



Hon Andrew Powell MP  
Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection

Ref CTS28899/13

6 DEC 2013

Mr Neil Laurie  
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Dear Mr Laurie

*Neil*

I refer to your letter of 22 November 2013 enclosing a copy of Petition No. 2128-13 lodged in the Queensland Legislative Assembly.

The Petition draws to the attention of the House the unnecessary releasing of helium balloons in Queensland. The Petition states that balloons are a common source of litter found in waterways and can cause serious harm to marine and wildlife. The Petitioners therefore request the House to ban the release of helium balloons in Queensland, with an appropriate penalty for deliberately doing so.

The Minister would like to commend the organisers and signatories on their interest in environmental protection broadly and specifically on this issue.

The government recognises the impact of litter on the environment generally, including the impact specifically to threatened and endangered species in the marine environment. In recognising the impact of litter, the government supports initiatives to minimise its effects.

It is acknowledged that balloons do have potential to create an environmental impact, the scale of which depends on the environment they enter. Balloon litter is of particular concern in the marine environment where they may be eaten by turtles and other animals.

It should be noted that balloons from any source, whether as a mass release or not, should be managed responsibly. As any balloon may become litter, good practice would be to use hand-tied natural latex with no metallic ribbon or clips attached.

As even natural latex takes time to biodegrade, measures to control litter are also very important. The Queensland Government recently released a Litter and Illegal Dumping Action Plan. This plan aims to create a State that is free from litter through the use of effective programs and partnerships. Grants are available to help community and industry organisations tackle these issues through activities that change people's behaviour.

Banning the release of lighter-than-air balloons, as suggested by the petition, is another option but not the only, or necessarily the best, intervention. These types of measures are often difficult to enforce and the government also has to carefully consider the use of measures that may restrict the ordinary activities of members of the community.

It is my belief that investment in education and awareness, along with partnerships with industry sectors and peak bodies such as the Balloon Artists and Suppliers Association to

develop good practice guidelines and information, is likely to be the most effective long-term way to reduce the amount of balloon litter in the environment.

Should you have any further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact Ms Kylie Hughes, Manager Waste Policy of the department on telephone 3330 5020.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A Powell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**ANDREW POWELL MP**