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Creating breastfeeding-friendly food outlets in rural Victoria

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This research forms part of a larger project that was completed over an eight-week period from March 2018 to May 2018, in collaboration with *more4moira*. The researchers were student dietitians on public health placement. *More4moira* is a local, community-based initiative launched in late 2017 in a target area in rural North-East Victoria that advocates for healthy eating and active living in children. *More4moira* promotes four community identified key messages, including: offer vegetables, provide tap water, support breastfeeding and encourage physical activity. The current aspect of the larger project focused on one of the key messages; support breastfeeding.

More4moira is governed by eight individuals from a variety of settings in the target area including local schools, early years settings, health services and the local council. *More4moira* contains a coordination group with representatives from other areas of the community, including parents, teachers, sporting clubs and local businesses. There are currently no representatives from food outlets. Therefore, the larger research project aimed to make initial contact and develop preliminary partnerships with the local food outlets by involving them in the *more4moira* initiative and encouraging them to promote the key messages.

The aim of this current research was to examine attitudes and barriers from the perspectives of food outlet staff in providing breastfeeding friendly store environments in the target area. The Moira Shire had a lower rate (52.1%) of fully breastfed infants at three months than the North-Eastern Victoria Region (56.4%) in 2014/15. *More4moira* recognise that breastfeeding may not be possible for everyone (for a variety of reasons). The aim of this key message is to create supportive environments so that breastfeeding mothers feel comfortable to breastfeed in public areas, if they choose to. This primary outcome of this message is to create breastfeeding friendly spaces at community events, workplaces and public venues, including food outlets. For the purposes of this research, a 'breastfeeding friendly venue' was defined as meeting the eligibility requirements of the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA), including displaying the "Breastfeeding Welcome Here" sticker.

This study recruited eighteen food outlets in the target area and utilised a mixed method study design. Food outlets were recruited through direct visits and the provision of an information sheet explaining the study. Food outlet staff attitudes towards supporting breastfeeding in their venue and the community were assessed using a pre-tested and self-developed survey. The researchers audited the in-store environment using the ABA criteria to determine whether it would be eligible as a "breastfeeding friendly venue". The study achieved 100% participation (n=18) of recruited food outlets. Five (5) outlets were already registered with the ABA and displayed the ABA sticker. Nine

outlets requested further support from the local health service to register the outlet with the ABA and to receive the “Breastfeeding Welcome Here” sticker. The majority of food outlets participating in the study felt that breastfeeding was important in the community. This research enables *more4moira* to develop partnerships with these identified food outlets into the future to increase the number of food outlets that are registered with the ABA, which in turn allows more mothers to feel supported and comfortable to breastfeed in public venues.

Presenters

Natalie Bremner has completed her honours in nutrition and dietetics at Monash University. Through a recent public health placement she found a passion for prevention, working closely with community members and trying to influence positive health changes at a community-wide level. Natalie enjoys the public health side of dietetics, engaging and working with a lot of different stakeholders in the community. Outside of dietetics, Natalie has a strong interest in netball.

Ashleigh Robinson is a lively outgoing person with entrepreneurial aspirations who has completed her final honours year of a nutrition and dietetics degree. Ashleigh is passionate about positively impacting the health and wellbeing of others in the community by sharing her love of good food.