

**Submission on the Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill****2019**

05/10/2019



Dear Members,

I am writing this letter to express serious concern about the Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. I oppose the proposed changes outlined in this bill because they lack sufficient evidential foundation and endorse disproportionate punitive measures that erode the right to political protest, a right recognised in the *International Declaration of Human Rights 1948*.

Lock-on devices hold a significant place in Australia's history of political activism. Since suffragette Muriel Matters was the first Australian to use a lock on device in 1908, locking on has historically been utilised as a non-violent action to peacefully demonstrate political dissent and mobilise social change.

This bill makes the false assumption that activists use lock-on devices to violently enforce their objectives. However, this is a baseless fear, as no evidence exists to prove that lock-on devices have ever been constructed or manipulated with the intention to cause injury to others in Queensland. The Queensland government has been unable to provide any examples of lock on devices causing injury to police.

Furthermore, the legislation uses fabricated terminology to refer to lock-on devices. Incorrect labelling of lock-on elbows as "sleeping dragons" and barrels as "dragon's dens" misconstrues the purposes of these devices by associating them with the dangerous threat of a dragon. The only instance where "dragon" is used by activists is when referring to the action of dragging-on a car as a blockading tactic. Similarly to how the threat of a real dragon is a fear irrelevant to our current reality, the fears regarding these supposed "dragons" are also born out of imaginative fiction.

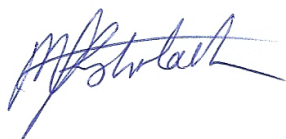
Moreover, the use of lock on devices do not encourage violence but rather have the opposite effect, by positing the activist in a vulnerable and submissive physical position. Activists engage in these direct actions and put themselves at risk as a way to demonstrate dissent without inciting violence towards others.

If activists were constructing lock-on devices that were intentionally causing injury these activists would have been charged and the government would be able to use these cases as evidence for this bill. Since no such cases exist, this indicates that the activity of creating lock on devices with malicious intent is not a tactic used by activists. Speculative fear is insufficient cause for passing this amendment.

Additionally, the law already allows police to search without a warrant. “Stop and search” powers are used by police to intimidate protesters who have no engaged in illegal activity and this bill will further empower them with justification for this.

This bill will infringe upon the right to engage in peaceful protest activity, which has played, and continues to play, a significant functioning role in maintaining ethical and equitable democracy. Therefore, this bill will erode the democratic nature of our society by restricting the range of methods used by Australians to peacefully advocate for political change. This is an erosion which we cannot tolerate in this current political age of climate emergency.

Yours faithfully,  
Merridee Rohrlach

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Merridee Rohrlach', with a stylized flourish at the end.