

Australia: Report Card 2023

The assessment of implementation of policies and programs from the World Health Organization's Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding (GSIYCF).

Policies and programs: Indicators 1–10

*IBFAN Asia Guidelines for WBTi for rating individual indicators 1 to 15 are as follows: 0–3 is rated Red, 4–6 is rated Yellow, 7–9 is rated Blue and more than 9 is rated Green.

Score out of 10

1. National Policy, Governance and Funding <i>Concerns national policy, plan of action, funding and coordination issues.</i>	1.5
2. Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative / Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding <i>Concerns percentage BFHI hospitals, training, standard monitoring, assessment and reassessment systems.</i>	6
3. Implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (WHO Code) and all subsequent World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolutions <i>Concerns implementation of the Code as law, monitored and enforced.</i>	5
4. Maternity protection <i>Concerns paid maternity leave, paid breastfeeding breaks, national legislation encouraging workplace accommodation for breastfeeding and/or childcare and ratification of ILO MPC No 183.</i>	6
5. Health and Nutrition Care Systems (in support of breastfeeding & IYCF) <i>Concerns health provider schools and pre-service education programs, standards and guidelines for mother-friendly childbirth procedures and in-service training programs.</i>	2.5
6. Counselling Services for Pregnant and Breastfeeding Mothers <i>Concerns the availability of and women's access to skilled counselling services on infant and young child feeding during pregnancy and after childbirth.</i>	6
7. Accurate and Unbiased Information Support <i>Concerns public education and communication strategy for improving infant and young child feeding that is actively implemented at local levels.</i>	2
8. Infant Feeding and HIV <i>Concerns policy and programs to address infant feeding and HIV issue and on-going monitoring of the effects of interventions on infant feeding practices and health outcomes for mothers and infants.</i>	4
9. Infant and young child feeding during emergencies (IYCF-E) <i>Concerns policy and program on IYCF-E and material on IYCF-E integrated into pre-service and in-service training for emergency management.</i>	0
10. Monitoring and Evaluation <i>Concerns monitoring, management and information systems as part of the planning and management process.</i>	0

Subtotal:
33/100

Feeding practices: Indicators 11–15

Requires national data that is no more than five years old and meets the WHO Indicators for assessing IYCF practices.

	Data	Score out of 10
Initiation of Breastfeeding (within 1 hour)	No available data	0/10
Exclusive Breastfeeding under 6 months	No available data	0/10
Median duration of breastfeeding	No available data	0/10
Bottle-feeding (0-12 months)	No available data	0/10
Complementary Feeding (6-8 months)	No available data	0/10
Subtotal		0/50

Total score = 33/100

The full report is available at www.wbtiaus.com or wbtiaus@gmail.com

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Gaps

There is no effective implementation of *The International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* and subsequent World Health Assembly resolutions have not been adopted or implemented in full.

The International Code is not effectively implemented and there is nothing to prevent commercial influence on policy.

Australian jurisdictions have not implemented Baby Friendly Health Initiative (BFHI) in the health system due in part to inadequate funding. This means health professionals are inadequately prepared for supporting breastfeeding women and their babies. The Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy (ANBS) 2019 priority action areas (including BFHI) do not have specific funding allocated.

Australian breastfeeding targets stated in the ANBS and the NHMRC Infant Feeding Guidelines are not consistent with the infant and young child feeding practices recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) regarding duration of exclusive and continued breastfeeding.

Nor are FSANZ food standards for packaging and labelling of baby foods.

The monitoring and reporting requirements in the ANBS have not been actioned.

The baseline evaluation due in July 2019-June 2020 was not funded or actioned.

There is no nationally consistent collection of quality data that monitors the effectiveness of the ANBS or how infants and young children are fed.

Recommendations

All Australian governments should fully implement the *International Code* and fund its monitoring and enforcement free from commercial influence to ensure full compliance including in the health system.

Include funding for BFHI in all state and jurisdictions to implement BFHI accreditation in the National Health Reform Agreement. The implementation of the ANBS should be included in the meeting agenda for Australian health ministers at least twice a year.

Update the NHMRC Dietary guidelines to

- align fully with WHO breastfeeding recommendations,
- include detailed guidance for health workers on supporting breastfeeding in emergencies and disasters,
- update recommendations in line with recent evidence to protect all women's rights to breastfeed regardless of HIV status, child protection status or incarceration.

Align baby food labelling to align with WHO recommendations of exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months.

Revise the ANBS implementation and timelines and make these publicly available.

Fund a Australian National Infant Feeding Survey, a Priority Action in the ANBS at least every five years.

Core Group Members

Naomi Hull RN BN Grad. Cert. Nursing, Cert IV Breastfeeding Ed (Counselling), IBCLC, MPH

Julie Smith BEc (Hons)/B A (Asian Studies), PhD, Cert IV Breastfeeding Ed (Counselling) Cert IV Breastfeeding Ed (Community)

Jen Hocking RN RM BA BN Grad Dip Mid MMed PhD

Libby Salmon BVSc MVS Cert IV Breastfeeding Ed (Counselling)

Susan Tawia BSc, PhD, Cert IV Breastfeeding Ed (Community), Dip Breastfeeding Management

Decalie Brown RN CM CFHN BHMtg FILCA IBCLC

Karleen Gribble BRurSc (Hons), PhD, Cert IV Breastfeeding Ed. (Community and Counselling).

Helen Adams RM IBCLC

Heather Gale RN RM IBCLC Post-graduate Diploma Nurse Education, Master of Nursing, (Former Breastfeeding Counsellor, Australian Breastfeeding Association).

Tracey Foster DipHSc Grad Dip Mid IBCLC CFHN Grad Dip Mgmt Grad Cert IV in Assessment & Workplace Training, Grad Cert Clinical Teaching

Elaine Burns RM, RN, BN, MCN(Midwifery), PhD

Bindi Borg PhD, M. International and Community Development, MA, BA, Cert IV Breastfeeding Education (Counselling and Community), Cert IV (Training and Assessment)

List of the partners for the assessment process

Core group

- Australian Breastfeeding Association
- Lactation Consultants of Australia and New Zealand

Reference Group

- Breastfeeding Coalition Tasmania
- Maternal Child and Family Health Nurses Australia (MCAFHNA)

Individuals

- Mary-Anne Land PhD, MPH
- Nina Chad PhD
- Professor Lisa Amir, MBBS MMed PhD IBCLC
- Kathleen Halliday AdvAPD, IBCLC



IBFAN
INTERNATIONAL BREASTFEEDING ASSOCIATION

WBTi
World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative (WBTi)

The World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative (WBTi) is IBFAN Asia's flagship. WBTi is being implemented as an integral part of two projects "Global Breastfeeding Initiative for Child Survival" (GBICS), in partnership with the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) and Global Proposal for Coordinated Action of IBFAN and WABA: Protecting, Promoting and Supporting Breastfeeding through Human Rights and Gender Equality" in partnership with Swedish International Development Agency (Sida).