



ABN 46 112 783 114

DrinkWise Australia Ltd

Level 1, 24 Bougainville Street

Manuka ACT 2603

Tel: 61 2 6162 4132

Fax: 61 2 61624133

www.drinkwise.org.au

MEDIA RELEASE

SUNDAY 11 JULY, 2010

DRINKWISE RAISES CONCERN OVER ALCOHOL AND ENERGY DRINK MIX

A licensee recently posed a question in the Western Australian press - "How is serving vodka and Red Bull any different to serving a vodka and orange?"

The issue was raised after the WA Liquor Licensing Commission imposed a new restriction on the licensee's venue concerning the service of energy drinks with alcohol - banning the premises from serving the combined products between midnight and 2am in a bid to solve alcohol-related violence.

DrinkWise Australia Chair, Trish Worth, said that comments like these highlighted a need to create community awareness of the effects of combining the two products; with emerging data suggesting that mixing alcohol and energy drinks is placing consumers at greater risk.

Ms Worth said that the difference between serving energy drink with alcohol, and soft-drink with alcohol, comes down to the caffeine content.

In accordance with the Australian Food Standards Code the caffeine content in cola drinks must not exceed 14.4mg per 100ml serve. Energy drinks have double the caffeine content with regulations requiring that they must not contain more than 32mg per 100ml serve.

Ms Worth said, 'Alcohol is a depressant; it slows down the central nervous system including the transmission of messages to and from the brain. When consumed it affects your reaction time, dulls your thinking, and reduces your attention span.

'Energy drinks, on the other hand, contain high levels of caffeine, a stimulant that increases the body's state of arousal by speeding up the production of nerve impulses, which increases the activity of the brain,' she said.

Arguably, Dr Mary Claire O'Brien et.al (published in 2008)¹ in the United States (US) has undertaken one of the most prominent studies.

O'Brien found that people who combined energy drinks and alcohol had a higher prevalence of alcohol related consequences including being taken advantage of sexually, taking advantage of someone else sexually, riding in a car with an intoxicated driver, being physically hurt or injured, and requiring medical treatment.

Based on her research and like projects, O'Brien suggests that the reason for this might be that consumers who co-ingest energy drink and alcohol appear less able to perceive their level of

¹ O'Brien Mary Claire, et al. 2008, 'Caffeinated Cocktails: Energy Drink Consumption, High-risk Drinking, and Alcohol-related consequences among college students', the society for Academic Emergency Medicine.

intoxication; and that a person's ability to gauge their level of intoxication may be an important component of risk assessment.

Add to this reports that, 'an investigation by the New South Wales Food Authority found that 77 percent of caffeinated energy drinks contained more than the amount of caffeine permitted by the food standards Code², and consumers are at greater risk.

Ms Worth said, 'DrinkWise's mission is to promote change towards a healthier and safer drinking culture in Australia.'

'We're concerned by the findings coming out of the United States. They indicate that the combination of energy drinks and alcohol is placing consumers at greater risk and resulting in them consuming greater amounts.

'We have raised the issue of mixing alcohol with energy drinks with the Australian Hotels Association (AHA), in particular the practice among some hotels of trialling energy drinks on tap, which we are concerned has the potential to normalise the mix.

'The AHA agreed that it was necessary to communicate this emerging evidence with their members, and invited DrinkWise to submit an article in the next edition of their trade publication 'Our Hotel', she said.

For more information visit www.drinkwise.org.au

Available for interview:

- The Hon. Trish Worth, Chair of DrinkWise

For further information or to request an interview please contact Lisa Smallacombe, DrinkWise Communications Manager on (02) 6162 4132.

² www.ausfoodnews.com.au/2010/05/13/regulations-on-energy-drinks-and-alcohol