



8.2 **COUNCIL PLEDGE TO SUPPORT ZOOS VICTORIA'S CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT THE USE OF BALLOONS OUTDOORS.**

WARD: **WHOLE OF MUNICIPALITY**

GENERAL MANAGER: **CLAIRE FERRES MILES, PLACE STRATEGY & DEVELOPMENT**

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TRIM FILE NO: **30/21/16**

ATTACHMENTS: **1. Request For CoPP To Support and Participate in the Campaign to End the Use of Balloons Outdoors**

PURPOSE

- To advise Council of the current campaign by Zoos Victoria to encourage the community and organisations including councils, schools and businesses to pledge not to use balloons in the outdoors.
- To outline proposed actions that Council can take to reduce the use of balloons in the City of Port Phillip.

I. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1.1 Pledges to support the Zoos Victoria campaign not to use balloons outdoors.
- 1.2 In line with this pledge, reviews and revises hall hire, event permit and grant application policies and procedures to prevent the use of helium balloons at all events:
 - Held on Council property
 - Funded or permitted by Council
- 1.3 Reviews and revises existing policies to prevent the use of all balloons at functions/festivals directly delivered by Council.
- 1.4 Review existing hall hire, event permit and grant application policies and procedures to reduce the use of non-helium balloons on Council property and during Council supported/permitted events.
- 1.5 Promotes the campaign to the local community, via the City of Port Phillip website, Enviro-ehub and other methods.



2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 When used outdoors there is a high chance that balloons and their attachments find their way into the environment, threatening wildlife with entanglement and ingestion.
- 2.2 Manufacturers of latex balloons claim that latex balloons biodegrade within 4 years (ref: ballooncouncil.org). However these claims have not been substantiated and the vast majority of balloons and their attachments are not biodegradable.
- 2.3 Australian seabirds in particular are at risk. Balloons and their attachments are one of the most common items found in the stomachs of shearwaters (a type of seabird) during scientific surveys and can cause starvation and death. (ref: www.zoo.org.au)
- 2.4 In the past, Council has addressed the issue taking an unofficial stand against the deliberate release of helium balloons in the outdoors and has refused event permits on this basis.
- 2.5 Council also tends not to use balloons during its own events.
- 2.6 Zoos Victoria wrote to Council on 19 January 2017 (Refer attachment 1) seeking support for their campaign calling on Australians to make the change from using balloons outside to seabird friendly alternatives. Zoos Victoria has also offered to provide support in the form of media opportunities and marketing material.
- 2.7 The Zoos Victoria campaign has provided a timely opportunity to formalise an official position and work in partnership to protect our marine environment.

3. KEY INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Zoos Victoria campaign has the call to action “When balloons fly, seabirds die. It’s time to change. Pledge to blow bubbles at your next outdoor celebration”
- 3.2 As a seaside Council, the City of Port Phillip is acutely aware of the impact that all types of waste have on our marine environment. A formal position on balloons can also be incorporated into future policies relating to the use of Single Use Plastics (e.g. plastic bags, straws, containers)
- 3.3 Council plays a range of roles in events that could potentially use different kinds of balloons and therefore requires a variety of approaches to reduce/discontinue the use of balloons.

Helium balloons

- 3.4 The deliberate release of helium balloons is the most harmful category of balloon use with all balloons ending up as litter. Even when not deliberately released, many helium balloons escape and cause environmental damage.
- 3.5 The Outdoor Events Policy is currently being reviewed and already contains a list of activities that are not permitted at outdoor events (such as fireworks),
- 3.6 Adding helium balloons to this clause to formalise the current unofficial position on helium balloons (referred to in 2.9) can be done with little effort. Monitoring this clause can then be accommodated within the existing permit monitoring framework.



The use of all balloons at Council functions/festivals

- 3.7 Formalising and promoting a Council policy to not use balloons indoors and outdoors at Council functions establishes Council as a leader and provides an opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of other types of decorations in place of balloons.
- 3.8 This could include the St Kilda Festival incorporating a no-balloon clause in contracts with itinerant traders, sponsors and buskers.

The use of non-helium balloons on Council property and during Council funded or permitted events

- 3.9 These events cover a wide range of community, commercial and social activities.
- 3.10 Currently event/festival planners are required to address waste management and demonstrate that they are aware of good sustainability practice during applications for permits or grants or as part of the Hall Hire conditions.
- 3.11 There is an opportunity during the application process to discourage the use of balloons and to suggest suitable festive alternatives.
- 3.12 Large scale or corporate events held under the Outdoor Events Policy could be required to be balloon free. However, small community events and celebrations are frequently run by volunteers that don't have sophisticated event planning processes. Further, balloons pose less of a threat to the environment due to the size of these events.
- 3.13 The City of Port Phillip has a deserved reputation for supporting dynamic and much loved events and festivals. In the short term, rather than have the Council's reputation as a place for celebration and enjoyment compete with Council's commitment to protecting the natural environment, it is proposed that a partnership approach be used.
- 3.14 This approach elevates encouragement and education over compliance and enforcement and can be developed and implemented promptly. Then over time, Council Officers can measure the success of the voluntary approach and determine whether a more compliance based approach is required.

