

For immediate Release

23 February 2023

Queensland to Ban the Release of Lighter Than Air Balloons

In a major win for wildlife, the Queensland Government has tabled legislation to ban the release of lighter than air balloons. It is expected that the ban will come into effect in September 2023, in line with the Governments Plastics Roadmap schedule.

'Released lighter than air (helium balloons) are a major source of plastic pollution and a particular threat to wildlife.' said Toby Hutcheon, Campaign Manager of the Boomerang Alliance

'This ban will stop the practice and encourage the community to find alternative ways to celebrate and commemorate their important occasions. Ways that don't lead to polluting the environment and harming wildlife.'

Released lighter than air balloons splinter in the atmosphere and return to earth, often with strings still attached. Seabirds, turtles, and other sea life often mistakes these balloons for food or get tangled in their strings. The result: they choke to death or die entangled in these strings.

Wildlife researchers have estimated that over 70% of the plastic found inside dead turtles in Moreton Bay were burst balloons. Dr. Jenn Lavers, well known for her work with shearwater seabirds on Lord Howe Island, says she finds balloons 'in about one in every 20 sea birds I examine'. Many young shearwaters, fed by their parents, are unable to fly due to their stomachs being full of balloons and other plastics.

Western Australia has introduced a similar ban, with other States and Territories now considering their options. Many Queensland Councils have already banned balloon releases, with LGAQ lobbying to stop the practice since 2018. The Labor Party, LNP and the Greens do not allow balloon releases at any of their sponsored events. Many event organisers have followed suit, given the harm caused.

'We congratulate the State Government on banning lighter than air balloons and ask those planning any future releases to please find another way to celebrate or commemorate your important occasions.'

'Our wildlife will thank you for it.'