

# BREASTFEEDING AND WORK

- Let's make it work



**COMMUNITIES**  
latching on to  
*Breastfeeding*

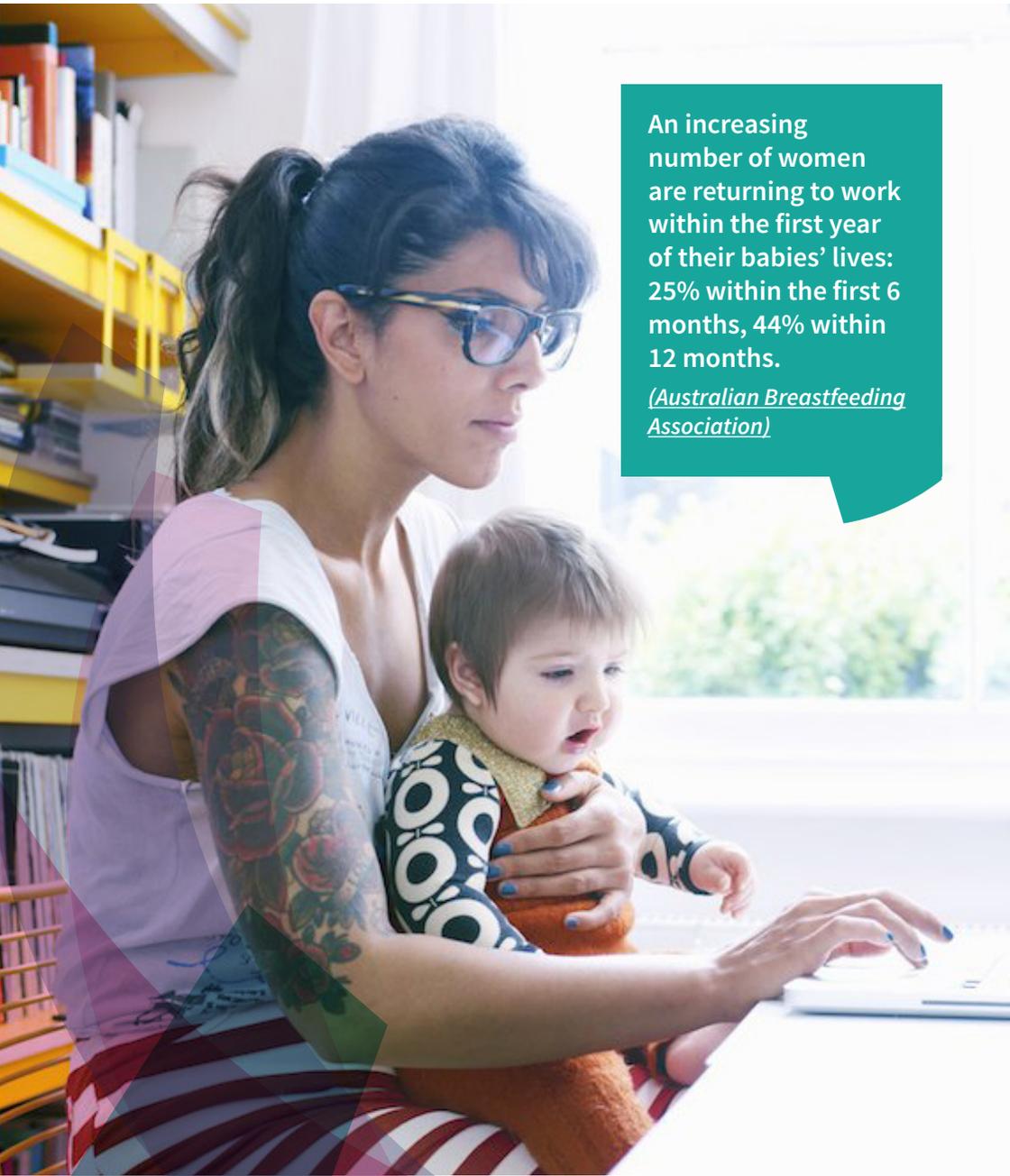


## INTRODUCTION

The ‘Communities Latching on to Breastfeeding (CLBF)’ social marketing campaign is designed to promote breastfeeding through strengthened community supports and supportive environments. Its vision is that all people feel supported by their community to breastfeed and that communities encourage and enable women to breastfeed without fear of stigmatisation. This includes communities that provide facilities and policies that are informed to family needs. This, among other things, may take the shape of adequate change care facilities in shopping centres, breastfeeding friendly workplaces, businesses that display Breastfeeding Welcome Here signage and a general attitude of respect and courtesy shown to women when breastfeeding at home or participating in community life.

Developing this ‘Breastfeeding and Work-Let’s make it work’ booklet is just one way that the CLBF campaign supports workplaces to enable women to breastfeed. In this booklet you will find information about:

- the benefits of breastfeeding to both families and employers,
- how employers can support those who are on parental leave and returning to work,
- how businesses can support customers/clients to breastfeed at their facility, and
- the roles that local government and childcare providers have to play.



An increasing number of women are returning to work within the first year of their babies' lives: 25% within the first 6 months, 44% within 12 months.

*([Australian Breastfeeding Association](#))*

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this handbook is to help employers and senior management to create a supportive environment for all families returning to work after having a baby.

## BACKGROUND

In order for a newborn to get the most nutritional benefit, [The World Health Organization](#) recommends breastfeeding until your child is at least two years old and for the first six months of the baby's life, doing it exclusively, meaning that the baby does not require any other nutrients other than what they are receiving from breastmilk.

