

Department of Justice
Office of the Secretary
GPO Box 825
Hobart TAS 7001

23 September 2021

Re: Workplaces (Protection from Protesters) Amendment Bill 2021

Dear Secretary,

I am writing on behalf of Bob Brown Foundation to register our strident opposition to the Workplaces (Protection from Protesters) Amendment Bill 2021.

This bill, in different iterations, has already been rejected by the parliament on two previous occasions, clear evidence that these laws lack public and parliamentary support.

This is an unnecessary piece of legislation, designed to intimidate citizens and prevent them from standing against injustice, with a particular focus on environmental protests. This is a targeted attack, with political motives and grave legal consequences, not just for environmental protesters, but for all Tasmanians.

Police already have numerous powers to remove and charge people engaged in non-violent protests in Tasmania. Current laws already provide for jail terms in certain circumstances for peaceful protesters. These new anti-protest laws are unnecessary, harsh and excessive.

The Police Offences Act 1945 is already providing for arrest and penalties for people participating in protests. This week our Foundation had 18 citizens facing the Magistrate Court for charges of trespass.

These laws will subject good citizens, from all walks of life, engaging in non-violent direct action to harsher penalties. But they will not stop peaceful protests against the destruction of rainforests, native forests, oceans and other ecosystems.

The right to protest is fundamental to a robust, healthy democracy and should be enshrined by our political leaders not undermined. From land rights, the environment, equality and worker's rights, peaceful protest has been integral to shaping our nation's and this state's democracy.

Tasmania has an international reputation as being a place of outstanding wilderness. Our wild places attract thousands of tourists from across the globe every year and inject millions of dollars into our economy. If it were not for the hundreds of citizens who peacefully protested for the protection of these places – against dams, logging, roading and mining – then we would not have the Franklin River, the Styx Valley of the Giants, or many of the ancient forests still standing across Tasmania.



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If these laws are passed, Tasmania's international reputation as a place for wilderness and nature will be overshadowed by these draconian laws. Tasmania will no longer be renowned for wilderness, unique wildlife and beautiful scenery but as a state that deliberately subjugates the democratic rights of its people in the interest of short-term corporate greed and profit.

A solution to end environmental protest in Tasmania would be to protect the intact nature and wildlife. A solution to protests is halting the destruction of its native forests, rainforests, wild places, marine environments and natural beauty by profiteers, who are increasingly out-of-state and hold little regard for this island or its people.

The Act also infringes on Australia's human rights obligations with three United Nations human rights experts having urged the Tasmanian Government in 2014 to refrain from passing the Bill into law.ⁱ

We are concerned that the Bill allow sright-wing groups opposed to vaccinations to protest outside hospitals but not allow forest savers the same rights in Tasmania's native forests, oceans and iconic kunanyi / Mt Wellington.

Tasmania's Liberal government's first attempt at these unnecessary and harsh anti-protest laws was knocked out by the High Court and cost the taxpayer more than \$100,000. We call on you to stop wasting time and taxpayers money on a law that is unnecessary and threatens human rights and the right to freedom of expression.

The government should end this drawn-out attempt to introduce punitive laws that punish dissent, putting the economic interests of corporations over the civil liberties of citizens.

We appreciate being able to voice our concerns about this Bill.

Our Foundation has collected 3032 submissions on this issue for you to register in opposition to the proposed Workplaces (Protection from Protesters) Amendment Bill 2021

Sincerely,



Jenny Weber - Campaign Manager

ⁱ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2014), 'UN experts urge Tasmania to drop its anti-protest bill' 9th September 2014. As found at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15002&LangID=E> (Accessed 23 September 2021).