



Uniting Church in Australia
Western Australia



UNIONSWA

Joint Statement - Criminalising Peaceful Protest

On behalf of our members and communities we represent, we the undersigned organisations are gravely concerned by the Criminal Code Amendment (Prevention of Lawful Activity) Bill 2015 and the implications it has for Western Australia's democracy and the rights of citizens to engage in peaceful protest.

Australians have a long and proud history of peaceful demonstration which has been instrumental in securing the rights that many of us now take for granted.

The right to vote, to a fair wage, to a fair price for farm produce, and to protect of the places we love, from the Franklin River to the Ningaloo Reef, most if not all of these rights would not have been achieved if it were not for citizens engaging in peaceful protest.

The Prevention of Lawful Activity Bill is legislation which has only recently come back on for debate. Political games should not be used to try to bury and hide legislation which is deeply unpopular in the community.

We foresee dire consequences from legislation which criminalises any form of peaceful protest and removes the presumption of innocence for citizens engaging in such activities, as this Bill will do. Concerned citizens exercising their rights to peaceful protest should not be presumed to have criminal intent in any democratic society.

We are calling on all our Parliamentarians to oppose this bill in order to protect our fundamental rights and values and to maintain the healthy function of our democratic society.

Rev Rick Morell
on behalf of the
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Piers Verstegen
Director
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Meredith Hammat
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