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February 28th 2007

James Catchpole, Secretary
Standing Committee on Health and Ageing
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra

Dear Sir,

Inquiry into the health benefits of breastfeeding

The inquiry invites submissions on "How the Commonwealth Government can take a lead role to improve the health of the Australian population through support for breastfeeding."

Heinz is a member of the industry body IFMAA. We are the leading baby food company in Australia and have provided nutritious foods for babies for over 50 years. We support the submission to the inquiry on behalf of IFMAA and endorse their views. We would also like to contribute our own views to this important inquiry.

Heinz believes that the Commonwealth Government can take a lead role in support of breastfeeding, by clearly identifying the barriers that prevent women breastfeeding and developing an appropriate social marketing campaign over an extended timeframe, to help overcome these barriers.

Heinz View

- 1. Heinz supports the promotion of breastfeeding as the most desirable way to nourish young babies.**
- 2. Why don't women breastfeed? There are many factors that influence a woman's decision to breastfeed or not. It is important that this inquiry does not focus only on infant formula availability as a barrier.**
- 3. It is important that government support provided to encourage breastfeeding does not alienate those who do not breastfeed**



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1. Heinz supports the promotion of breastfeeding.

For the past 20 years, Heinz has supported the education and promotion of healthy infant and toddler feeding through our Heinz Infant Feeding Advisory Service. This professional team of 10 specialist nurses and dietitians represents a significant investment by Heinz in appropriate feeding for better health. This team provides information and educational materials for parents, and play an important role in helping to maintain child health nurses' knowledge regarding best practice in infant feeding. We agree that breastfeeding is the most appropriate way to feed young babies. We have always, and continue to recommend it accordingly.

We market our formula responsibly, in accordance with the MAIF Agreement. Our policy is not to sell our infant formula to remote indigenous communities where hygiene factors could potentially put a formula fed infant at risk.

2. Why Don't Women Breastfeed?

Chairman of the Standing Committee on Health and Ageing, Mr. Alex Somlyay, issued a media release on 6 December 2006, stating that "...the public perception is that breastfeeding is not necessarily accepted as the most desirable way of nourishing young babies..."

We believe that there is wide acceptance that breastfeeding is the most desirable way to nourish babies. However, there are many barriers to breastfeeding that are preventing mothers from choosing this option.

Australian research in 2001 showed that the most important factor influencing a woman's decision to breastfeed was the father's reported preference for breastfeeding.^{i, ii} In 2006, further research into predictors of breastfeeding duration identified breastfeeding difficulties in the first 4 weeks, maternal smoking, introduction of a pacifier and early return to work as the most significant factors.ⁱⁱⁱ

Multiple other barriers include:

- Short stay in hospital – breastfeeding is a learned behaviour and current short stays post birth in hospital means mothers can be discharged before breastmilk supply is established.
- Lack of support in the weeks following birth – mothers may lack understanding of the changing needs of their baby and the relationship between frequent suckling and milk supply.
- Cultural acceptance of breastfeeding, with some mothers embarrassed to feed in public.
- Early return to work. The Parental Leave in Australia Study shows that 25% of women are returning to work before their baby is 6 months old. Just under 10% are back when their babies are under 3 months.
- Workplace acceptance – many workplaces do not accept nor provide suitable facilities for mothers who want to continue to breastfeed.

3. It is important that government support provided to encourage breastfeeding does not alienate those who do not breastfeed.

Breastfeeding is a highly emotional issue. Our market research with mothers indicates that feelings of guilt are a concern for those who do not breastfeed. They do know that breastfeeding is best, but



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they decide not to. Health professionals using emotionally loaded terms like “artificial feeding” do not help support these mothers caring for their infant.

Health professionals are charged with providing accurate information to mothers about feeding choices – and doing it safely and correctly if they do formula feed. However many refuse to receive such information about formula feeding and actively exclude infant formula manufacturers from ongoing professional education events.

As an illustration, the national professional conference for The Australian Association of Maternal Child and Family Health Nurses, in collaboration with Karitane and Tresillian Family Care Centres will be held in Sydney in May 2007. The policy of the organising committee is...

“The Partnership in Practice organising committee will not accept any form of sponsorship from any company or organization that manufactures, distributes or endorses breast milk substitutes.”

We echo the sentiments of the IFMAA submission, that “...the use of formula milk be depoliticised and treated objectively as a routine aspect of baby care, rather than as a moral issue...” and that while breastfeeding is encouraged, mothers who do not breastfeed are not made to feel inferior.

In summary, Heinz welcomes this inquiry and believes that the government can play a lead role in improving the health of the Australian population through support for breastfeeding. We look forward to a balanced view enabling a focus on addressing the most important issues that currently prevent mothers from breastfeeding.

Yours faithfully,

Heather Ferguson

Heather Ferguson
Dietitian/Nutritionist

Roxanne O'Brien

Roxanne O'Brien
Marketing Manager, Heinz Infant Category

ⁱ Scott JA, Landers MC, Hughes RM, Binns CW

Factors associated with breastfeeding at discharge and duration of breastfeeding
J Paediatr Child Health. 2001 Jun;37(3):254-61

ⁱⁱ Scott JA, Binns CW, and Aroni RA

The influence of reported paternal attitudes on the decision to breastfeed
J Paediatr. Child Health (1997) 33, 305-307

ⁱⁱⁱ Scott JA, Binns CW, Oddy WH, Graham KI

Predictors of breastfeeding duration: evidence from a cohort study
Pediatrics. 2006 Apr;117(4):e646-55