



Breastfeeding  
**Friendly**  
Workplace

An Australian Breastfeeding Association Initiative



Australian  
Breastfeeding  
Association

# Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace program – an initiative of the Australian Breastfeeding Association

Sally Eldridge



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The Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace program (BFW) aims to:

- Improve breastfeeding initiation and duration by removing the workplace as a barrier
- Promote 'best practice'

This presentation will:

- Share the origins and development of the BFW program
- Outline current developments and plans for the future



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## Origins:

- 1980s – NMAA identifies need to support breastfeeding women returning to paid work
- 1995 – Mother Friendly Workplace Awards
- 1996 – Breastfeeding Consultancy Services
- 2002 – Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Accreditation (BFWA) program



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## BFWA builds the business case for workplace accreditation

- Builds employer reputation as family friendly
- Retains staff, avoiding costs of recruitment and training
- Helps build workplace diversity and adapt to changing labour markets
- A framework for employers to meet their obligations under anti-discrimination legislation
- Greater confidence in quality of support and facilities for employees returning to work from maternity leave can contribute to their productivity
- Helps reduce absenteeism as breastfed babies are at less risk of childhood illnesses and women able to breastfeed and/or express during the day reduce their risk of engorgement and mastitis.



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2003 – The Australian Treasury becomes the first Commonwealth Government Agency to gain BFWA accreditation

“Becoming a Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace makes economic sense” – **ABA Director, economist and former graduate recruit at the Australian Treasury, Dr Julie Smith.**





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*“Providing facilities for workplace breastfeeding is a practical contribution we can make to the working lives of some of our staff. But we haven’t provided these facilities, and sought accreditation, for purely altruistic reasons. We know that as an employer we stand to gain substantial benefits, including:*

- attracting a better-balanced workforce;*
- retaining female employees with valuable corporate knowledge, minimizing the risk of losing key skills;*
- reduced staff absenteeism;*
- developing stronger, more positive relations with staff; and*
- building a positive organisational culture.*

*The way we look at it, breastfeeding is an investment that saves dollars as well as benefiting mothers’ and babies’ health.”*

**Treasury Secretary, Dr Ken Henry, Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2003**





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The Australian Financial Review  
www.afr.com • Friday 3 September 2004

# Public breastfeeding is best



### Cherelle Murphy

As the nation's workplaces get more family-friendly, the public service may be showing up the private sector.

The head of the Department of Family and Community Services, Mark Sullivan, was this week awarded for the department's breastfeeding facilities and flexible workplace policies by the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

This comes on top of similar awards for the departments of Health and Ageing and Education, Science and Training.

And soon the departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade and of Prime Minister and Cabinet will also join federal Treasury in being awarded accreditation as a Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace.

That puts the public sector well ahead of the private sector, where only 12 small organisations, mainly in the health sector, have met the ABA's standards.

Then followed:

- Family and Community Services
- Health and Ageing, Education
- Science and Training
- Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Prime Minister and Cabinet
- the Australian Parliament



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## Australian Breastfeeding Association

- First breastfeeding and work poster
- Breastfeeding Review – peer reviewed journal article
- Program branding

whatever you do whatever you do whatever you do

keep a good thing going keep a good thing going

working and breastfeeding: look at all your options  
www.breastfeeding.asn.au

VOL 13 NO 2 2005 BREASTFEEDING REVIEW

Research

### Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Accreditation

#### Creating supportive workplaces for breastfeeding women

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Anne Croker BAppSci (Physio) GradDipPublic Health IBCLC

Committed to creating a family-friendly workplace?  
**So are we.**

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The screenshot shows the website header with the Australian Breastfeeding Association logo, a search bar, and navigation links for Employers, Accredited Workplaces, Working Mothers, BFW Resources, and Contact Us. The main content area features a large banner with the text "Interested in becoming a Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace?" and a "Click here for more info" button. Below this are two smaller images: one of a nurse in a hospital setting and another of a woman holding a baby. Each image has a caption below it.

**Australian Breastfeeding Association**

Search

ABA HOME LOGIN

Employers ▾ Accredited Workplaces ▾ Working Mothers ▾ BFW Resources ▾ Contact Us

Interested in becoming a **Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace?**

[Click here for more info ▶](#)

...

**Interested in creating environments that are supportive of breastfeeding? So are we!**

**What do you need to combine breastfeeding and work?**

2009 – renamed Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace (BFW) program:

- Website
- Services and products for any workplace

### For employers:

- Toolkits to work through towards accreditation
- Access to the BFW team and ongoing partnership through reaccreditation
- Workplace posters, communication cards, Come Back packs to provide to returning employees
- Listing, profile

## Information and resources for breastfeeding women:

- Return to work plans
- Your rights explained
- Mother's stories
- Frequently Asked Questions
- List of accredited breastfeeding friendly workplaces



*Need practical advice about combining breastfeeding and work?*

**Breastfeeding Helpline**  
**1800 mum 2 mum**  
**1800 686 268**

Trained, volunteer counsellors are available 24 hours a day.

[www.breastfeeding.asn.au/workplace](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/workplace)

Australian Breastfeeding Association

Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace



This workplace is an accredited Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace

## Your support makes a difference to your colleagues

Balancing work commitments with a baby's needs is a challenge. Support and understanding from her manager and work colleagues can make a real difference to a mother's successful return to work after maternity leave.

