



Australian
Breastfeeding
Association

Annual Report

2018–2019



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About ABA

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

Today, ABA is one of the largest volunteer organisations in the country, with more than 1300 volunteers providing valuable support, information and assistance to breastfeeding families.

**Learn more about ABA by visiting
www.breastfeeding.asn.au.**

Message from the President



The ABA Board underwent many changes in the past financial year. We thank outgoing directors Sarah Lowndes, Louise Pennisi, Scott Williams, Laura Copeland, Grace Corbiau and Deborah Sykes for their commitment to the Association and welcome Helen Hovenga, Adrienne Picone, Mary Peterson, Alex Smith and Keith Anderson to the Board.

Special thanks goes to outgoing President, Susan Day. Karin Collinson was appointed Honorary Treasurer in July and other official positions were filled in November by Margaret Grove, President; Frieda Maher, Vice President; Mary Peterson, Honorary Secretary and Steve Miller, Company Secretary.

I would like to thank all these directors for their huge contributions. They have spent many hours of their time attending board meetings and sub-committees in the areas of finance, risk, strategy, governance, complaints and appeals, as well as addressing issues that arise from time to time.

It has been wonderful to work with such a dedicated team of volunteers and paid staff. ABA is truly an amazing organisation.

Our current major project is the strategic plan for 2020–2024. After initial consultation, the Board, CEO, National Office team and Branch Presidents came together in May for an intensive day of brainstorming for the plan. This gave the Board impetus for the next steps. The strategy committee together with Alison Boughey, CEO, has since worked hard to develop the new strategic plan to present to the Board and the wider Association for input.

The Board, CEO and National Office team prepared a submission for the next round of funding with the Commonwealth Department of Health for the infrastructure and training of volunteer breastfeeding counsellors for ABA's National Breastfeeding Helpline. The current funding expired on 30 June 2019. Everyone worked exceedingly hard to submit the new application and I would like to thank everyone for their enormous contribution.

ABA provides many services at the local level, including groups, Breastfeeding Education Classes (BECs), hospital and school visits, and a myriad of other community events. I take the opportunity to thank the dedicated volunteers who work at the grassroots level to provide breastfeeding support and education to mothers, families and the community. This is what makes our Association so different from other organisations. Peer support is recognised as a major factor in supporting mothers to reach their breastfeeding goals. There are too many people who volunteer their time for me to cover everyone, but we appreciate all of your contributions.

National programs and events such as Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace accreditations, Health Professional Seminar Series, National Mothering Week and World Breastfeeding Week demonstrate our commitment to working together to support mothers, educate the community and advocate for a breastfeeding inclusive society.

We face many challenges in the future with rapid changes in areas such as volunteering, membership, technology, legislation and the way we communicate. ABA has embraced many changes throughout its 55 years. I believe that we can continue to change and grow as an organisation with our many dedicated members, volunteers and staff working together for the future of ABA.

Margaret Grove
President

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Message from the CEO

It has been a highly successful 2018–2019 for ABA, with much cause for celebration. ABA's national office, state branches and local groups have all worked extremely hard to deliver some incredible achievements for the Association over the past 12 months.

In June we received word that the Federal Government would be increasing ABA's National Breastfeeding Helpline funding to \$8.2 million over 4 years. This will come into effect in the 2019–2020 financial year. This is a major achievement for ABA and is testament to the hours our volunteers and staff dedicate to ensuring the Breastfeeding Helpline continues to operate smoothly. ABA would like formally to acknowledge and thank the Federal Government for recognising the rising costs involved in running the Breastfeeding Helpline. With updated funding, we can continue to improve and expand this important service that supports thousands of Australian families every year.

This year we celebrated World Breastfeeding Week in August, National Mothering Week in May and have run two major fundraising appeals. National campaigns were held to celebrate World Breastfeeding Week and National Mothering Week. Our Festive Appeal encouraged breastfeeding reminiscences and nostalgia, while the Tax Appeal highlighted the ways that ABA keeps mothers connected to breastfeeding support. Both of these appeals generated important funds for our Association and the work we carry out. We are extremely grateful to everybody who donated this year. Your donations go a long way.

