NEW LAWS TO STAMP OUT VIOLENCE AT PUBLIC EVENTS

The Andrews Labor Government today introduced new public order laws and harsher penalties to stamp out violence at protests or public events.

The Crimes Legislation Amendment (Public Order) Bill 2016 will include new statutory offences of affray and violent disorder, and additional police powers to keep the community safe.

The Control of Weapons Act currently allows the Chief Commissioner of Police to designate an area where there is a likelihood of violence or disorder involving weapons. Within those zones, police have the power to search any person or vehicle within the designated area.

Under the Government’s changes, within a designated area, police will also be able to direct a person to remove a face covering if it is being worn to hide their identity or to stop the effects of capsicum spray.

Police will also be able to direct a person to leave the designated area if they reasonably believe the person intends to commit affray or violent disorder.

The common law offences of rout, riot and affray will be replaced by statutory offences of affray and violent disorder in the Crimes Act.

Affray is when a person uses or threatens unlawful violence and whose conduct would cause another person at the scene to be terrified. This offence will have a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment, and that increases to seven years jail if it’s committed while wearing a face covering.

Violent Disorder is when six or more people use unlawful violence together which causes injury to a person or people, or causes damage to property. It carries a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment, or 15 years if committed while wearing a face covering.

These reforms will remove out-dated and confusing language currently used in the common law offences and will make it easier for police to use the laws.

The Summary Offences Act 1966 will also be amended to require local governments to consult with police when considering any application for a permit that would facilitate a protest.

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Martin Pakula

“Victorians deserve to feel safe at public events. That’s why we’re arming police with stronger laws to deal with people who are violent or threaten community safety.”

“Violent behaviour won’t be tolerated. We’re cracking down on troublemakers who use facemasks to hide from the law.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Police Lisa Neville

“These laws respect the right of Victorians to engage in peaceful protest, whilst ensuring that police can deal with people who seek to disrupt peaceful protests and other events.”

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