




# Annual report

2022-2023



**Australian  
Breastfeeding  
Association**

## Our Impact 2022-2023

 **200k+** families reached

 **1502** parents attended a local or online breastfeeding education class

 **20k+** health professionals connected with ABA

 **122** Accredited Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces

 **1.4 million** website users

 **125** ABA Local Groups

Our impact 2022-2023 *continued*



53,726

calls received on ABA's National Breastfeeding Helpline



4699

'chats' received by ABA's real-time LiveChat service



679

fully qualified volunteer breastfeeding counsellors and educators



285

trainee volunteer breastfeeding counsellors and educators



42,837

ABA Professional website users



1171

health professionals, from more than 150 countries, engaged in ongoing education



Karen and Amy with their babies at 2023 National Mothering Week at Bondi Junction Group, NSW

October 2023  
Australian Breastfeeding Association

Level 3  
11 Queens Road  
Melbourne VIC 3004

PO Box 33221  
Melbourne VIC 3004

Email: [info@breastfeeding.asn.au](mailto:info@breastfeeding.asn.au)

ABN: 64 005 081 523 RTO: 21659

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## President's report

This year has been a period of revitalisation and change for the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA). The ABA Board, together with Executive Officer Victoria Marshall-Cerins, has overseen several new and continuing projects that will ensure the future of ABA and support breastfeeding.

Following on from the great work of the previous financial year, the ABA website with its new branding went live in August, with ongoing projects to continue its improvement over the coming months. Already the website has had more visits, both from within ABA and from the general public.

A huge thank you to Victoria, the senior managers and their teams and a large group of volunteers for their important work in updating this valuable ABA resource.

With COVID-19, many families have become more aware of the risks of face-to-face interactions. Our ABA breastfeeding educators and counsellors too have different needs.

Volunteering Australia has done extensive research into volunteering in the light of the pandemic and ABA, while doing better than many other organisations, has been affected.

In the light of this, ABA has developed a roadmap to revitalise ABA Local Groups, many of which are unable to offer the level of member support and activities that they did before the pandemic. Membership is an

integral part of this revitalisation and changes are being made to support ABA Local Groups, as well as mothers, parents and their families who prefer to interact online.

ABA now offers a new digital first membership plan. The first stage of the Newborn Virtual Village, launched in September 2022, consists of interactive online sessions about topics of interest for mothers of very young babies. This is being followed up with sessions about popular topics on breastfeeding and parenting as baby grows. These online sessions give ABA Local Groups an opportunity to focus on reconnecting with the mothers and families in their community and building engagement through in-person social activities.

As well as these online offerings, National Support Office is providing other resources that can be used to promote ABA Local Groups and take pressure off the volunteers who lead them.

Long-standing ABA breastfeeding counsellor, Judy Gifford, OAM, died in February 2023 and she leaves a huge legacy. Judy was very active in ABA right to the end, at the local, state and national levels. She also digitised our ABA archives which we are grateful for. Many people in ABA knew Judy in her various roles and she will be sorely missed. An annual 'Judy Gifford Impact Award' has been set up to

'In May 2023 we were given the welcome news that we had secured funding for our Breastfeeding Helpline for another 2 years from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2025.'

honour her memory and the inaugural award will be announced on International Volunteer Day in December 2023.

ABA relies on federal government funding to operate our National Breastfeeding Helpline services, undertake the training of volunteers to maintain these services and provide education opportunities for health professionals. In May 2023 we were given the welcome news that we had secured funding for another 2 years from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2025. This followed meetings in Canberra with the Department of Health, numerous communications with relevant politicians, and a campaign involving ABA members and supporters. Many of these wrote letters to their local MPs letting them know how important and unique ABA is in the peer support of breastfeeding mothers, parents, families and the community. We thank the many supporters who assisted with our campaign to gain this funding.

The ABA Board consists of an inspiring group of directors with expertise in a variety of areas.

At the 26 November 2022 ABA Board meeting, we welcomed Belinda Chambers to the Board to fill the position left by Karin Collinson who retired after giving 5 years of passion and expertise, especially as honorary treasurer for 4 of those 5 years.

## President's report *continued*

Cate Uhe was re-elected, and we are very grateful to continue to benefit from Cate's strategic thinking and attention to detail.

The work of the Board includes overseeing the Association's operations as well as being responsible for its strategic direction, finances, governance and risk management.

A large part of risk management now is cyber security. The Board and executive are working diligently on processes to minimise this risk.

'ABA now offers a new digital first membership plan. The first stage of the Newborn Virtual Village, launched in September 2022, consists of interactive online sessions about topics of interest for mothers of very young babies. This is being followed up with sessions about popular topics on breastfeeding and parenting as baby grows. These online sessions give ABA Local Groups an opportunity to focus on reconnecting with the mothers and families in their community and building engagement through in-person social activities.'



To ensure ABA continues to meet the needs of various communities, the Board set up the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee that meets regularly to prioritise issues and report to the Board.

The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan was finalised by the Board's Strategy Committee. This was based on input from a wide variety of people, including ABA members, breastfeeding counsellors and educators, branch presidents and National Support Office senior managers and their teams. Thanks to everyone who provided input.

After 6 years on the Board, the last 5 as President, this will be my last annual report as I am retiring from the Board. I have really enjoyed working with the group of highly talented people on the Board, the remarkable Victoria Marshall-Cerins, NSO and branch staff members, branch presidents and the many volunteers who keep our fantastic Association running so well. I feel very confident that ABA is thriving and that the passion and enthusiasm that everyone brings to their roles will enable ABA to continue building and growing with the changing needs of society well into the future.

A huge thank you to everyone who plays a role in ABA. Your work is very much appreciated.

**Margaret Grove OAM,  
President**

## Board of directors

### **Margaret Grove OAM, President**

*B.A. (Hons), Dip Ed, M.A., Certificate IV in Breastfeeding Education, Certificate IV in Training and Assessment*

Margaret Grove has been a breastfeeding counsellor since 1983. Her ABA roles over the years include Group Leader, Branch Training Manager and Director.

Margaret was on the ABA Board from 2001 for 7 years, 3 as National President. She returned to the Board in 2018 and has been President since 2019.

Margaret was the community representative on the Advisory Panel for the Marketing in Australia of Infant Formula (APMAIF) from 2009 to 2013.

Margaret and husband Geoff have three children and three grandchildren.

Margaret writes textbooks for Year 11 and 12 in NSW and is a retired maths teacher. Her non-ABA time is taken up singing in choirs, doing Pilates and playing taiko (Japanese drums).

### **Daile Kelleher, Vice President**

Daile is the CEO of a counselling and education service in Queensland with a focus on women's health and well-being and has been a non executive director with ABA since 2020. Daile is the Company Secretary for ABA and has a Diploma of Governance from the Institute of Community Directors. She Chairs the Diversity and Inclusion Board

## Board of directors *continued*

Advisory group and is a member of the Risk subcommittee.

Her governance experience includes committee membership on Ending Violence Against Women Queensland, the Queensland Women's Health Service Alliance, Equality Rights Alliance, QCOSS CEO Network and Queensland Sexual Health Clinical Network. She was the recipient of a Churchill Fellowship in 2023.

She has been a member of ABA since she was pregnant with her daughter Juniper in 2019 and Juniper is a familiar face at ABA meetings.

She lives in Brisbane with her husband, 2 step kids and Juniper as well as a very grumpy cat.

### **Leila Forde, Honorary Secretary**

*Leila Forde (MA, BA(Hons)/Dip Ed, Grad Dip Counselling and Psychotherapy, Dip in Breastfeeding Management, IBCLC, Dip in VET, Cert IV in BE)*

Leila has been a breastfeeding counsellor for 31 years, and is also a breastfeeding educator, trainer and assessor and Learning Programs Manager. She has held a variety of roles in ABA including Group Leader, Regional Rep, and ACT NSW Branch Training Manager.

In her paid work, Leila is a counsellor and psychotherapist, IBCLC Lactation Consultant, and music teacher. She has previously been a secondary school teacher and university lecturer.

In her spare time, Leila enjoys playing the piano and walking her dog. She lives in Sydney with her husband, Kevin, and has two children and one grandchild.

Leila feels honoured to serve as a Director of ABA. She is committed to helping and empowering mothers to breastfeed and to creating a community where breastfeeding is valued and recognised as culturally normal.

### **Dominique Bougoure, Honorary Treasurer**

*Honorary Treasurer from November 2022  
MBAus (Professional Accounting), BBus (Hons), CPA*

Dominique is a financial services professional with over 10 years experience in retail and investment banking in Australia and the United Kingdom.

She works closely with senior executives to develop and execute organisational strategy and successfully deliver key business priorities and goals. She is experienced in financial and business planning, management reporting, operating model design, communications and corporate governance.

Dominique was introduced to ABA through friends and family who have benefited from the Association's support and education services. She thoroughly enjoys contributing as a Board member and playing her part in the ongoing success of ABA, for the benefit of its members and volunteers.

### **Karin Collinson, Honorary Treasurer**

*Honorary Treasurer until November 2022  
BCom MAdvTax CTA*

Karin has been an ABA Breastfeeding Counsellor since 1992. She has held many volunteer roles in the Association, including group leader, and presently is a trainer and assessor with ABA.

Before retiring, Karin's paid work positions included various senior leadership positions within the Australian Taxation Office. She holds a Bachelor of Commerce from UWA, a Masters of Advanced Taxation from UNSW and is a Chartered Tax Adviser with the Tax Institute.

Karin is a passionate advocate for breastfeeding and the need to provide support to parents and workplaces to encourage and increase breastfeeding rates.

### **Louise Brown**

*BSc BDSoc IBCLC Cert IV Breastfeeding Education*

Louise has been a member of ABA since 2002. She has held roles at local, regional and branch level. Apart from her professional knowledge, Louise also brings to the Board governance skills from serving on management committees.

She is passionate about the role ABA plays to ensure breastfeeding women and their families have access to support and evidence-



Right: The ABA Board in August 2023. From left to right: Belinda Chambers, Daile Kelleher, Cate Uhe, Genevieve Finey, Louise Brown, Dominique Bougoure, Margaret Grove, Sally Eldridge, Katie Cross, Leila Forde.

## Board of directors *continued*

based knowledge to guide them on their breastfeeding journeys.

### Belinda Chambers

Belinda Chambers is an IT professional with extensive experience across corporate, not-for-profit, small-to-medium sized business sectors and healthcare in IT management, operations, and project delivery.

Belinda is also an Australian Breastfeeding Association breastfeeding counsellor from the Geelong area, and mother of two boys. As a volunteer, she loves being there to support mums and families in the times that they need it. Belinda enjoys telling stories and creating evidenced-based information resources such as the *Breastfeeding ... with ABA* podcast and blog.

### Katie Cross

*BNursing, Grad Dips in Midwifery and Family and Child Health, RN, RM MCHN*

Member of ABA for 33 years, was a counsellor for 10 years.

Currently working as a Maternal and Child Health Nurse in the outer suburbs of Melbourne.

When not at work Katie enjoys spending time with her grandchildren, running and following AFL football.

### Sally Eldridge

*BA, Grad Cert Public Sector Administration, Cert IV Breastfeeding Community Education*

Sally has been a breastfeeding educator and advocate for ABA since 2003 and held positions at group, branch and national level. Sally had a 32-year career in the Commonwealth Public Service in policy, program and case management roles across several states and overseas postings. In addition to her board position, Sally contributes to the Advocacy Working Group, her local group, and ABA's online breastfeeding preparation sessions. Sally lives in Canberra with her partner and has two adult children.

### Genevieve Finey

*MHealth Management, Grad Cert Diabetes Education, Grad Dip Midwifery, BHealthSc (Health Management), BNursing.*

Genevieve is a registered nurse currently on maternity leave from her position as a Clinical Midwife Manager.

In her professional role Genevieve has worked clinically providing care to women and their families through pregnancy and into their journey to parenthood.

Additionally, she has had experience in childbirth education, policy development, health service reform and human resource management including change management.



