

Victoria heavy-handed on COVID fines: Eslake



People wait for a tram in Melbourne. Picture: Getty Images

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The Victorian government imposed 4.5 times the value of COVID-breach fines on its residents than any other state, according to figures compiled by Tasmania-based economist Saul Eslake.

Mr Eslake's figures show in the first lockdown Victoria collected \$6 million in fines for breaches of COVID rules, which was \$2.2m more than all the other states combined.

For every 100,000 people the government collected \$89.90 in fines against \$20.10 in the other states.

Mr Eslake's conclusion was "the point is, Victoria's heavy-handed, revenue driven approach to enforcing the lockdown regulations failed. It didn't keep Victorians safe.

"Victoria could have made different choices – not just as to how it ran hotel quarantine, but in how heavy-handedly it would police lockdown restrictions, whether it would instruct police to issue warnings for inadvertent or first-time breaches of lockdown regulations, how much the fines it imposed would be, and so on," he added.

The COVID revenue figures follow a long track record of Victoria collecting more in fines than other states.

In the five years to 2019 the average fines (speeding, parking etc) collected per person was \$120.96 a year compared to the average in all States excluding Victoria of \$79.30.

This means Victoria imposed 34 per cent more fines on its residents than other states

With the NSW total \$76.96 and ACT \$92.51.

Mr Eslake noted in NSW drivers are given warnings about speed cameras, but not so much in Victoria, which tells you something about the aim of collecting revenue rather than saving lives.

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