

Bob Russell - Submission

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Dear Members

This submission is in regard to the proposed Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this feedback. I am a retired academic, who has become increasingly dismayed at the lack of action on the part of our governments in regards to the deteriorating climate situation. The fundamental duty of any state is to protect its citizenry against apprehended threats. Our governments are failing in this regard. Indeed, they are turning a blind eye to the threat, with their stated intention of opening up new thermal coal mines in the Galilee Basin. There is no greater indication of government missing the point than the attention that is now being giving to penalising legitimate protest. Truly, this is a case of "shooting the messenger".

The proposed new laws are clearly a disproportionate over-reach, which have absolutely no evidentiary basis in recent protest events against government inaction on global warming. The whole basis of protest is to disrupt "business as usual"; in this case the business of heating the planet up above 1.5 degree mark. Protection of our global commons may require disruption of those activities (businesses) which are responsible for global warming, given that our governments are doing little in the way of effective mitigation. However, it is important to remember that all protest actions that I have read about have been entirely peaceful events, while every climate action group that I am familiar with is committed to the principles of non-violent social action. The Queensland government has produced absolutely no evidence of so-called booby trapped lock-on devices being used in peaceful protest actions. The reasons for this is because, no such evidence exists. To suggest that it does is deceptive and manipulative. If it was the case, that protesters were trying to injure police with the use of so-called lock-on devices, this would already be illegal and punishable by existing laws. The use of any type of dangerous device intended to cause injury would be an anathema to any of the climate action groups that I know of.

The proposed laws give extra powers to the police to engage in searches without a warrant. This will only increase the use of "stop and search" powers that police already possess. The right to effective protest is a lynchpin of democracy and this includes protest that extends beyond tokenistic free speech. Australia has a proud history of non-violent protest in support of environmental protection as well as a host of other issues. Such actions have been used to protect the rights of our aboriginal sisters and brothers, workers, farmers, conservationists and discriminated against minorities. Many of our national parks today only exist on account of such protests that refused to "get out of the way". Today, however, the issue is much larger than the fate of one national park or one specific group. We all find ourselves implicated in the unfolding climate crisis!

The proposed anti-lock-on laws are both unnecessary and dangerous. Instead of this distraction, the government should be doing its real job which is leading the way forwards to a just transition out of the fossil economy and into the renewable economy that we so desperately need. A moratorium on new *thermal* coal mines in Queensland would be the most sensible way bring the protests to an end and let us all get on with more important business.