




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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SUMMARY OFFENCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (4.17 pm): I rise to speak in the debate on the Summary Offences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. We have already heard a lot about the mechanics of the bill so I will focus purely on how protesting has been affecting my community. Over my lifetime I have been to many rallies and many protests. They have always had an impact and mostly achieved an outcome, but not always. One thing they have had in common is that they have been done in a peaceful and respectful way.

For the 12 years prior to being elected as the member of Mackay I worked as a union organiser for the Queensland Teachers' Union. During this time I organised many rallies and stop-work meetings to improve the working conditions of teachers and advocate for resources for students. It was always a given that our voices would be heard, but no-one was put at risk—not teachers or students or the general public.

To achieve an outcome people need to be able to win over the public's hearts and minds. They need to bring the public along with them in their quest. They need to be able to give notice of their action and make provision for those who may be unfairly impacted. There are always some members of the community who will not agree with the issues but if people do it the right way they do not get them offside any further.

There has always been room in the community for different points of view. There has always been room for peaceful assembly and protest, and that will continue after these laws are passed. There is a need to be able to voice an opinion, and there is at times a need to get together to protest. My region is the backyard for servicing the coal industry. Mackay is a centre where families who drive in and out of the Bowen Basin live. It is our family members who drive the coal trains. It is our family members who operate the conveyor belts. It is our family members who load the ships. It is our family members who drive the heavy machinery that these protesters want to lock themselves to using dangerous devices.

We have already seen an emergency services worker in Bowen injured when taking one of these devices off a protester. Protesters who lock themselves to machinery at Abbot Point and on railway lines and heavy machinery are not only risking their lives but also putting at risk workers going about their legitimate duties. This is not acceptable. People in my community deserve to be able to go to work without their lives being put in danger by the action of protesters who do not think about the safety of others.

It takes many kilometres for a loaded coal train to be able to stop. The operator of a conveyor belt does not always see from one end to the other. They will not see protesters sneaking on to work sites. Why should our family members be traumatised by going to work so that protesters can have their day in the media?

Some protesters presented themselves to my office last week to present protest letters about the laws that are being debated here today. They presented letters to my staff and said that they needed to protest to save the environment and that that was the excuse for their dangerous behaviours. That

is an insult to my community because for decades Mackay has produced one-third of its electricity from renewable energy derived from the by-product of our sugarcane crop. In recent years we have seen a sea of solar farms constructed and out west there are wind farms.

These protesters need to go back to their own communities, get renewables built and make sure they have green communities before they come up to my mine. My community was a green community before it became trendy. We have had renewable energy not because we are trying to be trendy but because we are innovative and progressive and we know how to protest peacefully.

The protesters' addresses on the letters were very interesting. My staff asked them to write their addresses on their letters as they dropped them off—Rosebud, Victoria; Redfern, New South Wales; Sunbury, Victoria; Grovedale, Victoria. It is a bit cheeky for them to come into my community, wanting the right to put my community at risk, and protest our state laws. If they do not like it, they should just go home.