



South Australia

South Australia passes laws to crack down on protest after disruption of oil and gas conference

After 14-hour debate, upper house passes laws on disruptive protests, which increase maximum fine to \$50,000 along with potential jail time

Follow our Australia news live blog for the latest updates

Get our [morning and afternoon news emails](#), [free app](#) or [daily news podcast](#)

Australian Associated Press

California residents have certain rights with regard to the sale of personal information to third parties. Guardian News and Media and our partners use information collected through cookies or in other forms to improve experience on our site and pages, analyze how it is used and show personalized advertising.

At any point, you can opt out of the sale of all of your personal information by pressing

Do not sell my personal information

You can find out more in our [privacy policy](#) and [cookie policy](#), and manage your choices by going to 'California resident – Do Not Sell' at the bottom of any page.

An SA Best amendment did pass, ridding the bill of a reckless intention clause.

The changes increase maximum fines from \$750 to \$50,000 along with potential jail time.

They were prompted by three days of action by members of Extinction Rebellion earlier this month, including a woman who abseiled over a city bridge, forcing a main road to be closed for about 90 minutes.

Premier Peter Malinauskas defended the changes on Wednesday, saying the government received legal advice confirming the new penalties were commensurate with other penalties for similar offences.

“There has been no change to protest laws in South Australia,” the premier claimed on ABC Radio.

“One of the things that I have found rather disconcerting around some of the commentary on this piece of legislation is that somehow, it curtails or diminishes people’s right to protest, which is simply not true.”

The premier described the laws as quite a modest change and said if lawyers were right in asserting the courts could apply them outside of their intended scope, then that had always been the case.

He rejected the suggestion more people would be arrested and thrown in prison because of the laws.



📷 A woman abseils over a bridge in Adelaide during an Extinction Rebellion protest on 18 May. Photograph: Extinction Rebellion South Australia

“All the protests that have happened in the past, including many that I’ve participated in, have never resulted in an issuing of a fine,” Malinauskas said.

“The majority of people who protest do so passionately, vigorously, obstruct traffic, close streets, march and so forth - none of that will change.

“But we have got a very deliberate action here to affect those people who take to an extreme (protesting) that has an adverse effect on others in our community, who also have rights that need to be protected.”

Activists and lawyers have opposed the laws, criticising the lack of public consultation, unclear rationale for rushing the changes through and increased penalties.

SA Unions on Wednesday derided the government’s failure to respond to the majority of its concerns as well as those raised by the legal profession.

“Not only did the government rush this bill through the lower house in 22 minutes, they have taken the next available opportunity to force it through the upper house,” SA Unions secretary Dale Beasley said.

“We will not accept that this is how laws are made in South Australia, especially laws that can land workers in jail for standing up for their rights in public places.

“The hasty passage of this bill serves as a reminder that the rights of workers and the community, while hard won, can be easily lost.”

There needed to be careful consideration of the amendments achieved on Wednesday morning, SA Unions said.

The laws were prompted by three days of action by members of Extinction Rebellion earlier this month outside the annual Apea oil and gas conference in [Adelaide](#).

During the conference, the South Australian energy and mining minister, Tom Koutsantonis, told representatives of the Australian oil and gas industry [that the state government was “at your disposal”](#) in an extended welcome for the opening of its annual conference.

The protests outside the venue included a woman who abseiled over a city bridge, forcing a main road to be closed for about 90 minutes.

South Australian police commissioner said at the time he had been frustrated by the protesters.

“The ropes are fully extended across the street. So we can’t, as much as we might like to, cut the rope and let them drop,” Grant Stevens said.

South Australia rushed through the anti-protest laws [less than a day later](#).

I hope you appreciated this article. Before you move on, I was hoping you would consider taking the step of supporting the Guardian’s journalism.

From Elon Musk to Rupert Murdoch, a small number of billionaire owners have a powerful hold on so much of the information that reaches the public about what’s happening in the world. The Guardian is different. We have no billionaire owner or shareholders to consider. Our journalism is produced to serve the public interest - not profit motives.

And we avoid the trap that befalls much US media - the tendency, born of a desire to please all sides, to engage in false equivalence in the name of neutrality. While fairness guides everything we do, we know there is a right and a wrong position in the fight against racism and for reproductive justice. When we report on issues like the climate crisis, we’re not afraid to name who is responsible. And as a global news organization, we’re able to provide a fresh, outsider perspective on US politics - one so often missing from the insular American media bubble.

Around the world, readers can access the Guardian’s paywall-free journalism because of our unique reader-supported model. That’s because of people like you. Our readers keep us

independent, beholden to no outside influence and accessible to everyone - whether they can afford to pay for news, or not.

If you can, please consider supporting the Guardian today. Thank you.

Betsy Reed
Editor, Guardian US



Single	Monthly	Annual
\$5 per month	\$7 per month	Other

Continue → **Remind me in July**    



Most viewed
