

I have read the Australian Breastfeeding association submission and had planned to say many of the same things and fully support their submission. So as not to be repetitive I will give you one example of many I see every day, of why women should be assisted to stay at home if they wish without pressing financial needs forcing them back into the work place.

I work at the John Hunter Hospital. I care for many mothers and babies at the coalface. Recently I was asked to visit a first time Chinese Mother three days after the birth of her beautiful normal baby girl. She had not been able to attach the baby to her breast since birth and the midwives told me that they were unable to obtain any breastmilk.

On entering the room I found a Chinese speaking grandmother fussing around her only daughter. She had brought in homemade chicken dumpling soup and was obviously a caring and loving mother.

I examined Mulan (for confidentiality sake) and found her to be perfectly normal and could not understand why there was no breastmilk. I obtained an electric breast pump and requested the Grandmother hold the baby so Mulan and I could double pump both breasts at the same time.

I was surprised to see the Grandmother holding the baby at arms length like a tray of food and concerned by the body language. I asked Mulan if her mother had had much to do with children. She replied that she had been born through the Cultural Revolution and her Grandparents and State cared for her while her Mother worked in the fields, almost eating dirt to survive.

Through the doting husband who interpreted for me I gave Mulan's Mother a lesson from a besotted Grandmother. I showed her how to snuggle the baby up and hold it tight next to her heart so the baby could hear the heartbeat and feel the warmth of her body. I then showed the Grandmother how to move gentle with the baby explaining to her that for nine months Mulan's movements had been what the baby had felt and that gentle rocking would comfort and sooth the baby.

I then told her that the baby likes the sound of the family around it as its hearing, almost from conception is very good and for nine months the baby has heard those sounds. I then told her the baby would settle with the cuddling, moving and a lullaby and started to gently sing. Mulan's mother to my surprise joined me in my song and when I turned around Mulan was crying and the milk was pouring from her breasts. She then went on to breastfeed.

The bond between the Mother and the Child is a life sustaining one and statistics show very clearly that when that bond is severed or interfered with there are generational consequences.

It is a fundamental human right that the long term mental and physical well being of future generations is optimized. Only by allowing parents to nurture their children can that be achieved. I therefore request the Commission to support paid maternity, paternity and parental leave.