

Against re-authorisation of the MAIF Agreement for 10 years, as requested by the Infant Nutrition Council (INC)

The Infant Nutrition Council is an organisation of infant formula manufacturers. It represents the interests of its member organisations, namely to protect their market and increase opportunities for the promotion and sale of their products. **They do not act in the interest of protecting breastfeeding and supporting mothers** to be able to exclusively breastfeed their babies to six months of age and to continue breastfeeding to 2 years and beyond, **as recommended by the World Health Organisation.**

The Infant Nutrition Council would like the MAIF agreement to continue unchanged for another 10 years because the MAIF agreement allows manufacturers and importers of infant formula and related infant feeding products to promote their product to mothers without actually breaching the terms of the agreement.

This promotion harms babies and their mothers, by creating a perception that a breastmilk replacement product is as good as, or has advantages over breastfeeding. This leads to a reduction in community support from Health Professionals and family members when a mother experiencing difficulties breastfeeding wishes to continue, but, instead of having her problems addressed and resolved, is encouraged to stop, because the opinion she hears from all around her is “Why are you bothering? Formula is fine.”

The Infant Nutrition Council would like to lock-in the status quo for a further 10 years, to pre-empt possible tightening of regulations around infant formula marketing. The ACCC must not allow such a long extension period, which would fail to protect the consumer from the commercial interests of the infant formula producers and importers.

The ACCC should re-authorise the MAIF agreement for a maximum of 2 years. A 10-year extension of the MAIF agreement is anti-competitive, and is not in the interests of Australian consumers.

I ask the ACCC to approve the extension of the MAIF agreement only for the minimum period necessary, maximum 2 years, to allow more effective protection of mothers and infants from the commercial interests of formula manufacturers and retailers to be put in place as soon as possible.