

Mums angry at baby formula caution plan

By **MARIKA HILL**

HUNDREDS OF mothers have spoken out against a proposal to slap cigarette packet-style warnings on baby formula.

A warning that formula lowers a child's intelligence is among a raft of changes being considered by Food Standards Australia NZ.

Tracy Watson, who was unable to breastfeed after suffering post-natal depression, said for many mothers, using formula was a difficult decision and warning labels would only add to the stress.

"Having such labels on formula tins would only increase the feelings of guilt, shame and failure as a mother that are already present when you are unable to breast-feed."

Watson said she was infuriated by the lack of support and public shame for mothers who bottle-feed.

Warning labels would only further stigmatise mums, she said.

More than 500 parents across Australia and New Zealand have already expressed their concerns to Bottle Babies, a support group for mothers who use formula.

Formula already contains the "breast is best message" but FSANZ is looking at also warning of the associated health risks with formula.

Research found formula-fed babies are at a higher risk of infection and some chronic diseases. Some evidence also showed breastfed babies had higher IQs.

Bottle Babies founder Lisa Watson said formula information



They should be supported in how they feed their baby, not ridiculed by the product they use.

Lisa Watson, Bottle Babies

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should be given by health professionals, not via a one-size-fits-all warning label on the tin.

"Formula-feeding parents are saying loud and clear is that risk-based statements on formula tins will create unnecessary emotional distress."

One in every 20 women are unable to breastfeed for health reasons, but many more turn to formula for other reasons outside their control, she said.

"They should be supported in how they have to feed their baby, not ridiculed by the product they need to use."

Formula-industry group Infant Nutrition Council also hit back at warning labels, saying that although formula was never going to replicate breastmilk, it was safe.

NZ Lactation Consultant Authority and Le Leche League were unable to comment by the time the *Sunday Star-Times* went to press.

The FSANZ review will look at a range of issues including the current standards, labelling and advertising of formula. Submissions close on November 7.