastfeeding education so they can support men in their communities. NSW Health is continuing the trial and development of this program with ABA.

- Our multi-language booklets ‘How Breastfeeding Works’ are now available in eight languages. They are on the Online Breastfeeding Café site and will soon be available on the national ABA website. Additionally, over 3600 print copies have been sent to local health districts (LHDs) this financial year.

- We held a number of Community Mentoring Workshops for Aboriginal women with the additional achievement of having an Aboriginal woman qualified as a community educator. This program offers intensive support for Aboriginal women to become breastfeeding counsellors.

- In this financial year there have been 143 training meetings held around NSW including 13 training 2-day weekend workshops. As a result of this activity, volunteer numbers continue to increase as more and more counsellors and community educators complete their training.

- The ACT/NSW Branch supported a 2-day special Pregnancy, Birth and Early Childhood EXPO at Olympic Park in Nov 2015. We also had a stand at the Pregnancy, Babies and Children’s EXPO in May 2016, where over 550 scans were taken of our QR code by visitors to the ABA stand.

- This year we reached out to health professionals at major talks in Orange and the Sydney CBD, in addition to our regular weekly talks at the Royal Women’s Hospital. We also continued to provide trade display tables at Nepean, Blacktown and Liverpool health professional seminars and conferences.

The merger with the ACT Branch and the newly formulated Branch Plan have enhanced our focus on how best to utilise our volunteer power. With a dedicated team of over 400 volunteers to assist our 2½ FTE paid staff in the Branch (which amounts to about 5–6 part-time staff), we continue to have an integrated, organised and passionate team full of enthusiasm, energy and new ideas.

Our small team of volunteers in the ACT/ Southern NSW region (formerly ACT/SNSW Branch) have continued to actively engage with our local communities to promote and advocate for breastfeeding. They have maintained a strong focus on membership over the year, which has seen numbers of new members grow and an increase in the rate of membership renewals.
Membership is also driven by the breastfeeding education classes that are consistently delivered in the region. These are in high demand and very well regarded by attendees.

This year we have had an influx of trainees. Regular training workshops have supported our trainees, the majority of whom are progressing steadily through their course. This places the region in a good position for continuing the services we have been delivering and compensating for volunteers who have decided to move on from their roles with ABA. The region is also looking forward to working on our program Breastfeeding resources and support for the ACT region over the coming 3 years, supported by funding from ACT Health.

Nicole Bridges
ACT/NSW Branch

The 2015–16 year started off in a position of uncertainty. In July we had lost our Queensland Health funding and had temporarily moved into a more affordable office space, while continuing the search for a suitable, long-term location. By the third week of July we had received a phone call from the QLD government to say that the decision to cease funding to ABA QLD had been reversed.

We have continued to work with Board Connect (Consultative Company, funded by QLD Health) as opportunities relevant to us come along. We find this a great opportunity to network with other community groups in Queensland.

We moved into a new office location in December and have found this space to be a success. The meeting room is frequented by volunteers for various uses and is often a hive of activity.

We held a successful Regional teams’ weekend in November, enabling our training team to rejuvenate and plan for the following year’s activities. We have also begun a specific training budget to assist our trainees to attend metropolitan training weekends and to assist our trainers and assessors with their travel costs.

Our Branch Conference was in May. This year our theme was Nurturing: Taking Care of Yourselves and Others. It was a great success, with some positive feedback. Planning has commenced for next year.

Branch Office breast pump hire has been slow to get off the ground as word gets around the hospitals that we can still hire pumps after the closure of Mothers Direct. We have created some trifold brochures for promotion of all breast pump hire locations in South-East QLD and these are distributed to the major tertiary hospitals and pharmacies.

We are so pleased to have such a dynamic, passionate and willing team in Queensland who do such a fabulous job. We are so well supported by our office staff, so a big thank you goes to them also. They are invaluable in the support they give to our volunteers.

Naomi Hull
Queensland Branch President
A significant highlight and accomplishment for the SA/NT Branch has been the centralisation of finances and administration with Head Office (we were the first branch to do so). This was achieved thanks to the incredible support of Head Office staff and our office administrator, who have all supported these changes and communicated well, ensuring that the process could evolve as smoothly as possible. We are grateful for the ongoing support and experience by our Office Administrator – it has been highly valued within the Branch.

The NT Branch have also supported this transition, providing Head Office with the information required to facilitate centralisation of the services required in the region. We have appreciated and valued the professionalism of the NT Branch as we have worked to improve our partnership.

Despite a reduction in volunteer numbers, the Limestone Coast accepted the challenge to coordinate the 2015 SA/NT Branch Conference in July/August at Nunyara Conference Centre in Adelaide. Distance did not impact their enthusiasm, as we continued to build team spirit at the Conference. All attendees valued the opportunity to socialise, praising the great efforts of our volunteers and trainees while participating in professional development, as well as increasing the passion and motivation of all volunteers.

Our Branch Training Manager and the training team worked extremely well together to provide nurtured support, leading to a successful completion rate by mid-2016. Rostered training days and online groups support the training of each individual, no matter their distance from their trainer. In addition, involvement in the Parenting, Babies & Children’s Expo was a valuable opportunity to connect with new mothers and their families.

