

Submission on the Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019

07/10/2019

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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.

As a higher education graduate with 2 university degrees, a hardworking education professional and mother of twin 5 year old girls, I have well-informed and high expectations that our government will work at its utmost best to ensure environmental preservation for future generations of Queenslanders. I haven't always been, but am presently, deeply disappointed - to my core being - that it comes across that economic gain precedes environmental custodianship in Queensland. As a result, I thoroughly understand why good citizens who only care for the environment, use this 'lock on devices' not to cause disruption for the sake of disruption, but as a last resort to save irreplaceable natural resources, which are not being protected by the government. By enacting these new laws, more everyday people like me, with families and careers will be polarised by lack of choice, against the government's environmental stance. By enacting these new laws, civil disobedience will continue and escalate in numbers, and people may be morally pushed to take other less desirable measures to physically stop environmental malpractice.

The following submission points to be taken into consideration.

- 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 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.
- 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.

I appreciate your consideration of these points and thank you for your conscience in ensuring our respect for people and country.

Yours sincerely,
Genevieve Staines