
From: Jeanette Cullen
Sent: Wednesday, 11 November 2015 9:38 PM
To: Adjudication
Subject: A91506 & A91507 – Infant Nutrition Council – submission

Categories: Submission

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to register my dissatisfaction regarding the MAIF agreement and the proposal for its re-authorisation for a 10 year term. I was up until very recently a breastfeeding mother of three children, who has been fortunate to learn about the benefits of breastmilk and breastfeeding and had the support of other mothers and my local Australian Breastfeeding Association group to breastfeed all three children for an extended period of time, including tandem feeding my newborn and toddler.

I can give you many examples of how Formula has a detrimental impact on our breastfeeding rates and its positioning and marketing in our community disadvantages breastfeeding seen as the cultural norm. However here are two:

As an expectant mother, when discussing my feeding plans with my midwife, I did say that I "guess I would breastfeed" but that if things "didn't work out I would use 'formula'". Now as an expectant mother, I had never seen breastfeeding, had no real knowledge of its benefits, but because I had seen formula on the shelves and in the t.v advertising I knew of it, it was readily available and believed it to be a safe standby. Fortunately for me, I did get told about the Australian Breastfeeding Association ABA from a health professional (which does not happen all the time) and sought out my local group. Through this group I discovered the amazing world of breastfeeding and breastmilk and realised just how naive I had been. I had said to my husband, prior to my experience with ABA "If the breastfeeding thing is not working, I want you to support me in whatever choices I wish to make about alternative feeding i.e.formula" After my experience with ABA my words quickly changed to: "If breastfeeding is not working out, I want you to support me in every possible way to help me get breastfeeding" So the only insight I had prior to the birth of my first child about breastmilk and breastfeeding was due to a voluntary organisation that really relies on the word-of-mouth and mums seeking out support to get this information. Whereas anytime I walk into that supermarket or pharmacy etc there it is on the shelves, in a big glossy ad in many parenting magazines and smack bang in prime time tv. It is seen everywhere and because it brings in lots of dollars it can be seen everywhere.

Second example: Friend, who is mother of children: 1st-not breastfed, 2nd -initiated breastfeeding but did not continue. Now just over 12 months old is feeding him "toddler" formula. Had done this for first child.also. She has attended ABA meetings, had the benefits of learning about nutrition and benefits of breast milk. Finally the penny drops. I don't need toddler formula - my child has not been medically defined as nutritionally deficient - why

am I spending all this money? why did I believe their propaganda....because it is done so well and because they neatly segue the words breastfeeding into their advertising to make you think it is a necessary and suitable food source for toddlers.

If we want breastfeeding to be viewed as the cultural norm and for breastfeeding rates to be protected and improved upon then the MAIF agreement is not the answer. The voluntary and self-regulatory nature of the agreement and the lack of repercussions if there are breaches make it an insubstantial document. Reviews and recommendations have not taken place nor been adopted. Retailers are not included in the agreement, so formula and its advertising can be seen everywhere and yet daily we have to fight for breastfeeding in public to be accepted and breastmilk to not be considered a "biohazard" by some!

The ACCC appears casual in its dismissal of the possible changes to the WHO Code and its disinclination to wait for the WHO report and the National Breastfeeding Strategy before re-authorising the MAIF agreement, is hypocritical of Australia's obligations to legislate the full WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent World Health Assembly resolutions which it signed in 1981.

I am just constantly amazed that corporations and money-making always wins out. The Australian Government has an ongoing battle with improving health outcomes for all its population, yet if it was prepared to stand by breastfeeding and breastmilk then some of our poor health across the generations would be negated and the government would save money. The country is dependent upon volunteers to get the healthy messages out there and support mothers in their health choices yet is unprepared to play hard ball and fully commit to the WHO Code which research has shown does protect breastfeeding.

I beseech you to reconsider your intentions, and at the very least permit reauthorisation of the MAIF agreement for one year only, so that it goes under mandatory review in line with the new WHO Code and other significant reports of 2016

Sincerely

Jeanette Cullen