To whom this may concern,

I am writing in objection to the re-authorization of MAIF for a further 10 years. This is because it has been out of date for quite some time, and will continue to become even more ineffective over the next 10 years.

Breastfeeding is the normal way to feed a baby. I never had any doubt, before children, both my sister and myself would have no issues whatsoever with breastfeeding our children. One event, however, was a substantial shock to me. During the early days with my baby, I was still getting used to the whole 'breastfeeding thing', so I decided to host a barbeque at my house. Since I was still learning and am generally very shy in nature, I reserved to feeding my baby in the house away from the crowd. When my sister arrived with her husband they came in the house to greet me. It was there she told me to "cover up! There are people here!" before covering her husband's eyes and escorting him back outside. I was both shocked and horrified. This was not the attitude of our family?! She was breastfed for over 12 months!

Her attitude was that which has become normalised in the Australian culture by the unchecked and unchallenged marketing campaigns of infant formula for many, many years. Undermining breastfeeding is the ONLY way these companies become successful at selling their products. Undermining breastfeeding is highly profitable for them, at great expense to the infants of this country.

My second child was tragically born with an undiagnosed cardiac condition. Again, the battle to breastfeed continued due to normalisation of formula use engrained in the children's hospital. While I was breastfeeding my son, while he was hooked up to oxygen saturation monitors, I watched with amazement as his saturation levels increasing during a feed! I have since learnt, Neonatal Intensive Care Units who use human milk banks have substantially reduced cases and eliminated deaths from Necrotising enterocolitis (NEC). We should be protecting all new parents as well as their health professionals from unethical marketing practices. The current MAIF does not do this.

Australia signed up to the World Health Organisation code of ethical marketing practices back in 1981 and unfortunately, it was never truly updated to reflect the current WHO code. At present, we have nothing to reprimand these unethical practices, and continue to have government funded public health messages undermined by the companies that profit from low breastfeeding rates. I also understand the WHO code is due for another update next year. In addition, a review of the National Policy on Breastfeeding will be due at the end of this year. Why sign an agreement for 10 years when we don't even know what these new policies recommendations will be? A renewal of the MAIF for 1 year would be better than nothing in the interim, but DEFINATELY NOT 10 years.

The MAIF is a toothless tiger. The governance does not include any breastfeeding experts, government over sight, or any accountability and does not apply to non-signatories and is therefore useless anyway! The MAIF itself has for a long time been too narrow in it's scope not covering promotion from retailers, electronic and social media, and most highlighted, toddler milks. I have met numerous mothers who simply do not differentiate between infant and toddler milk marketing campaigns. I believe there is even research to support this, and why would they? They are created in this fashion for the sole purpose of avoiding the MAIF in the first place! It's no coincidence these follow-on formulas and toddler milks were created with the introduction of the WHO code and MAIF.

The only way we can protect the Australian population of new parents, our health professionals, and ultimately the next generation of Australian babies is to implement the WHO code in full and continue to update this code where needed in the future.

Regards
Tanya Flynn