

Thank you for considering the following submission:

My name is Neil Smith, and I have been resident in Tasmania for the last 27 of my 75 years. I have a PhD in electrical engineering. Now retired, I have worked in Tasmania for a small company contracting to the Antarctic Division and other clients, and conducted my own consulting business for several years.

My position is that I feel that in any enlightened community the laws should reflect the feelings and aspirations of as many of the people as possible, whilst not being unduly unfair to small minorities. Changes to the law should generally be unnecessary unless there is genuine factual evidence that the existing legislation is letting the community as a whole down.

Amendments to legislation should certainly not be made if the primary motivation is political in nature, i.e. designed to bolster the popularity of a government or a minister within their preferred sector of society. Whilst letting the feelings of large sectors of society - those the government concerned considers think in the "wrong" way, and of course are thought to be sufficiently few in number as not to upset its vote majority - be damned.

Unfortunately it is possible to interpret many of the comments attributed to Minister Guy Barnett in this sort of way. When he says "importantly, this legislation is not intending to prevent climate change protesters expressing their views on streets or footpaths" (or similar, sorry, I don't have the exact quote handy today), the interpretation is "sure, expression of views contrary to business as usual is fine, provided it's done in such a way that no-one in power has to take any notice whatsoever".

I imagine (and Minister Barnett's comments confirm) that the prime targets of this legislative amendment are those who feel strongly that preservation of our natural, chiefly forested, environment is important, for reasons of carbon dioxide drawdown, for protection of threatened species, because as enlightened 21st century humans we see a need to maintain a connection with those remnants of the natural world we have managed not to destroy over the millennia, or for all sorts of other reasons. Those who feel strongly enough that they are willing to stand in front of a bulldozer or the like for a few minutes or a few hours, thus inspiring others in the community to put pressure on governments to genuinely and rationally consider the rights and wrongs of the status quo.

Such people are not "extremists" as Mr Barnett likes to say. They are people with very genuine, significant feelings, and a universal commitment to absolute non-violence, and respect for all other people. With that "extremist" tag he's lumping them in with the likes of theatre bombers and racist armed militias willing to kill civilians.

And the people in Tasmanian society who agree with these "activists'" reasons are not actually all that few in number. The government (all governments in all societies) has a duty to honestly consider the views and feelings of this sector, and perhaps to vary the policies and regulations relating to use of our land in such a way as to satisfy almost everyone. It should not be impossible.

It is not a matter of abolishing the forestry or mining sectors, or any loss of jobs. There are all sorts of ways for us to have our cake and eat it too - plantation timber resource (already large), use of world's best practice in disposing of mine tailings (paste fill in disused mine tunnels, rather than acidic tailings dams requiring more land alienation) etc etc.

And regarding the actual treatment of direct-action protesters on the ground, there is no evidence that the law as it stands is insufficient to keep society moving in all its inter-related ways. Police virtually always do their job of clearing other people's blockages quickly, efficiently, and safely. Interactions between police and the direct-action community are generally polite, respectful and friendly. Everyone on both sides cooperates in making everyone's safety the top priority, as I know happened near Tullah 2 days ago. And if a few workers have to spend a bit of idle time (which was *not* a factor at Tullah) they are probably being paid anyhow. The effect on a company's bottom line is likely minimal in the grand scheme of things. Perhaps a little pressure might even stimulate changes in their *modus operandi* which actually lead to better profitability (!)

Rather than bringing in draconian penalties targeting a small number of folks, the government should be thinking about how it can change a bit of this and a bit of that so that most of us can feel we live in an inclusive and a decent society.

best regards,

Neil Smith, PhD

15 April 2022.