

Media Release

New rules needed for marketing infant formula, says RACP

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The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) is calling for the Government to align the *Marketing in Australia of Infant Formula's (MAIF) Code of Conduct* with the World Health Organisation's (WHO) guidelines on marketing of infant formula, updated on Saturday at the sixty-ninth World Health Assembly in Geneva.

"All reasonable steps should be taken to ensure infant formula marketing does not distort the critical role breastfeeding plays in infant health outcomes," said President of the RACP Paediatrics & Child Health Division, Professor Sarah Dalton.

"Mothers are inundated with incorrect and biased information through advertising and unsubstantiated health claims.

"Breastfed children perform better on intelligence tests, are less likely to be overweight or obese, and are less prone to diabetes later in life."

According to the WHO, increasing global breastfeeding rates and reducing inappropriate marketing of breast-milk substitutes could save the lives of more than 820,000 children under the age of five each year.

The RACP has previously expressed concern over the regulation of marketing of infant formula in Australia, including labelling of infant formula products.

"The MAIF Code of Conduct is voluntary and self-regulated. In its current state, the code does not sufficiently address the provisions of the WHO [International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes](#)."

The WHO and the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund recommend that babies are fed breast-milk for their first six months, after which they should continue breastfeeding – as well as eating other safe and nutritionally adequate foods – until two years of age or beyond.

"Breast-milk is safe, clean and contains antibodies which help protect against many common childhood illnesses," Professor Dalton added.

"The RACP will continue to advocate for effective means of safeguarding breastfeeding as the best infant feeding option for optimal health outcomes."

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About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP): The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 15,000 physicians and 7,500 trainee physicians across Australia and New Zealand.

The College represents a broad range of medical specialties including general medicine, paediatrics and child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology, public health medicine, occupational and environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine, geriatric medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients.

The College offers 60 training pathways. These lead to the award of one of seven qualifications that align with 45 specialist titles recognised by the Medical Board of Australia or allow for registration in nine vocational scopes with the Medical Council of New Zealand.