



📷 A police officers using a radar gun. Motorists on the Gold Coast owe \$127m in unpaid fines. Picture: JERAD WILLIAMS

Crime and Court

Gold Coasters owe \$127m in unpaid fines between 74,743 people

Lea Emery, Gold Coast Bulletin

January 11, 2017 12:00am

🛡️ Subscriber only

THE threat of having their car wheels clamped has been enough for 13 Gold Coasters to pay back more than \$64,000 in fines.

But the prospect of losing their car did not have much impact on the rest of the city with debt from unpaid fines increasing by \$7 million in just six months to a whopping \$127 million, split between 74,743 people.

In June the debt had been \$120 million between 73,500 people.

Those that did pay the fines back only did so after they were sent letters threatening to clamp their car.

The threats are part of a trial which started in June to entice people to pay their growing debt.

Suburbs targeted included Parkwood, Coomera, Hope Island, Burleigh Heads, Tallebudgera and Southport.



📷 The threat of having their car's wheels clamped was enough to recover \$64,000 from just 13 people.

The program is only targeted to those who owe more than \$5000 in fines.

A majority of those with a SPER debt have multiple unpaid fines, resulting in some debts totalling in the tens of thousands.

The debts accumulate when people fail to pay any type of fine, including fines for parking, fines issued for crimes by the court, road toll fines and speeding tickets.

People living in Southport and Labrador had the biggest debt with a whopping \$16.7 million owed in the 4215 postcode.

Pacific Pines, Carrara and Nerang followed with more than 7700 people owing \$14.3 million.

Unpaid fines are referred to the State Penalties Enforcement Registry to be collected and the body has the power to disqualify drivers' licences and garnish wages.

A spokesman for Treasurer Curtis Pitt said that SPER would be taking assets in order to meet debts but those in financial hardship would not be targeted.

Southport MP Rob Molhoek said police and council officers sometimes went "a bit too far" in issuing fines.

"There needs to be analysis done of that," he said.

"We need to identify how much is crimes, parking fines, speeding fines and what the fines are for."

Queensland Law Society president Christine Smyth said while the increase in police numbers had a positive effect on crime rates, it also meant more people were being fined.

She said the rapidly growing population was also a contributor.

Ms Smyth said smaller offences that attracted fines were often linked to poverty.

Top 5 worst postcodes

4215 — Southport, Labrador — 9564 people — \$16.7M owed

4211 — Pacific Pines, Carrara, Nerang — 7705 people — \$14.3M owed

4209 — Coomera, Pimpama — 7122 people — \$13.9M owed

4217 — Surfers Paradise, Bundall, Main Beach — 8437 people — \$12.1M owed

4214 — Arundel, Ashmore, Molendinar — 4794 people — \$8.9M owed