ABA would like to formally recognise and thank all volunteers who have contributed to ABA's support services this year, including those who assist with operational planning.

The National Breastfeeding Helpline is a pivotal support service that is available to mothers 24/7. The service is staffed by ABA's volunteer workforce. This year, the Breastfeeding Helpline:

- received **71,571 calls**, 80% of which were attended to
- was staffed by **649 volunteers**, who dedicated **27,000 hours** between them
- received encouraging feedback, with **92% of callers indicating that they received the support** and information they were seeking and 95% would call again.

ABA's Breastfeeding Helpline received 71,571 calls this financial year. The Helpline was staffed by 649 volunteers, who dedicated 27,000 hours to support mothers 24/7.

ABA's LiveChat service, launched to the general public in May 2018, has grown exponentially over this financial year. Initially a member-only service, LiveChat is now available to all members of the public from 8 pm–10 pm every week night, Eastern Standard Time.

This year, LiveChat achieved:

- **1654 chats**, 99% of which were answered
- a high success rate, with 92% of users suggesting they received the information they were seeking and **100% would use the service again.**

ABA would like to formally recognise and thank all volunteers who have contributed to ABA's support services this year, including those who assist with operational planning.



In our Breastfeeding Information and Research department, there was much focus on reviewing and updating current information available to the public. This includes ABA booklets that were reviewed and updated. A new booklet, *Breastfeeding: using a breastfeeding supplementer* was written and prepared in both print and digital form; while a new website article, *Breastfeeding a baby with congenital heart disease* was prepared and uploaded to ABA's website. ABA's submission to the Department of Health in response to the draft of the Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy resulted in key changes including about babies requiring special care.

In training, the development and implementation of a new Learning Management System (LMS) was rolled out to support and continue training of our volunteers. The development of a 'Train the trainer' workshop was introduced for ABA's *Deadly Dads* program and the annual Health Professional Seminar Series 2019 was a huge success. The Seminars, *Breastfeeding: Supplying the evidence* was attended by almost 1000 delegates and was also supported by a highly successful online program.

As of 30 June 2019, ABA's Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces program has 110 accredited organisations - including the Department of Human Services, which has 24,082 female employees nationally.

ABA's Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces (BFW) program supports women with combining breastfeeding and work. A total of 13 new organisations achieved accreditations in the 2018/2019 financial year, totalling 110 BFW accredited organisations by 30 June 2019. The Department of Human Services achieved accreditation in June, covering a total of 53 workplaces nationally. With 24,082 female employees, becoming a BFW accredited workplace is a major achievement for the department, its workers and ABA collectively. The Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (NSW) also achieved accreditation that covers three hospitals in the area (Milton, Wollongong and Shoalhaven) and has the potential to accredit three more in the next financial year.

ABA continues to deliver important publications to its members, including our quarterly magazine *Essence* and monthly eNewsletters for personal members. Our breastfeeding journal *Breastfeeding Review* is published three times per year with monthly eNewsletters sent to professional members. Our team of volunteers (editors, subeditors, copywriters and designers) contribute significantly to these publications to bring the latest news, events, information and research to our member base. ABA also has a volunteer proofreading group who ensure our publications are delivered to a high standard, as well as a dedicated website team who have assisted in redesigning the site this year to reflect a modern, fresh look. We would like to recognise the contributions of these volunteers, who work tirelessly behind the scenes to keep ABA running efficiently.

ABA looks forward to continued growth and more success stories in 2019/2020.

**Alison Boughey, CEO
Australian Breastfeeding Association**

News from our branches



ACT/NSW Branch

PROJECTS

We have delivered some great projects for ACT and NSW Health including two videos: one on *Breastfeeding Basics* and one aimed at workers to support breastfeeding women they encounter. Both have been received with great enthusiasm. We are now working on a new project funded by NSW Health to create updated *How Breastfeeding Works* books with full-colour illustrations in Easy English plus 14 languages.

