

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED] [Maternal and Paediatric](#)
Subject: Questions on Notice - Australian Breastfeeding Association TAS Branch
Date: Thursday, 28 November 2024 4:24:34 PM
Attachments: [Outlook-qgx4iign.png](#)
[Questions on Notice - Australian Breastfeeding Association, Tasmania Branch \(1\).pdf](#)
[Australian Breastfeeding Association TAS Branch ANBS information Nov 2024.pdf](#)
[ABA TAS-BFWWorkplaces -Nov24.pdf](#)
[ABA-eLearningModules.pdf](#)
[ABA-eLearningModules-BFHI \(1\).pdf](#)

Dear Mary,

I am pleased to provide the answers to the Questions on Notice following the public hearing in Hobart on October 21st 2024.

Question 1 Implementation of the Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy 2019 and Beyond in Tasmania.

- Please see attached information providing a broad overview of the current commitment by both the Australian and Tasmanian governments to the implementation of the Strategy, to date.

Question 2 How many hours do ABA volunteers in Tasmania contribute to the organisation in a month?

- The 23 Certificate IV trained volunteers in Tasmania contribute approximately 600 hours per month.
- There are currently 15 trained Breastfeeding Counsellors.
- There are currently 4 trained Breastfeeding Educators.
- And 4 volunteers have both qualifications.

Question 3 How many workplaces in Tasmania are accredited under the ABA Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces program?

- Four workplaces are accredited in the BFW program:
- UTAS
- Hydro Tasmania
- Public Health Services, Tasmanian Government
- Dept of State Growth, Tasmanian Government
- The attached document provides background information, in the Australian context.

In addition, I would like to provide the following information to the Committee, in response to the discussion about the training of ABA volunteer breastfeeding counsellors and educators.

<https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/volunteering/breastfeeding-counsellor-educator>

ABA also offers a range of breastfeeding education resources for health professionals. Please see the attached flyer and link for details of, for example, free e-learning modules:

- Disaster support for babies, toddlers and their caregivers
- Lactation after infant loss

<https://abaprofessional.asn.au/>

I am happy to answer any further questions the Committee may have, and wish them well with their important work.

Warmly,

Charlotte Fielding

Breastfeeding Counsellor and Educator - Burnie Wynyard Group

Assistant Branch President - Australian Breastfeeding Association Tasmania Branch



[Tasmania Branch | Australian Breastfeeding Association](https://abaprofessional.asn.au/tasmania-branch)

The banner is divided into two main sections. The left section has a blue background and contains the Australian Breastfeeding Association logo (a white silhouette of a mother and child), the text 'In Tasmania claim \$20 refund from your local group for your online **Breastfeeding Preparation Session**', and a circular badge that says 'Virtual Village Plus' with a price reduction from '\$90' to '\$70' for 'Health Care Card Holders'. The right section features a photograph of a pregnant woman sitting on a couch and using a laptop, with a purple overlay box that reads 'Breastfeeding Preparation Session' and 'Live webinar'. At the bottom, a blue bar contains the text 'To locate your group for refund visit breastfeeding.asn.au/tasmania-branch'.



What is the need for Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces?

Mothers can face numerous challenges when returning to work while breastfeeding. There are often barriers and challenges that impact their ability to continue breastfeeding. Workplaces may not provide adequate breaks for mothers to express or breastfeed, leading to concerns about maintaining breastmilk supply. There may also be inadequate private spaces suitable for breastfeeding or expressing breastmilk. Additionally, employers, managers and colleagues may not provide the required support, which can further hinder a mother's ability to continue breastfeeding confidently.

Breastfeeding rates are lower for employed women, particularly women who take shorter periods of maternity leave (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2013). Australian women provide most of the unpaid care for children, which in turn impacts their decisions regarding workforce participation. 1 in 3 women have reported that caring for children has prevented them from starting a job or working more hours. In addition, many women wish to return to work when their child is breastfeeding.

The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet are currently developing a National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality. It highlights that closing the workforce participation gap between women and men would increase the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 8.7% or \$353 billion by 2025. In October 2022, women's workforce participation rate was 62.3% compared to 70.9% for men – a participation gap of 8.6%. Women only make up 39% of all full-time workers, this has remained relatively the same over the past decade (with women making up 35% of full-time workers in August 2012). At every age, less than 50% of women are employed full-time and they earn less money over a lifetime than men. After having children, women often make substantial and lasting changes to their work commitments, whereas men's employment tends to remain relatively stable (Baxter 2023). Removing barriers that prevent women from participating in the paid workforce, such as providing supportive environments for breastfeeding, are crucial for closing the workforce participation gap.