Genevieve has lived in Darwin since 2011 with her husband and her breastfeeding journey started in March 2021 with the birth of her daughter, Imogen.

Genevieve has always been a strong advocate for the Australian Breastfeeding Association and its services for women and health professionals. She is delighted to be a board member and to contribute to the Association she has admired for so long.

### Cate Uhe

*BSc (Hons) Grad Dip Ed Dip Business Management Dip Breastfeeding Management Cert IV in Training & Assessment Cert IV in Management (Frontline and Human Resources) Cert IV in Breastfeeding Education*

Cate has volunteered for ABA for over 30 years, across local, regional, branch, national and board levels, and within several states.

Cate has very strong communication and project management skills and an extensive background in human resources and volunteer management through her work in the community sector as a manager. In addition, she has many years of experience in training, coaching and mentoring.

## Executive Officer's summary

2022–2023 was a year of revitalisation for the Association. The year kicked off with the launch of our new website in August 2023. The redevelopment of the ABA website was an enormous undertaking. The website showcases ABA's refreshed look and feel, which rolled out across the Association throughout the year.

The new website was launched with all 120 pages of breastfeeding information having been updated and redesigned. An interactive map has been introduced that enables visitors to find the ABA Local Groups closest to them, the nearest breast pump for hire and where their local breastfeeding-friendly venues are. The web build also included the introduction of a new interface for ABA members, making it easier to access all the inclusions in their ABA membership.

The new website also saw the launch of the digital Volunteer eManual, with new resources and tools to support the essential work that ABA volunteers do with mums, parents and families in our national services and across Australia in local communities.

In 2022–2023, ABA continued to be a major implementation partner to the Government's *Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and Beyond* (ANBS), a landmark strategy designed to protect, promote, support and value breastfeeding in Australia. In May 2023,

after an advocacy campaign during which more than 4600 letters of support were sent to federal MPs across the country, the Australian Government confirmed ongoing funding for ABA's Helpline Services through to June 2025. These funds enable ABA to provide our 24/7 National Breastfeeding Helpline and web-based LiveChat services, as well as to offer ongoing education of health professionals. Our 2022–2023 Annual Report showcases the impacts of these services, and in so many of the other areas outlined as priorities in the ANBS.

ABA's impact in 2022–2023 reached across all three priority areas of *The Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and Beyond*, to support and promote breastfeeding.

### Structural enablers Community education and awareness

ABA volunteer breastfeeding educators and counsellors supported more than 1500 expectant parents to prepare for breastfeeding and life as a new parent in 2022–2023. ABA provides both in-person and online breastfeeding education workshops. We saw a steady return to in-person Breastfeeding Education Classes through the year with ABA Local Groups across Australia offering more classes as the year progressed. Our shorter online Breastfeeding Preparation

## ANBS priority areas

### 1 Structural enablers

- 1.1 Community education and awareness
- 1.2 Prevent inappropriate marketing of breastmilk substitutes
- 1.3 Policy coordination, monitoring, research and evaluation
- 1.4 Dietary guidelines and growth charts

### 2 Settings that enable breastfeeding

- 2.1 Baby Friendly Health Initiative
- 2.2 Health professionals' education and training
- 2.3 Breastfeeding-friendly environments
- 2.4 Milk banks

### 3 Individual enablers

- 3.1 Universal access to breastfeeding support services
- 3.2 Breastfeeding support for priority groups

Source: *Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and Beyond* (ANBS)

Session, continued to be a popular choice for parents. In some communities, ABA Breastfeeding Education Classes continued to be the only in-person antenatal preparation available to pregnant women and their partners. As communities returned to a new post-pandemic normal, ABA volunteers have enjoyed meeting thousands of expectant and new families at Baby Expos around the country, personally connecting with more than 5600 families at these events.

Community education activities are conducted by ABA Local Groups across Australia. ABA Local Groups are the face of ABA in the community. Groups engage with local communities through talks to schools and

## Executive Officer's summary *continued*

community organisations as well as providing sessions for local health professionals and students about ABA's breastfeeding support services.

Our two annual awareness-raising campaigns, World Breastfeeding Week (August) and National Mothering Week (May) were seized as opportunities to advocate for a whole of community response to meeting the needs of mothers and parents. Local events were held around Australia and a free online webinar for National Mothering week attracted more than 100 participants seeking information about combining breastfeeding and work.

The WHO Code Taskforce project has the bold goal of achieving the full legislation of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (the Code) in Australian law. In 2022-2023 a network of more than 20 external cross-sector partners signed up to our first Call-to-Action and were supported to engage in the Department of Health's review of the MAIF agreement.

This year, the Community Protection for Infants and Young Children in Bushfire Emergencies project published a report from the Babies and Young Children in the Black Summer Study. The report summarises challenges and solutions from the research which included 266 survey responses and more than 75 interviews.

### Settings that enable breastfeeding Health professionals' education and information

ABA offers many education options for all health professionals who care for women and children.

In early 2022-2023, ABA led a Mastitis Roundtable with key experts and stakeholders from around Australia, and facilitated consensus on an updated approach to information on the topics of mastitis, engorgement, blocked ducts and white spot. This information has been disseminated throughout ABA's print and online resources and adopted by ABA's breastfeeding counsellors and educators.

Our 2023 Health Professional Seminar series, *Breastfeeding: bonding science and practice* was offered in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth with 875 in-person and online attendees.

Students in our Diploma of Breastfeeding Management course and stand-alone workshops come from a wide range of disciplines including midwifery, general practice, nursing, emergency and neonatal medicine to name a few. The course enables practitioners to build on breastfeeding management skills supporting best practice care of mothers and babies. In 2022-2023, ABA



continued to offer this nationally accredited course via blended delivery making this opportunity accessible to health professionals across Australia.

In 2022-2023, more than 1170 health professionals accessed our eLearning modules as a way of enhancing their professional development. ABA was also proud to be engaged by the World Health Organisation to redevelop their online learning module on the WHO Code. This went live in May 2023 and was showcased at the Global Congress on Implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes.

In 2022-2023, ABA continued to provide health professionals with access to comprehensive, evidence-based resources and information via our dedicated health professionals website and via our professional journal, *Breastfeeding Review*. Our extensive range of evidence-based fact sheets expanded with the addition of 12 new or revised fact sheets published on relevant lactation topics, including breast inflammation and mastitis, nipple shields, tongue-tie and hyperlactation.

### Breastfeeding-friendly environments

ABA's Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces (BFW) program embraced the legislated changes that occurred in 2022-2023 in

relation to the Fair Work Act 2009 and the Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Respect at Work) Act 2022. Our eToolkits were updated and the accreditation process was simplified and streamlined.

Our breastfeeding friendly recognition program for community venues and businesses was relaunched this year as, Breastfeeding is Welcome Everywhere. The relaunched program is now fully aligned with the underpinning principles of BFW.

### **Individual enablers**

#### **Universal breastfeeding education, support and information services**

Throughout 2022–2023 a remarkable team of 471 trained, dedicated breastfeeding counsellors gave close to 22,000 hours to support 53,726 calls from mothers, families and health professionals through ABA's 24-hour a day, 7 day a week National Breastfeeding Helpline. Our real-time messaging service LiveChat took 4699 chats in 2022–2023 and ABA volunteers supported 98% of requests for support from mums, parents and their families.

ABA's breast pump hire service was delivered by 152 volunteer ABA breast pump hiring officers (BPHOs) around Australia and this important service was provided for mums who needed it throughout 2022–2023. Our

BPHOs are qualified breastfeeding counsellors and can provide new parents with tailored breastfeeding information and support during the hire period. This was just one of the important local services offered by ABA Local Groups this year. ABA Local Groups are the cornerstone of ABA's community peer-support for local families. ABA's 125 local groups delivered 1813 breastfeeding education, information and support events in 2022–2023, maintaining community supports and connections for local parents after the social isolation of the pandemic.

#### **Breastfeeding support for priority groups**

Ten Community Breastfeeding Mentoring courses (10961NAT Course in Community Breastfeeding Mentoring) were delivered across NSW and Victoria this year for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers and the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

ABA's Deadly Dads workshops are a unique interactive experience facilitated by Aboriginal men, for Aboriginal men. Participants of these workshops learn about empathy, active listening, 'normal' infant behaviour, nutrition and family foods.

The *How Breastfeeding Works* booklets in easy English and 14 CALD languages were distributed to NSW Health facilities and health

services across Australia in their tens of thousands this year.

It has been a year of transformation for ABA and more lies ahead. However, none of what you will read in this annual report would have been possible without the extraordinary, Australia-wide team of volunteers who give of themselves and their time, to be there for Australia's mums and parents on their breastfeeding and parenting journeys 365 days a year. I acknowledge their extraordinary contribution to Australia's families, our communities, and to the Association. Thank you as always for all that you do.

**Victoria Marshall-Cerins,  
Executive Officer**

# Structural enablers for breastfeeding

'It was a nice, calm and welcoming environment that allowed for interaction in a judgement free way.'

**Caitlin, Victoria**



**514+**

**expectant parents prepared online for the practicalities of breastfeeding and becoming parents**

## Community education and awareness

### Breastfeeding Preparation Session

ABA's online Breastfeeding Preparation Sessions have continued to be very well received with many workshops booking out. Weekly sessions allowed expectant parents to attend a session to suit their needs, right down to their time of delivery.

Using feedback from participants and presenters, this program had major updates during the year, including a name change from 'Breastfeeding Education Live' to 'Breastfeeding Preparation Session'. Significant improvements were made to the presentation addressing identified needs and empowering participants for their breastfeeding journey.

ABA's breastfeeding counsellors and educators have delivered 55 Breastfeeding Preparation Sessions in the previous year. These sessions helped to prepare 514+ expectant parents for the practicalities of breastfeeding and becoming a new parent. The contribution of 58 volunteers made this amazing work possible.

This year also saw ABA continue to offer specialty Breastfeeding Preparation Sessions and introduced a session for pregnant women with diabetes. Specialty sessions for Breastfeeding Preparation Session continued for mothers expecting multiples and parents from the LGBTQIA+ community.

Evaluation feedback indicates on average, participants' knowledge of breastfeeding increased from 46% to 74% after attending

### Volunteer story



Presenting Breastfeeding Preparation Sessions on Zoom to expectant parents has truly been an enriching experience... Empowering these expectant parents with our knowledge and guidance is a fulfilling mission of mine.

What's even more significant is the sense of inclusivity we're fostering. The virtual format allows us to reach individuals who might not have been able to attend our face-to-face classes.

Initially, I worried that the digital approach might lack a personal touch, but I've adapted my presentation skills to create a friendly, inclusive, and personal atmosphere ... and I always wrap up with a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.

**Amanda, Breastfeeding counsellor for 25 years**

a Breastfeeding Preparation Session. Their confidence to breastfeed also significantly increased from 45% to 73%. This is an incredible increase for the short 1.5-hour session duration.

ABA looks forward to supporting more expectant parents and seeing this gain in knowledge and confidence to breastfeed continue to rise in the future.

## Breastfeeding Education Class

ABA's face-to-face Breastfeeding Education Classes were back with sessions being delivered across most states in Australia. These locations included Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia.

New resources were developed for the Breastfeeding Education Class. The new presentation and handbook provide volunteers with the tools to make the face-to-face sessions more interactive. There is a stronger focus on utilising a village to raise a child and empowering parents to choose the options that work for their family.

The feedback received from the trial period was very positive with participants highlighting that they loved the interactive nature of the class. Out of the 44 participants that completed the survey, 100% either agreed or strongly agreed they would recommend the class to a friend.

### Breastfeeding Education Classes, 2022–2023

State/territory*	VIC	NSW	QLD	SA	NT	WA	TOTAL
Number of classes held	31	6	24	3	11	13	88
Number of venues/locations	9	6	8	3	2	5	33
Number of participants	377	45	293	39	145	89	988

\*TAS – provided sponsored registration for online Breastfeeding Preparation Sessions in 2022–2023 in lieu of face-to-face sessions.

'I feel more at ease and confident to follow my baby's and body's cues.'

**Breastfeeding Education Class attendee**

'It was a really good session. I would recommend it for all new/ first time parents. I think it had a good coverage of most topics.'

