

New initiative launched to support breastfeeding in public

The Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) is launching a new initiative to help promote safe physical spaces for mums to breastfeed while they are out and about, and to raise community awareness of the needs of breastfeeding women and their babies.

The Breastfeeding is Welcome Everywhere program encourages local businesses and community venues to self-identify as being welcoming of all families including breastfeeding women and babies. There are currently 1,060 venues that have signed up to be a part of this program.



L-R: ABA Queensland Branch President Kylie Miller, café owner Chris Zirbel, Senator Larissa Waters, and local mum Kristy Kozera celebrate the launch of the Breastfeeding is Welcome Everywhere program at registered venue Sassafras Café in Brisbane (Supplied: Tricia Head)

National data shows that 96% of mothers in Australia start out breastfeeding, yet by 6 months of age only 60% of babies are still receiving any breastmilk and only 15% are exclusively breastfed.¹ Research tells us that lack of support and negative community attitudes to breastfeeding are key contributors to mothers stopping breastfeeding before they are ready.

Breastfeeding is protected under Australian anti-discrimination legislation. This program ensures businesses and venues recognise the rights of mothers and babies to breastfeed when and where they need. A venue registered as a Breastfeeding is Welcome Everywhere venue is recognised as a comfortable space for families.

“Mothers shouldn’t have to be concerned about where and when they need to breastfeed. It is important that mothers feel respected to breastfeed when their baby needs to,” explains Emily Carrolan, Breastfeeding Friendly Environments Team Lead.

“Perceived judgment from others while breastfeeding in public, unwanted comments or staring, and being made to feel they should cover up are all negative experiences that can impact a mum’s confidence to breastfeed in public or even continue breastfeeding at all,” Ms Carrolan said.

The Breastfeeding is Welcome Here program helps to remove these barriers and reduce social stigma by highlighting the role of breastfeeding friendly communities as an imperative support for breastfeeding women.

“Legislation protecting the right to breastfeed in public does not suffice; there needs to be improved access to breastfeeding-friendly spaces in communities across Australia,” Ms Carrolan said.

Breastfeeding is Welcome Everywhere venues can be everything from a cafe to a hairdresser, community centre or public library. All eligible venues receive a Breastfeeding is Welcome Everywhere sticker for public display in their premises, making it easy for mums to recognise welcoming places they can breastfeed their baby. There is also an [interactive map](#) available for mums to find a venue close by.

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National media enquiries (staffed 24/7) – 03 9686 6096 or marketing@breastfeeding.asn.au

References

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2011). *2010 Australian National Infant Feeding Survey: Indicator Results*. Canberra: AIHW. URL: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=10737420927>