

7 October 2019

Belinda Ward

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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 concerned that the basis for these laws, that activists are using “lock-on” devices to attempt to injure police and safety officers, is not backed up by evidence. In fact the simplest, and commonly used “lock-on” device is a bicycle lock. I carry one of those almost every time I travel, and use it for the purpose of locking my bicycle. This legislation could be used as an excuse to stop and intimidate anyone like me who is travelling with a bicycle and likely carrying a lock as I do.

Lock-on devices – including bicycle locks - have been used as a tool of peaceful protest for decades, yet the Queensland government has not offered examples of police being injured through the use of such devices. If activists were trying to use lock-on devices to injure police, that would already be illegal and the law has sufficient power to appropriately deal with that.

The law gives police extra powers to search without a warrant. As mentioned, this could apply to anyone with a bicycle – as they would be reasonably assumed to have a “lock-on” device. 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. It will further marginalise those who already struggle to have their voice heard in the community.

This law appears to really be about stopping protest activity. Presenting it under the guise of safety is a sham. The right to protest is a recognised pillar of democracy, and that right should not just be relegated to quiet, ineffective protests conducted out of sight. It must include actual effective protest activity as developed by historical protest movements.

Australia – and Queensland in particular - 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 the 1891 shearers’ strike (which was illegal) should recognise this.

We face a climate crisis, which is a genuine threat to health and safety – unlike the lock-on devices which this law seeks to ban. This bill introduces exactly the sort of superfluous law which invites misuse by police. That is dangerous for democracy.

I ask that you withdraw this bill.

Regards,

Belinda Ward