**Breastfeeding Education Class attendee**

On average, participants' knowledge of breastfeeding increased from 41% to 81% after attending a class. Their confidence to breastfeed also significantly increased from 47% to 84%. This is an incredible increase after only 3 hours of education.

The table below provides an outline of the number of face-to-face Breastfeeding Education Classes held, venues used and the participants who attended throughout the reporting period.

'Very informative and great interaction. Glad we came.'

**Breastfeeding Education Class attendee**

## Volunteer story

I LOVE presenting Breastfeeding Education Classes. Many of the parents-to-be are so excited for their bundle of joy to arrive and eagerly devour the information that we give and ask many questions. Breastfeeding is a learned skill, and it is great to learn a few things before a baby arrives, as it can be really difficult to learn AFTER they have arrived. I mean, you have just given birth and then you are expected to learn a whole new skill! I also think it is great that we get to tell them that ABA really has wrap-around support for them. If you are having difficulty, we can meet you where you are at, whether that is on the Helpline, with our online support with Newborn Virtual Village, on LiveChat, or at your local group. We have got you. ABA can be there to help you meet your breastfeeding goals. I love that we can give that to families.



**Kaitlyn Sandona, Breastfeeding counsellor, Tarragindi Group, QLD**

Breastfeeding Education Class *continued*



'Loved seeing the presenter feed her own baby'

'Great to know we can access ABA (Australian Breastfeeding Association) after baby is born'

**Focus upon: South Australia and Northern Territory**

There were 14 highly successful Breastfeeding Education Classes run over the year in the SA/NT Branch. Our classes always bring so many fresh faces to our ABA Local Groups. There were approximately 105 attendees across the SA/NT groups.

On Saturday, 20 May, we ran a successful Breastfeeding Education Class at The Hut Community Centre in Aldgate, SA.

The room was at capacity, with 11 mums-to-be and nearly all of them bringing their partner or mum.

Lauren Georgiou (a breastfeeding counsellor with Mt Lofty Group) and Carolyn Kirby (a breastfeeding educator with Mt Barker Group) facilitated the class with our updated program. There is an emphasis on 'it takes a village to raise a child' and the importance of finding your own supportive 'village'.

As usual, we received great feedback. One mum-to-be said she knew 'nothing' when she arrived and now felt ready and confident to start her breastfeeding journey.

In 2022-2023, the Darwin Group held 6 breastfeeding education classes, co-hosted a gathering on mental health with the local childbirth education association and celebrated mums and babies at community

events in Darwin and Palmerston. They also reached out to local health professionals and were featured as guest speakers at various playgroups in the area.

The group hosted 5 breastfeeding education classes in conjunction with antenatal classes. It was great to host in the university building located at the hospital. Classes ranged from 5 to 14 mothers and partners.

**Focus upon: Western Australia**

In WA there were 10 classes held in the Perth metro area and 3 regional classes held by our South West WA Group. There was overwhelmingly positive feedback on how the classes helped grow confidence and provide invaluable information to the attendees.



## National campaigns

### National Mothering Week 2023 Making it work – wherever you're at

As communities were back to face-to-face activities this year, National Mothering Week 2023 which took place from 8-14 May 2023, highlighted the need for mothers to be welcomed and respected wherever they go, including when out and about with their babies. This includes the right of breastfeeding women to feed their baby, and feel welcome and comfortable doing so, wherever they are.

This year's theme, *Making it work – wherever you're at*, celebrated the varied and diverse ways that mums and families navigate life with young children. The theme sparked conversations about the sometimes messy,



2023 National Mothering Week Bounce and Rhyme at Adelaide Northern Suburbs Group, SA/NT



2023 National Mothering Week at Rockhampton-Capricorn Coast Group, QLD

always unique experience of motherhood and acknowledged that 'making it work' (and the journey to get there) is different for each mum, at each stage. It was also about reminding the broader public about the importance of providing support to mums, at every stage of motherhood.

At ABA, National Mothering Week activities included delivery of a complimentary Connect & Share session, two Newborn Virtual Village sessions and a breastfeeding preparation class, connecting with 117 new mums.

ABA was excited to also announce the Breastfeeding is Welcome Everywhere program, as a new initiative to help ensure breastfeeding mums have the support they need – wherever they're at.

There were 21 events organised across Australia run by ABA Local Groups for new mums and bubs including special morning teas, counsellor Q&A sessions, quizzes, door prizes and cuppa and play sessions.

### World Breastfeeding Week 2022

World Breastfeeding Week took place from 1-7 August 2022 and the theme was 'Step up for Breastfeeding'. 'This year's theme

sought to involve governments, communities, and individuals in raising awareness about sustainable breastfeeding environments. The Global Breastfeeding Collective called upon governments to protect and promote women's access to care based on the evidence based 'Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding'.

ABA aligns with the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) for the theme each year. WABA explained the purpose behind this theme:

*'Breastfeeding is key to sustainable development strategies post-pandemic, as it improves nutrition, ensures food security, and reduces inequalities between and within countries. The theme was aligned with the thematic area 1 of the WBW-SDG 2030 campaign which highlights the links between breastfeeding and good nutrition, food security and reduction of inequalities'*

### World Breastfeeding Week 2022 – Step Up For Breastfeeding | Educate and Support

Our ABA Local Groups held a range of events and activities with their local mums, parents and families.



## ABA Virtual Village

### Newborn Virtual Village

In September 2022 ABA launched Newborn Virtual Village. This exciting program fills the gap between ABA's antenatal Breastfeeding Preparation Sessions and the face-to-face opportunities offered in ABA Local Groups. Mums can access support in the early days before many feel confident to leave the house.

The 1-hour sessions are available during the day on Tuesdays and Thursdays and offer practical skills and support to help mums establish breastfeeding and adjust to life with a new baby.

The five topics are:

1. Comfortable attachment and early days support
2. Learning your baby's feeding and other cues
3. Working out your supply in the early days
4. Sleep and breastfeeding patterns in the early weeks
5. Wellbeing and intimacy post-birth

These sessions are a major driver for membership.

Since the launch of the program, ABA has delivered 72 Newborn Virtual Village sessions. Providing support for 432+ new parents.

This program is very popular. Feedback shows 93% of participants would recommend

### Volunteer story

As a remote trainee, hundreds of kilometres away from my nearest Isolated Members North West Group, I was delighted to seize the opportunity to contribute to ABA education via videolink. As part of our training, we have to observe and then deliver a Newborn Virtual Village session. Being very familiar with technology and video calls through my work, this format of delivery is comfortable for me. Being invited to continue presenting is a fabulous way for me to connect with my fellow volunteers, be immersed in the language and philosophy of ABA!



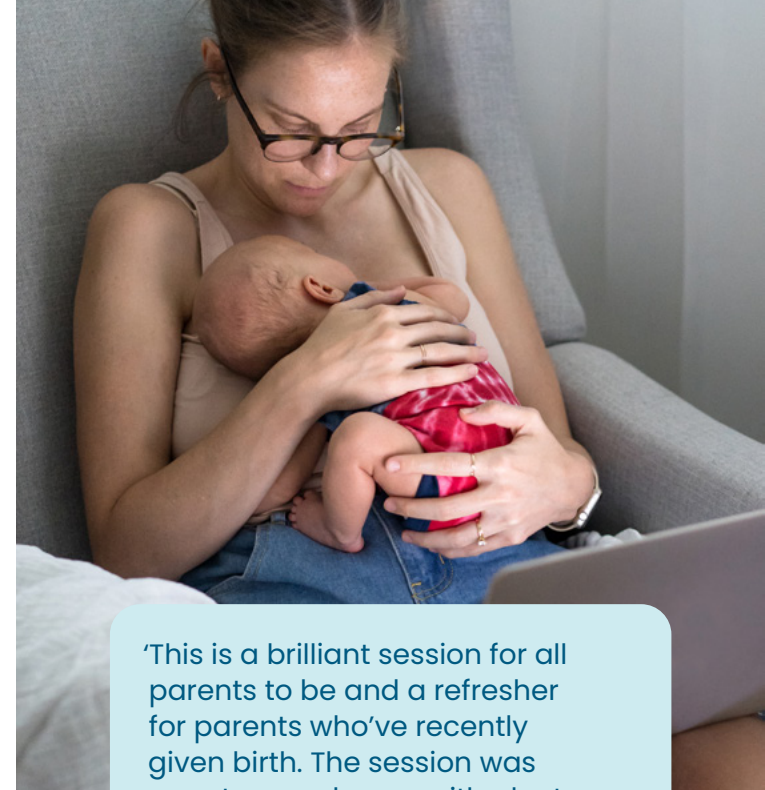
**Kato, Trainee, WA**

the session to others. Participants enjoy the interaction and opportunity to ask questions and hear from other mums. ABA looks forward to supporting new parents through the continuation and expansion of the program in the future.



**432+**

**new parents have joined  
Newborn Virtual Village sessions**



'This is a brilliant session for all parents to be and a refresher for parents who've recently given birth. The session was run at a good pace with plenty of participation opportunities. Educator was very knowledgeable and welcomed our questions in a non-judgmental environment.'

**Elena, NSW**

'You are amazing, thank you. My bub was crying and feeding for most of the hour. I could still type questions, but couldn't turn on camera or mic. I still felt like I participated.'

**Alicia, QLD**

### ABA Virtual Village *continued*

#### Connect & Share Virtual Village

In February 2023 ABA launched Connect & Share Virtual Village. The webinar series is for parents with babies beyond the newborn stage and is an extension of Newborn Virtual Village.

The 1-hour webinars are held once a month and provide parents with information and support on navigating the life changes that come with having a baby.

Webinar topics rotate each month and include:

1. Combining work and breastfeeding
2. Am I still me?
3. Beyond the newborn stage
4. Growing your family
5. Can I breastfeed if I...

The webinar series is free for all ABA members and forms a key component of ABA's digital first membership offering.

Since the launch, ABA has delivered 5 Connect & Share webinars. During National Mothering Week a Connect & Share session was free for everyone. This resulted in a massive 102 participants tuning in.

The feedback for Connect & Share has been very positive. Participants loved the topics and enjoyed learning about the experiences



'Please continue to provide these, they are great. Will recommend to others.'  
JC, NSW

of other mums. ABA is keen to support more parents through the expansion of the program.

'These are such wonderful learning sessions and a fantastic way for people to share questions they would not have thought of themselves.'

Emily, NSW

#### Volunteer story

I firstly signed up to Connect & Share to get my volunteer hours to become a breastfeeding counsellor but after doing the first one, I was hooked and have done 4 out of the 5.

Naomi, Breastfeeding counsellor



## Professional collaborations, consultations and submissions

### Consultations and submissions

Active participation in and the submission of written responses to public consultations and inquiries in the infant feeding and nutrition policy space, is an important part of ABA's advocacy work.

In March 2023, the Australian Government Department of Health initiated an anticipated review into the Manufacturers in Australia of Infant Formula Agreement (the MAIF Agreement) ahead of the end of the agreement's current authorisation period in July 2024. The consultation and subsequent review, conducted by an external consultant, included formula and toddler milk manufacturers, ABA and other breastfeeding advocates, public health organisations, researchers and academics. ABA attended a face-to-face consultation and submitted a background document to the consultation. We also made a submission via the online survey and encouraged ABA volunteers and partners to do the same. We await the outcome of this review and its recommendations.

ABA partnered with the World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative Australia, researchers and academics to make an important joint submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Food Security in Australia.

ABA's submission identified breastfeeding and infant and young child feeding as

crucial to the food security of infants and children in Australia.

### Professional collaborations

ABA continued to be a key stakeholder on the LifeBlood Milk advisory board, which is made up of clinicians, microbiologists, researchers, lab technicians and consumer representatives. Meetings are held two to three times per year to discuss guideline changes, latest research and general issues regarding donor human milk collection, storage and use.

