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Tasmanian Government **Media Release**

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Guy Barnett, Minister for Resources

Better Protection for Tasmanian Workers and Workplaces

Today in Parliament, the Tasmanian Liberal Government has introduced legislation to protect the rights of workers, and to deter unlawful interference with workplaces, with the introduction of the *Police Offences Amendment (Workplace Protection) Bill 2022*.

The Bill strengthens the law of trespass and obstruction, making them more easily understood and enforced. It applies to all persons and businesses equally. And it gives Courts the ability to give higher sentences if appropriate for more serious offences and repeat offences.

It's now more important than ever to ensure Tasmanians are free to go to work safely, without the risk that radical extremists invade their workplace.

Intimidating, threatening, and endangering employees is not an option.

I want to make it absolutely clear that the Government respects every Tasmanian's right to free speech. This legislation does not – and the Government has no intention to – put in place anything that will limit lawful protesting.

At the same time, the Government makes no apology for ensuring Tasmanians can go to work and run their businesses in a safe manner free from disruption. And more so, it is incumbent on all of us to ensure there are no longer genuine risks to people's safety from interference by extremist protesting in business operations.

The *Police Offences Amendment (Workplace Protection) Bill 2022* proposes:

- appropriate aggravated penalties where a court is satisfied that a trespass obstructed a business or undertaking, and clarify the elements of the trespass offence;
- appropriate aggravated penalties where a court is satisfied that a trespass caused a serious risk to the safety of the trespasser or another person; and
- appropriate penalties for the existing offence of public annoyance, and clarification that this offence includes unreasonable obstruction of the passage of vehicles or pedestrians on a street.

The Bill was released for two weeks public consultation, and feedback from submissions has been used to finalise the Bill before introduction. These submissions are available on the Department of Justice website.

Labor governments and oppositions across the country have supported similar legislation and it is time that the Tasmanian Labor Opposition finally threw its support behind Tasmanian workers and not stand side-by-side with the Greens and the Bob Brown Foundation.