

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee](#)
Date: Sunday, 6 October 2019 8:03:14 PM

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

Dear Secretary,

Please allow me to provide feedback on the **Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019**. The proposed amendments to this law disturb me greatly and I am therefore 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. It is my considered opinion that the current laws are more than adequate to keep the peace when the authorities are confronted by peaceful demonstrations by the public.

In my opinion the right to peaceful and effective protest is one of the cornerstones of our democracy. I understand that the Government sees these protests as inconvenient but that is the whole point. When our Government fails to act on the will of the people it should expect a reaction from the community. All over the world where peaceful protests are curtailed by over authoritarian Governments, we see violence break out. This is not the Australian way and nor should Queensland ever return to the dark days of the oppressive Bjelke Peterson era.

The recent Announcement by the Premier, as the basis given for the drafting of these laws, was that activists are using “lock-on” devices to attempt to injure police and safety officers. This is a hysterical reaction to the ongoing backlash against the Government's approval of the ADANI mine and the allegations that harm is intended to Police or Safety officers is not backed up by evidence.

These devices have been used for decades and the Queensland government has not offered examples of police being injured, or anybody being charged with setting “booby-traps” inside lock-on devices. This rubbish is pure speculation. The allegation the Premier made was untrue and instead of changing the law the Premier should be apologising to the people of Queensland

.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 proposed law gives police extra powers to search without a warrant, something that I am totally opposed to. 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 proposes to bring in laws which are really about stopping protest activity. As I have already said, the right to peaceful protest is a recognised pillar of our 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 proposed law. Queensland Labor, which traces its origins to one such illegal protest (the 1891 shearers' strike), should recognise this. This particular protest is one the Australian Labor party has always been very proud of. Today's Queensland Government is far too conservative in nature and the proposed changes in law reflect that.

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 us, our children and our grandchildren,

Taking away our protest rights erodes our democracy. To protect our democracy and help ensure a better future for all Australians, we must protect our protest rights. History is filled with examples of the efficacy of such non-violent direct action, especially peaceful disruptions.

This form of protest helped to win the eight hour working day, to protect the Franklin and the Daintree and advance Aboriginal land rights. Protest helped to secure women's right to vote, to stop our involvement in the Vietnam War and end the criminalisation of homosexuality. The protest against the Adani mine will go down in history as one of those great protests.

Protest continues to play a key role in highlighting the cruelty of our refugee policies, something that is extremely dear to me as I stand with the people of Biloela in the quest to Protect Nades and his family from deportation by the Federal Government.

Protesting is a valuable tool for protecting workers' rights, in stopping coal seam gas exploration and so much more. To allow legislation that actively undermines the efficacy of protest activity is a disservice to our social growth.

I urge the committee to reject this Bill.

kind regards

Michael Powell

