
From: Megan Fox
Sent: Wednesday, 11 November 2015 1:07 PM
To: Adjudication
Subject: A91506 & A91507 - Infant Nutrition Council - submission

I would like to comment on the ACCC's draft deliberation to approve a reauthorisation of the *Marketing in Australia of Infant Formula (MAIF agreement)* for the next 10 years.

I have two young sons and am proud to be a breastfeeding mother.

There are a couple of areas that I feel require further examination. Firstly, the 10 year period is too long and the agreement, as it stands, fails to address some of the problems of voluntary self-regulation of marketing of infant formula.

There is a large body of evidence demonstrating the benefits of breastfeeding, to both babies and mothers. Breastfeeding reduces the risk of many chronic diseases, such as Type 2 diabetes and obesity. In fact, to combat obesity, the World Health Organisation (WHO) is in the process of strengthening protections against food marketing to children and their parents. This is likely to result in changes to the WHO Code, due out early next year. I note that in the draft determination, these anticipated changes are noted and open to be reviewed, however, given the high likelihood of changes being needed to MAIF, an interim re-authorisation of 1 or 2 years rather than 10 is more appropriate.

Most Australian mothers initiate breastfeeding, however less than 20% of babies are exclusively breastfed at 6 months. The National Health and Medical Research Council Infant Feeding Guidelines are very strong in their promotion of breastfeeding, and are aligned with the WHO guidelines recommending that babies be exclusively breastfed until 6 months and breastfeeding to continue for at least the first 2 years of life.

So I ask, why is the use of formula so prevalent in Australia and what impact does the marketing of formula in Australia play in these poor rates of breastfeeding? Granted, MAIF prevents the marketing of formula for infants under 12 months of age by manufacturers, but manufacturers and importers can advertise toddler milks on TV, Facebook, company websites, parent information services and baby clubs. Research indicates that mothers do not differentiate between toddler formula advertising and infant formula advertising. Thus advertising of toddler formulas undermines breastfeeding. Furthermore, the Infant Feeding Guidelines state "pasteurised full cream cow's milk is an excellent source of nutrients in a mixed diet in the second year of life". So, for the majority of children, toddler milks are unnecessary, but this is certainly not how they are marketed.

Australia is a signatory to the WHO Code, however I am very concerned that this voluntary agreement may not comply with our obligations around the marketing of breast milk substitutes. The growth in sales in formula alone should be enough to demonstrate that the MAIF agreement in its current form is not sufficient. The fact that retailers are not covered by MAIF means that manufacturers can easily obtain promotion of their formula products through these outlets, offering discounts and paying for advertising space in catalogues and online. This is a significant loophole which must be addressed.

Our health system is struggling to cope with the increasing costs of managing chronic disease in an ageing population. Increasing breastfeeding rates now will have an impact on the health of our nation in the years to come, so we need to promote and protect breastfeeding in our society through multiple channels. Providing adequate support to breastfeeding mothers is the most important, but protecting mothers from incessant advertising of formula will ensure their efforts to breastfeed are not being undermined.

Thank you for allowing me to present my concerns.

Megan Fox