



3RD PARTY WDO PROJECT

SEEMA SANGHI, ADVOCACY LAW ALLIANCE
seema.sanghi@advocacylaw.org.au

What is a WDO

Work and Development Order

- Delivered through a partnership with Revenue NSW, Legal Aid NSW and the Department of Communities and Justice.
 - DCJ administer the WDO scheme including overseeing the WDO Guidelines and Audits
 - [Revenue NSW](#) manage unpaid fines in NSW, approve WDOs, process new WDO sponsor applications, manage the online [Self Service Portal](#) & [Self Service Portal Guide](#)
 - Legal Aid NSW has a WDO service with six teams across the State. Promote access to WDOs, provide training for organisations, develop WDO resources and provide a specialist service for clients with unpaid fines
 - Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT promote the WDO scheme to ensure it is accessed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who need assistance with unpaid fines

What is a WDO

Work and Development Order

A WDO is a **three-way** agreement between Revenue NSW, the client and an approved WDO sponsor.

- The WDO applicant agrees to undertake an activity in exchange for clearing their unpaid fines
- **Activities:** TAFE course, mental health/medical treatment program, life skills course, or mentoring
- A WDO application must be supported by an approved WDO Sponsor who will monitor participation in appropriate activities
- No cost to either the Sponsor or the applicant.

Sponsor Update

The current number of active sponsors in NSW

Health Practitioners	1252
Government Agencies	336
Non-Government Agencies	975
For Profit Organisations	92

- Increase of 141 new sponsors from 30 June 2021 to 3 December 2021.

Sponsors in Newcastle & Lake Mac

<https://www.revenue.nsw.gov.au/fines-and-fees/cant-pay-your-debt/find-a-wdo-sponsor/hunter>

Legal Aid NSW CLSD Program and Work and Development Order Service third-party WDO sponsor project

Purpose

- Pilot a service model to increase the number of people who have complex needs and high fine debt to engage in the Work and Development Order Scheme (WDO Scheme).
- Link people with fine debt who do not have access to an appropriate WDO sponsor with the WDO scheme.
- Explore and document any barriers for WDO sponsors and test the effectiveness of tools and resources for sponsors.

The Problem

Pre-COVID:

Persistent high fines debt in locations of socio-economic disadvantage, as well as low engagement in the WDO scheme.

- During July, August and September 2021, 47,414 fines were issued for breaches of Public Health Orders (PHO), amounting to **\$43,234,340** in debt.
- December 2021: almost 18,000 PHO fines remain unpaid with 99% of those fines having escalated to enforcement
- Low engagement in the WDO Scheme attributed to key service providers, including psychologists and drug and alcohol treatment services, unwilling or unable to become WDO sponsors
- People engaged in activities or treatment with a service that is not a WDO provider have to decide whether they disengage with their service to participate in a WDO with another service provider who is a sponsor, or where this is not appropriate, not participate in the WDO Scheme at all.

The Benefits

- Clients continue engaging with their existing service providers, or to engage with a service provider who meets their needs but who is not a WDO sponsor.
- Expand availability of the WDO scheme to those who would not otherwise be able to benefit from the scheme and to limit the likelihood of clients disengaging with service providers that they trust in order to get access to the scheme.

Project team and resources

- The project is jointly lead by the CLSD Program and the WDO Service at Legal Aid NSW and is conducted in partnership with Advocacy Law Alliance.
- The Hunter CLSD Program regional coordinator who is employed by Advocacy Law Alliance works as the project coordinator
- The Legal Aid NSW WDO Service provides training and day to day support for the coordinator to act as a third-party sponsor for the WDO scheme and facilitate monthly project meetings

How does the 3rd party project work?

1. Ask people visiting your service - “do you have unpaid fines?”
2. If they answer YES, find out if they are eligible for a WDO (see [factsheet](#) for more details):

Are they:

- In financial hardship or receiving a Centrelink payment
- Experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness
- Living with a mental illness, an intellectual disability or a cognitive impairment
- Addicted to alcohol or volatile substances
- Under the age of 18 years

3. If they fit under one of the above, then see if they are already participating in any WDO-approved activities (see [factsheet](#) for details).

Are they taking part in:

- Medical or mental health treatment
- Drug and alcohol treatment
- Mentoring for under 25s
- Counselling or casework including financial counselling
- Education programs
- Volunteering

4. If YES, gain their verbal permission to refer them to the 3rd party project using this [online form](#) or email

seema.sanghi@advocacylaw.org.au

Case Study:

Giving people the chance to move forward, through the WDO 3rd party project

“It is so good to be able to drive my car again. I haven’t had my license for ages and I’ve been trying to get a WDO [for my fines], but no one around here is doing them.”

Marika* had \$867 in fines from traffic infringements and her license suspended for several months as she was unable to afford to pay off her fines.

There were very few active WDO sponsors in her community. We all know how tough it is not being able to drive in places where 4-wheels is necessary.

Marika was, however, seeing the local Aboriginal Health service and was able to count those appointments as her WDO activity although they were not WDO sponsors.

She was able to clear her fines while attending to her medical needs – win/win - thanks to the 3rd party project for non-WDO sponsors.

The health service is also now interested in reactivating their WDO sponsor role, having seen the positive outcomes for this young person.

