

CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL

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Submissions close on 16 April 2009

I wish to talk to the main points in my written submission at the hearings to be held between Monday 11 May 2009 and Monday 18 May 2009.

Are you completing this submission:

On behalf of a group or organisation

If you are representing, how many people do you represent?

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25 March 2009

Your Submission:

[I am unable to make the submission copy my text correctly - particularly my figures. Apologies for this. I will post a submission with all the text intact].

I would like the Christchurch City Council to consider working towards a mother-friendly, breastfeeding-friendly, baby-friendly Christchurch City. Undertaking this project would signify a positive commitment to the support of breastfeeding women and demonstrate that the city values mothering, babies, children and breastfeeding and all the benefits to society this entails.>

Approximately 90% of women commence breastfeeding in New Zealand but by the time the baby is six weeks old almost half of these women have introduced infant formula and by the age of six months only 12% of women are still fully breastfeeding.>

The NZ Ministry of Health recently produced guidelines for optimal infant feeding which recommend that a baby be breastfed exclusively until the age of six months, then after the introduction of complementary foods, to continue breastfeeding for at least the first year and longer. This reflects the global World Health Organisation's and the Ministry's literature and research about the importance of breastfeeding to the health of babies, children and adults. It is also a government priority to reduce inequalities in health and the Ministry of Health recognise that barriers exist to the initiation, exclusivity and duration of breastfeeding.>

In terms of the health goals for New Zealand, breastfeeding contributes positively to five of the thirteen priority population health objectives in the

New Zealand Health Strategy (Ministry of Health, 2000). Improving nutrition; reducing obesity; reducing the incidence and impact of cancer; reducing the incidence and impact of cardiovascular disease and reducing the incidence and impact of diabetes.>

Also the World Cancer Research Network released statements in 2008 & 2009 regarding special recommendations for reducing the chances of developing cancer. This statement advocates for breastfeeding exclusively for up to 6 months and emphasises that there is now strong evidence that breastfeeding protects mothers against breast cancer and babies from excessive weight gain.>

Being breastfed also protects babies from bacterial meningitis, respiratory tract infections, gastroenteritis and chronic gut disorders, ear infections, and bladder infections -this is all research and evidence-based.>

One of the aims of the Canterbury Breastfeeding Advocacy Service is to work towards the creation of a culture that makes it easier for women to breastfeed outside of the home environment. This includes not only health service facilities but community facilities such as libraries, swimming pool complexes, recreational facilities and shopping malls. A lack of broad social support for breastfeeding women has been identified in research. This includes limited or no workplace support for breastfeeding women returning to the paid workforce.>

Women who wish to breastfeed but discontinue do state that they would have liked to breastfeed for longer but they find it hard to breastfeed when out of the home, they feel uncomfortable breastfeeding in public, appropriate facilities for breastfeeding are few and far between and they often receive negative comments when breastfeeding.>

Recent incidents in Christchurch include a young Māori mother being told she could not breastfeed her baby at Christchurch Airport when she was saying goodbye to her husband who was leaving for East Timor. This mother had a small baby only a few weeks of age and was discreetly breastfeeding under a shawl.>

In terms of the nine community outcomes described as goals in the Christchurch City Council's plans there are four categories where becoming a mother-baby-breastfeeding friendly city fits into this proposed scheme.>

1. A safe city " where even the youngest citizens " babies - are able to be nurtured safely by their mothers and supported to reach their full positive potential. As an example of the broad reach of breastfeeding and mothering value, recent research suggests that breastfeeding can facilitate a bond with the mother that can ameliorate disadvantage and attachment disorders. Positive interventions to strengthen the relationship between mother and baby may assist in breaking the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage. Low IQ, low emotional security and few emotional ties are risk factors that can reduce the likelihood of escape from disadvantage [Clarke, A., & Clarke, A. 1996]. Supporting continued breastfeeding with this natural support for the attachment process, can make a significant impact on these factors and therefore could be viewed as a positive intervention to potentially improve the chances of escaping a "negative predicted outcome" in disadvantaged children.

Strathearn & Mamun et al., in the journal Pediatrics [2009] studied a cohort of mothers and babies over fifteen years and analysed 6621 cases in respect to child maltreatment. Of 512 children with substantiated maltreatment reports > 60% experienced " 1 episode of maternally perpetrated abuse or neglect. The odds ratio for maternal maltreatment increased as breastfeeding duration decreased and the odds of maternal maltreatment for non-breastfed children were 4.8 times the odds for children breastfed for " 4 months. Even after adjustments for confounding there was a 2.6% higher incidence for non-breastfed infants, which is a significant percentage in terms of public health importance and prevention of abuse.

