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MEDIA RELEASE

Publishing private details a step too far: LAST

Member for Burdekin and Shadow Minister for North Queensland, Dale Last, has called on the federal government to crackdown on privacy breaches perpetrated by radical activists.

In the past year activists have caused chaos throughout Queensland and Mr Last said putting people at risk by publishing their personal details was a tactic that seemed to be gaining popularity amongst the various activist groups.

“During the year we’ve seen farms invaded and that resulted in traumatised people and animals and recently there have been threats to publish personal contact numbers published merely because of the job they do,” Mr Last said.

“What these activists don’t realise, or don’t care about, is that anyone could access those details and it poses a real risk to people’s security.”

“Any kind of criminal could get their hands on that information and it could result in harassment or far worse crimes and, if that happened, these activists should be held responsible.”

“Australia has federal privacy laws to protect people and I am calling on the federal government to ensure that any publication of private details, without a person’s consent, is investigated and the perpetrators prosecuted.”

Mr Last said the move to breaching people’s privacy was the next step in increasing action taken by activists after the vast majority of people reacted negatively to their actions.

“They are acting just like a child having a temper tantrum,” he said. “They didn’t get their way by stopping people from working or blocking streets so they have stepped it up a notch in the hope people will cave in.”

“If people want to participate in a legal protest then that is democracy in action but when you put people’s jobs and their safety at risk you really have crossed the line.”

Earlier this year Mr Last introduced a Private Member's Bill to the Queensland Parliament to beef up trespass laws and, while the legislation has not yet been debated, the Committee that assessed the Bill recommended it not be passed.

"To anyone who says we already have deterrents in place for these actions I would say '*why aren't they working*'" Mr Last said.

"If the current laws are sufficient then why are we seeing people locked in their workplaces and prevented from going home to their families?"

"If the existing legislation is tough enough than why are we hearing of farmers being traumatised by people invading their properties dressed in masks?"

"In my electorate there have been infrastructure projects hindered, trains brought to a standstill and Police Officers injured due to these protesters and yet the current government says there is no problem. You really have to question who they are supporting because it's not the average person doing their job."

"What we are seeing is protesters using fear to spread their message and that shouldn't be accepted in our society. Targeting workers to the point where they have to ensure their clothing doesn't identify their employer is bordering on discrimination."

"I doubt that any members of the current Queensland government will support my legislation because, as far as they are concerned, primary producers and the resources sector are nothing but groups for them to demonise."

"In parts of regional Queensland we have high unemployment and youth unemployment of over 20% and, while companies can be targeted by radicals, they are less likely to invest and less likely to create jobs."

"There was testimony at the inquiry into my Private Members Bill that showed there were businesses spending over \$70,000 to try and protect themselves from these activists who are breaking the law. That is money that would be better spent employing workers or improving their businesses."

"I've written to the Federal Attorney-General asking for the publication of this information to be investigated from a Privacy point of view. Whether it's publishing the address of a farm that someone lives on or their phone number; it's being done to try and intimidate them, and it shouldn't be tolerated."

"If there needs to be amendments made to the federal legislation then I have asked Minister Porter to consider doing just that. When we saw activists invading farms the federal government acted much faster than the Queensland government did, so it appears that they are more interested in protecting people's rights than the current Queensland government is."

"No one is asking for legal protests to be stopped. All we are asking for is for everyone to have their right to privacy, their right to go to work and their freedom to go home to their families protected."

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