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REVENUE NSW FINES DEBACLE REINFORCES IPA CALL TO CANCEL ALL COVID FINES

“Revenue NSW’s decision to waive half the state’s COVID fines is a recognition of the flawed and disproportionate enforcement of lockdowns, which should never have been imposed in the first place,” said Morgan Begg, Director of the Legal Rights Program at the Institute of Public Affairs.

Yesterday, the Supreme Court of New South Wales ruled a number of Public Health Order fines were invalid because they failed to provide a sufficiently detailed description of the offence. This is turn forced Revenue NSW to withdraw more than 33,000 fines issued in the name of COVID.

“During the pandemic, Australians lived under the greatest misuse of police and the criminal law in the country’s history,” said Mr Begg.

“Using the criminal law against people to outlaw everyday life traumatised citizens, pitted police against the community, violated the rule of law, and lead to unacceptable sanctions which have been shown to be on tenuous legal foundations.”

The withdrawal of these fines reinforces Institute of Public Affairs research, which found there should be a general amnesty on all penalties issued during the pandemic. Such an amnesty should also be accompanied with law reform that ensures an unelected bureaucrat can no longer unilaterally regulate basic human activity under threat of criminal sanction.

“The New South Wales Government, along with all other states and territories, should do the job properly, and waive and refund all COVID fines issued immediately,” said Mr Begg.

“Waiving and refunding the fines is only the first step towards accountability. All Australian governments must announce a joint Royal Commission into the pandemic response so Australians can learn why these damaging decisions were made and how to ensure we do not repeat them,” said Mr Begg.

“The numerous socio-economic, recreational, lifestyle, and mental health harms caused by lockdown measures have not yet been fully quantified but there will be a significant ongoing cost of Australia’s pandemic response. Australians deserve answers.”

To download the IPA’s research report *Hard Lessons: Reckoning the Economic, Social, and Humanitarian costs of zero-covid* [click here](#).

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