

TIME-TO-PAY-UP FINES ENFORCEMENT STRATEGY

565. Ms J.A. RADISICH to the Minister for Justice:

I commend the minister and his officers for taking up the initiative to develop the time-to-pay-up fines enforcement strategy. Will the minister inform the house of the progress of this innovative community campaign?

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO replied:

I thank the member for the question and her commitment to help solve this problem. As the member well knows, the government has made a commitment to try to tackle the problem of fine defaulters ending up in prison for non-payment of fines. Last Thursday I launched the time-to-pay-up campaign, and on Friday we published nearly 40 000 licence numbers. I advise the house that this campaign has been very successful, and I will indicate to the house some of the results. In the six days until Tuesday 6 363 people accessed the online licence search system and 3 115 phone calls were made to the Fines Enforcement Registry. More than 1 000 people have already paid their debts in full or are making arrangements to pay their debts. More than \$679 000 has been collected by the Fines Enforcement Registry. This is an outstanding result. It has highlighted for me that we need to continue to target awareness of this problem. In addition to the drivers' licences advertising campaign, we are also targeting approximately 1 493 difficult offenders who are at immediate risk of imprisonment for non-payment of fines. These are the worse offenders in the fines system. Of the 1 521 people, 673 have had their matters resolved by a range of measures including payment in full, work and development orders and entering time-to-pay schemes. Of those on time-to-pay arrangements, 180 offenders are subject to Centrepay direct debit. As a result of these fines being paid, an additional \$1.3 million will be collected. Additionally, it is anticipated that in excess of 10 000 imprisonment days will be averted through payment and performing work and development orders. We have set up regional work parties in the Kimberley and Pilbara to allow fine defaulters to do community work. Of course, that will be of benefit to those towns and remote communities in those areas. The new community work programs complement the existing Repay WA program which in the last financial year saw offenders complete nearly 250 000 hours of community work, valued at approximately \$3.5 million. The best result of the campaign so far has been the low number of people in custody. We were looking at trying to minimise this. Members know that it costs about \$250 a day to keep somebody in prison. When we started this campaign somewhere between 160 and 170 fine defaulters were in prison. I am advised that at last Thursday's prisoner count only five people were in custody for non-payment of fines. That is an outstanding result and is a compliment to all of us in this house for supporting that program.