



Hon Greg Smith SC MP

Attorney General
Minister for Justice

MEDIA RELEASE

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WORKING OFF FINES SCHEME WINS SUPPORT

A program that enables severely disadvantaged people to work off their fines had been expanded and made permanent, NSW Attorney General Greg Smith SC announced today.

The Fines Amendment (Work and Development Orders) Bill 2011 was given unanimous support as it passed through both the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council.

“Work Development Orders (WDOs) give the homeless, mentally ill and other vulnerable people the chance to clear their fine debts by engaging in unpaid work or educational and therapeutic programs,” Mr Smith said.

A two-year pilot program found one in five participants did not incur further court fines or penalty notices that were referred to the State Debt Recovery Office.

Mr Smith said the program would now be open to people with serious addictions to alcohol, illicit drugs and other volatile substances.

“Drug and alcohol abuse are often closely linked to criminal behaviour and helping people overcome their addictions will have major benefits to the community,” Mr Smith said.

Mr Smith praised not-for-profit organisations, including St Vincent de Paul, Mission Australia, Catholic Care, Youth Off The Streets and the Schizophrenia Fellowship for their commitment to the scheme.

“These good Samaritans have played a crucial role in the success of Work Development Orders, by operating the programs that have helped disadvantaged people clear their fines and make a positive contribution to society,” Mr Smith said.

Ninety-six per cent of organisations and health practitioners involved in the Work Development Order pilot supported its continuation.

By April this year, more than 700 people had been issued with WDOs and had reduced \$294,000 in personal fine debt.

“The expansion of Work Development Orders will divert more people from the criminal justice system and will save taxpayers’ money,” Mr Smith said.