

Submission on the Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019

7/10/2019



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 are disproportionate, overreaching, and appear to have no evidential basis. I am a 62 year old grandmother, International Aid Worker and fully employed woman who is seriously concerned about the erosion of basic democratic rights to protest against issues that are impacting the earth.

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.

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. The vast majority of activist operate following non-violent principles designed to draw attention to the issues without harming people on any side of the debate. The 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. I am very proud to have been involved in the protests in the 1970’s and early 80’s that resulted in the formation of the Nightcap National Park in northern NSW and believe that without the protests that were conducted then we would have lost that pristine rainforest to indiscriminate logging. This is now recognised as a World Heritage area.

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.

Yours sincerely
Sally Moore

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