




Speech By
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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Cheese and Biscuits Cafe, Breastfeeding

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (11.50 am): A little cafe in Frenchville, North Rockhampton, has made worldwide headlines after the cafe owner asked a male customer to leave following a complaint about a breastfeeding mother. I am so proud that we have small business owners and people in Keppel who are prepared to stand up for women and their children and say that breastfeeding in public should not be an issue. After all, it is a woman's legal right!

The owners of the Cheese and Biscuits Cafe, Jessica-Anne and Stephen Allen—who, mind you, have a great selection of teas and delicious baked goods and I encourage you all to pop in for a coffee when next in Rocky—say that they were only doing what they felt was right after a man complained about a mother breastfeeding in their cafe. The male customer had approached the owners and complained about the woman feeding her baby sitting at an outside table. Cafe owner Jess said a middle-aged gentleman returned to the counter after ordering a coffee to inform the cafe staff that there was a mother—goodness gracious!—breastfeeding in the outdoor dining area and asked the staff to tell the woman to cover up. Jess told the man that Cheese and Biscuits Cafe is a breastfeeding-friendly cafe, that they have mothers groups and ladies who come and breastfeed all of the time and that they would never ask a mother to cover up whilst she is feeding her child. The cafe staff also offered him a seat inside if he preferred. However, the male customer declined and returned to the outdoor area.

When cafe staff went outside to deliver the coffee to the male customer, they noticed the breastfeeding mother was upset. The male customer said that he had confronted the breastfeeding mother and insisted that next time the staff should make sure they ask breastfeeding mothers to cover up. Cafe owner Jess then took his coffee, put it in a takeaway container and asked the man to leave. She said that she was worried about how the new mother would feel. 'I was afraid that she would feel like she had to cover up from now on,' she said. 'And, quite frankly, that is not good enough. It should never have been an issue in the first place because it is a form of adult bullying and is actually against the law to approach a breastfeeding mother and ask her to stop or cover up,' she said.

The Cheese and Biscuits Cafe story has made news headlines around the world and the cafe owners received hundreds of messages of support such as this from one mum—

As a new mum, this is one of my concerns that if I take bub out in public and have to feed her that someone will 'have a go at me'. It warms my heart to know that there are establishments like your own that help us stand up for ourselves.

It is astounding that in 2015 mothers are being discriminated against for breastfeeding their babies in public. A recent study from the Maternal and Infant Nutrition and Nurture Unit at the University of Central Lancashire in Preston found that many breastfeeding mums felt marginalised and shamed

when feeding in public, with many citing that as the reason they quit breastfeeding. The study also found that mothers fear that if they breastfeed in public they may be seen as hippies, weirdos or naturalists while others reported being stared at, frowned at and tut-tutted at.

The fact that women, like the mother at the Cheese and Biscuits Cafe that day, are made to feel embarrassed and ashamed for doing one of the most natural things in the world is beyond absurd. A mother breastfeeding her baby is a normal and natural thing. Babies have a right to be breastfed and mothers have the right to breastfeed. The benefits of breastfeeding are widely accepted amongst the medical community. Babies have less chance of diarrhoea and vomiting, fewer chest and ear infections and less chance of becoming obese while women who breastfeed have a lower risk of breast and ovarian cancer. We should be encouraging more women to breastfeed their babies. Under Australian federal law and Queensland law, breastfeeding is a right, not a privilege, and this includes if breastfeeding mothers are expressing milk by hand or with a breast pump. Cheese and Biscuits Cafe owner Jess Allen said, 'We didn't do anything great; we just did what was morally right.' I say bravo, Jess!