SERVICES

Training:

We have been awarded Federal Volunteer grant funding this year to help us continue to support volunteer workshops. Even without this funding in 2018, we still managed to conduct 94 training sessions and workshops for volunteers from 10 Regions.

BECs:

We conducted 58 BECs around ACT/NSW this year in addition to an estimated 700 general workshops/discussion groups throughout the Branch this year: an incredible amount of volunteer activity.

Community Education and Activities:

We had 'information stands' at three Expos this year and continue to deliver breastfeeding education sessions to first year Midwifery students at The University of Canberra annually.

Health Professionals:

The Branch held or supported 16 workshops for health professionals this year and has delivered almost 8000 of the original multi-language booklets to health professionals on request in 8 languages.

National Breastfeeding Helpline:

The Branch continues to support the Helpline in a big way, with an average of 134 breastfeeding counsellors taking calls each month.

Chapter 1: Starting Out



Above: A photo still from the ACT NSW Breastfeeding Basics Video

Grants:

In the last year the Branch has successfully been awarded around \$75,000 in ACT/NSW-based grant funding including Disability Inclusion Grant, Federal Volunteer grants and BECs funding through Goulburn Local Solutions.

Nicole Bridges
ACT/NSW Branch President

Queensland Branch

ABA QLD continues to receive great support from the Community Benefit Fund provided by QLD Health. This money provides us with the funds to cover the cost of running our office to support our volunteers, along with a portion of our training costs.

We held a very successful Regional Teams' weekend in November, enabling our training and branch teams to rejuvenate and plan for the following year's activities. Our Branch Conference was held in May. The theme this year was *I am, we are, strong*. It was a great success, with great feedback. We were joined by Mary Peterson from the Board and Sasha de Silva from National Office.

Branch Office breast pump hire has not been as profitable in the last 12 months but continues to tick along.



ABA QLD has many community partnerships and collaborations. We have representatives attending the meetings of the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital Infant Feeding Resource Group, Child and Youth Community Health Service Breastfeeding Workgroup, and the South-East Queensland Breastfeeding Coalition.

We have collaborated with the QLD Country Women's Association to support them to get Breastfeeding Welcome Here stickers across the state in many of their venues.

Our membership numbers are remaining stable thanks to some strong growth and activity in Rockhampton-Capricorn Coast Group who have been using novel strategies to promote the Association and attract new members.

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

SA/NT Branch

Naomi Hull QLD Branch President

Working relationships are strengthening between ABA and CaFHS (SA), with CaFHS seeking accreditation as a Breastfeeding Friendly organisation. Northern Territory hosted a health professional seminar with a focus on breastfeeding in emergencies. Another successful Baby Expo was held in Adelaide, more volunteers work on Breastfeeding Helpline, and Breastfeeding Education Classes are well attended.

Group activity varies, with some groups growing, and others challenged to meet the needs of mothers and families. A cluster of groups is merging into one supergroup, sharing resources and personnel, to re-create a strong presence in central Adelaide.

Due to becoming a Director, we thank Mary Peterson for her dedication and passion in her leadership of the Branch.

Wendy Burge SA/NT Branch President

The SA/NT Branch continues to function with strength and commitment, welcoming new trainees and volunteers through the year. We are grateful for the work of the training team, ably supported by national expertise and the online LMS.

Branch Team vacancies were actively filled during the year. Branch Meetings regularly held via Zoom ensure connection across two large states/territories.

Branch Conference, organised by the Hills Region, provided a rich opportunity for trainees and volunteers to share, learn and heighten motivation. 2020 Conference will be organised by a committee from across the Branch.

We thank Child & Youth Health (CaFHS) for the provision of Branch Office, Women's & Children's Health Network for the funding of staff, and the Northern Territory government for financial support. Linda de Vries services Branch Office with great thoroughness and accomplishment.

