

**Tasmania's House of Assembly passes country's toughest anti-protest laws**

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The government has rushed new anti-protest legislation through the lower house after cries from Labor and the Greens the move stifled debate and would further stifle democracy.

The bill was based on original anti-protest legislation which was overturned by the High Court in 2017.

The government reintroduced new legislation in the House of Assembly recently which it said was not against peaceful protest, rather to protect the rights of workers and businesses from disruptions from activists.

Primary Industries Minister Guy Barnett said he was confident the bill would withstand a constitutional challenge based on advice from the Solicitor-General, however, would not say whether the Solicitor-General himself explicitly said so.

Labor deputy leader Michelle O'Byrne said his response was reminiscent of that in 2014 on the original legislation.

The wording of the title of the original bill was reworked, in accordance to concerns from the High Court and non-compliance with human rights.

Mr Barnett said this meant the bill would apply to Tasmanians equally

Greens leader Cassy O'Connor said the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute was not satisfied that removal of the wording in the title would satisfy the High Court.

She said the government had only selectively listened to those who had made submissions and ignored the opinion of legal experts who expressed their reservations.

Mr Barnett moved a motion for the bill to be declared urgent which provoked accusations from Labor and the Greens that the government was attempting to gag debate.

The motion, to have debate concluded by 6pm, was passed with the backing of Clark independent MHA Madeleine Ogilivie.

Ms O'Byrne said there was no urgency on the bill as it would not reach the Legislative Council for four months.

"You are running scared," she said.

Ms O'Connor said she suspected the bill would not be brought on for debate until after the upper house elections in Huon and Rosevears in May.

Mr Barnett would make no commitment for the bill to be debated in the first week of sittings in 2020.

Labor and the Greens both took aim at Ms Ogilvie after the debate for voting with the government.

Labor's David O'Byrne said rather than protecting workers, the bill circumvented workers' rights if they weren't part of a registered union.

Ms O'Connor said: "This is a fateful day for Tasmanian democracy."