*If someone in your team is currently combining breastfeeding and work commitments, please keep in mind:*

- She may need to take breaks during the day to express milk or feed her baby.
- She may require some flexibility around her work.
- Combining work and breastfeeding can be stressful. Understanding from colleagues goes a long way.

This is a short-term commitment on the part of your colleague however it has long term benefits to both mother, baby and your organisation. She will appreciate your support!

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The Australian Bureau of Statistics' 2017 *Pregnancy and Employment Transitions* survey found:

- An estimated 582,300 Australian women with a child under two years old. Of these women:
  - 42% had started or returned to work after the birth of the child;
  - 18% were on leave for the birth of their child (up from 9% in 2011);
  - 51% were participating in the labour force, (up from 43% in 2011).
- Less women permanently left the job they were in prior to giving birth (77% compared to 71% in 2011);
- 65% of women who had started or returned to work, returned to the same job with the same roles and responsibilities (compared to 59% in 2011).



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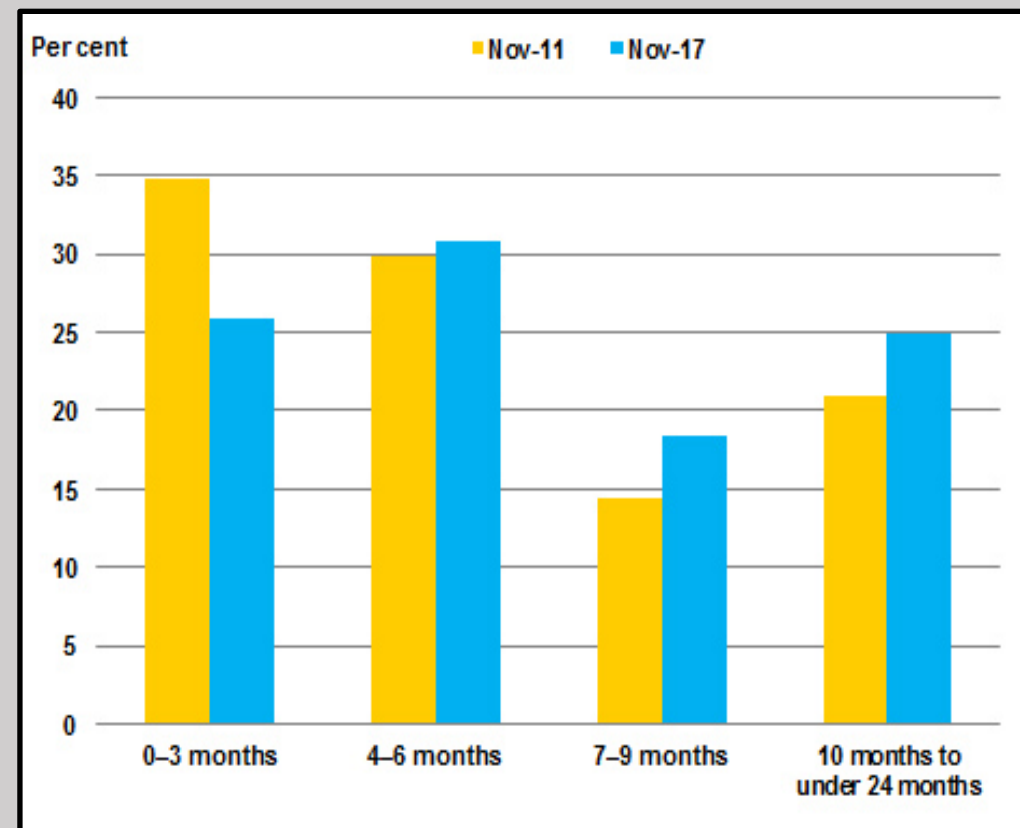


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The same study found:

- A decline in the proportion of women re/commencing work in the first three months following child birth—from 35% in 2011 to 26% in 2017
- A slight increase in mothers delaying the re/commencement of work until their child was older (aged 10 months to under two years)—from 21% in 2011 to 25% in 2017.
- The majority of women returning to work when their babies are of an age where the World Health Organization recommends they be exclusively breastfed.

**Age of child when mother started or returned to work following child's birth, 2011 and 2017**



How it was then:



Sadly the need continues:



“I go back to work in 11 weeks and my manager has told me to wean my son. Her excuse was that most mothers have weaned their children by the time they return to work and they have no private office or space for me to pump during my shifts.

They have offered the bathroom and my vehicle as a private alternative. Neither will work as bathrooms are full of germs and stalls are in high demand (and stalls are in the shared male and female bathroom) and my vehicle is in a carpark accessible by over 300 people 24h a day.

Is there a law or requirements by employers to provide space for nursing mothers that’s private?”

Email to the BFW program July 2020



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# So we look to the future:

- Renew current resources, develop new resources, including digital offerings
- Build customer management capability
- Grow the BFW team
- Increase marketing and promotion to strengthen recognition, reputation, reach and relevance
- ANBS recommendation that all Commonwealth, State and Territory agencies must become BFW accredited



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# Thank you!

Questions?

Contact us: [bfwa@breastfeeding.asn.au](mailto:bfwa@breastfeeding.asn.au)