

08/10/2019

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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.

It is my opinion as a Social Scientist, long time serving Volunteer Firefighter and Community Case manager and Mother that in order to maintain a sustainable and positive democracy, that a key part, as set-out by the United Nations Human Rights Charter also, is that every person, should be allowed to peacefully protest.

To begin to legislate against peaceful protest actions opens the door for laws such as the terrorist related, to be unjustly used against innocent, caring members of our community, and creates systemic violence, and unjust silencing. How are we any better than a dictatorial regime if we begin this way?

I also urge you to know that the media's choice to focus on a concept of booby trapped devices, is just NOT accurate and would never be a part of the way these activists operate. They are focused on creating a safe and just nation for everyone, Police included.

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. It is just NOT happening, and the propaganda shouldn't give a platform for legislation to be created!

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.