



## DIRECTOR SHIRE SERVICES REPORT

9<sup>TH</sup> May 2006

**DSS4 ABORIGINAL ROAD SAFETY AWARENESS  
AND LICENSING PROGRAM  
File: 159 MJT**

### SUMMARY:

Reporting on the outcomes of the Aboriginal Road Safety Awareness and Licensing Program. (ARSAL)



Council, through its Road Safety Officer, initiated discussion with professionals engaged in the aboriginal health, employment, family, cultural, transport and crime prevention fields. It was identified that the low percentage of Aboriginal drivers with licences in our community was a major barrier to providing successful outcomes to agencies services.

The program was designed by the key stakeholders to identify the barriers that exist, which may prohibit or restrict aboriginal people from accessing resources. The program provided direct outcomes to individual clients at a grass roots level. Pre and post surveys of over 120 participants generally indicated a significant immediate impact on their knowledge and attitudes, and their ability to access programs provided to communities. Clients revealed strong support for the program, with 98% reporting that the program met their requirements and provided motivation to participate in other agencies programs.

Council's Road Safety Officer was invited to Sydney in October 2005, by the Council of Social Services NSW (NCOSS) to present a paper at their annual conference. The forum of the conference was based on the NSW fines system, and was titled "Not such a fine thing." The conference was attended by numerous stakeholders including Government Representatives, NSW Government departments and agencies, community advocacy groups and other community organisations and welfare groups.

The Public Interest Advocacy Service (PIAC) and the Homeless Persons' Legal Service (HPLS) has published a report titled "**Not such a Fine Thing!**" *Options for Reform of the Management of Fines Matters in NSW, April 2006*. A copy of this report is available

for perusal. HPLS plans to meet with the NSW Government, State Debt Recovery Office, Office of State Revenue, Rail Corp and the NSW Ombudsman to discuss the Report's recommendations.

The Report contains eighteen (18) recommendations with four (4) of the recommendations put forward as a direct result of Kempsey Shire Council's involvement in the (ARSAL) Program, and the presentation put forward at the (NCOSS) conference.

These recommendations are:

5. *That the Office of State Revenue introduce direct debit (including Centrepay) and Bpay facilities for the payment of fines and fine related debts to the Infringement Processing Bureau and State Debt Recovery Office.*
9. *That the Office of State Revenue adopt the position that people receiving income from Centrelink are, by definition, on low incomes. Presentation of a Centrelink health care card or pension card should be deemed by the Office of State Revenue to be adequate proof for a person to qualify for a time to pay arrangement on hardship grounds.*
12. *That the NSW Government review the way in which the State Debt Recovery Office imposes driving sanctions and the circumstances under which such sanctions may be lifted.*
13. *That the State Debt Recovery Office lift driving sanctions for low-income fine defaulters within four weeks of making a payment arrangement for their fines related debt. Where a person enters a Centrepay or direct debit arrangement, driving sanctions should lift immediately.*

*The report "Not such a Fine Thing" and the above recommendations will have a major influence in the future success of the Aboriginal Road Safety Awareness and Licensing Program. The program has received additional funding from the Minister of Transport this year to extend its coverage to six centres across the Mid North Coast including additional workshops at Kempsey and Bellbrook.*

*Kempsey Shire Council is acknowledged in the report, for their contribution and enormous assistance, in providing ideas, case studies and written information dealing with the problems facing disadvantaged people who receive fines. The evaluation of the ARSAL program and the NCOSS presentation by Council's Rod safety Officer also forms part of the appendix of the report.*

*The Homeless Person Legal Service, and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre have requested Kempsey Shire Council's support,*

*to lobby State Members of Parliament. HPLS also anticipates convening a working group on the issue of fines, to progress the Report's recommendations, and Council has been invited to be a member of this working group.*

**REPORT IMPLICATIONS:**

- ***Environmental***

*There are no Environmental Implications arising from this report.*

- ***Social***

*The Social Implications of the Aboriginal Road Safety Awareness and Licensing Program provides a positive image for Council and meets the outcomes outlined in Council's Social Plan*

- ***Economic (Financial)***

*Accommodation and travel, if necessary, can be met with the existing budget of the ARSAL program.*

- ***Policy or Statutory***

*There are no Policy or Statutory Implications arising from this report.*

- ***Acting Director's Review***

*An opportunity exists to advocate Council's stand on social issues, and to promote Council's core values through participation on the working group, which will seek to progress the Report's recommendations through Parliament.*

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1 That Council's Road Safety Officer accept the invitation to be a member of the working group, set up by the Homeless Persons Legal Service in partnership with the Public Interest Advocacy Service to progress the Reports recommendations through Parliament.
- 2 That Mr Andrew Stoner MP, State Member for Oxley, be requested to support the progress of the Report's recommendations through Parliament.

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**A P Vermeulen**  
**ACTING DIRECTOR SHIRE SERVICES**