



Chair,  
Coalition of Celebrant Associations  
c/- The CoCA Secretary  
PO Box 3113 Robertson NSW

The Western Australian Wildlife Rehabilitation Council Incorporated is writing to your Association to request that you actively discourage your Western Australian members and their employees from organising, encouraging or participating in the release of helium filled balloons at celebratory or funeral or other commemorative services or events organised, approved or endorsed by members and their employees of your association.

Naturally, should your Association choose to do so, this request would extend to all of Australia, but as WAWRC Inc only represents wildlife rehabilitators in WA and we are unaware of the existing regulations in other States or Territories we are unable to make this request to your members in the rest of Australia.

We make our request for three reasons:-

### **ENVIRONMENTAL**

Released balloons return to Earth somewhere, sometime as ugly and dangerous litter. The balloon industry says that latex balloons are safe to release – claiming they rise to a height of eight kilometres and burst into minuscule pieces. The fact is, every released balloon behaves differently. All helium filled latex balloons fall to earth as ugly litter. Some land completely intact, other burst – all can resemble an enticing meal to any animal, whether it falls on land or in the sea.

As you would soon see if you scanned media reports or the internet, many animals mistake burst so-called biodegradable latex balloons as food, causing intestinal blockage and death. The ribbons or string that is sometimes tied to balloons, whether it is biodegradable or not, will last years and can also entangle any animal that comes in contact with it. This tragedy of dead and dying wildlife is something that the members of our organisation, and wildlife rehabilitators and rescuers worldwide, have to deal with on a regular basis.

### **HELIUM SHORTAGE**

As the Nobel Prize winner in 1996 for his work on superfluidity of Helium, Robert Richardson has issued a warning that our supplies of Helium are being used at an unimaginable rate and could be gone within a generation.

Helium is used in cooling the superconducting magnets in MRI scanners at hospitals. There's no substitute because Helium has the lowest boiling point. It's also required

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for fibre optics, sea/space exploration, welding, supersonic wind tunnels, cooling nuclear reactors, life-saving medical procedures and diagnostics, cryogenics, laboratory research, lasers, Liquid Crystal Displays (LCD) screens, rare document preservation and breathing ventilators for infants and the ill.

And this valuable and limited resource is wasted in balloons!

## **LAW**

Under the Litter Act 1979 of Western Australia, Part IV Section 23 *Prevention of litter* any person who deposits litter, or causes litter to be deposited, on any land or on or into any waters commits an offence, the penalty for which could be up to \$1,000. Under Section 24C *Offences by bodies corporate*, where a body corporate commits an offence and it is proved that the offence occurred with the consent or connivance of, or was attributable to any neglect on the part of, any director, manager, secretary or other officer of the body corporate, or any person who was purporting to act in any such capacity, that person, as well as the body corporate, commits that offence. In organising, condoning or facilitating the release of balloons at celebratory or funeral commemorative services or other events the body corporate of members, and their employees, of your association are in contravention of Section 23 of the Litter Act 1979 of Western Australia. We do not believe that any changes to your existing regulations or operating procedures are required, or changes would at least be minimal, and all that is required is for the members of your association, and their employees, to fully comply with existing legislation - the Western Australian Litter Act of 1979.

Your positive action will potentially contribute to the saving of countless wildlife and prevent the wastage of a valuable resource and, being the environmentally conscious association that I am confident you are, we look forward to a positive outcome to our request.

*P.M.W. Vickridge*

Peter Vickridge  
Chair,  
Western Australian Wildlife Rehabilitation Council Incorporated

Web: [www.wawrc.org.au](http://www.wawrc.org.au)

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