



AMA

15 March 2017

Toronto Board of Health  
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall  
100 Queen Street West  
Toronto, ON, Canada  
M5H 2N2  
c/o: Jann Houston

AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL  
ASSOCIATION  
ABN 37 003 426 293

T | 61 2 6270 5400  
F | 61 2 6270 5499  
E | info@ama.com.au  
W | www.ama.com.au

42 Macquarie St Barton ACT 2600  
PO Box 6090 Kingston ACT 2604

Dear Toronto Board of Health

I am writing to you today to voice the Australian Medical Association's (AMA) support for initiatives that seek to restrict the marketing and sale of so called energy drinks to young people. This support extends to the motion that is currently being considered by the Toronto Board of Health to restrict the sale of energy drinks to those aged over 19 years.

The AMA has long supported calls for tighter regulations on the marketing of highly caffeinated beverages, also known as energy drinks, in order to reduce their appeal to, and consumption by, young people. The sophisticated marketing of energy drinks leads many young people to believe that their performance during sport, employment, study and social engagements can be enhanced by consumption of these drinks. It is not surprising that young people are found to have frequent and heavy consumption patterns.

Energy drinks have been associated with a range of health problems ranging from heart palpitations through to potentially fatal spasms of the coronary arteries. A detailed American study<sup>1</sup> found that these highly caffeinated energy drinks are associated with "adverse cardiovascular events", including sudden and deadly heart attacks, ruptured arteries, heart arrhythmia, tachycardia and elevated blood pressure. The study confirmed that adolescents and young adults were particularly vulnerable to these adverse cardiovascular events.

While tragic, the reality is that the US Food and Drug Administration has confirmed that energy drink consumption was associated with 18 deaths between 2004 and 2012. The researchers noted that this finding was extremely conservative and suggested that energy drinks were likely to be associated with many more deaths (up to 180) during that same period.

Since 2013, the AMA has called for reductions in the caffeine content of energy drinks, and for their sale to be restricted to adults (in Australia, this means people aged over 18 years of age). Dr Steve Hambleton, the President of the AMA at that time, was particularly vocal in warning consumers and the relevant government authorities about the dangers associated with energy drinks and called for restrictions on their sale. Dr Hambleton argued that energy drinks were not appropriate for a range of consumers including children, adolescents, pregnant women, and those with caffeine sensitivities, and that it was inappropriate for the products to be marketed or sold alongside 'soft' drinks.

---

<sup>1</sup> Higgins, J.P., Yarlagadda, S. & Yang, B. (2015). Cardiovascular complications of Energy Drinks. *beverages*, 1, 104-126

A number of European countries have successfully implemented measures that restrict access to energy drinks. In Lithuania energy drinks are only available to those aged over 18 years of age, and in Norway, Denmark and France energy drinks are available only in pharmacies.

The AMA is supportive of the motion currently being considered by the Toronto Board of Health to restrict the sale of energy drinks to those people aged 19 years and older. Restricting young people's access to energy drinks recognises the very real risks that these products pose.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Simon Tatz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Simon Tatz  
Director, Public Health