ABA also continued its key work as a core team member in the Australian team of the World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative (WBTiAUS). ABA was involved in the second assessment which audited policies and programs to determine Australia's commitment to breastfeeding and infant and young child feeding. Again, Australia scored dismally and ranks third-last in the world out of almost 100 countries. The WBTi Australia report is a strong advocacy tool that identifies gaps and makes recommendations for change to improve breastfeeding support for mothers.

In August 2022, ABA brought together a group of respected Australian clinicians, researchers and academics to discuss the latest evidence on mastitis and engorgement in light of changes to published international

protocols. A productive online roundtable session and survey enabled us to develop consensus statements to guide updates to our information for health professionals and mums. Associate Professor Wendy Ingman, Head of the Breast Biology and Cancer Unit at the University of Adelaide found the collaboration rewarding:

'The consultation process engaged breastfeeding experts in a productive discussion about how we can best support mothers

and their health care team to prevent and manage mastitis. I'm very happy that this resulted in provision of updated, clear and practical information that will help Australians navigate this debilitating condition.'

**Associate Professor Wendy Ingman,  
Head of the Breast Biology and Cancer  
Unit at the University of Adelaide**



## Research

### Conference presentations

The Breastfeeding Information and Research (BIR) team continued to focus on evaluating ABA services and presenting the work at health professional conferences. Team members attended the Australian College of Midwives conference in Cairns in September and made two well-received oral presentations: *What modifiable factors improve breastfeeding exclusivity and duration in Australian women?* and *LiveChat: the Australian Breastfeeding Association's web-based service providing information and support*. September was a busy month for conferences and BIR team members also attended the Maternal and Child Health Nurses Association conference in Canberra, presenting an oral presentation on *Online breastfeeding support that works: the Australian Breastfeeding Association's LiveChat service*.

### Community Protection for Infants and Young Children in Bushfires Project

In early 2022, ABA was awarded \$684,000 under the Australian Government *Preparing Australian Communities – Local Stream* grant program to establish the *Community Protection for Infants and Young Children in Bushfire Emergencies Project*. The project began with an in-depth research study, undertaken with support from Western Sydney University, to establish an evidence base for

'It's nice to be asked about our own stories ... It's a subject that should be included. We are out there protecting our little babies, our children, the future.'

**Anonymous study participant**

planning for infants and young children in bushfires. The *Babies and Young Children in the Black Summer (BiBS) Study* closed in December 2022 with 266 surveys completed. Over 75 interviews were also conducted with parents/caregivers who had evacuated (or prepared to) during the Black Summer Bushfires, emergency responders who supported them, and emergency management personnel from across the globe. Feedback from study participants has been overwhelmingly positive.

A report titled *'Want to help the children? Help the parents': Challenges and solutions from the Babies and Young Children in the Black Summer Study* was published and resources and learning tools for parents and emergency responders are in development. Two community breastfeeding mentoring workshops were also held to improve support for mothers and babies during emergencies in Eurobodalla Shire, NSW, where the project is based.



ABA's Bushfire Project team with Fiona Phillips MP at the launch of the project in August 2022. From left to right: Dr Karleen Gribble, Fiona Phillips MP, Dr Michelle Hamrosi and Kate Turtiainen

The Babies and Young Children in the Black Summer (BiBS) Study represents the first research in Australia of its kind into the experiences of young families in emergencies.



Residents of Eurobodalla Shire, NSW, participated in two community breastfeeding mentoring workshops to improve support for breastfeeding families in emergencies.

## ABA meets with the Premier of Tasmania

In March 2023, Victoria Marshall-Cerins, Executive Officer of ABA, Charlotte Fielding, ABA Tasmania Branch President and Dr Susan Tawia, Manager Breastfeeding Information and Research met, via Zoom, with the Premier of Tasmania and Minister for Health, Jeremy Rockliff, to discuss the need for breastfeeding support across Tasmania, as it is very difficult for Tasmanian families to access timely, accurate breastfeeding information and support. Back in October 2022, ABA made a submission to the community consultation process for the 2023 budget, asking for funding to provide a Breastfeeding Promotion Officer. This is the first time ABA have ever asked for funding from the Tasmanian government.

The meeting covered ways in which breastfeeding is important for the health of mothers and babies and the importance of breastfeeding to the economy.

In the May Budget ABA were promised \$110,000 in funding over 2 years which they are still waiting to receive. The ABA representatives are looking forward to future meetings with the Minister for Health.

## WHO Code Taskforce Project

Since September 2021, ABA has been supporting the WHO Code Taskforce Project. The end goal of the project is to see legislation, in full, of the Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and the subsequent World Health Assembly resolutions. Having the provisions of the WHO Code enshrined in law is an important step towards protecting mothers, babies and breastfeeding in Australia. Families deserve to have access to accurate, unbiased information regarding infant feeding.

This year ABA hosted a briefing meeting for external stakeholders via Zoom, with presentations from key Steering Group members such as Mr David Clarke, Assoc. Prof Julie Smith, Dr Jen Hocking and chaired by Emeritus Professor Jane Scott. This led to approximately 20 partner organisations and signatories to our first Call To Action.

Since then, external stakeholders were given background information prior to participation in the Department of Health MAIF Review. ABA Executive Officer, Victoria Marshall-Cerins, and Senior Manager, Naomi Hull attended the WHO Congress on the Implementation of the Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes in Geneva in June. The congress strengthened our knowledge and capacity to advocate for increased regulation of marketing of breastmilk substitutes.

'The Australian Government is still yet to legislate The Code in full. Australian mums, babies and families deserve better. ABA's WHO Code Project is fighting for their rights to the best possible nutrition and health breastfeeding provides.'

**Dr Philip Baker, ARC Future Fellow, Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition, Deakin University**



Team Australia. From left to right: Victoria Marshall-Cerins, Dr Mu Li, Naomi Hull, Dr Nina Chad, Dr Phil Baker, Dr Julie Smith.

## Local community engagement

ABA Local Groups are the face of ABA in the community. As well as providing local breastfeeding information and support to mums and parents, they play an important role in increasing community understanding of the importance of breastfeeding and raising awareness of the needs of breastfeeding families and how to support them.

### Safe feeding guide for ACT families

In 2022–2023, ACT/NSW Branch actively supported a number of community organisations including supplying Nutrition

‘Nutrition Australia ACT has forged a valuable partnership with Australian Breastfeeding Association in its commitment to promoting breastfeeding and providing essential information to families. Through this partnership, many families in Canberra have gained access to crucial resources, education, and support, all aimed at fostering a nurturing environment for breastfeeding mothers and their infants.’

**Leanne Elliston, Executive Officer  
Nutrition Australia**

Australia with information packs for ACT families and partnering with St John Ambulance and Red Nose in ACT to provide safe feeding guidance for families.

### Positive breastfeeding social media stories

In 2022–2023, the Australian Breastfeeding Association’s social media presence continued to thrive, with Facebook emerging as the standout performer. ABA’s Facebook content reached an astounding 1,025,785 accounts throughout the year, while maintaining a stable audience base of 122,322. Notably, the resounding success of our World Breastfeeding Week 2022 posts played a pivotal role in these achievements, with user-generated content also making a significant contribution. Strong copywriting and the exceptional coordination of ABA’s volunteer Social Media Team boosted our Facebook engagement by an average of 10% over the year.

Despite a minor 4% dip in impressions for the year, ABA’s Instagram engagement experienced substantial growth, stemming from an audience base of 38,427 and counting. Remarkably, Instagram accounted for 42.3% of the total new engagement, despite having an audience size of just 31% of that on Facebook. This highlights the growing potential and significant opportunity for ABA to connect with pregnant and new parents via this platform.

## Volunteering with young mums in Queensland

As a volunteer, talking to young mums through the Encircle Young Mums program is a highlight of my month. Sharing resources and encouragement to those who have found themselves on the parenting journey earlier than most is an incredibly fulfilling experience. The focus of the presentation is where to seek help, offering real life experiences and stories of the realities of breastfeeding. It is heart-warming to see these young women engage in the topics, laugh and add tools to their tool kits for life after the birth.

**Kylie Miller, Breastfeeding counsellor  
and educator**

Impressively, ABA’s total user engagement within Instagram rivalled the size of its entire audience each month – an impressive achievement accomplished without sponsored posts or other advertising investments. We will continue to employ tailored content creation, audience growth strategies, and increased user-generated content to further nurture and expand this vital engagement channel.

Local community engagement *continued*

**Expos**

It has been great to watch as expectant parents emerge post-pandemic and return to engaging with our volunteers. ABA's presence at Baby Expos in state capital cities saw thousands of parents sign up to receive further information from ABA with thousands more walking away with breastfeeding information packs.

Breastfeeding counsellors staffing the stall often find themselves talking through a breastfeeding problem with a family in the middle of the Expo, and our daily 'Secrets

of breastfeeding success' talks are always full. We give out between 500 and 1000 information packs at each Expo, and the number of people scanning their ticket to receive further information about ABA has increased from 254 in July 2022, to 416 in October 2022, to 744 in June 2023.

**Volunteer story: expo**

Volunteering at the PBC (Parents, Babies and Children) Expo was such a rewarding experience! Initially I wasn't sure that I'd be able to contribute much, being a trainee. However I was able to speak to countless attendees about ABA and our services, and I was sure to tell everyone that stopped by how amazing they were for being so proactive and obtaining as much information as they could ahead of their parenting journey. Many stories and laughs were shared. It was overall such a wonderful experience and I encourage everyone to get involved, even trainees! I cannot wait to volunteer again next year.

**Emily Hendry – Trainee, Adelaide Northern Suburbs Group**

**Focus upon: ACT and New South Wales**

There were three baby and children's expos as well as 19 seminars/workshops for health professionals during the year in ACT/NSW.



ABA Breastfeeding counsellor, Jessica Leonard, presents at the Melbourne Expo



ABA Breastfeeding counsellor, Leanne, and trainee, Nadia, volunteering at ABA's stall at the Melbourne Expo in June

Local community engagement *continued*

**‘Say yes to breastfeeding’ project, Victoria**

In 2022–2023 the ‘Say yes to breastfeeding’ project worked to identify current breastfeeding supports available to families in the cities of Hume and Whittlesea, as well as looking at barriers faced by families to accessing support. In partnership with maternal and child health nurses from both councils, lactation consultants from the Northern Hospital, and staff from DPV Health we formulated recommendations to enable more families in the north of Melbourne to breastfeed.

**The Breastfeeding Centre, Victoria**

The ABA Victoria Branch office is the home of the Breastfeeding Centre, Victoria. This ABA-run centre welcomes professionals and members of the public and offers breastfeeding information, support and resources. We received 62 visits in 2022–2023, from families across six surrounding local government areas. This free support with information in multiple languages is appreciated by south-east Melbourne’s diverse communities, with our visitors speaking 14 different languages at home.

**Child and Family Health Services SA, multiple birthing classes**



ABA Breastfeeding counsellor, Ali Hankinson, and I had the privilege of speaking at an antenatal education session for multiples at the Women’s and Children’s Hospital in Adelaide. We spoke about ABA and the services we provide to the community and about membership and its benefits. It was a casual atmosphere and we were well received by the couples who attended. We took some *Essence* magazines and the *Breastfeeding ... naturally* book, as well as some ABA magnets to take home. A few people asked general questions about breastfeeding twins and about supply which we were able to answer.

I felt very encouraged that we were able to reach families in the antenatal period.

**Lisa Weatherly, Trainee, Adelaide Northern Suburbs Group, SA**

**International Women’s Day Breakfast**

It was great, as always, to see so many women coming together, and a baby breastfeeding nearby too. I was able to chat to women on my table, a person from SA and another from Sydney, who were willing to contact their MPs about the funding for the ABA Breastfeeding Helpline.

It is important that ABA is represented at these events.

**Ali Hankinson, Breastfeeding counsellor, Crystal Brook Group, SA**

**NAIDOC Week**

The Katherine Group, NT, attended NAIDOC events in and around Katherine in 2022–2023. There was an information table with a comfy place to sit for any mums wanting to feed or have a chat in the shade.



