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**Redfern Legal Centre pursues a public interest outcome in COVID fines case**

Redfern Legal Centre is continuing to pursue a public interest outcome in its second COVID fines case.

The court will hear the matter on November 22, 2023.

This case concerns a woman who was issued a \$3,000 COVID-19 fine for leaving Greater Sydney without a permit. She was homeless, living out of her van and waiting near the NSW border for a permit to enter South Australia, where a friend had offered her accommodation.

Revenue NSW has already withdrawn and reimbursed the monies paid and have offered to pay the interest on the money taken from the plaintiff's bank account.

Revenue NSW have also conceded that the plaintiff's fine is not a fine under s.20 of the Fines Act because the allegation did not specify the offence and the offence of "Leave Greater Sydney for Prescribed Purposes Without Permit" did not apply to the area where the plaintiff was living in her van.

The plaintiff lodged two internal reviews with Revenue NSW and both reviews found the fine still stood. Only now have Revenue NSW conceded the fine is not a fine.

The plaintiff seeks justice for the many other people who were issued with the same fine as hers.

For the plaintiff this process is more than just about her fine, it is about a desire for a just and fair outcome.

Today, in court, Revenue NSW wanted the matter to be discontinued.

But Redfern Legal Centre is of the view the case is of significant public interest and that the court should determine whether the fine is invalid based on the recent Supreme Court case *Beame; Els v Commissioner of Police & Ors* [2023] NSWSC 347.

Redfern Legal Centre Senior Solicitor Samantha Lee argues that the original Supreme Court judgment shows that all COVID-19 fines are invalid.

"Revenue NSW should have withdrawn and repaid all COVID-19 fines after the previous judgment.

"In NSW, there are still 29,000 COVID-19 that should be withdrawn.

"Data obtained from the NSW Police Force shows these fines were distributed disproportionately in communities with a higher proportion of First Nations people and within regions of low socioeconomic status.

"These fines, which severely affect individuals facing financial hardship ought to be withdrawn with appropriate reimbursement made" she said.