



THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

20 March 2009

24-Hour National Breastfeeding Helpline

The Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon, today officially launched a national toll-free 24-hour helpline to provide support with breastfeeding information.

The Rudd Government has provided \$2.5 million to help establish and run the service nationally. We have also provided a further \$1.8 million to help train breastfeeding counsellors and provide education opportunities for other health professionals.

The helpline, 1800 MUM 2 MUM, is staffed by Australian Breastfeeding Association volunteer's right across Australia.

Breastfeeding helps protect infants against a number of conditions, including diarrhoea, respiratory and ear infections, and obesity and chronic diseases later in life.

Breastfeeding also benefits a mother's own health by reducing the risks of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes and osteoporosis.

Australia's dietary guidelines recommend exclusive breastfeeding of infants until six months of age, with the introduction of solid foods at around six months and continued breastfeeding until the age of 12 months – and beyond, if both mother and infant wish.

Despite this, the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children found in 2004 that while 92 per cent of newborns were initially breastfed, this dropped to 80 per cent fully breastfed by one-week-old. There was a steady decline each month, with only 56 per cent fully breastfeeding at three months and 14 per cent at six months.

Part of supporting Australians in early parenthood is about promoting the value of breastfeeding and improving breastfeeding rates in Australia. The national breastfeeding helpline recognises that sometimes new mums and their families need advice.

As well as investing in the helpline, the Australian Government is developing a National Maternity Services Plan and the first National Women's Health Policy since 1989.

For free, confidential breastfeeding advice and support, 24-hours a day, call 1800 MUM 2 MUM (1800 686 2 686, toll-free from landlines in Australia). Further

breastfeeding information is available from the Australian Breastfeeding Association web site, www.breastfeeding.asn.au

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 7220.