Tasmania Branch

Tasmania Branch continues to see a decline in volunteer numbers and we strive to do as much as we can with the resources we have. We currently have 29 trained volunteers and 3 trainees. Much of our focus during the year was working out how best to continue to support our groups, as well as planning for our upcoming seminar for health professionals planned for August 2019.

Group meetings are held across the state in a variety of venues, public and private. Sadly during the year, two groups closed, due to lack of volunteer capacity and low meeting attendances. With the closure of Circular Head and Launceston & Surrounds Groups, we now have six groups operating across the Branch. All groups offer face-to-face counselling at meetings, monthly discussions, community education and breast pump hire.

Membership numbers hovered around 135 for most of the year and we are glad to report the decline in numbers has slowed somewhat, due to a donation received



from the Health Minister, Michael Ferguson, in September 2018. All new and renewing personal members of ABA in Tasmania are eligible for a rebate of 50% of their membership. This offer is being widely promoted across the state.

In September we met at Camp Clayton, in northwest Tasmania, for our annual Branch Conference. Thanks to a generous donation from Barwon Region (Victoria), the registration costs of all volunteers were covered in full. We all enjoyed a weekend refreshing our skills and knowledge, as well as re-connecting with our peers. Thank you to our volunteers for all your work over the course of the year.

Charlotte Fielding Tasmania Branch President

Victoria Branch

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

Our conference theme was *A Recipe For Success: Caring, Advocacy, Knowledge, Empathy*. As ever, a range of great speakers presented sessions and ran workshops. In break-out sessions for regional reps and group leaders, we considered how we can continue to support the mothers of Victoria as volunteer capacity diminishes.

Victorian groups have continued to run group meetings, including drop-in sessions that are proving popular in some areas. ABA volunteers have provided feed and change tents at local festivals and shows. Breastfeeding Education Classes have continued to be well attended. Breast pump hire continues to provide income for many groups. Those groups with strong income streams have been supporting groups



that are struggling financially, for example by providing conference registration fees.

The branch office is open three days per week and continues to provide high level administrative support for volunteers. The branch office supports branch activities such as conference, and administers BECs for much of the branch. Branch office staff work closely with staff from other branches to ensure consistency across the branches and reduce duplication of services.

My thanks to the amazing volunteers of VIC Branch for their hard work and enthusiasm and to the branch office staff who help us in so many ways.

Kathleen Mather
Victoria Branch President



Above: One of ABA's favourite photos of 2018-2019 - Hester, Ben and baby Aila Brown. Photo credit: Fred + Hannah Photography

WA Branch



The WA Branch volunteers have continued to strive to reach many families in WA. We see the value in building relationships and the importance of support from health professionals. In November 2018 we held a very successful Health Professional Seminar in the South West of WA for regional health professionals which sold out. It was organised and run by volunteers. The feedback was fantastic and is something we would consider doing again in the future. We also hosted a successful National ABA seminar series in Perth in March 2019 and look forward to it returning in 2020.

2019 is the 50th year of NMAA/ABA in Western Australia and we have events planned for the second half of 2019 to celebrate. We were saddened to hear that our founder, Peggy Munslow-Davies passed away earlier in the year. We were privileged to have such an inspiring and strong woman starting the Nursing Mothers' Association in Western Australia.

Despite the challenge of membership numbers declining throughout the country, the number of volunteers in WA remains fairly stable and our team continues to be spread throughout the state. All of our volunteers are involved in supporting mothers. We are a passionate team of volunteers and I thank them for all of the time they give and all of the amazing work they do.

Emma Hitchens
WA Branch President

Thank you to our 2018–2019 sponsors, advertisers and corporate partners

We are extremely grateful for the support of our major partners, sponsors and corporate partners who have contributed to ABA financially and demonstrated their committed to ABA during the 2018–2019 financial year.



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- Possums for parents with babies
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Australian Breastfeeding Association

PO Box 33221
Melbourne VIC 3004

P | (03) 9690 4620

E | info@breastfeeding.asn.au

W | breastfeeding.asn.au

**Australian
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Association**

Breastfeeding Helpline: 1800 686 268