



MEDIA RELEASE

Under embargo until 13 December 2010

## Health bodies call for crack down on alcoholic energy drink manufacturers

A coalition of health organisations has called on the State and Federal Health and Consumer Affairs Departments to follow the US example and push manufacturers of alcoholic energy drinks to withdraw their products from sale. All alcoholic energy drinks are expected to be off American shelves by COB today.

The Alcohol Policy Coalition is urging governments to take action now on alcoholic energy drinks as momentum and evidence builds in Australia and overseas around the harms and negative health effects of mixing alcohol and caffeine. This includes pre-packaged drinks, such as those withdrawn in the US and over-the-bar drinks, such as those banned in Western Australia.

Sondra Davoren, senior policy adviser for the Alcohol Policy Coalition, said that the combination of alcohol with energy drinks was potentially more harmful than alcohol alone as it enables drinkers to consume even greater amounts of alcohol than usual, as they feel less drunk.

"If people are consuming alcoholic energy drinks to excess, they are putting themselves at risk of serious short-term physical harm such as drink driving, aggressive behaviour and injury. But there are also less obvious long-term health affects such as cancer and cirrhosis of the liver," said Ms Davoren.

"Consumer Affairs Victoria have already put out a public warning about these products in 2008 and Lion Nathan and Fosters conducted a voluntary recall of their alcoholic energy drinks and no longer produce or market them. There are still, however, many rogue operators who are creating and aggressively promoting these pre-packaged products to young people. We want these products off the shelf," she said.

Ms Davoren said that the addition of caffeine to alcoholic beverages was not permitted under the Food Standards Code.

"Many states have begun to acknowledge the danger of mixing energy drinks with alcohol and we've seen Western Australia move to ban mixing energy drinks with alcohol in pubs and clubs," she said.

On Friday 3 December 2010, the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council noted concerns continue to be raised about pre-packaged alcoholic energy drinks. The Ministerial Council agreed the issue of combining alcohol with caffeinated beverages would be referred to the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy for consideration.

"Currently the issue of alcoholic energy drinks is being shuffled between various Ministerial Councils, it is time for governments to step up and show leadership on this issue, as these products are marketed heavily to young drinkers who are more at risk of harm," she said.

### Background information

#### US recall

The manufacturers of seven caffeinated alcoholic beverages have stopped producing or shipping the products following FDA warning letters.

The FDA told manufacturers that the addition of caffeine to alcoholic beverages was not approved by the agency and it was an "unsafe food additive." After a year long review by the FDA, the agency announced that it did not find support for the claim that the addition of caffeine to alcoholic beverages is 'generally recognized as safe,' which is the legal standard. Rather, the agency found evidence that the combination of caffeine and alcohol in the products posed a public health concern.



- Phusion Projects of Chicago, Illinois, has ceased producing caffeinated alcoholic beverages, is no longer shipping such products and expects to have all of its caffeinated alcoholic beverages off retail store shelves by December 13. Phusion Projects is the maker of Four Loko.
- San Diego, California-based United Brands has ceased shipping its caffeinated alcoholic beverage Joose and expects to have its product off retail store shelves by December 13. United Brands also said that it no longer markets Max, another caffeinated alcoholic beverage listed in the warning letter.
- Charge Beverages Corp. of Portland, Oregon, ceased producing its caffeinated alcoholic beverages, Core High Gravity HG, Core High Gravity HG Orange, and Lemon Lime Core Spiked, in September and has not shipped any caffeinated alcoholic beverages since early November.
- New Century Brewing of Boston, Massachusetts, has ceased manufacturing its caffeinated alcoholic beverage, Moonshot.

None of these products are available for purchase in Australia.

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The Alcohol Policy Coalition (the Coalition) is a collaboration of health agencies – Australian Drug Foundation, Cancer Council Victoria, Heart Foundation (Victoria), Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre and VicHealth – with shared concern relating to the misuse of alcohol and its health/social impacts on the community. Alcohol remains one of the major causes of preventable death and illness in Australia. As such, the Coalition advocates for evidence based policy to prevent and reduce the harms caused by alcohol to Australians. For more information visit [www.alcoholpolicycoalition.org.au](http://www.alcoholpolicycoalition.org.au)