

## Question on Notice

No. 1789

Asked on Tuesday, 25 November 2008

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

### QUESTION:

With reference to outstanding debts and fines not paid by the public and in light of the recent news that fines will be increased, which will ultimately lead to more funds being collected by SPER—

- (1) What is the total amount that is currently outstanding to be collected by SPER?
- (2) What amount is being collected by SPER each year?
- (3) What action is being taken each year to increase the effectiveness of SPER to substantially decrease the outstanding amount?

### ANSWER:

As at 30 November 2008 there were 2,089,912 penalties valued at \$505,597,660 registered with the State Penalties Enforcement Registry (SPER) for collection. This outstanding pool is categorised into:

- Awaiting enforcement – 578,454 penalties valued at \$135,529,080
- Under active compliance – 794,619 penalties valued at \$189,235,690
- Under active enforcement – 667,475 penalties valued at \$166,724,619
- Under suspension or dispute – 49,364 penalties valued at \$14,108,271

It is important to note the SPER not only collects penalties on behalf of the State Government, but also on behalf of other agencies such as councils, hospitals, universities and victims of crime under an order of a court.

Since commencing operations in November 2000, SPER has collected over \$549M in penalties and fees. During the 2007-08 financial year SPER collected \$131.39M. Since commencing operations in November 2000 SPER has increased collections by 242% and the clearance rate (finalised matters divided by lodged matters) by 119%.

Year	Total Collections	Percentage improvement over previous year's total collections
2001-02	\$32 M	n/a
2002-03	\$51.7 M	62%
2003-04	\$71.8 M	39%
2004-05	\$76.7 M	7%
2005-06	\$85.4 M	11%
2006-07	\$100.99 M	18%
2007-08	\$131.39 M	30%

(Total collections include fees paid by lodging agencies and; overpayments that are refunded back to debtors).

SPER is continually enhancing its computer systems to maximise the collection of penalties and in 2009 will introduce new instalment plan technology which will see the SPER system create payment plans with minimal staff intervention. SPER also continues to improve its capacity to trace, contact and profile debtors to ensure the most cost effective compliance option is used. SPER is currently evaluating a marketing campaign as part of its commitment to public education. SPER is also committed to working with interstate and commonwealth agencies to improve information sharing.

SPER has a strong community engagement approach and has conducted several regional campaigns during 2008, with more planned for 2009. SPER also works closely with several non-government organisations to ensure a high level of service delivery is provided to our most vulnerable citizens, offering a variety of options tailored to suit a debtor's situation.