



Speech by

Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Wednesday, 19 August 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

State Penalties Enforcement Registry

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.09 am): I am very pleased to inform the House that the State Penalties Enforcement Registry, better known as SPER, has set a new monthly record for the collection of outstanding fines. Last month, SPER recovered more than \$14 million in unpaid fines, smashing the old record of \$12.9 million set in July last year. This is a great result. It means that more and more people who have been fined for breaking the law are repaying their debt to the community through the SPER system.

There are many ways that people can work with SPER officers to repay their fines, with instalment plans available to low-income debtors. Last month alone, SPER negotiated an additional 3,000 instalment plans for fines totalling around \$8 million. These plans help to ensure that people who cannot pay a fine up-front can repay their debt in instalments on the basis of their personal and financial circumstances.

These figures clearly show that people are getting the message that it is in their own best interests to do the right thing and repay their debt to society. Those Queenslanders who, after being given ample opportunity, still do not do the right thing can be the subject of enforcement action such as wage garnisheeing or driver's licence suspension for traffic related fines. Soon these fine dodgers, who persist in refusing to do anything to repay their debt, could face further penalties.

Last month I announced plans to introduce legislation later this year to give SPER enforcement officers the authority to clamp the wheels of motor vehicles belonging to high-end debtors who refuse to pay their fines. If they still do not pay after their wheels are clamped, SPER can seize and sell property, including motor vehicles. Anyone who thumbs their nose at a fine—whether it is a traffic related matter or not—could have their driver's licence suspended. The wheel-clamping strategy will be rolled out during a 12-month trial in Brisbane from January next year while licence suspensions will apply state-wide.

These new measures will not completely solve the problem of SPER debts remaining unpaid but will add to the array of tools SPER can use to recover what is owed to Queenslanders. As I have said before, SPER is happy to work with people to ensure their fines are repaid, and their personal and financial circumstances are certainly considered. But people who blatantly and persistently refuse to pay their fines do not deserve sympathy. The Bligh government's proposed new measures will go some way towards ensuring they do not continue to get away with it.