



Sunday Times

12-Dec-2010

Page: 43

General News

By: Phil Hickey & Anthony Deceglie

Market: Perth

Circulation: 315024

Type: Capital City Daily

Size: 190.52 sq.cms

Frequency: -----S

Alarm at caffeine in pubs

**Phil Hickey
Anthony DeCeglie**

PUBS selling energy drinks on tap have come under attack from health experts.

The Sunday Times can reveal that the high-caffeine drink Mother is now on tap at several Perth pubs, including the Brass Monkey in Northbridge.

This is despite warnings from the Drug and Alcohol Office that mixing energy drinks and alcohol can lead to an increase in risk-taking behaviour by patrons such as driving while drunk, getting into fights and unwanted sexual activity.

"There is growing evidence showing that drinking alcohol with energy drinks can mask the intoxicating effects of alcohol, and people can think they are sober when they are not," DAO executive director Neil Guard said.

After being alerted to the situation, the recently formed McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth has vowed to write to the Director of Liquor Licensing, calling on him to investigate pubs selling energy drinks on tap.

Centre director Mike Daube said selling energy drinks on tap led to "wide-awake drunks".

"It's worrying and irresponsible for hotels to do this," Prof Daube said.

"It's likely to lead to more alcohol

problems, including violence and drink-driving."

Australian Medical Association state president David Mountain said providing the energy drinks on tap created a "nightmare scenario".

"It's a nonsensical drink to have on tap," associate professor Mountain said.

"It gets people in the mindset that they can go longer and harder.

"It's the last thing you need in venues that are already prone to violence and people who are drinking too heavily."

Coca-Cola Amatil, which owns Mother, refused to reveal the number of WA venues where the drink was sold on tap.

"We have only placed Mother on tap into venues where there is an established energy drinks market – in other words we're simply replacing the method of dispensing it from bottles and cans to fountain," a spokeswoman said.

All Mother draught taps carry a warning message about caffeine consumption.

Opposition health spokesman Roger Cook called on the hotel industry to carefully monitor the situation.

Health Minister Kim Hames said the issue had not yet been raised with him.