

Dear Wollongong City Council,

Although I am not allowed to address the Council meeting on the 29th June as I reside outside Wollongong, it would be very much appreciated if you could make the time to read the following before the meeting. The balloon release issue is not confined to Wollongong.

As the founder of No Balloon Release Australia, I have been closely involved in the campaign to nationally ban the release of balloons and the use of helium to inflate balloons.

Thank you to Lord Mayor Bradbury for raising this important issue.

While I support the Lord Mayor's motion, there are a few additional points I would like to make.

1. Australian Funeral Directors Association already advises its members to not release balloons.
2. NSW allows "up to 20" helium filled balloons to be released at any one event, so mourners are currently within their rights to release balloons. A funeral director most likely won't deny a client a balloon release if they can go elsewhere.
3. Many releases occur at memorials without funeral director input. The balloons are bought as a part of helium kits, or just the helium tanks, or already filled helium balloons from chain stores or discount shops such as Big W, Spotlight, Target, The Reject Shop, or local newsagents. Customers are usually not given any information about balloon release laws, the impact of the balloons nor the dangers of inhaling helium. Any advice can be easily ignored. The non-recyclable helium tanks end up in land fill.
4. The 100+ and 60+ rosary balloon releases earlier this year in Western Sydney were created by a party supply shop. The organisers had approached two other shop owners who declined as they belong to the Pro Environment Balloon Alliance (PEBA), whose members pledge to not provide balloons for release. So the organisers knew that their releases would be illegal, and perhaps knew they would damage the environment. They simply shopped around until they found a compliant business. The local council refused to take any action.
5. It is not only mass releases which impact the environment. Just one released helium balloon will result in litter, and it takes just one balloon to kill an animal. NSW needs to amend the Litter Act to totally ban the release of balloons.
6. NBRA has received many reports of helium balloons collected as litter from Wollongong beaches after being released from Western Sydney and other areas. Pool shops, kindergartens, real estate agents, political parties, where ever there is an event, fair or market, helium balloons are handed out for free and then often released, either deliberately or accidentally.

7. Over the past four years since NBRA began, it has become obvious that balloon releases need to be stopped at their source. We need to stop using helium to inflate balloons. Queensland considers balloon releases as illegal, both Victoria and Tasmania consider balloon releases to be littering, yet releases still occur in those states.

Will Wollongong Council please:

- \* request NSW amends the Litter Act to totally ban the release of balloons?
- \* lobby the Federal Government through the Hon. Trevor Evans, Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management, to nationally regulate the sale of helium so it cannot be used to inflate balloons, to prevent balloon releases? Such regulation would remove the compliance obligation from local government.
- \* request the NSW Local Government Association take the same actions?

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