Research indicates that one in two working mothers in Australia experiences some form of discrimination during pregnancy, parental leave, or upon returning to work (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2014). This discrimination not only hinders women's career progress but also increases the risk of women being sidelined from leadership positions and earning lower salaries compared to their male counterparts.

However, under federal, state and territory legislation, it is unlawful to treat a woman less favourably because she is breastfeeding or expressing. This means it is against the law for an employer to refuse to make arrangements to assist employees to breastfeed or to refuse to accommodate their breastfeeding needs (including expressing) at work. Effective from December 2022, the *Fair Work Act 2009* was amended to include protection of breastfeeding from discrimination.

The *Respect@Work* legislation also introduced a new obligation in 2022 to the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, imposing a positive duty on employers to 'take reasonable and proportionate measures' to eliminate discriminatory conduct including workplace sex discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. The Australian Breastfeeding Association's Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace (BFW) accreditation aligns with these new amendments, working with organisations to build workplaces that actively support breastfeeding mothers to return to work.

The BFW accreditation achieves this by providing a framework for organisations to implement policies that promote breastfeeding and establish family-friendly practices. By ensuring that workplaces offer adequate breaks, suitable spaces for expressing milk and a culture of support among employers, managers and colleagues, the program helps remove obstacles that may discourage women from continuing to breastfeed while balancing their work commitments.

This support is not only beneficial for the mothers but also plays a critical role in enhancing overall workforce participation. As more women can confidently integrate breastfeeding into their work lives, the potential for economic growth and a more inclusive society increases.



Do you have examples of how effective these initiatives can be?

Providing safe and respectful work environments improves employee wellbeing and engagement and increases productivity levels and innovation.

From our business case, the benefits are also clear for supporting gender equality. BFW accreditation helps create a welcoming and supportive culture that benefits all employees, not just breastfeeding mothers. This supportive environment boosts team morale and builds a reputation as a family-friendly workplace, which appeals to job seekers. Many organisations use their BFW accreditation as a positive point when hiring, as it signals to potential candidates that the workplace supports family and work-life balance.

Comments received from current accredited organisations:

Thank you. It's been [the] first year for our accreditation. I am very glad we took the step forward to take up accreditation. The team at BFW has been super supportive and friendly in answering our questions and ensuring we are set up for success. Emily has been extremely responsive and I feel grateful for opening up the space for employee's utilisation for their needs.

We have received welcomed feedback from team members regarding our implementation of an adequate space and facility where parents have the privacy, space, time to breastfeed.

The inclusion of our BFW accreditation in our recruitment and induction materials, has been mentioned as a positive action by candidates and new staff. The accreditation aligns with our culture of care and accountability and demonstrates our commitment to our employees experience.

Are there any resources available for workplaces and employers to implement these practices more effectively?

There are a number of resources available to help workplaces and employers implement BFW practices effectively. The BFW accreditation provides a comprehensive online module for organisations to work through which has practical guidance, best practices and templates to support workplaces in creating breastfeeding-friendly environments. This toolkit covers areas such as developing policies, setting up suitable facilities and educating staff.

In addition, the BFW program provides ongoing support to accredited organisations. While the support team is small, they assist workplaces in meeting BFW standards and offer advice tailored to specific organisational needs. In recognition that every workplace is different, the BFW team works collaboratively with each organisation to find the practical solution that works best for them.

The program also works to continually develop resources based on emerging needs and feedback from accredited workplaces, ensuring that the support materials remain relevant and effective.

Is there reasonable uptake of the program and of the accreditation.

The BFW accreditation has seen steady growth, with more workplaces recognising the importance of support for breastfeeding employees. There are currently 134 accredited organisations, with significant uptake within sectors such as healthcare, mining, corporate offices and government departments. Notably, interest is growing in traditionally male-dominated industries like mining and engineering.

Government departments have been instrumental in implementing the BFW program. Currently 10 federal government departments, 8 state government departments and 22 government agencies have achieved BFW accreditation. Several departments are among the longest supporters of BFW accreditation, highlighting a longstanding dedication to supporting breastfeeding mothers in the workplace. The Department of Treasury has held accreditation for 21 years, while both the Department of Veterans' Affairs and Australian Parliament House have maintained their accreditation for 16 years each.

This continued commitment reflects the leadership of these departments in fostering employee wellbeing and aligns with the goals of the *Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy (ANBS): 2019 and Beyond*, which encourages all government entities to adopt BFW accreditation. The ANBS emphasises the creation of supportive environments for breastfeeding in both public and private sectors but specifically calls upon government departments to take a leading role in facilitating such environments by adopting breastfeeding-friendly policies and supporting accreditation programs like the BFW. This strategy was developed by the Australian Government in collaboration with all state and territory governments with input from stakeholders (see table below)

Table 1: 2.3 Action area – Breastfeeding-friendly environments from the ANBS

Action	Detail	Responsibility
Implement the Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace program in government agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Commonwealth, state and territory government departments must seek Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace accreditation from the ABA. 	Commonwealth States and territories
Recognise employers that provide support for breastfeeding mothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise employers that provide support for women to breastfeed—for example, through the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's Employer of Choice for Gender Equality citation. 	Commonwealth States and territories Employers

Tasmanian Accredited Organisations:

- Public Health Services, Tasmanian Government
- Tasmanian Department of State Growth
- University of Tasmania
- Hydro Tasmania Group

Awareness about the options available for education and support, as many people may not know they exist.

