

VIRGINIA THORLEY, OAM, MA, PhD, GD Counselling, IBCLC, FILCA
Lactation Consultant

Virginia Thorley has been involved in the breastfeeding field since 1966, when she qualified as a breastfeeding counsellor with both La Leche League International and the Nursing Mothers' Association of Australia (now the Australian Breastfeeding Association, ABA). She is the author of four books, including *Successful Breastfeeding* (written as Virginia Phillips and first pub. Sydney 1974; last edition, Melbourne, 1991). In 1966 she began her lifelong work in relactation and adoptive breastfeeding. The first – and for several years the only - breastfeeding counsellor in Queensland, she founded the ABA's Queensland Branch, with the State's first group in tropical Townsville in 1969, and gave over 40 years' continuous service to this organisation.

In 1985, Virginia - again living in Townsville - was in the initial group of lactation consultants to be certified an IBCLC (lactation consultant) by the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners, with mandatory fifth-yearly recertification. She has published over 95 peer-reviewed papers and shorter items on breastfeeding, infant feeding and self-help groups in health care. One of her published papers, "Relactation in mothers of children over 12 months" (*J Trop Pediatr* 1993;39:45-48), was named joint UNICEF Breastfeeding Paper of the Month for September 1994. She had a chapter published in the international textbook of self-help materials edited by Alfred H Katz and Eugene I Bender (1990). She is a chapter author for the second edition of the *Core Curriculum for Lactation Consultant Practice* (2007). She is also the author of a self-published bibliography, *Relactation and induced lactation: Bibliography and resources*, regularly updated.

Virginia prepared a medical/health sciences bibliography on pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, child health and related topics for the quarterly *Birth Issues* journal for many years and was on the editorial review panel. She is on the editorial review panels of both *Health & History* and the *Journal of Human Lactation* and the editorial board of the *International Journal of Self Help and Self Care*, and also reviews for other journals.

Since 1975, Virginia has spoken on breastfeeding-related topics at conferences, seminars, workshops and in-services for health professionals and the general public in all the eastern States and the Northern Territory. In 1996-2009, she gave presentations on breastfeeding in South Africa, Romania, Russia, the United States and Australia including at ILCA conferences in 1998 and 2003. She was a participant in both International Conferences on Self-Help and Mutual Aid, the first in Dubrovnik, former Yugoslavia, in 1979, and the second in Ottawa, Canada, in 1992. She also presented two posters at the VELB/ILCA conference in Vienna in October 2008.

Other research interests, besides relactation, include the history of infant feeding, particularly twentieth-century Australia and mid-nineteenth-century England. Specific research areas in history are influences on mother's choices, wet nursing and co-feeding, and human milk banking. Clinical interests include low-tech methods of re-

educating faulty suck; mother or infant behaviours that enhance or hamper the breastfeed; tongue-tie; thrush; and management of headaches during lactation.

In 1999 Virginia was elected to the Board of Directors of the International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), the global professional body for IBCLCs, for a three-year term, 1999-2002. Also in 1999, she was appointed to the International Advisory Council (IAC) of the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA). The IAC appointment has been extended to December 2010.

In July 2008 Virginia met the criteria to become one of the first to be inducted as a Fellow of the International Lactation Consultant Association (FILCA). As a lactation consultant, she sees private clients, as well as continuing independent research, writing and speaking. Her memberships include: the International Lactation Consultant Association (Fellow), the Australian & New Zealand Society for the History of Medicine, the Queensland Lactation College, the Australian Lactation Consultant Association, and the Australian Breastfeeding Association (Honorary Member).

Though first and foremost an IBCLC lactation consultant, Virginia has also had extensive experience working part-time with indigenous (Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, New Caledonian, Tahitian) and non-English-speaking-background adults in an educational context, ranging from adult literacy to English for Academic Purposes.

She was educated at the Townsville Grammar School, the University of Queensland and the University of New England (Armidale). Her MA thesis, a cultural history within the history of medicine, is titled "Feeding their babies: Infant feeding advice received by Queensland women in the postwar period, 1945-1965" (University of Queensland, 2000). Eight (8) articles have been published in peer-reviewed journals from this research. Her PhD thesis (University of Queensland, 2007) examined influences on Australian mothers' infant feeding decisions, 1900-2000. She is an Honorary Research Fellow in the School of HPRC at the University of Queensland. In 2009 she completed the Graduate Diploma in Counselling (UNE, Armidale), and has a particular interest in stress management, the effects of life changes, and loss and grief situations.

Virginia was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) (under her former surname Thorley Phillips) in the January 1994 Australia Day Honours for "services as an author, counsellor and consultant on lactation, and to the Nursing Mothers' Association of Australia". In August 1978 she was made an Honorary Member of the Nursing Mothers' Association of Australia (now the Australian Breastfeeding Association). Her biographical details appear in the *Marquis Who's Who in the World*, the *Dictionary of International Biography*, the *Contemporary Who's Who*, the *International Who's Who of Contemporary Achievement*, and a number of similar reference texts. She is a consulting editor of the *Contemporary Who's Who*, an honorary role.

<p><i>Research planned for 2009/10: Human milk banks in Australia, 1950s-1980s.</i></p>
