



Rutherglen High School

PRINCIPAL: Mr. Phillip Rogers

A VICTORIAN SECONDARY COLLEGE

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'Energy' drinks and other carbonated drinks at school

Background:

Victorian government schools are required to follow guidelines in terms of what we can sell at our Canteen.

For that reason, we do not stock cans or bottles of soft drink nor so called 'energy' drinks.

Energy drinks are a potent source of caffeine and can contain high levels of sugar, sodium and herbal stimulants. The growth in popularity of these drinks is concerning, with annual sales in Australia increasing more than 600 per cent between 2001 and 2012 and still climbing. Teenagers and young adults dominate the market.

Research:

In the largest study of its type in Australia, *Telethon Kids Institute* researchers have found more than half of young people who consumed energy drinks suffered negative health effects – leading the Institute to call for a ban on sales of the products to children under the age of 18.

The Amped Up study, led by public health researcher Dr. Gina Trapp surveyed 3,688 Western Australian high school students about their energy drink use.

Preliminary findings showed more than 50 per cent of those surveyed had tried an energy drink, with 55.4 per cent of that group reporting they had experienced adverse outcomes – some serious enough to require medical assistance.

According to the survey, 24.6 per cent had experienced heart palpitations, 24.5 per cent had had trouble sleeping or insomnia, 24.3 per cent had headaches, and 24 per cent had upset stomachs.

Existing research shows energy drinks have been connected to cardiovascular and neurological issues such as seizures, psychosis and cardiac arrest. There is also evidence linking energy drink consumption in children and young people to substance use and a range of behavioural problems.

Other peak health bodies, such as the Australian Dental Association and Australian Obesity Policy Coalition, support a ban.

Data from the Australian Poisons Information Centre shows a five-fold increase in calls regarding energy drinks, with the most common symptoms palpitations, agitation, dizziness and gastro-intestinal upset, and at least 128 people requiring hospitalisation.

What do we want at Rutherglen High School?

Consumption of energy drinks and soft drinks with high levels of sugar and caffeine can and do have a negative impact on children in terms of health outcomes and their ability to concentrate and focus.

I know of several families who ask: **“did you have a coke or energy drink?”** if their child gets into trouble. There may or may not be a medical diagnosis, but history shows that the two often go together.

Parents should ensure students do not consume these drinks before school and should not bring such drinks to school.

I believe as a school we should confiscate such drinks from students if they do bring them to school.

Naturally if a parent wants to come and collect the drinks, that is their prerogative.

I am interested in hearing your thoughts so please contact me on 02 6032 9483 or by email at rutherglen.hs@education.vic.gov.au I will take your feedback to School Council to determine any next steps.

Regards

Phil Rogers

Principal