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EXCLUSIVE

Drivers fined millions since new no



Rhett McGillicuddy was fined \$1200 for driving unregistered. He never got a letter telling him it was due, which is happening to a lot of drivers since they took away the rego stickers. Picture: John Appleyard

UNKNOWING drivers have handed over close to \$70 million to the State

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SINCE THE REMOVAL OF CAR REGO STICKERS.

The move to abolish stickers was sold to drivers as 'making life easier' — but **More related stories** with some drivers claiming they never received renewal reminders in the post, the annual errand has gone unnoticed, resulting in costly fines of more than \$1200.

According to figures obtained from the State Debt Recovery Office, 52,871 penalty notices had already been issued in the first 10 months of this year, raising more than \$32.4 million in revenue.

That is almost double the \$17.4 million raised in the 12 months of 2010, when only 34,085 fines were issued.



Rhett McGillicuddy with his children (from left) Brydie, 6, Evelyn 23 months, and Logan, 4, was fined \$1200 for driving unregistered. Picture: John Appleyard

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"I had all three kids across the back, there was no malice in it — I hadn't received any paper work about it at all."

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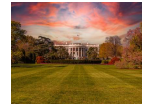
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"It was a \$600 fine — I was two days over."

Again, he failed to receive any reminder this year and was recently caught five weeks out of registration.

"I was driving around that whole time and hadn't been caught — the officer said the reminder — which I didn't get — wasn't mandatory, it was purely a courtesy letter," Mr McGillicuddy said.

"He said 'I remember when all my cars are due'.

"But if we don't have the stickers anymore to remind us, we need to make sure we are getting that paperwork.

"Life is busy enough to remember this on top of everything else.

"I've been driving for 13 years and never forgot when I had the stickers. It's ridiculous." Northern beaches mother of two, Bianca Tobia, was also fined last week for being three days out of rego, and said stickers acted as everyday reminders for busy drivers, and should be brought back.

"I was pulled over after having my plate scanned in Lane Cove, and he said was I aware my car was unregistered — I was not," she said.

"I purchased the car in January and I knew I hadn't paid a rego for the car as of yet, so I had a feeling it would be coming up — but I hadn't received any paperwork in the mail, so I didn't think about it.

"Having the sticker would have been an absolute saviour and reminder that I needed to pay rego soon, but in all honesty it was 'out of sight, out of mind'.

"I was so disappointed, angry, and annoyed.

"How could I have forgotten? I realised the car sticker was what saved me every year!"

NSW Police Inspector Phil Brooks said drivers caught unregistered were fined \$623 for using an unregistered vehicle, and another \$623 for using an uninsured vehicle, tipping the fine to \$1246 — more than four times the average green slip cost.

Insp Brooks said Mobile Automatic Numberplate systems on Highway Patrol vehicles 'continued to detect unregistered and uninsured vehicles'.

A spokesman for the Roads and Maritime Service said motorists received information in the mail six weeks before registration was due, including pensioners who do not have to pay renewal costs.

"A reminder letter is sent if the registration payment or notification of a green slip is not received by the due date," the spokesman said. "A third letter is sent two weeks after the due date to ensure motorists are aware they are not registered and may face fines if they continue to drive.

"Roads and Maritime offers a free registration renewal service whereby customers receive an email or a text message in the days leading to the expiry date to ensure payments can be made on time.

"Feedback on this service has been very positive."

Customers can also download an iPhone app to renew registrations.

"Since December 2012 when the app became available, it has had strong take-up and use with 173,351 registration renewals and 2,848,391 free rego checks completed via the iPhone app," the spokesman said.

NRMA spokesman Peter Khoury said the organisation liked the new sticker-less system, and encouraged motorists to take more personal responsibility as an unregistered car meant an uninsured car.

"Also in the last 12 months to two years the police are using rego recognition systems in their cars, and our view is the new system is better, with less red tape," he said.



"We also have to take more personal responsibility — your rego is due at the same time every year, so put it in your calendar.

"Yes people are used to the sticker — and you can still get them from the NRMA if you want one."

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