Local community engagement *continued*

**Awareness raising with health professionals, Victoria**

Several Victorian volunteers stepped up to present at the Royal Women’s Hospital staff training sessions, to inform them about ABA services that can support women birthing there. With about 20 staff attending each of the six sessions, midwives, NICU nurses and new graduates at the hospital are now better informed about ABA.

**Supporting diverse communities in West Melbourne**

ABA Victoria Branch worked with cohealth and the City of Maribyrnong in 2022–2023 in an ongoing project, sparked by a Breastfeeding Summit that cohealth hosted in July 2022. This project included a community breastfeeding mentoring workshop held in March 2023 to train bicultural workers to support breastfeeding in their communities. Branch staff also provided training to staff across the community hubs and libraries in the City of Maribyrnong, as well as the Maribyrnong Aquatic and Recreational Centre. This was a great way to get the word out about ABA’s recently revamped ‘Breastfeeding is Welcome Everywhere’ initiative, with all eight venues subsequently registering.

**ABA feed and change tent at Agfest, Tasmania**

One of the biggest annual community events in Tasmania is an agricultural 3-day field ‘day’. Agfest is held in rural northern Tasmania – in a paddock! Thousands visit and many of them are family groups. This year a team of 30 volunteers supported Devonport Group’s feed and change facilities there.

Approximately 450 to 500 families visited the feed and change, with chairs, change-tables, shelter, colouring-in and toys, a welcome respite for hungry and tired little ones. It is always gratifying to see the very many mothers and families take a break from the bustle, weather, and mud, to feed and change their babies and toddlers, and to hear the relief and gratitude from patrons that ABA provides somewhere they can go in the middle of this big event to care for their children.

With more than a few grandparents accompanying families to Agfest often supporting mums and parents, members of our volunteer team hear about the times when Nursing Mothers was there for them a generation ago, how much that support meant, and their gratitude for ABA being here today to support mothers and families.



**Feed and change**

I attend the Peppercorn Market twice a year and have a feed and change tent. Mums come and change their babies and some of them will feed. Usually, they also have some questions, so I talk through their situations with them.

**Kellie Sarret, Whyalla Group, SA**



WA’s Applecross Group Leader Kirsten Tannenbaum representing ABA at Connect Groups Self-Help and Support Groups Awareness Day in 2022

Local community engagement *continued*

Health professional education in WA

The WA Branch continued their strong focus on health professional education this year, delivering talks to student midwives and student dietitians to further their breastfeeding knowledge, with over 170 students reached across two Perth Universities (Edith Cowan University and Curtin University). Of the student midwives surveyed, 86% said they would recommend the session to others, and all indicated an increase in their breastfeeding knowledge.

Talks to health care students in WA

- Five smaller classes at Edith Cowan University in Joondalup and Bunbury for student midwives (approximately 90 students total across the 5 classes)
- One lecture at Curtin for student dietitians (approximately 60 students)
- One 3-hour lecture at Curtin for student midwives (open to all universities, 22 students)

Overall approximately 172 students were reached.

'The presenters they have inspired me so much I will be applying to become a breastfeeding educator.'  
Student midwife



Approximately **172**  
health care students reached  
over 7 talks in WA

'The additional knowledge I gained particularly in how to support and guide new mums, how to work collaboratively with additional service(s) such as the service ABA provides.'  
Student midwife

# Settings that enable breastfeeding

'Great information  
shared in  
*Re-lactation,  
induced lactation  
and breastfeeding  
module.*'  
Rebecca

## Health professionals' education and training

### eLearning modules

ABA continues to support a broad scope of health care workers by offering relevant eLearning modules to enhance their professional development. ABA's online learning content explores a range of current topics, including the World Health Organization (WHO) Code, infant feeding in emergencies, nipple pain and iron needs.

The module that ABA developed with the World Health Organization about the WHO Code, went live in May. It was accessed by delegates from the Global Congress on Implementation of

the International Code of Marketing Breastmilk Substitutes conference. This eCourse has been accessed globally in over 150 countries.

ABA's learning modules are based on evidence-based research, presented by health experts in their fields. Between 2022-2023, ABA's eModules were accessed by 1171 participants, with a total of 2217 modules completed. This not only equated to more than 3000 hours of professional education, but this was also a significant increase from the previous year's figures!



## Annual Health Professional Seminar Series

In March 2023, ABA held the Annual Health Professional Seminar Series '*Breastfeeding: bonding science and practice*'. It was well received by attendees from the live seminars that were held in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, and Perth, as well as the online program. The online program saw an increase in the number of registrations over the last few years.

Feedback from delegates indicated that 69% had previously attended ABA's seminar series, confirming the ongoing value, workplace relevance and quality of the education provided by the seminar programs.

A special mention to Dr Treasure McGuire, Zainab Yate, Professor Denise Harrison, Naomi Hull, Professor Karleen Gribble, Alison Thomas, Professor Lynn Gillam and Emily

'It heartens me to see so many passionate people come together to broaden their knowledge of breastfeeding and sharing information. Supporting women on their breastfeeding journeys has been proven to increase the numbers of breastfed babies and the length of time they are breastfed; let's do more of this!'  
**2023 seminar delegate**

'I have attended every one of the ABA yearly breastfeeding conferences. I always learn something new and always reset my motivation to continue to support breastfeeding.'  
**2023 seminar delegate**

Carrolan, for dedicating their time and knowledge to the professional development of health care workers. All speakers received positive feedback, with over 70% of attendees evaluating the presenters and their content as excellent or very good.

Feedback from the series also indicated that attendees appreciated the high level of organisation and planning that was put into the event. ABA is excited to see what next year's program brings.

### Attendance statistics

Brisbane	104
Melbourne	199
Perth	95
Sydney	106
<b>Total</b>	<b>875</b>
Online registrations only	371*

\*9% increase from previous year

Right: Professor Karleen Gribble presenting at the live seminar in Sydney.

'Every year I look forward to the HP seminar, which always has engaging speakers, important research to practice updates and a chance to catch up with professionals in this area! I always look forward to it and always leave with my cup full. Many thanks!'  
**Feedback from 2023 seminar attendee**



## Diploma and workshops

### Diploma of Breastfeeding Management

ABA was pleased to continue to deliver the 10960NAT Diploma of Breastfeeding Management in 2022–2023. The diploma continues to build on the breastfeeding management skills of health professionals to enable them to support breastfeeding mums more effectively. This year's learners came from a wide range of professions, including midwives, nurses, general practitioners, emergency and neonatal doctors, lactation consultants, physiotherapists, dietitians, speech pathologists and occupational therapists. Learners are located in all parts of Australia, including metropolitan, regional and remote areas.

The course continued to be delivered in an online format using virtual workshops, the learning management system and individualised support for learners. Feedback showed that health professionals valued

**'I have just started the course but feel much better with my understanding of breastfeeding and feel much more confident in supporting new mums to breastfeed their babies.'**

**2022 diploma learner**

**'My knowledge base and counselling skills have improved remarkably since I commenced the Diploma of Breastfeeding Management. The evidence-based knowledge I have gained through my studies is used every day with the mother and baby dyads I provide care for in my work as a midwife.'**

**2022 diploma graduate**

gaining theoretical knowledge and evidence-based strategies for service delivery and management of breastfeeding issues. It is very pleasing to hear from our learners how they are able to be agents of change in their workplaces to improve services for mothers and babies, and how they utilise their breastfeeding management skills to more effectively care for breastfeeding mothers and babies.

### Health professional workshops

ABA was once again proud to have highly knowledgeable and skilled internal and external guest speakers who eagerly facilitated this year's workshops.

ABA delivered 10 online workshops over the year, allowing health professionals from anywhere around Australia to upgrade their skills in lactation management and earn professional development points.

Health professionals are increasingly taking advantage of the flexibility to update their professional skills at times that suit them,

**'In my work as an ED doctor in a metropolitan hospital I have been part of the establishment of a new clinic led by specialised nurses for completely well babies returning to the Emergency Department within 28 days of birth. We rapidly assess these babies in ED to ensure they are well and then redirect them to the neonatal-nurse-led clinic. This allows us to keep babies who simply need support with feeding/jaundice/sleep out of an Emergency Department, which is undoubtedly a stressful environment for parents, as well as exposing them to unnecessary infection risks.'**

**'It has been a huge success so far with well over 100 babies accessing this clinic.'**

**2022 workshop attendee**

accessing the learning management system to view recordings of workshops and access other resources. Forty-two health professionals not enrolled in other courses with ABA registered for these workshops. Participants continue to report they will be able to make use of their new skills and knowledge immediately in their practice. *Assessing breastfeeding* and *Managing breastfeeding* continued to be the most popular workshops this year.

## Health professionals' website and resources

### Professional website

Our professional website continued to provide a dedicated platform for health professionals to access professional development opportunities and comprehensive resources to enable them to engage in best-practice breastfeeding support for mothers and families.

Website visitors arrived from across the globe to download fact sheets and other resources, access one-of-a-kind eLearning modules or peruse the full back catalogue of ABA's peer-reviewed journal, *Breastfeeding Review*.

### Breastfeeding Review

ABA's peer-reviewed academic journal publishes original research, case studies, reviews, letters, commentaries and discussions. In 2022–2023, original research papers were published from research groups in Australia, China, Hungary, Turkey and the United States. The November 2022 edition was a particular highlight, featuring three papers from Australian researchers looking at the experiences of Australian women: *Breastfeeding knowledge, experiences and support of first-time mothers in rural South Australia*; *What do women with gestational diabetes want for breastfeeding support?*, a participatory action research study; and *Western Australian women's experiences of breastfeeding support*.



### Fact sheets

Downloadable fact sheets on breastfeeding topics are available to all visitors to the professional website, with over 4000 downloads recorded in 2022–2023. During this period, 12 new or revised fact sheets were published on lactation topics relevant to health professionals, including *Breast inflammation and mastitis*, *Nipple shields*, *Tongue-tie*, and *Hyperlactation*. Reflecting the common concerns of many parents, other commonly downloaded titles included *Storing and using expressed breastmilk*, *Night-waking of infants and toddlers*, and *Low milk supply*. In early 2023, all fact sheets were given a fresh new look to coordinate with ABA's new website and other updated resources.



### Other resources for health professionals

Each month, our professional members received a digital newsletter highlighting the latest research in lactation and providing access to a fact sheet and feature article on an interesting breastfeeding topic. Around five new research publications were summarised and added to the growing library of research summaries each month, providing members with a searchable and concise overview of the latest research in lactation.

Last year, following major updates to ABA's information on mastitis and engorgement, additional resources were created to ensure that those supporting mums were aware of the latest evidence around the management of these common conditions. These well-received resources included a health professional's guide to the revised information, a feature article and an updated fact sheet. ABA's respected textbook, *Breastfeeding Management in Australia (5th edition)*, continued to sell well.

## Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces

The Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace (BFW) program continued to provide support to organisations to provide the time, space and supportive culture necessary for breastfeeding employees.

In December 2022, the *Fair Work Act 2009* was amended to include protection of breastfeeding from discrimination. Legal definition now covers breastfeeding, the acts of expressing and breastfeeding over a period of time. At the same time, the *Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Respect at Work) Act 2022* came into effect and introduced a new obligation 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.



Presentation of BFW accreditation certificate to JLL Commercial Real Estate in November 2022.

The BFW eToolkits were updated to reflect these changes to legislation and align with ABA's new style guide. Content was simplified and streamlined to make accreditation straightforward and completed more efficiently.

A new BFW eModule was developed and launched in April 2023 for existing accredited organisations. This module was designed to include the most up-to-date information and an overview of the importance of the accreditation and how to maintain accreditation standards.

The re-accreditation process has been reviewed and is now called Ongoing Accreditation. This requires a 2-yearly compliance audit and a self-audit survey every other year.

**'I am excited to be starting a new chapter as a working mother, in a truly supportive workplace where I can continue my breastfeeding journey thanks to JLL's family friendly policies.'**

**Employee testimonial, JLL Commercial Real Estate – Became BFW accredited in late 2022**



123

BFW accreditations



### A workplace story

'The journey to achieve and then maintain national accreditation by the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) has been extremely positive for our employees, centre leadership teams and for our enrolled families,' said Linda Carroll, Chief People Officer.

