

Fines and Traffic Law Working Group Report Quarter 2 | April to June 2021

1. Meeting of the Fines and Traffic Law Working Group (FTLWG)

The Fines and Traffic Law Working Group met on 12 May 2021.

2. Presentation by Isabella Wallington, Principal Advisor, Hardship Programs, Revenue NSW

The FTLWG invited Isabella Wallington to provide an update on the cross-agency program of work under the Hardship Support Program, led by Revenue NSW. The program aims to break the cycle of disadvantage for First Nations people and vulnerable young people who are disproportionately impacted by fines. Initial discovery work undertaken with communities across NSW highlighted some common themes and experiences:

- lack of knowledge about fines, enforcement processes and social impacts
- negative perceptions of law enforcement – feeling targeted and intimidated
- difficulty paying debts and general debt-related stress
- social and financial problems caused by fines eg. licence suspension

Revenue NSW has worked with government, NGOs and communities to identify six core work streams to effect change.

1. Education: increasing fines knowledge and responses
2. Diversion: alternative options to issuing a fine in the first instance
3. Identification and connection: culturally appropriate services, early engagement and data share
4. Community partnerships: place-based initiatives and collaborative local solutions
5. WDOs: increase take up opportunities, particularly for medical and mental health treatment
6. Enforcement: reducing the impact of licence sanctions in remote communities and repealing powers to issue warrants of commitment

There are 19 initiatives under the program, with 12 in progress, 5 delivered and 2 to commence. Completed initiatives include: specialist Revenue NSW team providing culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal people; allowing social workers in private practice to become WDO sponsors; licence sanctions not imposed in remote locations as a first response to overdue fines; sanctions lifted without lump sum payments; age and culturally appropriate communications

3. Progress report on Fairer Fines amendments

Revenue NSW provided a progress report on the amendments to the Fines Act 1996. Ann King confirmed the results of a recent survey in which 84% of respondents (75 people) acknowledged improvement in services implemented through the legislation changes. The latest Fairer Fines data was also presented. 665 Penalty Notices had received the 50% reduction to the value of \$110 000. Of the applications declined 705 were paid in full and 627 opted for a payment plan.

4. Work and Development Order Scheme Guidelines update

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) advised that the revised WDO guidelines are with the NSW Attorney General. They will be referred to the FTLWG for comment following approval of the consultation brief. DCJ also confirmed positive discussions with Community Corrections to improve access to WDOs.

5. FTLWG focus areas 2021-22

The FTLWG discussed focus areas for 2021-22. They will include: the high rates of unauthorised driving offences in particular communities eg. Blacktown; voting fines; concession fare eligibility and response to the IPART report; WDO Guidelines review; and continued contribution to the research of Dr Julia Quilter and Prof Russell Hogg on transport, disadvantage and financial penalties.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the FTLWG is on **Wednesday 11 August 2021**, 10am to 11:30am.

Meredith Osborne

Chair, Fines & Traffic Law Working Group

May 2021