

Our Ref: E17.1104

7 March 2017

Clr Stephen Leslie
Mayor
City of Lithgow Council
PO Box 19
LITHGOW NSW 2790

Dear Clr Stephen Leslie

Re: Balloon release ban

I am writing to inform you about one of the steps Eurobodalla Shire Council has recently taken towards protecting our natural environment. I strongly encourage your Council to join us in this campaign and ban balloon releases in your region.

On 14 February 2017 I raised a Mayoral motion to ban balloon releases at Council events and in Council managed reserves. This was unanimously approved and has since received overwhelming support from the local community. Our Facebook post on this decision received well over 700 likes and reached over 20,000 people. It has been the second most popular story we've ever posted.

Unfortunately balloons can cause significant harm to the natural environment. Although some balloons are made from a natural latex and are marketed as an environmentally friendly option, these will still take months to break down and are known to harm and kill animals in both the marine environment and on land. The attached strings and clips on balloons will last much longer in the environment and go on to be eaten or entangle marine species.

Balloons can travel large distances once released, with balloons being found on Eurobodalla beaches from as far away as Sydney, Victoria and the Riverina. These balloons were identified by their logos.

The information about where the balloons were released was shared with the Australian Marine Debris Initiative who contacted the owners of the balloons to notify them of the distance their balloons had travelled and also to ask them to consider alternatives to their advertising.

We understand that in NSW under the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 – Amendment (Balloons) Act 2000* it is illegal to release 20 or more gas filled balloons at, or about, the same time.

If smaller numbers of balloons are released the balloons should not have any attachments. On-the-spot fines can be given and penalties are much higher if over 100 balloons are released.

The New South Wales legislation is, however, largely not monitored or enforced with large releases of balloons happening across NSW and Australia. These releases often happen at times of difficulty or celebration for the community concerned. However, I believe that there are alternate ways to better commemorate these events than with balloons.

Banning balloon releases is a small but important step we can all take to help protect our local environment. I appreciate your support on this issue.

See our website www.esc.nsw.gov.au for more information or contact Council's Sustainability Coordinator Mark.Shorter@esc.nsw.gov.au or 02 4474 1037 for more information.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Liz Innes
Mayor