

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

8/10/2019

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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 express my deep concern over and opposition to these new laws, which are disproportionate and overreaching, and appear to have no evidential basis.

In my 70 years of life, I have been a supporter of both the UK Labour Party and the ALP in Australia. I have given my support to Labor on the understanding that it stands for the principles of free assembly and active participation in non-violent protest. It now appears that Labor, at least in Queensland, is throwing out these fundamental principles simply to court both the powerful lobby groups who donate to the party and the workers who (on account of Labor's own lack of foresight) feel threatened by the inevitable downturn in fossil fuel industries. This is not the Labor party of progressive idealism; nor is it pragmatic in the light of our fossil-free future.

Even more disheartening is Labor's flimsy support for measures that we know we need to take to counter critical climate change, change that will affect the very survival of our children and life on our planet. Hence the need for many of us to take to the streets to protest, using whatever non-violent means we can to garner support for real climate action.

The proposed laws fly in the face of participatory activism. They smack of desperate measures by the QLP to defend the morally insupportable corner you have painted yourselves into. You just don't want to lose face, whereas our current crisis demands a brave review of measures that support more fossil fuels, against the advice of the IPCC, almost all climate scientists and most of the population, and in the face of extreme weather that is already affecting us all.

I make the following points specifically in relation to the proposed laws.

1. The reason given for the need for these laws is that activists are using "lock-on" devices to attempt to injure police and safety officers. This 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 of anybody being charged with setting "booby-traps" inside lock-on devices. It's pure speculation.

2. 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.
3. If it were the case that activists have been trying to use lock-on devices to injure police, prosecutions would already have been made under laws that already exist.
4. 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, including not just free speech but public activism as developed by historical protest movements.
5. 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 came about as a 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.
6. 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, is a genuine threat to health and safety.

Please consider my objections to the proposed legislation, not only because it threatens the foundations of our democracy, but in the context of the very real threat we know we are all facing from climate change.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Harry Audus', written in a cursive style.

Harry Audus