Breastfeeding Education Classes were held every two months in SA and monthly in NT. Run by our volunteers, the classes provide invaluable support and information to expecting parents. In SA we have identified the need for greater promotion of the classes within our community and amongst health professionals, which will remain a focus for the year ahead. Additionally, the cost return is also due for review to ensure viability of the classes, considering the time and effort required by volunteers to coordinate these classes.

Funding from the SA and NT Government has also been approved for another year and is now coordinated through the Department for Education and Child Development. This has not had any impact on our partnership. One significant change however was the end of our tenancy agreement. The additional space we were utilising at the Children's Centre is now required by them. Securing suitable office space within a limited budget will pose a challenge, however new premises are required by 30 October 2016.

It has been an eventful year and we are grateful for the ongoing support of the Branch Office, along with the northern and southern volunteers who have dedicated so much for their time to supporting mothers and babies in their communities.

Roseanne Fisher
Branch President SA/NT
Tasmanian Branch

TAS Branch held a successful Branch Conference in September at a venue in the south of the state. Participating volunteers were able to meet and hear directly from the CEO, Rebecca Naylor. We celebrated volunteers receiving Years of Service Certificates. These included breastfeeding counsellors Janet Stephens and Helena Gammon (35 years each), Elisabeth Wilson (30 years), Lynne Matton-Johnson (25 years), Charlotte Fielding and Helen Grainger (20 years) and Melissa Krushka (5 years). Suzanne Groom was also presented with her well-deserved Honorary Life Membership Certificate by the CEO and the Branch President, which had been awarded at the end of 2014 for her significant and ongoing contributions to ABA at the local group, regional, branch and national levels.

A successful Branch Training Weekend was held in Hobart in early March 2016. This was followed by the Health Professional Seminar, Breastfeeding: Making Connections, which was held in Hobart on 19 March. Thank you to all involved for both these events.

We have welcomed five newly qualified volunteers to the Branch over the past financial year (three breastfeeding counsellors and two community educators, including a re-qualifying breastfeeding counsellor). Our breastfeeding counsellors contributed to the Breastfeeding Helpline roster and, in June 2016, we achieved a participation rate of 70% for the first time. We also have some community educators who have taken shifts on the new initiative, LiveChat, which they have very much enjoyed.

Despite Tasmania Branch’s small membership and volunteer base, nine local groups are being maintained in the state, providing regular get-togethers and support for mums and mums-to-be, as well as community education and breast pump hire services. Thank you to everyone who supports our groups, the Branch and the organisation, nationally. We look forward to a fruitful 2017.

Tana McMullen
TAS Branch President
Victorian Branch

Victorian Branch volunteers have continued to provide high-quality support and assistance to mothers and babies across the state.

With the ongoing support of the Victorian Department of Education and Training, the branch conducted two major projects. The Hospital Resource Project provided local groups with a resource box to deliver to their local public hospital. The box contained a range of ABA resources and provided local groups with a way to begin building or strengthening their relationship with their local hospital and promoting the services ABA offers to mothers and health professionals.

The second major project was the Santha Traill Memorial Project, in honour of a Victorian volunteer who passed away suddenly.

She worked closely with her local indigenous community and Victorian Branch was pleased to be able to offer the community a chance to participate in a Community Breastfeeding Mentoring workshop in her memory.

In addition to these major projects, local groups and regions across the branch have conducted more than 80 Breastfeeding Education Classes and have continued to support the mothers and babies of Victoria through local group meetings, providing feed and change tents at local events, talks to secondary school students and the training of new volunteers.

Thank you to everyone who has supported us throughout the year. Your help is greatly appreciated.

Kathleen Mather
VIC Branch President

WA Branch

Western Australia held a successful branch residential conference in September 2015 which delivered a busy professional development program to volunteers from all over the state. During our conference dinner, WA was fortunate to present its fifth honorary membership to Judith Lee for her outstanding leadership of the WA branch and significant commitment to the Association as a breastfeeding counsellor.

A big focus has been on encouraging membership, breastfeeding education classes and community awareness of the Association. We participated in a number of events including the Perth Pregnancy, Baby and Children’s Expo where we successfully signed up around 30 new members.
We gained 10 new health professional members from the Health Professional Seminar in March and in the same month, we were invited to participate in the World’s Biggest Playgroup Day event. We have attended many smaller community events throughout the state and continue to utilise opportunities for awareness and promotion.

A big challenge has been the geographical isolation that many volunteers and members face. Through the use of technology and social media we are working on connecting and supporting our members where possible. WA currently has 15 local support groups with 7 in Perth and 8 spread throughout the rest of the state.

Breastfeeding Helpline participation continued to rise with 81% of WA breastfeeding counsellors taking calls on the National Breastfeeding Helpline in the month of February and we continue to sustain a participation rate above 70%. In the 2015/2016 financial year we saw 10 volunteers complete a Certificate IV in Breastfeeding Education and qualify as breastfeeding counsellors and community educators.

In October 2015 we were all shocked at the sudden passing of one of our volunteers Laurel Pepper. This was a significant loss for WA because of Laurel’s active involvement in her local group, region, branch and training. She was a wonderfully dedicated volunteer and continues to be missed.

The WA volunteers continue to work hard to support not only our members and the wider community, but to support each other in our volunteer roles. They are an absolute pleasure to work with and we have made some wonderful achievements, I look forward to what we can achieve in the next year.

Emma Hitchens
WA Branch President