

ACU launches healthy drinks policy

Australian Catholic University (ACU) is the first Australian university to remove sugary drinks from its vending machines.

It's hoped the move will encourage other universities, schools and workplaces to follow suit.

The decision came after analysis revealed sugary drinks made up around 55 per cent of all beverages available in vending machines at ACU's campuses across Australia.

Professor Anne Cummins, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students Learning and Teaching) at ACU, said the University had a duty to ensure its students and staff had a healthy environment in which to study and work.

"We wanted to change the perception of what products are automatically expected to be sold in vending machines. ACU regularly reviews not just the goods and services we provide, but also the providers and supply chains we use. This is part of the University's commitment to a sustainable and healthy environment in which to study and work," Professor Cummins said.

The vending contractor, Qualityvend, has removed any drinks with added sugar, in line with the latest guidelines from the Department of Health in New South Wales, including soft drinks, some flavoured waters, fruit drinks, cordials, iced teas, energy drinks and sports drinks across all vending machines at all but one of ACU's eight campuses servicing 32,000 students.

The vending machines now have to follow the 75/25 rule – i.e. 75% of products are 'everyday' (healthier food and drinks according to the Australian Dietary Guideline, ADG) and limit 25% of the products to 'occasional' (less healthy food and drinks according to the ADG) such as some fruit juices, and flavoured milks. Examples include water, milk, coconut eater, diet soft drinks, and flavoured waters (essence only).

Dr Jason Wu of The George Institute for Global Health, who managed the analysis with ACU, said: "This is a first step but there are many more to go. We know when people are presented with healthier choices they choose them. When drinks such as these have been removed from sale in universities overseas, people have not complained or demanded their reinstatement. They simply swap for a drink not loaded with sugar.

"Sugary drinks are an important part of the picture when it comes to a healthy diet, but we would also like to see universities, public places and schools ensure that all of their food and drinks offering meet healthy food guidelines. With 60 per cent of Australians overweight or obese we need action right now."

ACU student Scott Slater, who collected the research data, said he believed most students would welcome the move but appreciated there may be initial opposition to the decision. "I think most of my peers will realise we are doing this for a very good reason. Give it a few weeks and it will become the norm to reach for a water, rather than a soft drink."

Robbie Allison, of Qualityvend which provides the machines on campus, said: "Students, and the public in general, want healthier options. This is what has driven us to ensure that our vending machines meet these changing expectations. We don't want to add to the obesity crisis in Australia, we would like to be part of the solution, machine by machine."

SUGARY FACTS

- It's estimated one can of regular soft drink a day could lead to a 6.75kg weight gain in one year (if you added these to regular diet and don't offset).[1]
- Research has shown that consuming 340ml of sugary drink a day (which equates to less than one standard can) increases your risk of type 2 diabetes by 22% when compared to drinking one can a month or less.[2]
- Young Australians are very high consumers of sugar-sweetened beverages, and sugar sweetened soft drinks in particular. The 2007 Australian National Children's Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey found that 47% of children (2 to 16 years of age) consumed sugar sweetened beverages (including energy drinks) every day.[3]

Media Enquiries

Jen Rosenberg, National Manager, Strategic Communications

Australian Catholic University

Jen.rosenberg@acu.edu.au, 0407 845 634

The George Institute for Global Health

The George Institute for Global Health conducts clinical, population and health system research aimed at changing health practice and policy worldwide. Established in Australia and affiliated with UNSW Sydney, the Institute today also has offices in China, India and the United Kingdom, and is also affiliated with Peking University Health Science Centre and the University of Oxford. Facebook at [thegeorgeinstitute](https://www.facebook.com/thegeorgeinstitute) Twitter @georgeinstitute Web georgeinstitute.org

ACU

ACU is a public, not-for-profit university funded by the Australian Government. It is open to students and staff of all beliefs. Its research institutes and faculties focus on the priority research areas of education, health, theology and philosophy, and social justice and the common good. Facebook at [AustralianCatholicUniversity](https://www.facebook.com/AustralianCatholicUniversity) Twitter @ACUMedia Web acu.edu.au

[1] Apovian CM. Sugar-sweetened soft drinks, obesity, and type 2 diabetes. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 2004; 292(8): 978–9.

[2] The InterAct Consortium. Consumption of sweet beverages and type 2 diabetes incidence in European adults: results from EPIC-InterAct. *Diabetologia* PMID, 2013. <http://stochasticscientist.blogspot.com.au/2013/04/bad-news-about-sugary-soft-drinks.html#sthash.GJNRNvPI.dpuf>

[3] Mortensen A. The role of beverages in the diet of Australian children. Analysis and summary report commissioned by the Australian Beverages Council. Australia, 2010: 1–15.