Amanda Brown returned to work full time as Centre Manager at Milestones Early Learning Baulkham Hills in April 2023 with baby Michael who is now 10 months old.

'With Affinity's support it's been seamless – while on maternity leave I put a plan in place with my Area Manager before I returned to work which enabled me to take the time to pump and store milk before my son Michael started attending care here, and now I'm able to breastfeed him to sleep each day with no disruption to my duties,' explained Amanda.

## Baby Care Rooms

The Baby Care Room recognition program continues to promote and recognise community premises that provide suitable feeding and changing facilities for breastfeeding mums and caregivers throughout Australia.

This program is currently being reviewed to align with the other Breastfeeding Friendly programs. New resources will be created, and the development of a new learning module has commenced. We look forward to sharing more about this valuable initiative soon.

## Breastfeeding Friendly ECEC recognition program

The Breastfeeding Friendly Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) recognition program was developed in 2023 in anticipation for the launch in the next reporting period. This new program will support breastfeeding mothers with infants in an ECEC service. A learning module was developed for educators covering practical workplace information. There is information on using expressed breastmilk and caring for breastfed infants and young children. Further resources include information for families about how the ECEC service can support breastfeeding mothers with children in their care.



## Breastfeeding is Welcome Everywhere

### Previously *Breastfeeding Welcome Here*

With a refreshed look and a new name, Breastfeeding Is Welcome Everywhere (BWE) was relaunched during National Mothering Week. This program now aligns with the elements of time, space and supportive culture. The newly revamped BWE recognition program promotes safe physical spaces for mums to breastfeed.

In addition to providing venues with a breastfeeding friendly sticker display, a variety of resources were developed for the recognition package. This includes a variety of digital posters and information cards for employees. One of the cards includes frequently asked questions for employers and employees.



145

venues signed up to support Breastfeeding is Welcome Everywhere\*



QLD Branch President Kylie Miller presented a Breastfeeding is Welcome Everywhere sticker to Sassafras Café in Brisbane. Present to celebrate the launch of the updated program were Senator Larissa Waters and local mum Kristy with her baby.

### Why do venues want to become recognised as Breastfeeding Friendly?

*'It's important to provide safe, welcoming spaces for mothers in the community. Breastfeeding is a basic human right that needs to be encouraged and supported, "to know they can feel comfortable always".'*

*'We want to encourage and support all feeding mothers to feel safe, secure and included in our spaces.'*

*'We care very much about ensuring our guests feel welcome, safe and comfortable to breastfeed at our park, wherever they choose, and are eager to advertise our support.'*

\*Includes Breastfeeding is Welcome Everywhere and the program's former title, Breastfeeding Welcome Here



# Individual enablers for breastfeeding

'The volunteers on the other end of the phone have always been very helpful each and every time I have called. We are so lucky to have this service especially via phone call(s) as living remotely can make things a lot harder to seek assistance and help.'

**Annalisa, Breastfeeding Helpline caller, 2023**

## Breastfeeding Helpline

Throughout the 2022-2023 year a remarkable team of 471 trained, dedicated peer breastfeeding counsellors contributed an average of 46 hours each, volunteering their time to offer unwavering support to mothers, families and health professionals through ABA's National Breastfeeding Helpline.

### Who contacts the Breastfeeding Helpline?

Most of the calls to ABA's Breastfeeding Helpline are from mothers (97%), with the majority having one child (72%). The most frequent age group that our volunteers assist families with comprises babies aged between 1 and 4 months (35% of all calls). However the range of enquiries spans from brand-new mothers seeking support and reassurance with their newborns to parents seeking information about their toddlers. This diversity indicates the Helpline's broad and essential role in providing support across various stages of motherhood.

The National Breastfeeding Helpline continues to support mums, babies, families and health professionals with a 93% satisfaction rate (2022-2023 National Breastfeeding Helpline Services survey).

'The volunteer I spoke to was very helpful but also friendly, supportive and empathetic and made me feel so much better and more confident after the call.'

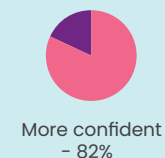
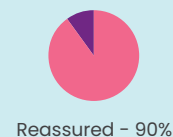
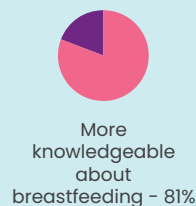
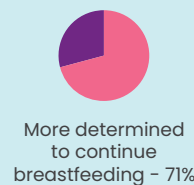
**Kathryn, Breastfeeding Helpline caller, 2023**

Of callers, 97% would recommend the Breastfeeding Helpline to family and friends and 90% noted that they felt more reassured after the call with an ABA volunteer.

The results of the 2022-2023 Helpline services survey indicate that without ABA's Breastfeeding Helpline a substantial 43% of callers would have needed to contact a GP, child health nurse, lactation consultant or visit a hospital. It is a pleasure to be there for these families, supporting them from the comfort of their own homes.

The top two reasons for contacting the Breastfeeding Helpline remained the same as in 2021-2022 with sore breast and nipples being the top reason for making contact and information on feeding patterns coming in second.

### After my call I felt...



**Breastfeeding Helpline** *continued*

'The volunteer was amazing. Her advice was so practical and the most needed thing was her reassurance, a listening ear and support when I was emotional.'  
**Kirsty, Breastfeeding Helpline caller 2023**

The support provided by ABA's dedicated volunteers remains extremely high with 95% stating that they felt the volunteer empathised with them, 97% saying the volunteer was welcoming and approachable, and 94% noting that the information and support provided by the volunteer whom they spoke with was helpful.

A big thank you to each and every volunteer who has given time over the past 15 years to ensure that mums, their families and health professionals are supported in their breastfeeding queries each and every day, via ABA's Breastfeeding Helpline ... and to the families who choose to reach out to use the service each and every day. Thank you for trusting in our incredible volunteers.

**During the 2022–2023 financial year:**



**53,726**

**calls were made to the National Breastfeeding Helpline**



**78%**

**of all calls were supported**



**Close to 22,000**  
**hours were generously dedicated to ABA's Breastfeeding Helpline alone**

**Top 5 reasons for calling, 2023**

- 1 Sore breast or nipples
- 2 Information on feeding patterns
- 3 Concerns with frequency of feeds
- 4 Concerns with low milk supply
- 5 Concerns with lengths of feeds/  
Reassurance



## LiveChat

ABA's LiveChat service consistently receives exceptional praise from mothers and their families. This invaluable support and information resource is available every weeknight from 8 pm to 10 pm AEST as well as during midday hours each Monday and Friday from 12 pm until 2 pm.

LiveChat connects parents with evidence-based support and information and seamlessly integrates visitors with ABA's vast collection of resources including thousands of articles, videos and images. LiveChat ensures comprehensive, real-time support and is an important resource for the community.

During 2022-2023 4699 chats were initiated. Over the past couple of years the primary reason for people reaching out to ABA's LiveChat for support was the need for reassurance. In the 2022-2023 period we observed a notable shift with 19% of contacts centring around concerns regarding the

### Top 5 reasons for visiting, 2023

- 1 Concern with frequency of feeds
- 2 Information on feeding patterns
- 3 Reassurance
- 4 Concern with low supply
- 5 Expressing and/or storing

'This service was incredible. The volunteer was so helpful and informative by providing advice and also resources as well as reassurance.'

**Sharni, LiveChat visitor**

frequency of feeds, while reassurance did continue to remain among the top five reasons for contact.

ABA's LiveChat service was, in 2022-2023, rated extremely highly by those accessing this support with an outstanding 97% satisfaction rate. Furthermore, an impressive 100% of respondents noted that they would contact LiveChat again in the future if needed and the same 100% would recommend the chat service to family and friends. These results underscore the exceptional quality of ABA's LiveChat support, staffed solely by volunteers who give their precious time to be there for Australian families each weekday.

### Who contacts LiveChat?

Of those reaching out for support via ABA's LiveChat service, 98% are mothers and 83% noted that they had one child. The most common age of the baby whom the mother is contacting our volunteers about is 1 to 4 months (35% of all chats). Those living in rural

'I can't praise the volunteers enough. Such wonderful WONDERFUL help. And free! I'm shocked and so blessed to have access to such a fantastic service.'

**Sandra, LiveChat visitor 2023**

or remote areas of Australia were 23% of the mums (up from 14% in 2021-2022).

ABA's LiveChat success can only be attributed to the exceptional dedication of ABA's highly skilled volunteers. In 2022-2023 86 volunteers gave their time to supporting mums and their families. Their generous commitment of time to those who seek assistance daily is not only appreciated by ABA but also by hundreds of families who benefit from their support month after month. ABA is proud to be offering such exceptional service to all Australian families.

### Volunteer story

My Friday evening on LiveChat is a great way to finish the week. I look forward to being on shift with a great team of volunteers who are keen to support each other.

It is wonderful being able to meet mums where they're at via this service. Often, on a Friday evening, that means offering info and support to a mum while their bub sleeps nearby or in arms.

**Donna, LiveChat volunteer**



## Breast pump hire

During 2022–2023, ABA breast pump hiring officers continued to hire out hospital-grade breast pumps to mums needing these to support their breastfeeding journey.

Hiring a quality breast pump was nominated as the main reason for joining by 16% of ABA’s members. There was also a strong demand for short-term hires, when a mum needs to express due to a hospital or NICU stay or when community support organisations collaborate with vulnerable mothers.

Breast pump hire continues to be an active and effective referral pathway to ABA from hospital, NICU/neonatal specialists and midwives.

ABA’s 152 breast pump hiring officers, located throughout Australia, continue to be highly valued providers of specialist support and information about breast pumps and expressing, free from commercial influence and with experience across a range of brands and pump systems.

### Focus upon: Victoria

As well as providing breast pump hire directly to families who visit us at the Breastfeeding Centre, we also provided breast pump hire to 21 vulnerable women through our partnership with the Royal Women’s Hospital Cornelia Program. We had a Deakin University student work on a project to create information packs for groups wanting to partner with local



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**breast pump hiring officers providing local pick-up across Australia**

Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Programs and other local organisations which could assist families who need breast pumps but are otherwise unable to hire them.



## Breastfeeding ... with ABA podcast

Our podcast and blog about breastfeeding is made by parents for parents. Our volunteers and experts talk about what to expect in the early days, supply, sleep, poo and much more.

These podcasts are backed up by evidence from a source listeners can trust.

In 2022–2023, 11 new podcast episodes were released. They were a great addition to the existing library of eight podcast episodes from 2021–2022. The new episodes featured diverse voices of mums, dads, grandparents and LGBTQIA+ parents across a variety of interview and conversation formats. Our podcast episodes received over 150,000 plays in 2022–2023.

- Ep 30** Breastfeeding stories ... breastfeeding and community
- Ep 29** Breastfeeding stories ... maternal autism
- Ep 28** You don’t need a bottle to have a break
- Ep 27** Breastfeeding ... and allergies: Part 2
- Ep 26** Breastfeeding ... and allergies: Part 1
- Ep 25** Breastfeeding stories ... finger feeding and returning to the breast
- Ep 24** The lasagne effect
- Ep 23** Breastfeeding stories ... fly-in fly-out work and breastfeeding
- Ep 22** Breastfeeding and alcohol
- Ep 21** Big boobs, little boobs and everything in between
- Ep 20** Breastfeeding stories ... eleven years of breastfeeding

## ABA local support groups

Like many organisations, ABA was required to move all support for breastfeeding mothers and their families to the online space during the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdowns. This meant that ABA Local Group face-to-face connections were no longer available.

During the past 2 years ABA has worked hard to support ABA Local Groups across Australia to return to face-to-face engagement. We have developed resources to assist groups to promote and host regular social and breastfeeding support activities.

A number of these events are organised and run by volunteer members and they all encourage engagement, connection and the creation of 'the village' that ABA is known for. Activities typically include Walk & Talk, Chat & Play, Cuppa & Chat.