In November 2011, 190,000 (53%) of mothers of a child under two who had a job while pregnant had returned to the workforce. A further 16,000 mothers who did not have a job while pregnant, started working after the birth of their child. The average age of their child when they started or returned to work was 28 weeks ([Australian Bureau of Statistics 2014](#)).

Unfortunately one of the greatest obstacles many women face when returning to work is how to continue breastfeeding their baby in line with the guidelines. Discrimination in the workplace against mothers is pervasive and despite taking very short periods of parental leave, fathers and partners also face discrimination ([Australian Human Rights Commission 2014](#)). The most commonly reported main reason given by mothers who started or returned to work was in order to keep their job or their employer had requested their return (26%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2014). Without the right support, a significant number of women experience anxiety, choose to delay their return to work, reduce their work hours or leave their jobs altogether. This is not good for employers or their bottom line.

Workplaces can make the transition to returning to paid work easier for breastfeeding women by offering flexibility in work practices, suitable facilities for breastfeeding or expressing and storing breastmilk, and a culture that is supportive of breastfeeding and is documented in formal workplace policies. Not only employers, but businesses, councils and childcare providers have a big part to play in supporting those returning to work after having a baby.



# BENEFITS

Helping breastfeeding employees return to work from maternity leave not only demonstrates a supportive and caring approach, but it makes good business sense. It is an innovative way to meet organisational objectives. Being registered with the [Achievement Program](#) will allow your business to be supported in becoming a Family Friendly workplace, including but not restricted to:

- providing appropriate facilities
- developing suitable workplace processes and policies (see appendix 1 for a policy template, and
- documentation that supports breastfeeding women to meet both their work and family commitments.

