

Coolum District Coast Care Group Inc.



www.coolumcoastcare.org.au



Friday 4 October 2019

Committee Secretary
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee
Parliament House
Brisbane Qld 4000

Via email: lacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Madam/Sir

Re: Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019

Coolum District Coast Care Group Inc, trading as Coolum and North Shore Coast Care (CaNSCC) is a not for profit volunteer organisation situated on the Sunshine Coast whose aims are to:

- Protect and conserve the natural values of the coastal area between South Peregian and Maroochy River
- Encourage the preservation of this area's bio diversity, and
- Encourage active participation of the community and governing bodies, to achieve these goals

CaNSCC is a hands on organisation doing practical work and projects for the good of the environment, in partnership with local and State government environment departments. Although CaNSCC undertakes community environmental awareness and education, and advocates for environmental protection and conservation, the organisation is rarely involved in even peaceful protest, and members abhor the use of violence, wanton vandalism or anarchy to 'make a point'.

However, CaNSCC members are concerned with the *Summary Offences and other Legislation Bill 2019*, in that it seeks to restrict avenues of protest that would otherwise ensure that the issues of concern to certain groups are noticed and taken seriously by not only the public but also our civic leaders, the politicians.

CaNSCC respectfully requests our law makers to consider that those protesters at whom the *Bill* is directed, may be driven to protest because laws which were written to protect the environment are being flouted or ignored by proponents of economic development, under the guise of such development benefiting people and communities. As wealth, power and "people benefit" is increasingly placed above the purpose and principles enshrined in law, advocates for equitable consideration of their causes are becoming increasingly frustrated to the point of taking desperate measures.

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This is not a new phenomenon and our (particularly natural) world would be the poorer if such disruptive protest had not occurred in the past. For example, if certain operators in the past had not been 'prevented from entering or leaving a place of business' or protesters had not 'caused a halt to the ordinary operation of plant and equipment' through the use of tripods and chains, several of Australia's iconic old growth forest national parks would not exist today.

And if 'dangerous attachment devices' are prohibited, what is the next technique that will be prohibited? While we recognise and support the rights of others to not be unnecessarily delayed or prevented from going about their lawful business, this Bill has the potential to be the 'thin end of the wedge', leading to a slow erosion of the community's rights to 'peaceful protest'.

Notwithstanding the *Peaceful Assembly Act 1992*, Governments of all persuasions over the years have been all too ready to restrict the rights of peaceful protesters under the guise of "the rights of others", for example Premier Joh Bjelke Petersen's outright banning of street marches in September 1977. The recent overt increase in Police and security forces' powers for surveillance and 'search without warrant', at all levels of government, gives us no comfort that restrictions will stop at 'dangerous attachment devices'. Perhaps 'glue, rope, chain or padlocks' will be next. Just because Section 14A specifically states these are not (*of themselves*) attachment devices, it is still open to interpretation by the police officers involved. And laws like these can be easily further amended, once the 'thin end of the wedge' is inserted.

Accordingly, and sadly, the Management Committee decided that CaNSCC cannot support this Bill, until members are convinced that our civic leaders are prepared to listen to and act on community concerns, rather than only support big business to make private profit, while the people bear the environmental loss.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Leigh Warneminde'.

Leigh Warneminde

President, on behalf of Coolum District Coast Care Group Inc