Promote the Campaign to the local Community

- 3.15 Promoting the Zoos Victoria campaign provides an opportunity to educate and encourage the whole community to reconsider the use of balloons at their private events.



FURTHER SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

- 4.1 Reducing the use of balloons aligns with “Vibrant” – a liveable and connected City. Initiatives outlined in this report will reduce the number of balloons and their attachments that end up as litter thus supporting: “4.3 – Improve and manage local amenity and assets for now and the future”
- 4.2 The community is demonstrating an increased interest in the production of waste and in protecting our natural environment. Reduction in the use of balloons has also been proposed by the *Toward Zero* Community Forum (A key forum for engaged citizens to generate ideas and support Council’s sustainable environment activities).
- 4.3 Any reduction in balloon use relates to Council’s priority “Sustainability”. Specifically it will provide an opportunity to forge a leadership position and support the achievement of the *Toward Zero* Sustainable Environment Strategy goals relating to:
- Waste
 - Contamination and Pollution
 - Sustainable Purchasing and Procurement
- 4.4 There are a number of existing policies that will be affected by a formal position on the use of balloons. Including: Outdoor Events Policy, Minor Permits Policy and Hall Hire Terms and Conditions.
- 4.5 Reducing balloon litter in the marine environment directly addresses the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14.1: “by 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, particularly from land based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution” The Sustainable Development Goals were formally supported by Council in September 2015.

5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

- 5.1 Internal consultation has been undertaken with officers from Meetings and Events, Open Space and Recreation, Safety and Amenity, Sustainable Transport, Sustainable Policy, Vibrant and Creative City, Children’s Services, Art and Heritage and Asset Management and Property
- 5.2 Officers are supportive of reducing the use of balloons but have also highlighted the complexities involved in developing and enforcing restrictions regarding use of balloons.

6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There is a risk that some members of the City of Port Phillip community will disagree with an initiative to reduce the use of balloons.
- 6.2 There is also a risk that a stated pledge and a review of written policies will not result in a demonstrated change in balloon use.



- 6.3 These risks will be mitigated by utilising Zoo Victoria's materials to educate the community regarding the danger to wildlife caused by balloons and by incorporating information about balloons in the wider communication plan being developed regarding the use of Single Use Plastics in our community.
- 6.4 The encouragement and education approach proposed for addressing the use of non-helium balloons on Council property and during Council funded or permitted events will reduce the risk of conflict and provide an opportunity to gather evidence of the potential positive and negative impacts caused by a wider ban.

7. SUSTAINABILITY – Triple Bottom Line

7.1 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- Reducing the use of balloons will have a positive effect on the environment. Apart from the obvious reductions in litter and pollution, there will be the reduction in the use of a single use product that generates greenhouse gas emissions during its production and transport.

7.2 SOCIAL & CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

- Formalising a position on the use of balloons will not reduce access to events held in the City of Port Phillip.

7.3 ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

- As with any initiative that encourages a reduction in consumption, there is the potential for a negative impact on local businesses that supply balloons.
- There is a possibility that event planners will choose alternative locations that allow the use of helium balloons which would result in a reduction in related economic activity. However, the City of Port Phillip is a desirable location with over 350 major events approved per year so economic impact is unlikely.
- If Council considers broadening a restriction on balloons to all balloons at all events then this will increase the likelihood of events leaving the municipality.

7.4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- The Sustainable Programs and Sustainable Policy teams will be able to provide support to review organisational policy and practices for the recommended actions. As the recommendations align with existing unofficial policy and with the timing of scheduled policy reviews, this can be done at no financial cost.
- There is a possibility that event planners will choose alternative locations that allow the use of helium balloons which would result in a reduction in revenue from permit fees. However, the City of Port Phillip is a desirable location with over 350 events approved per year so financial impact is unlikely.
- If Council considers broadening a restriction on balloons to all balloons at all events then this will increase the likelihood of events leaving the municipality.



8. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

8.1 TIMELINE

- 5 April 2017 – Council pledge to support Zoos Victoria’s campaign against the use of balloons outdoors.
- The relevant policies will be reviewed and revised to include a clause preventing the use of helium balloons at all events hosted, funded, or permitted within the City of Port Phillip. This will occur progressively and within scheduled reviews where possible.
- 15 April 2017 - The Sustainable Policy and Sustainable Programs team will support the relevant Council Departments to include information about balloon alternatives for event planners applying for Hall Hire, event permits or Council funding.

8.2 COMMUNICATION

- A communications plan will be developed by Sustainable Programs that will include:
 - Utilising the Zoos Victoria campaign materials to communicate the benefits of reducing balloon use.
 - Ensuring that event planners are aware of Council’s position preventing the use of helium balloons.
 - Development of information for all event planners suggesting alternatives to balloons.
 - Communicating internally to staff that Council functions will now formally be balloon free.
 - Promoting Council’s leadership through social media, website and media release.

9. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

- 9.1 No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect interest in the matter.