

Submission on the Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019

05/10/2019



Dear Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019.

I am writing to you to express my deep concern and opposition to these new laws, which have no evidential basis, are anti democratic, and are harmful for our society.

First, contrary to your claims, there is no evidence that “lock on” devices are designed and used to attempt to injure police and safety officers. These devices have been used for decades, yet the QLD government has offered to examples of police officers being injured or “booby trapped”. Indeed, “booby trapping” such devices makes no sense since it would primarily endanger the activists that are using them. (Not to mention that intentionally injuring anyone is already illegal, and so the proposed laws are unnecessary).

Second, under the guise of safety, these laws are really aimed at stopping protest activity. The right to protest is a recognised pillar of democracy. Non violent protest activity in which “lock on” devices are used is especially important in the current situation where the government is undemocratically working against the public interest, e.g. by supporting the environmentally and socially disastrous coal mining sector in general, and the Adani coalmine in particular. With these proposed laws, by strangling dissent and public opposition, the government would be strangling democracy and crucial democratic rights which make our society good and resilient in the face of corrupt politicians and demagogues.

Third, the proposed laws would suppress one of the crucial tools needed to address climate change – something which, unlike lock on devices – is a genuine threat to health and safety among other things. Stopping the Adani coalmine is important for dealing with climate change, and that’s what the protesters whom the proposed laws are targeting are trying to achieve. I can understand that the QLD government is operating under political constraints that make it hard, under the circumstances, to do what is required to address the problem of climate change (although you ought to anyway – that’s your job). But at least it could refrain from making laws that put sticks in the wheels of others who are prepared to fight climate change, doing your job for you.

Finally, Australia has a proud history of successful protest movements using civil disobedience. These have advanced the rights of workers, gender and sexual equality, indigenous rights and environmental protection. Queensland Labor, which traces its origins to one such protest (the 1891 shearers’ strike) should recognise this. The proposed laws target civil disobedience and thus go against the spirit of social justice and everything that the Labor party stands for, at least *ought* to stand for if it has any integrity.

Sincerely,

Max Fedoseev,
a concerned citizen