

Submission on the Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019

6th October 2019

Submission from:

Arwen Birch

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Dear Members,

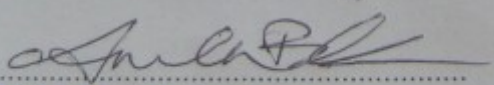
I am writing to express my strong opposition to these new laws, which would make using or possessing “lock-on” devices an offence that carries up to two years in prison.

One of the justifications for the new laws is that such devices are used to attempt to injure police, yet no evidence has been provided for this and no injuries to police have occurred despite years of use of such devices. Even 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.

The laws are designed to discourage protest. Although protests can be unpopular at the time they occur, they have advanced many important causes that make the world a better place. Many of our national parks today are the result of protest activity which used devices of the kind prohibited under this law. Once upon a time, slavery was legal and freeing slaves was illegal. Those who benefited from slavery did not want their world changed by protests. Segregation was once illegal and protesting against it was illegal. At this time in human history killing the Earth to make a profit at the expense of future generations is legal. Greatly contributing to climate change, which is currently causing and will in the future lead to untold suffering is perfectly legal. Those who benefit want to make it illegal to protest against them. The full weight of science is begging the Earth to take climate action and prevent more fossil fuels from going into the atmosphere. People with nothing to gain, but who have moral convictions that tell them they need to stand up for what is right, should not be punished by unfair laws with overly harsh penalties.

To erode our democracy by bringing in laws without evidential basis in order to restrict protest is very dangerous. It punishes one of the important avenues for addressing the climate crisis – something which, unlike lock-on devices, actually is a genuine threat to health and safety.

Yours sincerely,



ARWEN CERISE BIRCH