



Speech by

Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Tuesday, 18 May 2010

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

State Penalties Enforcement Registry

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.30 am): There has been considerable interest in the implementation of the government's trial of tougher penalties for fine defaulters, particularly the new wheel-clamping provisions. There is, however, another major component to the State Penalties Enforcement Registry trial—that is, the new powers that relate to the seizure and sale of property. The two-year trial of seizure and sale provisions in the Brisbane area, which started on 1 January this year, is initially targeting those fine defaulters who owe more than \$5,000 and for whom wheel clamping is not suitable. Debtors are given 14 days notice in which to contact SPER to start paying their debts. If no contact is made, a warrant for the seizure and sale of assets is issued.

As at 30 April 2010, SPER had issued 15 property seizure warning letters—four to corporate debtors with fines totalling \$165,000 and 11 to individual debtors owing a total of \$92,000. These notices are having the desired effect. Already, two of the corporate debtors have paid their fines in full and one made a substantial upfront payment and is now on a payment plan. Some individual debtors have been more recalcitrant. One fine defaulter who owed \$6,151 continually refused to pay a five-year-old debt, forcing SPER to issue a warrant to sell the debtor's property at a public auction. This action finally persuaded the debtor to pay their fines in full before the auction took place. While this is a good outcome, it is unfortunate and very regrettable that SPER has to go to these lengths before debtors pay their fines.

The expansion of driver licence suspensions to non-motor vehicle related fines also started on 1 January and, as at 30 April, there were about 17,000 SPER driver licence suspensions in place relating to non-motor vehicle offences. This is another instrument in the government's armoury to recover money from fine defaulters who continually avoid meeting their obligations to the community and ignore the numerous warnings offered by SPER to pay their debts, including the option of paying by instalments, before their licence can be suspended. However, all of this can easily be avoided. All these fine defaulters have to do is do what the community expects and pay their fines.