While many organisations and businesses may not be aware of the options available for education and support related to BFW accreditation, we actively work to raise awareness through a variety of channels. Our website (breastfeeding.asn.au) provides comprehensive education resources about the BFW program and other returning to work information.

In addition, we utilise social media platforms and our newsletter distribution to share information and success stories to help spread the word about the program. [Media releases](#) also play a role in promoting the BFW program and its positive impact on workplaces across Australia.

We collaborate with local health districts and community groups to further increase awareness and offer targeted support to organisations. To reach a further audience, we also distribute flyers that outline the BFW program and its benefits.

However, it is important to note that our capacity to deliver these educational initiatives is limited by available funding and high workload. Despite this, we remain committed to finding ways to raise awareness and support workplaces in adopting breastfeeding-friendly practices and we would be happy to discuss promotion opportunities with the Tasmanian government for all of their departments and services.



References:

Australian Government, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. (2023, March 8). *National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality: Discussion Paper*. <https://www.pmc.gov.au/office-women/working-women-strategy-gender-equality>

Australian Human Rights Commission. (2014). *Supporting working parents*. <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/pregnancy-and-return-work-national-review-report>

Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2013, December). Workplace support, breastfeeding and health. *Australian Government*. <https://aifs.gov.au/research/family-matters/no-93/workplace-support-breastfeeding-and-health>

Baxter, J. (2023, May). *Employment of men and women across the life course*. Australian Institute of Family Studies. <https://aifs.gov.au/research/facts-and-figures/employment-men-and-women-across-life-course>



Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and beyond Implementation in Tasmania

The [Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and beyond](#) (ANBS) was endorsed by all federal, state and territory Health Ministers in March 2019. Since the launch of the Strategy the Australian Government has focused on the following actions.

- **Action area 3.1 – Universal breastfeeding education, support and information services** Funding for the National Breastfeeding Helpline to provide breastfeeding education and peer support by the Commonwealth government is ongoing.
- **Action Area 1.2 – Prevent inappropriate marketing of breastmilk substitutes** An independent review of the Marketing in Australia of Infant Formulas (MAIF) Agreement has been completed. The government has committed to strengthening the regulation of infant formula marketing.
- **Action area 2.4 – Milk banks** Commonwealth funding to LifeBlood Milk Bank.

There has been no funding allocated for the implementation of the Strategy within Tasmania. The Tasmanian government uses the Strategy to guide action on breastfeeding within its current resources.

- **Action area 1.3 – Policy coordination, monitoring, research and evaluation** Monitoring and some limited reporting, on breastfeeding rates (on hospital discharge).
- **Action area 2.1 – Baby Friendly Health Initiative** Maintaining BFHI accreditation in all Tasmania maternity facilities is ongoing.
- **Action area 2.3 – Breastfeeding-friendly environments** Encouraging early childhood education and care services to support breastfeeding through the Move Well Eat Well program.
- **Action area 2.3 – Breastfeeding-friendly environments** Encouraging the implementation of the Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace program in all government workplaces.
- **Action area 2.4 – Milk banks** Improving access to donor human milk for premature babies in Tasmanian hospitals.
- **Action area 3.1 – Universal breastfeeding education, support and information services** Delivering ante-natal breastfeeding-specific education through Tasmanian maternity facilities.



- **Action area 3.1 – Universal breastfeeding education, support and information services** Some funding for ABA Tasmania Branch was received in December 2023 to support local Certificate IV-trained volunteers to provide free in person mother-to-mother support and peer counselling through local support groups. Increased funding beyond June 2025 is required in order to maintain ABA's free peer support services in Tasmania.
- **Action area 3.1 – Universal breastfeeding education, support and information services** Postnatal support for breastfeeding is provided by the Child Health and Parenting Service.
- **Action area 3.2 – Breastfeeding support for priority groups** Encouraging the development of targeted programs to improve breastfeeding support for priority groups.

Reproductive, Maternal and Paediatric Health Services in Tasmania would be strengthened by greater investment in breastfeeding. This could be achieved through a commitment to implement all actions of the Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy in Tasmania supported with necessary funding. This would improve the health of Tasmanian mothers and babies.