

I am writing to register my opposition to the proposed anti-protest laws – the Workplaces (Protection from Protesters) Amendment Bill 2021

I believe that the right to protest peacefully is fundamental to our democracy. Protests have made our country better. Protests are how ordinary citizens like myself can become seen and heard by government. Only after tireless, sustained protest did Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people win the right to vote, did LGBT+ people achieve marriage equality, and did unions secure the eight hour work day.

As someone born in Tasmania, who has lived my whole life here I am well aware of how important peaceful protest has been, and continues to be, in protecting our special state and precious environment. Peaceful protest has helped to save the Franklin River, Wesley Vale, the Tamar Valley, Ralphs Bay and vast areas of protected forest across the island.

However, our environment and way of life is still at risk of destruction by harmful industries and many Tasmanians will not give up trying to protect it.

In this age of climate, ecological and biodiversity crises I seriously don't understand why we still need to battle against this environmental destruction. I believe that even if the new laws are introduced, so many of us will continue to protest as we know that there is no option and we feel it is our civic responsibility to protect what is left for future generations. We need to do what is right to be able to sleep at night, and to be able to look our children and grandchildren in the eye and know that we have tried everything we can to safeguard their future.

Who will benefit from the introduction of these laws? Only people with very short term goals, hoping to make a quick buck, certainly not most Tasmanians who are concerned about our long term future and quality of life.

Please reconsider trying to reintroduce these harsh and unnecessary anti-protest laws, and start listening to the people, not just the money-hungry corporations.

Thank you

Jacqui McElwee