

**Submission  
No 287**

**INQUIRY INTO PROVISIONS OF THE RIGHT TO FARM  
BILL 2019**

**Name:** Dr Miranda Coulson

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I am deeply disturbed by a bill currently before the NSW Parliament.

This Right to Farm Bill 2019 undermines the fundamental democratic right to protest.

If this bill is allowed to pass, this will amount to a significant government sanctioned limitation on the right to protest.

This is much more fundamental right than a 'right to farm'. This can only be viewed as the start of a slippery slope towards the gagging of free speech and prohibition on peaceful demonstration against perceived wrongs, by the Australian public.

The NSW Government has portrayed the legislation as simply about stopping animal welfare activists trespassing on farms but hidden in Schedule 2 of the Bill is a sinister and broad threat to democracy and the right to protest.

The proposed legislation increases the fine for anyone who 'enters inclosed lands without permission' and 'hinders' a business when they do so, from \$5,500 to \$22,000 and brings in a new three-year gaol sentence for the offence. This is occurring only three years after the penalty for this offence was increased tenfold from \$550.

The definition of 'inclosed lands' is so broad that it captures any land with a defined boundary, such as any building, a forestry coupe with a fence, land designated for coal or gas mining, or a work site.

The definition of hindering a business is similarly broad and would capture many forms of peaceful protest, such as a sit-in at a company's corporate headquarters, a farmer or knitting nanna who locks on to coal or gas equipment, or even union officials' and members' activities on a work site.

I join with environmental groups and civil liberties organisations who oppose the disproportionate and anti-democratic elements of this legislation.

A right to protest is intrinsic to our way of life in Australia. The following points are crucial and that this bill:

- o Does not apply to people engaged in genuine peaceful protest;
- o Does not increase the current penalties for aggravated unlawful entry onto inclosed lands; and
- o Does not criminalise people who encourage others to participate in a peaceful protest.

Yours Sincerely,  
Miranda Coulson