




Speech By  
**Jessica Pugh**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY**

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**WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING AND OTHER LEGISLATION  
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (11.49 am): Yesterday was World Turtle Day, and this bill is going to make them very happy indeed! Happy World Turtle Day for yesterday. It was also my mother-in-law's birthday and the Clerk's birthday, so happy birthday, Cathy and the Clerk! On 1 July 2022, the Queensland government announced its intention to ban the mass release of lighter-than-air—otherwise known as helium—balloons, to commence on 1 September 2023, following consultation to expand the ban on single-use plastics.

Others have spoken about stakeholders. I want to begin by acknowledging some key stakeholders in my community who have given some important early feedback on this policy, going back as far as 10 years. I will start with Dennis Taylor, who is the former president and current member of the Sumner Park Rotary Club. Dennis and the Sumner Park Rotary Club have advocated with me for years around the banning, where possible, of single-use plastics and the damage that balloons can do to our marine wildlife. In addition to Clean Up Australia Day, when we would clean up riverine environments in my beautiful community of Mount Ommaney and we would often find things like balloons that had been released in addition to other plastic detritus, they would do monthly roadside and riverside clean-ups where they would frequently find balloons and other items that potentially had been released as part of a symbolic release by a community group.

We know where these things can end up. That is why this legislation is so important to groups like the Sumner Park Rotary Club, the Pennywort Creek Bushcare Group, the Centenary and District Environment Action group and Oxley Bushcare. Like many Queensland electorates, I have a river that runs through my electorate. When you have a river or a water feature that runs through your electorate, you can see the kinds of things that can end up in your waterways when people are thoughtless about what they throw out and what they let go into the air.

On 1 July 2022, following community, industry and business consultation showing strong support to expand the ban of single-use plastics, a ban on the mass release of lighter-than-air balloons was announced, to commence on 1 September this year which, as I said, has strong support in my community. While releasing balloons is considered a littering offence under the current litter provisions, the proposed ban on the outdoor release of these lighter-than-air balloons prevents the action specifically of release. That will avoid the balloons becoming litter when they come back to earth when the helium runs out. This removes beyond a shadow of a doubt any confusion for people who might be planning events and memorials. It allows a consistent message to be provided through party supply businesses—of which I have plenty in my electorate—caterers and event organisers about the requirements regarding balloons.

I recognise that over the years balloon releases have been very popular at memorial events in particular, serving as a symbolic act of catharsis by those affected by grief or those wanting to express the physical act of letting something go up to the heavens. I can certainly understand that. I think it was the member for Noosa who yesterday outlined several fantastic alternatives that community groups are

now coming up with as a result of the restrictions that these laws will create. I think everybody understands that the act of releasing a balloon may result in the death or injury of precious wildlife. They agree that that is too high a price to pay, so they are coming up with alternatives such as butterfly releases or dove releases and things like that. They are beautiful alternatives that serve the purpose just as well.

It is really important to note that the ban is not a ban on balloons. It is a ban on the outdoor release of any number of lighter-than-air balloons. As I mentioned, I have many wonderful professional businesses in my community who I consulted about this bill in the lead-up, including a small business run by a local Middle Park mum, Delightful Moments & Balloons, and Unique Party Hire. They both do beautiful balloon arrangements. When I spoke to Emily De Vries, the owner of Delightful Moments & Balloons, about these changes and what kinds of balloons she is using in her business, she told me that businesses like hers are now increasingly looking into recyclable options. They do not even use a lot of helium anymore. They are fixing their arrangements to nets. It is great to see businesses keeping up with these kinds of changes. I know that my community is strongly in support of these changes. I commend the bill to the House.