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New Zealand Baby Food Brand Odi Expands into Australia with Nutrient-Dense Range

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Odiâ??s launch comes amid increasing scrutiny of commercial foods marketed to babies and young children

Odi is aiming for a category it says has too often prioritised sweetness and convenience over the nutritional needs of growing children.

For too long, Australian parents have been sold baby food under the banner of “healthy”, “natural” and “nutritious”, while many baby-food options remain dominated by sweet fruit purées, low nutritional diversity and added synthetic nutrients.

Odi's launch comes amid increasing scrutiny of commercial foods marketed to babies and young children, with Australian Government research finding commercial infant foods may be a major contributor of sugar to children's diets, while national infant-feeding guidelines recommend first foods be iron-rich.

It is a problem clinical nutritionist, nurse and mother of four Gina Urlich knows well. Urlich founded Odi after becoming frustrated by the gap between what parents reasonably assume children's food provides and what many products actually deliver.

"Parents should be able to pick up a product made for their baby or child and trust that it has been formulated around what growing bodies actually need," said Urlich.

"But 'healthy' doesn't necessarily mean nutritionally balanced. A product can be organic, natural or made predominantly from fruit and still not provide meaningful amounts of nutrients such as iron, protein, iodine or omega-3.

"Parents are incredibly time-poor. Convenience isn't the problem - families need convenient options. The question is whether we can make convenience genuinely nutritious."

The issue is particularly important during early childhood, when nutritional requirements are high and eating habits are beginning to form.

While fruit naturally has a place in a balanced diet, commercial children's foods can be heavily fruit-based and consequently very sweet. Some children's pouch products contain the equivalent of 5 teaspoons (20g) of sugar in a single serve.

Rather than replacing one convenience format with another, Urlich says Odi set out to rethink what goes inside it.

Odi products are formulated around nutrient-dense whole-food ingredients including organic vegetables, organ blends, bone broth and algal DHA omega-3, with essential nutrients including iron, protein, omega-3 and iodine derived from real food ingredients rather than synthetic fortification.

Several of Odi's products provide approximately 30–50 per cent of a child's recommended daily iron intake from whole-food ingredients, alongside naturally occurring co-factors that support absorption.

"When I started looking closely at the category, I kept coming back to the same question: where are the nutrients?" said Urlich.

"Babies and children have enormous nutritional needs relative to the amount of food they can physically eat, so every mouthful is an opportunity. We wanted to create food that makes those mouthfuls count.

"That meant starting with nutrient density and building the product from there - rather than starting with sweetness, shelf life or what is cheapest to manufacture."

The approach has helped make Odi one of New Zealand's fastest-growing baby and kids food brands, with the company now bringing its range across the Tasman as it expands into the Australian market.

Originally created for babies starting solids, Odi has grown into a broader children's nutrition range designed to support families from six months through to 14 years, including baby purée pouches and powders, family nutrition products and healthier takes on familiar children's snacks.