COVID-19: Australia to withdraw or refund tens of thousands of fines

Description

AUSTRALIA: Australia's largest state has said it will withdraw or refund tens of thousands of fines issued during the COVID pandemic after lawyers found some fines were invalid in a test case.

Australian states and territories instituted strict restrictions during the **pandemic**, including limits on travel and movement outside the home.

Police in New South Wales, the largest state, could issue fines of A$1,000 (£558) to individuals who breached public health orders.

Redfern Legal Centre, a free legal service, launched a test case in July on behalf of three plaintiffs arguing their fines of between A$1,000 (£558) to A$3,000 (£1,674), were invalid because the penalty notices did not sufficiently describe the offence.

Government lawyers conceded the plaintiff's fines did not meet legal requirements in a hearing at the New South Wales Supreme Court.

Shortly after, the Commissioner of Fines Administration withdrew 33,121 fines, just under half the 62,138 **COVID**-related fines issued.

The remaining fines are unaffected by the decision.

All sanctions, including driver license restrictions will be stopped. Those who have already paid will be refunded.

"Today justice has been granted to three people who took on the NSW government regarding the validity of their COVID fines and won!" said Samantha Lee, acting solicitor for the plaintiffs in a statement.

Revenue NSW said the challenge was on a "technical basis" and the court's decision did not mean the offences had not been committed.

Category

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