



Tuesday 30 September 2014

Food Standards Australia New Zealand  
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By email: [submissions@foodstandards.gov.au](mailto:submissions@foodstandards.gov.au)

## **Endorsement of the Obesity Policy Coalition (OPC) Submission: Proposal P1030 concerning health claims on electrolyte drinks**

The Parents' Jury is an online network of Australian parents who advocate for healthy food and physical activity environments for children. We are supported by VicHealth, Diabetes Australia – Vic, Cancer Council Australia, YMCA Victoria and the Australian and New Zealand Obesity Society.

With 1 in 4 Australian children now overweight or obese, it is more important than ever to work collaboratively across all sectors to encourage healthy eating, including supporting parents to make healthy and informed food and beverage purchases for their children. The Parents' Jury members have frequently spoken out about the importance of clear and consistent food labelling on packaged foods.

The Parents' Jury fully endorses the submission by the OPC<sup>i</sup> re FSANZ Proposal P1030, concerning health claims on electrolyte drinks. Further, we would like to add or reiterate the following points as they relate to The Parents' Jury members:

### **Parents want clear and consistent food labelling that helps them make healthy choices**

- Parents often don't have the time or knowledge to decipher nutrition panels, which increases their susceptibility to being misled by health claims on packaging.
- An overwhelming majority of parents support simple, consistent food labelling systems such as traffic light labelling and the Health Star Rating System as it allows them to easily select healthy options. 90% of parents surveyed by The Parents' Jury said they would like to see these systems implemented for all packaged foods<sup>ii</sup>.

### **Health claims on electrolyte drinks are likely to be misleading for parents**

- Currently, Standard 1.2.7 protects parents from misleading information to a degree by ensuring products meet the threshold requirements of the Nutrient Profiling Scoring Calculator (NPSC) in order to carry a health claim. If leeway is given to the threshold for sugar content, parents may be misled to believe that electrolyte drinks are a healthier option for children than soft drinks.
- There is already much misconception about the healthfulness of electrolyte drinks, with respondents to FSANZ consumer research indicating that electrolyte drinks are

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a healthier option than soft drinks, with parents considering them “better” for their children than other drinks, such as soft drinks like Coca Cola<sup>iii</sup>.

### **Not consistent with Australian dietary guidelines for children**

- The Australian Dietary Guidelines specify that the intake of food and drinks containing added sugar, including sports drinks, should be limited<sup>iv</sup>. Consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages is a major contributor to the childhood obesity epidemic<sup>v</sup>.
- Electrolyte drinks contain amounts of added sugar comparable to soft drinks. While a can of Coke contains 40g (9 tsp) of sugar, a bottle of Gatorade contains almost as much, at 36g (8 tsp).

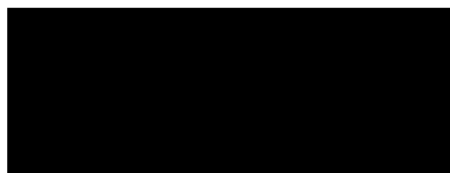
### **Electrolyte drinks are not consumed as intended and contribute to excess energy consumption in children**

- Electrolyte drinks are designed for endurance athletes and are not beneficial for the majority of the population. However, they are so readily available in supermarkets, sports facilities, cafes, convenience stores and at service stations that parents could be led to believe that they were fit for everyday consumption.
- Parent respondents to FSANZ consumer research noted that their children consumed sports drinks in the context of sport or activity; during hot weather, outdoors in the sun; during sports like football and playing in playgrounds<sup>vi</sup>. Consumption of electrolyte drinks in these situations is not necessary and potentially contributes to excess energy consumption and weight gain.

In order to avoid misleading parents and consumers into thinking they are purchasing a “healthier” beverage, The Parents’ Jury requests that FSANZ hold electrolyte drinks to the same benchmarks as other sugar-sweetened beverages for the purposes of allowing health claims on packaging.

If you require further information, please contact Dimity Gannon on (03) 9667 1742 or by email: [dimity@parentsjury.org.au](mailto:dimity@parentsjury.org.au)

Yours sincerely



**Campaigns Manager, The Parents’ Jury**

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The Australian and New Zealand Obesity Society



We build strong PEOPLE  
strong FAMILIES strong COMMUNITIES



## References

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- <sup>i</sup> Obesity Policy Coalition submission to FSANZ (2014)
- <sup>ii</sup> The Parents' Jury (2011), Parents endorse mandatory traffic light labelling. Media releases webpage: <http://www.parentsjury.org.au/tpj-media/media-releases> accessed 30/9/2014
- <sup>iii</sup> Colmar Brunton 'FSANZ Consumer research investigating the use of formulated supplementary sports foods – Final Report' (2010)
- <sup>iv</sup> Australian Dietary Guidelines (2013)
- <sup>v</sup> J James and D Kerr (2005), International Journal of Obesity (29), Prevention of childhood obesity by reducing soft drinks
- <sup>vi</sup> Colmar Brunton 'FSANZ Consumer research investigating the use of formulated supplementary sports foods – Final Report' (2010)

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