

Paul Gabbert


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Dear Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019.

It was very chilling to read the proposed amendments to the summary offences and other legislation bill. We are currently at a critical pivot point in our future. Whilst most Australians accept the science of climate change and the likely impacts, there has been a complete lack of political leadership in responding to the existential crisis that it presents. Instead we have had ordinary people being forced to act, to put their bodies in harm's way, in an attempt to bring attention to and to force a complacent government to act.

The premier has said "These protesters put their arms in steel cylinders and drums filled with concrete," Ms Palaszczuk said.

"Inside these cylinders and drums are glass fragments — even butane gas containers — so that anyone trying to cut a protester free will be injured or worse." ABC news website 20 August 2019.

The premier has produced absolutely no evidence to back these claims and these amendments are an example of legislative overreach. The protesters are committed to non-violent direct action and are not interested in hurting anyone as the premier asserts. The Police already have broad stop and search powers in Queensland, under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 which they already use liberally to conduct (arguably unlawful) searches on people suspected of being involved in activism.

The proposed amendments place the prioritisation of business interests over the right of people to protest the destruction of our climate. Targeting members of the public who participate in protest action by banning an effective method of peaceful protest through legislation is unjustifiably inconsistent with our right to freedom of expression. This right is protected by section 7 of the Human Rights Act (Qld) and articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Before you consider this legislation I urge you to meet with the protest groups, spend time with them and understand what their motivations are. Our parliament cannot be at arm's length from the people, it has to be embedded in the populace, drawn from ordinary people and empathetic to their concerns. Democracy is not something to be taken lightly. We do not want to return to the draconian days of the Bjelke-Petersen era.

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.

Yours sincerely

Paul Gabbert