Breastfeeding counsellors and educators from Adelaide Northern Suburbs Group, SA



1750

local breastfeeding information and support events across Australia

Breastfeeding support activities are run by our volunteer breastfeeding counsellors and educators who provide specific breastfeeding peer support to mums and families, for example Connect & Share, Info & Chat and Breastfeeding drop-ins. ABA also continues to provide nationally coordinated online group options for our members, which supplement the wonderful work of ABA Local Groups.

Following COVID-19, most ABA Local Groups are now back to running face-to-face activities, supporting our local families with counselling and opportunities to meet other families in the local area. All groups meet in a variety of locations including local community centres, libraries, local cafes and playgroups. We pride ourselves on being inclusive and supportive of all families including refugees, LGBTQIA+, culturally and linguistically diverse groups and those from rural, remote and regional areas.

We have been working hard to revitalise our ABA Local Groups through connecting with local communities. A number of groups ran 'messy play' sessions, which proved to be

'I started attending the South Eastern Suburbs Group when my daughter was about 14 months old but I wish I'd gone sooner! It's such a friendly and supportive environment. We talk about anything and everything, not just breastfeeding. It's been really lovely to spend time with other mums and hear their stories. I don't have many friends with breastfed babies the same age or older than mine so going to the groups and seeing older children breastfeeding is really encouraging. Plus there's usually delicious baked goods, and who could say no to a brownie!'

**Kathryn, South East Suburbs Group, WA**



Swan-Mundaring Group, WA, Group Leaders Shona Macskasy and Alice Clement, and Rebekka Mitchell with Elizabeth and baby Riley

### ABA local support groups *continued*

a great way of engaging new mums and popular with toddlers and bubs too!

Our ABA Local Group activities remain an important part of our community outreach, connecting our volunteers directly with breastfeeding mothers in their area and helping trainees watch and develop the skills they will need as qualified counsellors and educators.

#### Crystal Brook Group, SA

Crystal Brook Group has monthly meetings at a counsellor's house which are well attended. We get between 10 and 20 mums plus babies and toddlers as well. We try to have some grandma helpers with the toddlers. We have a discussion on a breastfeeding topic, then morning tea. Sometimes we have a guest speaker; for example, we had a 'come and try' infant massage session recently. We share breastfeeding information or local events on our local Facebook page. The counsellors communicate through a messaging group if they can't attend meetings.

#### Alice Springs Group, NT

As Group Leader for Alice Springs, I have been able to attend in Alice twice this year, meeting with lactation consultants, the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and some families in the community. Alice Springs has not

'I have found my ABA group to be a warm and welcoming space and I'm enjoying learning about others journeys and sharing my own experiences.'

**Amy, South East Suburbs Group, WA**

had a qualified ABA volunteer in the community for some time. Our visits are to highlight ABA as a service that the town can still access.

Every Friday during school term and once a month on a Tuesday, I head to the Katherine Group and attend a local playgroup, 54 Reasons. Many of the families who have attended the Breastfeeding Education Class will attend playgroup. It is nice to have that follow up with the families.

I also visit the local hospital and hostel. Women from communities come in to the hostel 1 month before they are due, to wait to have their babies.

We have accessed Families as First Teachers (FaFT), library programs, communities and many hospitals across the NT.

#### Adelaide Northern Suburbs Group, SA

Adelaide Northern Suburbs Group had 23 catch-ups in 2022-2023, as well as facilitating a Breastfeeding Education Class.

Our ABA Local Group events are run by a group of 8 volunteers, 3 counsellors and 5



Randwick Group volunteers, NSW/ACT

trainees. Our catch-ups are well attended, with anything between 4 and 15 mums joining us, depending on the offering. We present topics, offer bounce and rhyme, clothes swaps, and special events for World Breastfeeding Week and National Mothering Week, as well as casual play and chats.

#### Tarragindi Group, QLD

Just after COVID-19, we were getting 1-2 mums per catch-up and with a bit of work Tarragindi Group has turned into an ABA Local Group that is absolutely thriving. This last year we have had a catch-up every fortnight. These catch-ups have consisted of some guest speakers that have come to talk about baby wearing or donating breastmilk through the Australian Red Cross Lifeblood. We have also had all of the usual topics, such as family foods, breastfeeding in the early days and night-time parenting. We have also had plenty of park plays and a pram walk. Each fortnight we have anywhere from 15 to 30 mums/families come along. We offer coffee and a topic, and we always stay over the allotted time! It has been wonderful to see this group go from strength to strength. I am so looking forward to seeing where 2024 takes us.

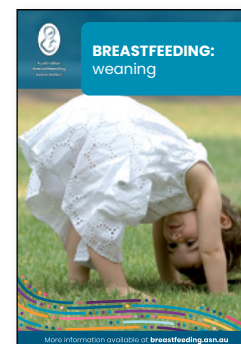
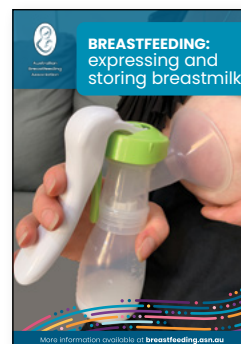
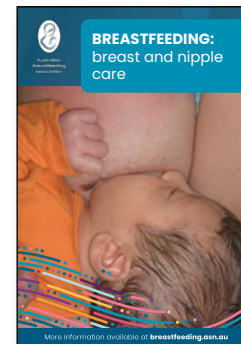
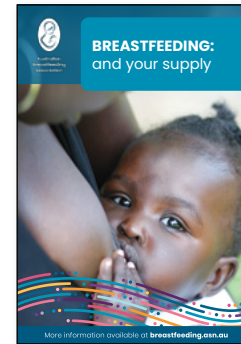
## Booklets and website

### Booklets

ABA's series of 21 in-depth booklets for families continued to be a popular resource throughout 2022-2023, with around 2500 printed copies purchased throughout the year. Sales of digital booklets continued to outstrip printed copies, demonstrating that families in Australia value instant access to resources that provide information and support for every step of their breastfeeding journey. The five most purchased titles were *Breastfeeding:*

- *expressing and storing breastmilk*
- *sleep*
- *an introduction*
- *and your supply*
- *weaning*

Many booklets were updated to capture changes to information and latest research, with *Breastfeeding: breast and nipple care* undergoing a major overhaul. Work commenced on an updated booklet design that will see the full selection of booklets published as eBooks in the coming year.



Above: Some of the most popular titles in our series of booklets for mothers and families

### Resource pages of the ABA website

The user-friendly and feature-filled new ABA website has enabled mothers and their families and supporters to access information at the touch of a button on any device. Breastfeeding information webpages continued to be updated regularly based on user-feedback and changes to evidence or best-practice. As an example, over 40 webpages were revised to reflect ABA's updated information on mastitis and engorgement. This 'living resource' continues to grow and adapt to meet the information needs of Australian families and their supporters.

## Member magazine and eNewsletter

### Essence magazine

Essence is ABA's flagship publication for members. It continues to enjoy strong readership and is delivered every quarter to thousands of families and health professionals.

The publication contains a collection of informative articles, of first-person accounts from breastfeeding mums to evidence-based information pieces on a broad range of important topics.

Many issues feature light-hearted content such as breelfies from our social media accounts, recipes, and key events from across ABA.

In 2022-2023, some of the popular stories included:

- Profiling and celebrating partners, grandparents and husbands who support us
- Tips for camping with kids
- Rose Anderson's moving reflections on breastfeeding when the land takes on a blue hue before sunrise and after sunset
- The latest information on engorgement and mastitis for mums
- Belinda Milgate sharing her experiences of bushwalking with her young kids.



### Member eNewsletter

Every month ABA members receive our eNewsletter that is filled with informative articles, volunteer profiles, a what's on section and stories from our ABA community.

Our eNewsletter is a way we connect to our members to better help support them.

Our digital engagement has increased over the last 12 months. We reached a monthly open rate of around 53% in 2022-2023 and engaged with 3300 mums and families. We look forward to expanding this work in 2023-2024.



## Community Breastfeeding Mentoring course

The 10961NAT Course in Community Breastfeeding Mentoring (CBM workshop) is a nationally recognised course. It covers mentoring skills and basic breastfeeding information for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, and the individuals and groups who work with them.

Over last 12 months it has been wonderful to see an upswing in activity. During the 2022-2023 financial year, nine workshops were facilitated across NSW and Victoria. This is amazing given the programs were unable to run when there were face-to-face restrictions in the previous reporting period.

We continued to deliver high-quality training to staff employed by NSW Health working within our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Additionally, we were delighted to work alongside the University of Wollongong, School of Medicine by facilitating a CBM workshop to train Aboriginal peer breastfeeding supporters as part of a research study.

Through the ABA Victoria Branch, in 2023, CBM workshops were reintroduced to the CALD community with great results. The team at cohealth Footscray were so pleased with the course that we are now in talks to run them on an ongoing basis.



A very happy group of Community Breastfeeding Mentoring participants from the CALD workshop run in March 2023

**'Great course – well done. Very valuable for our community. We really appreciate the opportunity.'**  
**CBM attendee**

**'The program allows me to feel confident about empowering woman (sic) in my community.'**  
**CBM attendee**



Community Breastfeeding Mentoring workshop participants

**'Absolutely an awesome and informative workshop.'**  
**CBM attendee**

## Deadly Dads

Deadly Dads® Workshops: a unique, interactive workshop facilitated by Aboriginal men, for Aboriginal men.

Research clearly indicates that support from fathers improves breastfeeding outcomes. Participants of these workshops learn (amongst other things) about empathy, active listening, 'normal' infant behaviour, nutrition, and family foods.

We have continued to work to raise awareness around this valuable program via events like the 2023 Health Professional Seminars. The last 12 months have seen an increase in enquiries from organisations nationally. Updated marketing material and information means we can better engage key stakeholders.

'This is not just women's business. This is family business.'

**Deadly Dads attendee**

'Excellent. The workshop promotes Aboriginal men's role within a family unit.'

**Deadly Dads attendee**



'This workshop is needed in the community. It should be part of antenatal care.'

**Deadly Dads attendee**

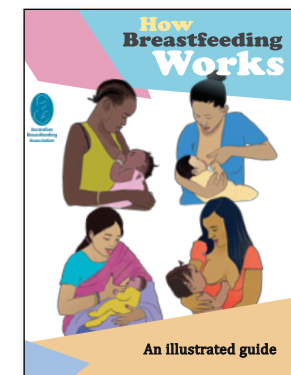
## How Breastfeeding Works

In 2022-2023, ABA NSW/ACT Branch distributed more than 21,000 copies of *How Breastfeeding Works* booklets to NSW health facilities in 14 CALD languages.

A further 20,000 copies of the easy English version of this booklet were distributed to health services across Australia before supplies ran out.

We are current awaiting funding to do a revision and update of this booklet for changes to mastitis protocols and then reprint. We have backorders of more than 30,000 booklets in both English and CALD language to be distributed once the revisions have been completed.

In the meantime, the booklet is now available as an ePublication available online on the ABA Health professional website for the first time. NSW Health reports that this ABA produced booklet is the preferred publication for distribution in NSW Health facilities.



# Volunteer training and support

‘Learning the skills to help other mothers, and being able to practice these skills a lot in a safe environment so that we feel as ready as possible to take on the role. The trainers were fantastic. I honestly can’t thank them enough for their time and energy to support trainees.’

**Allison, Trainee**

## Volunteer training

With a key focus on revitalisation and renewal this year, ABA volunteer training centred its efforts around consolidating the *Certificate IV in Breastfeeding Education* course to solidify our ongoing commitment to learning excellence.

It has been fantastic to see the numbers of new trainees enrolling in the course strengthen. Key factors contributing to this upturn were the launch of our user-friendly and easy to navigate training webpages on the ABA website, as well as running six national ‘Volunteering with ABA’ promotional sessions.

Over the course of the year a number of continuous improvements were made to training and assessment materials. These changes were implemented utilising the valuable feedback gained from moderation and validation sessions with our trainers and assessors, combined with the ongoing engagement from our trainee cohort. We have been running more live sessions and providing more in-person support. Early signs indicate that as a result of these improvements, trainees appear to be progressing through the course at a much faster rate, with total completions up by almost 15%.

