

Peter Shepherd
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07/10/2019

Submission on the Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019

Dear committee members,

I would like to take this opportunity to provide feedback on the Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019.

I would like to share that I am concerned about and opposed to these new laws. I understand that they are being justified by the fallacy that lock on devices are dangerous to police and emergency personnel but this has never happened and there is no evidence whatsoever that anyone has tried to make them dangerous before. They do not hide any explosive devices or other traps which would harm the activist or police. They are simply a device which is designed to make it difficult to remove the activist, so that the activist has a better opportunity to make their voice heard and make meaningful change in the world. They are typically made of inert materials like concrete and/or steel and can be removed safely with basic tools.

These laws are dangerous as they are one more step towards undermining democracy. Activism has been a healthy and significant component of democracy in Australia for many years and has led to many improvements in environmental health, wilderness protection, equal rights, indigenous rights and animals rights etc. To undermine and eventually remove limited avenues people have to protest as part of a healthy democracy, is to move towards a totalitarianism. We do not want that in Australia.

Australians demanded long and hard from between 1977 and 1992 to legally have the right to protest, resulting in the Peaceful Assembly Act. Lock on devices are part of that right to protest and we want to allow Australians to continue to exercise that right.

These laws are disproportionate. To lock someone up in jail for engaging in a non-violent and peaceful protest using a lock on device is totally unreasonable. There are other activities which are more harmful and dangerous that are not punished anywhere near as severely.

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These devices are often used by well educated, professional, mature, kind and responsible people. They are not part of some sort of extreme fringe group who are just trying to cause trouble and harm the authorities. This is a non-violent and peaceful tool which is often used by intelligent people to make well considered and ethical responses to injustices around us.

I trust that you will consider this matter diligently and base your decision on facts and not fears or misleading claims.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Shepherd." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and a distinct 'S'.

Peter Shepherd