

Submission on the Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019

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 concern and opposition to these new laws, which appear to have no evidential basis and threaten Queenslanders' right to publicly advocate on critical matters as well as placing at high risk what has been a respectful relationship between police and peaceful activists.

I have, over recent times participated in rallies to advocate for more effective legislation to address the threats posed by climate change and have consistently been impressed by the way in which the Queensland Police Service has respected the rights of activists, facilitated safe assemblies and marches and generally behaved in a courteous and professional manner.

Having read the proposed changes to the legislation, I can't help but conclude that the safety issues raised as justification for the changes are already covered by laws governing dangerous devices and that the changes would serve little purpose other than to lead to confusion, conflict and perhaps discourage community members with genuine concerns from exercising their rights to advocate for government action and protest to highlight dissatisfaction and disappointment with a status-quo.

In fact, the Labor party above all, has a strong and proud history of exercising democratic rights through using public protest including marches and occupation of public spaces to raise awareness of injustices and demand affirmative action, and indeed of consequently effecting beneficial changes which have contributed to the growth of our nation and protection of our values.

As someone who lived in Queensland during the 1970's and 1980's I witnessed first hand how, as Commissioner Tony Fitzgerald noted, 'law and order could be politicised.' It would truly be a tragedy for Queensland to return to those polarising and violent times.

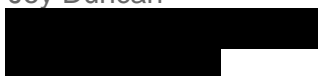
There does not appear to be any evidence that any lock-on devices have ever been booby-trapped and in fact, with regards to the climate activism, doing so would run counter to two of the agreed principles of actions which are 'peaceful' and 'non-violent'.

I was alarmed to read some of the devices that were listed as 'dangerous' and 'lock-on', as I would routinely carry a number of them for every-day practical, and benign purposes such as super glue, padlocks and poly-twine. The amendment to this bill seems to place an unreasonable burden on police officers to somehow predict the purposes to which an item would be used as well as running the risk of activists being unjustly detained and questioned.

At the end of the day these proposed changes appear to do nothing to increase safety while creating the impression that the government opposes the right to advocate and protest and in itself sets a dangerous and costly precedent.

Yours sincerely,

Joy Duncan



8th October, 2019