In February, the training team hosted its annual training residential meeting in Melbourne with a range of key ABA stakeholders in attendance. This was an extremely valuable and productive

‘I have received so much support from so many in ABA, I feel very thankful to many trainers and assessors all over the country who have supported and encouraged me. I have loved the online zoom meetings with others who are studying. Some of these people have become good friends through the training and a I valued that ‘face to face’ aspect so much.’

**Jessica M, Cert IV Breastfeeding Education student**

event providing training and support teams with the opportunity to engage face-to-face, receive important updates on ABA’s strategic direction, and share local learnings and issues at a national level.

The annual Quality Indicator Survey once again reported extremely positive satisfaction rates amongst learners and training personnel. Learners continue to value the incredible quality of ABA trainers (89%) and rated overall satisfaction levels with ABA courses at 90%. Survey results amongst ABA training and support staff were just as impressive, indicating an overall satisfaction score of 94%!

## Volunteer training *continued*

Finally, ABA would like to acknowledge the generous support received from the Australian Government. ABA was thrilled to recently learn that ongoing funding has been granted for the next 2 years. This funding enables ABA to not only deliver our national Helpline Services, but also provide training and education to our volunteers and Australia's health professionals, cementing our position as Australia's peak body for breastfeeding information, education and support.

ABA is so grateful for the extraordinary work that ABA volunteers, paid staff and stakeholders do to continually uphold and grow the success of the training division and the 10998NAT Certificate IV in Breastfeeding Education course.

'The "work at your own pace" style allowed me to continue looking after my young children while studying. There were periods of time when I studied more or less depending on my children's needs. The face-to-face training days were also quite inspiring.'

**Emma, Cert IV Breastfeeding Education student**

## Volunteer eManual

Our enormous collection of volunteer resources was collated into an eManual for housing on the new website. Through this massive project, we have resourced our breastfeeding counsellors, educators, leaders, training personnel, local volunteers and ABA Local Groups into the future.

An outstanding number of new and updated resources form the Volunteer eManual. Around 40 procedures, guidelines and other documents for volunteer use were updated for the new website, and over 60 webforms and hundreds of new pages were created! Breastfeeding counsellors and educators have their own individual resource spaces in the eManual to allow easy access to the over 25 supporting documents and guidelines needed for their essential volunteering.

ABA Local Group revitalisation has been supported by providing volunteers with over 40 newly created resources for facilitating group activities and over 50 new pieces of related promotional material. This enables them to effectively engage with mums in their local communities. Our group leaders and regional representatives are equipped for their roles with over 20

'The volunteer manual is an essential resource for all volunteers. The online manual is a one-stop shop with information on all volunteer roles and responsibilities including policies, guidelines, professional learning, promotion, advocacy, financial management and educational activities. This time-saving toolbox for volunteers is an awesome achievement by the website development team.'

**Ros Fleetwood, ABA Breastfeeding counsellor, ACT/NSW**

new and updated documents, guidelines and information pages.

With the implementation of the digital-first membership, came a huge number of new resources for online breastfeeding education programs. This saw the creation of 12 new education presentations with accompanying resources and promotional materials. Together with in-person presentations, the new Volunteer eManual now houses over 30 pages of breastfeeding education resources, accessed daily by volunteers and staff.

## Volunteer ongoing education

### Branch conferences and other volunteer continuing education

#### Victoria Branch conference for trained volunteers

ABA Victoria Branch held our annual conference in February 2023 in Ballarat. Over 100 volunteers gathered for 2 days of professional development, networking and filling our cups so we can give back to mums. The theme for the conference was 'Knitting together the threads of breastfeeding support', and presentations included information on how breastfeeding is affected by neurodiversity, cultural diversity, maternal age and the current limited stays in hospital after birth; as well as self-compassion to prevent burnout, connecting with other organisations and knitting together a successful ABA Local Group.



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issues of *Talkabout* published, keeping volunteers informed of activities across the Association and providing professional development



Former National Assessment Manager Janet Sullivan received an award from Branch Training Manager Julie Taylor for her immense contribution to training across the Association

### ACT/NSW Branch conference

After providing professional development for our volunteers online during the COVID-19 pandemic, the ACT/NSW Branch saw the return to face-to-face branch conferences in May 2023. Attended by more than 130 delegates over 3 days, the branch was able to bring together representatives from all 39 active ABA Local Groups across NSW and ACT. All volunteers were given the opportunity to receive updates and presentations on areas ranging from the new mastitis protocols, lactation aids and the WHO Code, as well as workshops on how to prevent burnout and supporting priority communities. This essential professional development and training reengaged existing volunteers and helped with the training of our newest volunteers.

## Volunteer spotlight



I've been volunteering with ABA since 2019, but due to the isolation of the COVID years, this was my first chance to attend a face-to-face conference. It was amazing to see everyone together and the level of enthusiasm and engagement was next-level! I really enjoyed meeting other volunteers face to face and hearing about their experiences. The engagement and positive atmosphere were infectious and really re-invigorated my enthusiasm for volunteering. I gained new knowledge and some ideas that I was excited to take back and implement without our local group.

**Lauren H., Group Leader Randwick NSW**



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volunteers achieved their Certificate of Practice, completing at least 60 hours within 12 months on the Breastfeeding Helpline or LiveChat services

### Volunteer ongoing education *continued*

#### Continuing professional development in WA

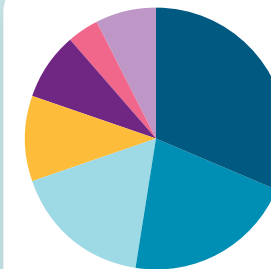
WA ran a number of professional development opportunities this year, including training on the new website and our ever-popular professional development morning in April. The professional development morning featured talks from a variety of speakers, including members of the WA advocacy team, the WA training team, the BIR team and three speakers from the Geddes Hartman Human Lactation Research Group from the University of WA, bringing our volunteers up to date on the latest developments in their work. All attendees surveyed agreed they learned new knowledge and skills they can use in their volunteer role, and 100% said they would recommend the professional development morning to other volunteers.



WA professional development morning in April

### Volunteer reporting

- 2022-2023 Volunteer Reporting survey sent to 915 volunteers and trainees with a 79% completion rate
- 320 up from 262 volunteers facilitated ABA Local Group face-to-face activities
- Greatest involvement in breastfeeding advocacy and promotion was working with health professionals (30%)
- More volunteers were hiring breast pumps
- Breastfeeding counselling gave counsellors the most enjoyment in their role (79%)
- Breastfeeding educators received significant more enjoyment from breastfeeding education, training and assessing, mentoring and support, and breastfeeding advocacy, than breastfeeding counsellors



#### Estimated hours spent as an ABA volunteer

- 31.6% Most weeks I would spend between 2 and 4 hours a week
- 20.9% I would spend less than 2 hours a week
- 17.3% I would spend around 1 to 3 hours a month
- 10.6% Most weeks I would spend between 4 and 10 hours a week
- 8.2% This reporting period my volunteer hours have been all over the place
- 3.9% I would normally spend at least 10 hours a week
- Other



35

new online professional development activities provided for volunteers

## Volunteer support

ABA's volunteers are the lifeblood of the Association. They are the people that mums, families and health professionals turn to in their time of need. ABA volunteers have an incredible breadth of skills, knowledge and experience. Our breastfeeding counsellor and breastfeeding educator roles are probably our most well-known volunteer roles. These volunteers give their time to many activities across the Association each year including looking after ABA Local Groups, taking calls on our Breastfeeding Helpline, supporting mums over our LiveChat service and educating parents in our Newborn Virtual Village workshops.

What many may not know is that our members contribute to many other volunteer roles in ABA. These include local group or branch treasurers, social media creators, group activities organisers, group communications facilitators or members of project working groups. Throughout 2022-2023 we have seen the number of volunteers within these roles grow and we look forward to supporting more people into the many roles that ABA has to offer over the coming year.

### Volunteer spotlight

I have been a volunteer with ABA since 2007 and accepted the opportunity to be the Advocacy Working Group coordinator feeling a little uncertain about how well I'd go given I have very little personal advocacy experience. However, it has been a real pleasure to help in a little way to keep the ball rolling on Advocacy within the organisation. This is mostly done by ensuring regular meetings occur, made even easier with Kirsten Tannenbaum stepping up to help run the meetings so I can focus on taking minutes. I feel like I'm mostly just keeping track of the tasks at hand and supporting volunteers to do stuff they offered to do! I enjoy keeping a finger on the pulse of how we are advocating for a breastfeeding inclusive society and health care system within Australia. In an ideal world we wouldn't be needed, but until things like the Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy (ANBS) are fully implemented, we cannot afford to stop advocating for the current and future generations of mothers and children who want to breastfeed!



**Rachel Hodge – Coordinator of Advocacy Working Group**

'I chose to join ABA as I had just given birth to my second daughter and was living in an area with no family or support systems. It was a good place to start making some connections and friends to be around. I love ABA as it has provided that and so much more!'

**Trainee, Carla, Sydney**

'I joined ABA to be around other mums who are as passionate about breastfeeding as I am and since joining I've found a community of women who encourage and support me.'

**Trainee Brooke, Sydney**

### Images

We thank the following photographers and contributors for the use of their images in this report.

**Kristy Fransen** page 4

**Stephanie Adams Photography** page 5 and page 14

**Natasha Peterson-Jones** page 15

**Kirsten Tannenbaum** page 25 lower

**Amanda Brown** page 31 upper right

**Rebecca Barta** page 34

**Rebekka Mitchell** page 37 lower right

**Jessica Pressland-Black** page 46

## Thank you

### Appeals

ABA has two major fundraisers each year, the Festive Appeal, and the Tax Appeal. In the 2022-2023 financial year these appeals were successful despite the challenging economic climate.

The theme for our 2022 Festive Appeal was *Gift another mum an easier start this festive season*, which enabled ABA to produce volunteer resources, connected ABA with families and sponsored breastfeeding education for vulnerable mums. The appeal raised more than \$12,500.

All parents need support, particularly in the early years, so our Tax Appeal theme was *Help us deliver essential support for families at every stage*. This appeal highlighted our research telling us that timely information and support at key milestones enables mums and babies to continue their breastfeeding journeys. In 2022-2023 our Tax Appeal raised almost \$40,000.

Donations have enabled ABA to facilitate our Newborn Virtual Village, educate expectant parents with world-class online breastfeeding education and contribute to our volunteer capacity to educate local health professionals about breastfeeding.

As a volunteer organisation, we rely on the generosity of people like you who share our

passion and commitment to continue our work in the community. Thank you, we would not be able to do what we do without your generous support.

### Corporate and pro bono partners

ABA has been partnered in our support of Australian mums and families by a tight knit family of corporate sponsors and partners. Our Annual Health Professional Seminar Series attracted 879 delegates across Australia; 58% attended live seminar events in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, and Perth, whilst 42% attended our online sessions.

Proudly WHO Code-compliant, and subject to a stringent evidence-based assessment, ABA is delighted to continue our association with Ardo Medical, Laborie Medical Technologies, as one of our major sponsors of ABA's health professional seminars and official prize donor for the Pregnancy, Babies and Children's Expos across Australia. ABA worked collaboratively throughout the year with our promotional parenting partner, the Pregnancy, Babies and Children's Expo, enabling ABA to present to over 80,000 attendees and directly connecting our ABA stand to over 6000 parents throughout the year.

Majestic Computer Technology has continued to support ABA's ICT strategy needs, as we continue to develop our



volunteer communication and resource provision channels, managing our website, and supporting a largely remote volunteer and staff workforce. ABA is also deeply appreciative of the pro bono legal counsel provided by Russell Kennedy Lawyers, supporting ABA in the emergent areas of social media law, in addition to contract law and other matters.



## Thank you *continued*

We would like to extend a special thanks to the following individuals and foundations who have provided significant support this year.

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Catherine Matthews	Joanne Smith	Pam Bagworth	
Dani Wegner	Josephine Cohen	Patrice Laslett	
Deborah O'Neill	Joy Spark	Prof Mary Anne Noone	



**Australian  
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