

06/10/2019
Kate Christianson



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 are disproportionate, overreaching, and appear to have no evidential basis.

I am an educated Environmental Scientist, working across a variety of government and private industry in the environmental field for nearly 20 years. I am a citizen of this beautiful country who is deeply concerned about the state of the natural environment, and its continued destruction and brazen disregard across government and private industry in the name of a dollar (i.e. greed).

"The continuing refusal, despite persistent warnings from scientists and activists, to stop human-caused climate breakdown is the great moral failure of our time. No amount of traffic chaos from a blocked city street can compare to the threat of more numerous and severe natural disasters. No safety hazard for police officers using power tools compares to the climate-related "health emergency" already declared by the Australian Medical Association. No illegal act of protest is nearly as extreme as being told repeatedly that your chosen lifestyle is threatening the existence of whole nations and species yet refusing to do anything to change it."

– The basis given for the drafting of these laws, that activists are using "lock-on" devices to attempt to injure police and safety officers, is not backed up by evidence. These devices have been used for decades, yet the Queensland government has not offered examples of police being injured, or anybody being charged with setting "booby-traps" inside lock-on devices; only speculation. Police, when questioned by the Guardian, did not state that the lock on devices were dangerous to their personal safety. Historically, there have been no charges made to anyone using a lock-on device with the intent to injure police.

– The legislation in fact misrepresents the devices by including sinister-sounding terminology like "sleeping dragon" and "dragon's den" which is not used by the activists themselves.

– If it was the case that activists were trying to use lock-on devices to injure police, that would already be illegal and the law has sufficient power to punish that as it stands currently.

– The proposed law gives police extra powers to search without a warrant. Police already use "stop and search" powers as a way to intimidate and hinder protesters who have not broken any law, and this law will give them more justification to do so.

– Under the guise of safety, the government is bringing in laws which are really about stopping protest activity. The right to protest is a recognised pillar of democracy, and this right should include not just tokenistic free speech but actual effective protest activity as developed by historical protest movements.

– 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. Many of our national parks today are the result of protest activity which used devices of the kind prohibited under this law. Queensland Labor, which traces its origins to one such illegal protest (the 1891 shearers' strike) should recognise this.

– To bring in superfluous laws, with limited evidential basis, to restrict protest is very dangerous. Not only does it erode our democracy, but it suppresses one of the vitally needed tools we have

to address the climate crisis we are currently facing – something which, unlike lock-on devices, actually is a genuine threat to health and safety.

Thank you for your time and for reading.

Regards,
Kate Christianson