

**ITEM B LORD MAYORAL MINUTE - RELEASE OF LIGHTER THAN AIR GAS FILLED BALLOONS**

Ceremonies to commemorate or memorialise the passing of a loved one are very special occasions. However, the release of lighter than air gas filled balloons unfortunately have a significant environmental impact and destructive consequences. A CSIRO study found that balloons are in the top three most harmful pollutants threatening marine wildlife – along with plastic bags and bottles.

Under the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* it is an offense to release 20 or more balloons at or about the same time if the balloons are inflated with a lighter than air gas. Wollongong City Council's Single Use Plastic Management Policy also states that at events on Council controlled or managed land, participants must refrain from distribution of a range of single use plastics, including balloons.

It is important that the community is aware of the environmental impact caused by balloons and the legislation regarding their release.

#### RECOMMENDATION

Council writes to all local Funeral Directors requesting that they inform those arranging funerals and post funeral memorial ceremonies about restrictions regarding the release of 'lighter than air' gas filled balloons. The correspondence should -

- 1 Advise that under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 it is an offense to release 20 or more balloons at or about the same time if the balloons are inflated with a lighter than air gas.
- 2 Highlight the severe impact that balloons and other single use plastics have on the environment, especially marine wildlife.
- 3 Encourage those wishing to commemorate the passing of a loved one to explore other environmentally friendly options such as releasing bubbles, lighting candles or scattering flower petals.
- 4 Advise that under Wollongong City Council's Single Use Plastics Management Policy, organisations or individuals organising events conducted on Council land, including cemeteries, must refrain from balloon use and distribution and comply with litter and environmental legislation.

#### ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments for this report.