The authors conclude that promoting and supporting breastfeeding represents a simple and cost effective means of strengthening the mother-baby relationship particularly in at risk and vulnerable populations.>

2. A city of inclusive and diverse communities where the diverse community represented by breastfeeding women is included and supported within the culture of the city and these mothers and families are able to feel absolutely welcomed in city council facilities. Then the positive example and role modeling of the City Council provides the foundations for a growing city awareness of the importance of support to the continuation of breastfeeding. The number of births in Canterbury in 2008 numbered 7284 and given that 90- 94% of these women start breastfeeding and a large majority of these women plan to breastfeed for longer than they actually manage, they do represent the largest majority of women with babies in our city. The WHO/UNICEF Baby Friendly Community Initiative, which aims to work towards communities that support breastfeeding, is also quite clear that women who make the decision to bottle-feed their babies also receive optimal support and so these baby-mother-breastfeeding friendly projects are also about safe infant feeding and aim to raise awareness of the support that is needed for all mothers too regardless of their feeding mode.>

3. A city of people who value and protect the natural environment in terms of being green you cannot get much greener or carbon neutral than breastfeeding. No water usage, no waste products, no electricity usage and a sustainable [with support] and renewable resource. I noted that a City Council in Canada [courtesy of a friend who sent me a photograph] has produced large billboards set up on the side of roads which show a baby with the words "Breastfeeding" No water, no waste, no pollution, no packaging. Totally environmentally friendly. I also noted a poster last year in Australia with a cute baby in a bucket of water which says "Save Water: Breastfeed". All in all great messages and a signifier that local authorities are getting on board and setting a fine and admirable example to the people living in their cities.>

4. A healthy city Breastfeeding and health have been discussed earlier in this submission but a few further points require outlining. Breastfeeding is not just of value while a baby is breastfeeding but the long term advantages, right into adulthood, are now well researched. What many people are unaware of is that breastfeeding is not just about optimal nutrition but also about the healthy development of the baby's very immature and vulnerable immune system. Only about half of what's in breast milk is about food and nutrition and a lot is about providing immunity and immune support for the baby. In the womb a baby receives food and antibodies via the placenta and then once born, breastfeeding and breast milk continue this work. A new baby does not start producing antibodies until about the age of four months and the immune system is fully functional at around two years of age. Breastfed babies definitely get sick much less and have fewer admissions to hospital. Breastfeeding also confers life-long protection against many chronic diseases and being breastfed and then breastfeeding yourself, provides an inter-generational maximised benefit. Women who breastfeed have protection against breast cancer, ovarian cancer, osteoporosis and rheumatoid arthritis and the hormones of breastfeeding can have positive effects on the mother in terms of promoting a sense of well-being. The latter, however, can also be dependent on how well supported the mother feels with her mothering and breastfeeding endeavours.>

As the coordinator of the Canterbury Breastfeeding Advocacy Service which is a Ministry of Health funded project, managed by Te Puawaitanga Ki Otautahi Trust, [an arm of the Māori Women's Welfare League], I am in a position to work as part of my role towards building Christchurch into a baby and mother friendly city. I do not envisage a great financial cost to this project but modest cost and mostly a commitment and a role modeling by the City Council to:>

• Become a breastfeeding and mother friendly employer which involves

supporting breastfeeding women returning to the City Council paid workforce with a private room to breastfeed/express breast milk amongst other simple innovations. Appropriate signage stating that the CCC support breastfeeding is necessary and a staff breastfeeding policy is easy to create to support this. I have a template of a breastfeeding policy that can be used for adaptation and consultation. I also have a project to create signage stating that "breastfeeding is welcome" in process at the moment which will have a Canterbury and Christchurch theme and hopefully become known and recognised throughout the city.>

• Use appropriate signage in the City Council building that states clearly that breastfeeding women are welcome to breastfeed there and start working towards an appropriate space for visitors to the City Council building to breastfeed in private if they wish. A toilet is not a suitable space.>

• Create breastfeeding friendly CCC sport and recreational facilities by undertaking the activities already outlined above.>

• Create a breastfeeding, mother-baby space at all CCC events. A recent festival in the North Island had a breastfeeding friendly and family friendly tent where mothers could retreat for a short respite from the busy crowds and breastfeed their babies.>

Thank you for this wonderful opportunity to present my submission. I am also very interested in speaking about my submission to the council in May.>

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