

Angie Stringer

To whom it may concern,

Queensland's Waste Strategy 2010–2020 Waste Avoidance and Recycling Consultation Draft

In regards to: **Action 2—Statewide litter prevention strategy, page 34 of the draft strategy; implementing a ban on the release of lighter-than-air balloons from government and government-sponsored events.**

Firstly, I fully endorse this proposal; however I am disappointed that it only applies to government and government-sponsored events.

NSW banned the mass release (>20 balloons) at any event over a decade ago and I think Queensland should not only follow NSW, but reduce the amount to zero.

I have personally been involved in performing necropsies on Green Turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) and Loggerhead turtles (*Caretta caretta*) that have died due to the ingestion of plastic marine debris resulting in severe bowel impaction. The plastic found inside these animals contains, amongst other random pieces of plastic; deflated balloon; round plastic pieces often used to secure the balloon to either plastic ribbon or plastic piping; or the ribbon itself.

I have also assisted in the rescue of a Northern Giant Petrel (*Macronectes halli*) that had ingested a balloon and was found stranded on a beach in northern NSW with an 80cm long plastic ribbon protruding from its mouth. On careful removal of the ribbon, an orange balloon, which had no doubt been attractive to the petrel as a presumed food source, was connected to the end of it. Had the petrel not been rescued by the volunteers at Australian Seabird Rescue, it would have been another casualty of balloon caused fatality. I have attached a photo of the removal process for your information.

All of the species mentioned above are listed threatened species under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. I am sure there are many other cases of marine wildlife suffering similar fates.

I think that it is appalling that someone can be fined for discarding a cigarette butt, but organisations, companies and individuals can legally discard hundreds (or even one) plastic balloon. As the old saying goes, what goes up must come down and unfortunately it is our marine wildlife that pays the price. The balloons, once released travel long distances and by Queensland also taking the step to ban them will hopefully encourage other jurisdictions to do the same, as we all know marine species are blind to political borders.

Kind regards



Angie Stringer

BApp.S. (Env)

13/8/10



Northern Giant Petrel (*Macronectes halli*) and the balloon (insert) that was removed from it.
May 2006. Australian Seabird Rescue, Ballina NSW.