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## Prescriptions not best formula for infant nutrition

The introduction of prescription requirements for access to infant formula may reduce infant nutrition levels in Australia, the Infant Nutrition Council (INC) warned today.

INC's CEO Jan Carey said: "All mothers should be supported to provide the best nutrition for their infants. There's no question that breast milk is best and improving breastfeeding rates is an important aspect in maximising Australia's infant health and wellbeing.

"However, when an infant is not breastfed, the only suitable and safe alternative is a scientifically developed infant formula product. The INC is concerned that a prescription requirement to obtain infant formula may lead to inappropriate feeding choices such as unmodified cow's milk. This could lead to an increase in infants with inadequate nutrition.

"The INC understands that social and other issues may make it difficult for new mothers to provide breast milk exclusively. We reject the suggestion that the removal of breast milk substitutes from the market will increase breastfeeding rates."

Ms Carey said when a baby is not being breastfed, it's important that their mother has ready access to the only product that will meet all their baby's nutritional requirements; infant formula.

In order to help improve breastfeeding rates the *Marketing in Australia of Infant Formulas: Manufacturers and Importers Agreement* (MAIF Agreement) was introduced in Australia in 1992. Under this agreement, providers of formula do not advertise or in any other way promote infant formulas (for babies under 12 months) to the public.

The Australian government monitors and enforces strict compliance with this industry's ethical practices via the MAIF Agreement. The MAIF Agreement is Australia's official application of The World Health Organization's *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* (the WHO Code).

"Health care professionals, governments and infant formula providers have a responsibility to not only protect the critical role of breastfeeding but also to ensure the continued nutritional welfare of each and every Australian baby," Ms Carey said.

The INC supports both breastfeeding and infant formula and represents the major companies manufacturing, importing and marketing their own brands of infant formulas in Australia.

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**For further information, contact Jan Carey 0412 514 735**

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