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MEDIA RELEASE

11 JULY 2008

Breastfeeding mums to get the help they need

The Rudd Government will provide \$5 million to help establish a 24-hour toll-free national helpline to support breastfeeding mothers and their families, and to support research into breastfeeding.

There is strong evidence of the links between breastfeeding and prevention of obesity and asthma in children as well as prevention of chronic diseases such as breast cancer and cardiovascular disease.

There is also evidence of the protective effects of breastfeeding from gastrointestinal and respiratory tract infections as well as middle ear infections in babies.

Despite this, there has been a decline in the rate of exclusive breastfeeding over the last decade.

The Australian Breastfeeding Association's existing helpline takes more than 1200 calls each week. The Rudd Government's funding will upgrade this to a national 24-hour toll-free helpline.

When fully operational this service will provide all new mums who want to breastfeed access to one-to-one expert support around the clock after they bring their baby home from hospital.

The Rudd Government has also committed \$1.15 million over 3 years to fund a comprehensive range of research to support breastfeeding - including into the barriers and enablers to breastfeeding, consistent indicators to monitor breastfeeding rates and the development of dietary guidelines for pregnant and breastfeeding women.

The Government recognises that health professionals and volunteer breastfeeding counsellors need training and support. The Government will provide funding to develop and provide training for health professionals such as GPs, midwives, maternal and child health nurses and practice nurses, and for volunteer breastfeeding counsellors who will staff the helpline. The ABA has commenced work on this important initiative.

Breastfeeding in the early weeks of a child's life can be difficult.

For a new mum with a baby, just home from hospital, that supportive voice on the end of the phone at 2am answering her breastfeeding questions can make all the difference.

All parents want to give their children the best possible start in life.

The Rudd Government understands that making decisions about breast or bottle feeding babies can be difficult and complex for parents – and this funding will help mothers have support and information while making their parenting choices.

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For all other inquiries, please contact Ms Roxon's office on (02) 6277 7220