

Question on Notice

No. 111

Asked on Thursday, 14 February 2008

Mr GRAY asked the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland (Mr Shine) -

QUESTION:

Will he inform the House what he is doing to collect unpaid fines registered with the State Penalties Enforcement Registry?

ANSWER:

The enforcement of unpaid fines is proactively undertaken through the use of licence suspension, warrants against property and fine collection notices issued to employers and banks. Each year since it was established the State Penalties Enforcement Registry (SPER) has been improving the efficiency of its collection techniques and other enforcement options, which has allowed SPER to maintain the integrity of fines without resorting to use of imprisonment which was commonplace before SPER was introduced.

SPER actively seeks information about an offenders address, locating and making contact with an offender to let them know about their outstanding fine. SPER currently works with a range of government agencies to obtain this information.

SPER has a current clearance rate of 68% and is currently collecting \$10-\$11 million each month, and in the seven months to January 2008, has collected over \$74 million. SPER has in place 111,240 instalment plans allowing people to pay off \$151,738,375 of outstanding fines.

SPER has been trialling a system of issuing warrants for imprisonment in some of the toughest cases. The trial is targeting debtors who owe significant amounts of money and who have consistently refused to pay up. This is a last resort option and rigorous assessment process is used to determine who should be targeted in consultation with a number of agencies such as Queensland Corrective Services, Queensland Transport and Department of Communities.

I have asked the Department of Justice and Attorney-General to look particularly at five possible options to strengthen the fine collection system, and improve the rate of enforcement across the State, these are:

- enforcement cooperation with other States and Territories;
- reporting outstanding fines to agencies who hold people's credit records;
- greater information sharing across Queensland and Commonwealth agencies;
- widening the use of Driver Licence Suspension to include other offences; and
- seizure and sale of assets.