



# QUEENSLAND COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES

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*Watching Them While They're Watching You*

## **MEDIA RELEASE NEW POLICE POWERS IN RELATION TO PROTESTS**

The Premier today released a statement in which she said there was evidence that protesters were arming themselves with booby traps, which could harm those who remove the protestors from a place of protest.

"If these allegations are true those planning such conduct are to be condemned and should face appropriate legal sanction. The QCCL has always supported the right of peaceful protest, even if that causes inconvenience to others" said Mr Cope, QCCL President.

It is our view, that protesters should comply with the law and apply for permits to protest. Having said that, penalties for those who protest illegally should reflect the fact that there is a right to dissent in this country.

In relation to the Premier's proposal to increase police powers to deal with this apparent threat, we await the detail of the legislation.

"We are always concerned," said Mr Cope "about proposals for increased police powers. The first test the government has to pass is to establish that there is not already sufficient power to deal with the problem"

Relevantly, the police already have a power to search a person when they reasonably suspect that the person has something the person intends to use to cause harm to himself, herself or someone else.

It is not clear why this power is not adequate to deal with the issue described by the Premier. Every time we give police new powers that are not necessary we chip away at our liberty

"The QCCL calls on the government to refer the legislation to a Parliamentary Committee which can consider the evidence and decide whether the legislation is an appropriate response. No doubt the committee can deal with the referral on an urgent basis", says Mr Cope

"It is the position of the Council that the protestors and the police ought to respect one another, with the protestors engaging in peaceful protests with a permit and the police facilitating that. The type of behaviour described by the Premier, if true, violates that principle and is appalling. However, as is the case in all these situations, the response needs to be calm and considered." said Mr Cope

**For further information contact Michael Cope President QCCL on 07 3223 5939 during office hours and at all times on 0432 847 154**

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ENDS