## BENEFITS TO THE EMPLOYER

- **Optimises recruitment and retention strategies:** Promoting your status as a family-friendly workplace in recruitment advertising gives employees and potential candidate's confidence about the quality of breastfeeding and family support provided in your workplace. Creating a supportive breastfeeding and family friendly environment can deliver significant cost savings associated with improved retention rates, earlier return to work, duration of service and reduced recruitment and re-training costs.
- **Builds your reputation as a family-friendly employer:** Formalising workplace policies indicates a commitment to creating a workplace culture that is supportive of breastfeeding needs. It demonstrates transparency and shows you are serious about helping women and men balance work and family commitments. Typically, this is reciprocated through increased employee loyalty and motivation, resulting in improved productivity.
- **Enhances cost savings associated with a healthier, happier workforce:** Research shows breastfed babies tend to be healthier, so parents and carers are more likely to require less time off work to care for sick children. Anecdotal evidence also suggests bottom-line benefits from reduced absenteeism, and minimising disruption to work flow:
  - ▷ New mothers who are not breastfeeding have 3 times as many 1-day absences from work as breastfeeding mothers, as their children are sick more often. (Cohen, Mrtek, Mrtek, *Am J Health Promotion*, 1995)



- **Demonstrates commitment to equal opportunity and workplace diversity:** By offering breastfeeding support in the workplace you are also promoting equal employment opportunity and enhancing your status as a socially responsible employer. Working towards a breastfeeding/ family-friendly workplace reflects a commitment to the health and well-being of those wanting to have a baby, and pregnant or breastfeeding employees.

## **BENEFITS TO THE MOTHER**

- Less likely to develop:
  - ▷ Breast and Ovarian cancers
  - ▷ Osteoporosis
  - ▷ Type II Diabetes
- Helps the uterus to return to normal size after childbirth
- Cost benefits: not having to pay for formula
- More convenient and accessible: not having to sterilise bottles
- Promotes mother-baby bonding and can deeply satisfy
- Decreased risk of maternal/postpartum depression
- Provides a natural method of birth control and has a 98% protection from pregnancy in the first 6 months after birth of the baby
- Generally healthier baby in the short and long term.

References: Australian Breastfeeding Association 2017, Smith, J. P. et al. 2013, Better Health Channel 2017, The Department of Health 2017, World Health Organization 2017



An open discussion between you and your employee (ideally before she goes on maternity leave) is important to address any fears she may have about returning to work.



# SUPPORTING BREASTFEEDING AS AN EMPLOYER

Returning to work after maternity leave can be a challenge for many mothers. A major issue is their ability to either breastfeed or express breast milk at work. Supporting breastfeeding mothers is a simple initiative that actively promotes work/life balance and workplace productivity.

## WHAT IS INVOLVED IN BECOMING A SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACE?

Your workplace can help make the transition back to work easier, and support mothers to continue breastfeeding by:

- Allowing parents enough time off work in order to get breastfeeding established.
- Providing a comfortable, private and clean space for breastfeeding and expressing breastmilk (this room does not have to be specifically for breastfeeding; this room can have many other functions).
- Ensuring refrigeration facilities are available nearby, so [expressed breastmilk](#) can be stored safely for later use.
- allowing women to take lactation [breaks](#) throughout the work day.
- Providing flexible work arrangements. For example: flexible start and finish times, which can make it easier for mothers to incorporate expressing milk into their day; and if possible for the mother to work from home.
- Ensuring an employee isn't [discriminated against](#) if she continues to breastfeed upon returning to work.
- Creating a family friendly culture in your workplace.

### Examples:

Mary takes two lactation breaks- 1x15min in the morning and 1x15min in the afternoon. She reduced her usual 1xhour lunch break to 30mins to support this.

Anna returned to work when her son was six months old. Anna's mother who lives close by minds him while Anna is at work. Anna wants to continue to breastfeed so she speaks to her supervisor about allowing her to take a break each morning and afternoon so she can go to her mother's house and breastfeed. Anna's employer allows breastfeeding mothers to take lactation breaks of up to one hour per eight hour work day to feed their baby or express milk. This means Anna can take a paid break during work time to breastfeed her son.



## SUPPORTING CUSTOMERS AND CLIENTS AS A BUSINESS

Breastfeeding friendly businesses offer a welcoming attitude and supportive environment for breastfeeding women and carers. All families benefit from this as well as business owners. Being a breastfeeding friendly business promotes you as a community-driven organisation and can increase clientele by offering more services to families.

The Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA)'s [Breastfeeding Welcome Here](#) program was developed to improve community acceptability of breastfeeding in public through the promotion of breastfeeding friendly premises. These can be everything from a café to a hairdresser, community centre or public library.

Venues can receive a [Breastfeeding Welcome Here](#) sticker to display, showing that they are welcome to breastfeeding on their premises. Mothers can look for the Breastfeeding Welcome Here sticker when out and about or check ABA's website listings to find a breastfeeding friendly venue.

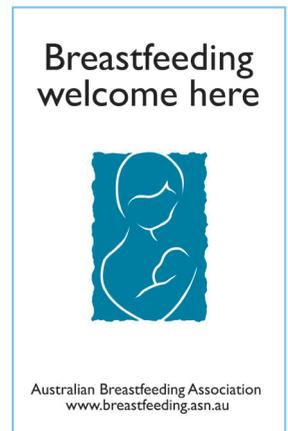
The criteria for breastfeeding friendly venues to display the sticker are to have:

- A welcoming attitude from staff and management
- A smoke free environment
- Room to move a pram

Businesses could also consider providing:

- Enough space for parents with children to move
- Baby care facilities
- Small selection of simple toys which are easy to clean
- An area dedicated to children (play mat or corner)
- Comfortable seating

Make sure that your staff are aware of women's rights to breastfeed wherever they may lawfully be. [Anti-Discrimination legislation](#) protects a women's right to breastfeed in public places.



## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

There are many things that local councils can do to support breastfeeding and family friendly communities. Most strategies to support breastfeeding have a low budget impact and will provide significant benefits to families, the community, the environment and the economy.

Local councils have the ability to help create child and family friendly communities that can contribute positively to the development of family happiness and wellbeing. Creating family friendly environments generates broad economic, social and cultural benefits, and is a long term investment in the life of that community. As Australia's urban population continues to grow, cities need to be designed with families and children's needs in mind to ensure the community provides positive advantages for their development. Cities need to provide a diverse range of services, experiences and facilities to enhance the opportunities for families to fully participate in all aspects of community life.

**Local councils play a significant role in creating local environments that support health and wellbeing. In its day to day planning and operations, councils have an important role to play in shaping the community to be active and healthy.**

## WAYS THAT LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAN SUPPORT BREASTFEEDING:

- Encourage the inclusion of breastfeeding and baby care facilities in local council development planning processes.
- Provide appropriate parenting facilities, environments and messages for breastfeeding in public places. This may include the development, update and dissemination of a list of venues containing breastfeeding friendly facilities within local areas.
- Ensure that parenting facilities are available at community events. This could be a shaded area with some chairs allocated for parents of young children.
- Foster a supportive working environment for breastfeeding employees. This may include promoting breastfeeding friendly workplaces and participation in the [Australian Breastfeeding Association workplace accreditation program](#), or accessing the CLBF resources (see appendix 1 for sample policy).
- Encourage local child care services to adopt policies and practices that support breastfeeding. Ensure that council operated child care services and schemes are supportive of breastfeeding.
- Encourage local businesses to become breastfeeding friendly. This may include participation in the Australian Breastfeeding Association's free [Breastfeeding Welcome Here Program](#) or utilising the Family Friendly Checklist.
- Display the 'Breastfeeding Welcome Here' sticker at your council building.
- Raise awareness about support services available in the local community and ensure that people know how to access these services.
- Support local breastfeeding and parenting support groups, such as those run by the [Australian Breastfeeding Association](#).
- Ensure that the staff of Council services and facilities are aware of [anti-discrimination legislation](#) in relation to breastfeeding.
- Promote and support World Breastfeeding Week (in August every year).
- Ensure the community is pram and family friendly, e.g larger car parks for room to get the pram and baby out safely, longer car parking, and community events which are accessible for those with prams.
- Include a page on breastfeeding information and services on your council website.

## CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Starting child care may be one of the first times that a mother spends longer periods of time away from her baby. This might also coincide with returning to work. Mothers may believe that they need to give up breastfeeding, but this is not the case.

**Child care providers play an important role in supporting mothers during this time of change. Mothers need to know that it is possible to continue breastfeeding while their child is in care**



## WAYS THAT CHILD CARE SERVICES CAN SUPPORT BREASTFEEDING:

- Advertise that your service is supportive of breastfeeding when families approach you for the first time. This may be during an inquiry phone call or orientation to the service.
- Let parents know how you can support them to continue breastfeeding while their child is in care.
- Provide factual and practical information about how to continue breastfeeding after returning to work.
- Ensure that parents are aware of the support services such as their local maternal and child health nurse, the [Australian Breastfeeding Association](#) website, breastfeeding helpline (1800 686 268) and local support groups.
- Provide a comfortable place for mothers to feed. Some mothers who work part time or close-by may wish to come and breastfeed. Other mothers may need to breastfeed when they drop-off or pick up their child.
- Try to provide a private room that mothers can access if they need to express breast milk. They will also need access to a basin for hand washing and may need space in a fridge to store expressed breast milk.
- Support staff and carers to breastfeed. They can be good role models, helping others to know that you can combine breastfeeding and work.
- Ensure that your service has policies and practices supportive of breastfeeding (see appendix 1).
- Understand the [WHO Code](#) and what this means for child care workers. Ensure that your service does not promote or advertise infant formula.
- Audit your environment. What messages does your service give to families about infant feeding? Is breastfeeding represented as the normal way to feed babies?
- Consider posters, displays and images in children's story books?
- For more information on how child care services can support breastfeeding visit [www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bfinfo/breastfeeding-and-childcare](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bfinfo/breastfeeding-and-childcare)

## SUPPORTIVE CHILD CARE POLICIES AND PRACTICES

A breastfeeding policy and documentation of clear processes for managing expressed breast milk will help you to meet the National Quality Standards, Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety, Standard 2.1 and 2.2.

- Have a breastfeeding policy or include breastfeeding in another relevant policy (see appendix 1).
- Document protocols for:
  - ▷ [Safe storage and handling of expressed breast milk](#)
  - ▷ Heating of breast milk
- Display the Australian Breastfeeding Associations [Breastfeeding Welcome Here](#) sticker to let families know you're supportive of breastfeeding.
- Create an environment that shows breastfeeding is the preferred way to feed babies e.g. display posters and books that demonstrate breastfeeding.
- Consider how your service manages and stores products and equipment needed for formula feeding.
- Consider including the following topics in your policy:
  - ▷ Discuss how your service supports breastfeeding on first contact with families.
  - ▷ Describe how you support breastfeeding mothers including the physical space and facilities.
  - ▷ Describe how you support staff to breastfeed.

## FURTHER RESOURCES:

Australian Human Rights Commission - [www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

Australian Breastfeeding Association - [www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au)

Achievement Program - [www.achievementprogram.health.vic.gov.au/](http://www.achievementprogram.health.vic.gov.au/)

Fair Work Ombudsman - [www.fairwork.gov.au/leave/maternity-and-parental-leave](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/leave/maternity-and-parental-leave)

National Health & Medical Research Council: Infant Feeding Guidelines - [www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines-publications/n56](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines-publications/n56)

Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission - [www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/](http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/)

Workplace Gender Equality Agency - [www.wgea.gov.au/](http://www.wgea.gov.au/)

Australian Institute of Family Studies - <https://aifs.gov.au/>

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Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2017, *Discrimination and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women Get the facts: Know your rights*, Australian Human Rights Commission, retrieved 9 May 2017, [www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/get-facts-fact-sheet-10](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/get-facts-fact-sheet-10)

