

## Need for lactation support highlighted during World Breastfeeding Week



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The World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund have called on governments to protect and promote women's access to skilled breastfeeding counselling, which is a critical component of breastfeeding support. WHO recommends exclusive breastfeeding until six months of age and continued breastfeeding into the second year of life or for as long as mother and infant desire.

Last year, Federation supported a research project conducted by Dr Elaine Burns and the Return to Work and Study team (Associate Professor Susanne Gannon, Dr Sky Hugman, Dr Heather Pierce) at Western Sydney University that investigated how supportive Australian work environments were for women who had returned to work and maintained breastfeeding in female dominated professional groups, including teaching and nursing.



Preliminary results indicate that the experiences of women seeking to maintain milk supply were similar across all groups surveyed and interviewed and included: lack of access to a suitable space to express; difficulties taking their allocated break; using their lunch break to express or pushing through until the end of the work day and at times feeling isolated. Despite these difficulties the women in this study reported that they persisted as long as possible to maintain supply for their infant.

According to the researchers the study has highlighted the necessity for a review of workplaces in Australia and a need to make them more breastfeeding friendly. There were many reports of support from managers and colleagues as well as evidence of less positive experiences. Another interesting finding so far is that women in the 'Education and Training' sector were less likely to have a suitable place to express breast milk than other sectors. The team are still analysing this data and plan to have published their findings by the end of the year.

World Breastfeeding Week is a timely reminder to ensure colleagues are aware of their entitlements and are supported. Information about lactation breaks in schools can be [found here](#) or members can contact Professional Support.