

Question on Notice

No. 1974

Asked on Thursday, 4 December 2008

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

QUESTION:

Will he provide information on the performance of the State Penalties Enforcement Registry in the collection of unpaid fines in 2008?

ANSWER:

The State Penalties Enforcement Registry (SPER) is responsible for the collection and enforcement of unpaid infringement notices and court ordered penalties. A specific aim of SPER is to maximise the collection of restitution/compensation for victims of crime, whilst reducing the use of imprisonment for fine defaulters.

SPER continually seeks opportunities to enhance its business process and computer systems to maximise the collection of penalties. In 2008 SPER commenced a project to introduce new instalment plan processes and technology which will see the SPER system create payment plans with minimal staff intervention. There are currently over 112,000 instalment plans in place covering almost \$171M in outstanding penalties.

During 2008 SPER has continued to improve its capacity to trace, contact and profile debtors to ensure the most cost effective compliance option is used.

SPER has a strong community engagement approach and conducted several regional campaigns during 2008, with more planned for 2009. SPER enforcement officers also regularly visit several metropolitan Magistrates' courts to engage with debtors and assist them to enter into compliance.

SPER has strong links with a range of 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.

From 1 January 2008 to 30 November 2008 there have been more than 680,000 debts lodged with SPER for enforcement. During this same period more than 488,000 debts have been finalised.

For the month of November SPER had a clearance rate of 79%. The monthly clearance rate is determined by dividing the number of debts finalised for the month by the number of debts lodged for the month.

Since 1 January 2008 SPER has collected:

- \$109M in fines and other monetary penalties that have been remitted to Consolidated Revenue;

- \$8.2M in fines and other monetary penalties that have been remitted to referring agencies (such as local councils, universities); and
- \$11.4M in court ordered monetary penalties that have been remitted to victims of crime and other beneficiaries of court orders (such as professional costs).

SPER continues to seek opportunities to improve the collection of unpaid penalties and 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.