

Question On Notice:

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: In your submission you say that Australians owe more than \$1 billion in toll penalties. That is what you were talking about earlier when you gave the example of a courier, for instance, being \$100,000 in debt. That is really concerning. Do you have any idea as to how much of that debt is in New South Wales?

Ms JOHNSTONE: I am not sure.

Mr FRASER: The numbers are very hard to get a hold of.

Ms JOHNSTONE: The secrecy thing before.

Mr FRASER: I think it is probably a few hundred million dollars. It is very hard to find all of this out. You just write to the departments and you do not get answers at all.

Ms JOHNSTONE: That is just penalty debt which is actually held with the toll road operator, so it is likely to be much higher than that again.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: That is relying upon a Current Affair report that you refer to in your submission, is that right?

Mr FRASER: We actually supplied our research to a Current Affair and then they ran a story.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: You reference a Current Affair as the source of that?

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Mr FRASER: Yes. We took the reports published by, for example, the State Penalties Enforcement Registry [SPER] in Queensland and the Sherriff in Victoria and I think from the State Debt Recovery Office [SDRO] or something in New South Wales and compiled those numbers of what was publicly available. We have kept all of those—

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Are you able to provide those numbers?

Mr FRASER: Yes. We keep everything referenced.

The CHAIR: That would be very useful.

Answer:

QLD:

As at 28 February 2017, the debt pool for the State Penalties Enforcement Agency stood at nearly \$1.18 billion. \$228.4 million (19.35% of debt pool) of that was for toll related debt. By the end of March 2017 toll related debt rose to \$233 million.

-See Attachment A, Page 18, section 3.3.

VIC:

As at 30 June 2015, the dollar value for outstanding warrants was \$1.69 billion. \$687 million (40.65% of debt pool) of that was for tolling infringement warrants.

-See Attachment B.

NSW:

As at 31 December 2015 the amount owed by State Debt Recovery Office debtors was \$805 million.

-See Attachment C, Page 1, section 2.

A conservative estimate of \$97 million (12% of debt pool) based on the percentages of toll debt in the total debt pools in QLD and VIC would suggest that the total toll debt related to enforcement action in Australia exceeds \$1 billion.

During our testimony, we made reference to the lack of information publicly available in each state about toll debt. The lack of cooperation from various state departments means it can be challenging to obtain the most recent and accurate information that we think should be available in the public interest.