Smith, J. P., McIntyre, E., Craig, L., Javanparast, S., Strazdins, L., & Mortensen, K. 2013, Workplace support, breastfeeding and health. *Family Matters*, 93, 58-73, retrieved 5 February 2018, [aifs.gov.au/publications/family-matters/issue-93/workplace-support-breastfeeding-and-health](http://aifs.gov.au/publications/family-matters/issue-93/workplace-support-breastfeeding-and-health)

The Department of Health 2017, *Breastfeeding*, Australian Government Department of Health, Commonwealth of Australia, retrieved 6 September 2017, [www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-publhlth-strateg-brfeed-index.htm](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-publhlth-strateg-brfeed-index.htm)

World Health Organization 2017, *10 Facts on breastfeeding*, World Health Organization, retrieved 6 September 2017, [www.who.int/features/factfiles/breastfeeding/en/](http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/breastfeeding/en/)

World Health Organization 2018, *Health Topics: Breastfeeding*, World Health Organization, retrieved 19 January 2018, [www.who.int/topics/breastfeeding/en/](http://www.who.int/topics/breastfeeding/en/)

# APPENDIX 1: BREASTFEEDING POLICY

## PURPOSE

Breastfeeding is recommended for optimal infant and young child nutrition. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends breastfeeding for at least two years. Returning to work is one of the barriers identified by mothers as a reason they discontinue breastfeeding and can therefore not reach the WHO recommendations. In order for mothers to have a positive breastfeeding experience and to meet the recommended breastfeeding guidelines, workplaces need to support breastfeeding practices and utilise breastfeeding policy.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Breastfeeding Procedure, relevant legislation, directives, guidelines and policies governing conditions of employment and work and life balance. Please see 'references' for more information.

## POLICY

*(Your organisation name)* is committed to fostering a supportive work environment for employees who choose to breastfeed and/or express milk while at work.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Management

- Provide suitable and reasonable workplace facilities for employees who choose to express breast milk or breastfeed their child (refer to 'Breastfeeding Procedure')
- Provide breastfeeding/ lactation breaks during work hours e.g. 2 x 15 minute breaks per working day (refer to 'Flexible Working Arrangements' policy)
- Ensure employee awareness of breastfeeding rights, policy and facilities
- Seek to eliminate any unlawful direct and/or indirect discrimination on the grounds of breastfeeding
- If, in emergency situations, there is a need to delay the taking of a lactation break, efforts should be made to ensure that the employee is able to take the break as soon as practicable in order to minimise any risks to the employee's health or milk supply and/or the child's health
- Provide pregnant employees applying for parental leave with information regarding the combination of breastfeeding with work (refer to 'Breastfeeding Procedure')
- Understand the legal rights women have to breastfeed in combination with paid work

## EMPLOYEES

- Understand and action the breastfeeding procedures and facilities at work (refer to 'Breastfeeding Procedure')
- Respect and support employees who need to breastfeed and/or express breast milk at work
- Ensure that the workplace facility is left clean and tidy, and follow workplace health and safety and public liability policies and practices

## REFERENCES

Relevant Legislation	Federal Sex Discrimination Act 1984 Work Health and Safety Legislation Fair Work Act (Australia) Public Health & Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic) Public Health and Wellbeing regulations 2009 (Vic) Equal Opportunity Act 2010
Accreditation Standard	Victorian Workplace Achievement Program Australian Breastfeeding Association Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Accreditation Program
<i>(your organisation's related documents)</i>	Breastfeeding Procedure Employee Health & Wellbeing Policy Flexible Working Arrangements Policy Equal Opportunity Policy Child Friendly & Child Safe Policy Leave Policy Breastfeeding and Work Brochure
Additional Information	World Health Organisation Australian Breastfeeding Association Australian Human Rights Commission The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission Australian Government Department of Human Services Fair Work Ombudsman- Australian Government
Acknowledgements	Australian Breastfeeding Association World Health Organisation The Queensland Government's Breastfeeding and Work policy





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