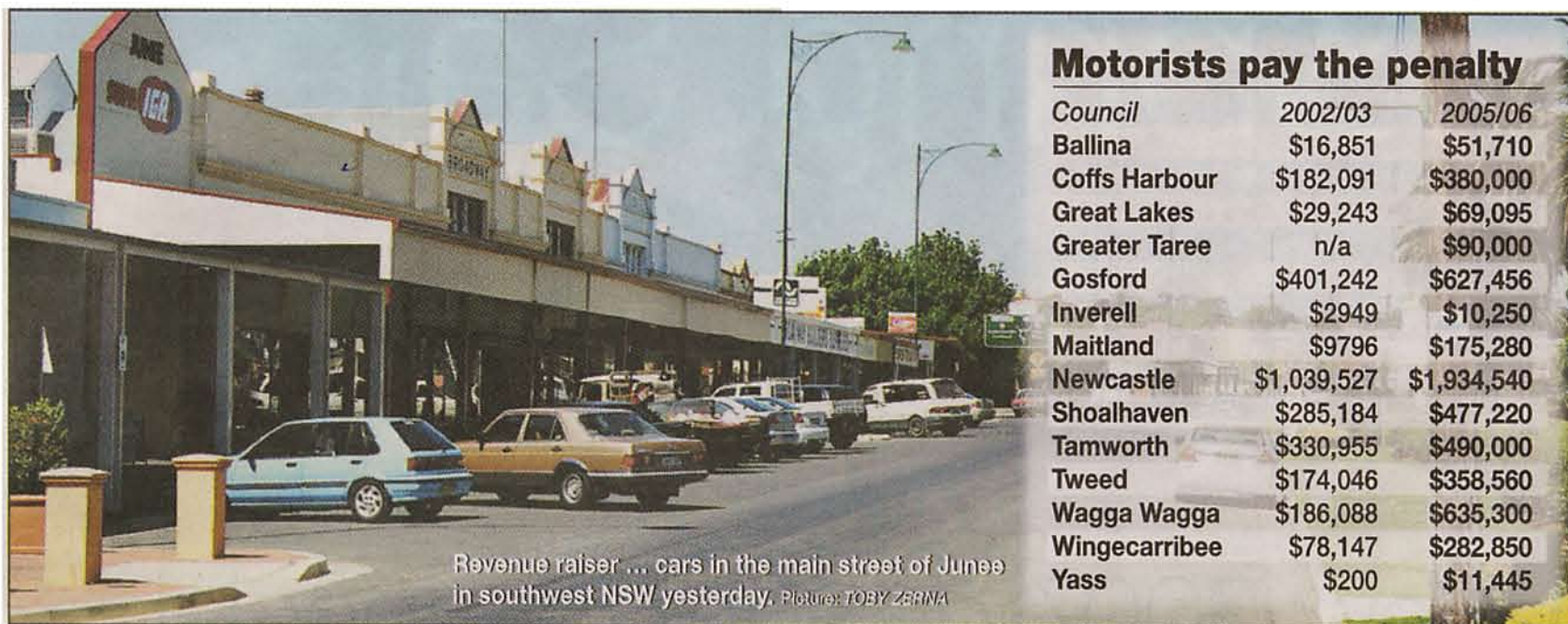


# Country parking blitz to boost councils' coffers

## Sleepy towns taxing drivers



Revenue raiser ... cars in the main street of Junee in southwest NSW yesterday. Photo: TOBY ZERNA

### Motorists pay the penalty

Council	2002/03	2005/06
Ballina	\$16,851	\$51,710
Coffs Harbour	\$182,091	\$380,000
Great Lakes	\$29,243	\$69,095
Greater Taree	n/a	\$90,000
Gosford	\$401,242	\$627,456
Inverell	\$2949	\$10,250
Maitland	\$9796	\$175,280
Newcastle	\$1,039,527	\$1,934,540
Shoalhaven	\$285,184	\$477,220
Tamworth	\$330,955	\$490,000
Tweed	\$174,046	\$358,560
Wagga Wagga	\$186,088	\$635,300
Wingecarribee	\$78,147	\$282,850
Yass	\$200	\$11,445

### EXCLUSIVE

By SAMANTHA WILLIAMS

Regional Reporter

**GREEDY** country councils — including many with sleepy main streets — are following in the steps of their city cousins and clobbering motorists with parking fines.

With thousands of families heading to the country for the school holidays, an investigation by *The Daily Telegraph* reveals you won't be leaving city parking practices behind.

Country councils issued \$6,634,541 worth of parking infringements during the 2005/2006 financial year.

Two of the biggest earners outside the Sydney, Illawarra and Newcastle areas were Wagga Wagga and Coffs Harbour councils, which tripled and doubled their revenue respectively in four years.

Even rural towns like Junee, Coonamble, Hay and Kyogle — which had never issued fines before — have begun cracking down.

Coffs Harbour managed the huge increase with just one designated parking officer who collected \$380,020 — up from \$181,091 the year before — from the tourist town's 60,000 population.

"It's concerning that one ranger has made all that money," Shires Association president Col Sullivan said.

Mr Sullivan said giving control over parking

fines to local government in 2001 was never designed for "cash grabs".

"If this is the case then there are obvious concerns behind the reason why they are issuing fines," he said.

Coffs Harbour mayor Keith Rhodes blamed tourists for the spike in his council's revenue from parking infringement notices.

"High numbers of tourists who don't know our rules come into our area from Queensland and other parts of NSW," he said.

NRMA president Alan Evans criticised councils, saying they were not using the money raised for road improvements or safety.

"Country councils see what their city cousins are doing and are following them," he said.

"But motorists in the country are less tolerant than those in the city, who are more conditioned, and local government representatives could find themselves tipped out of office if they continue to push fines hard."

*The Daily Telegraph* revealed last week that motorists are being hit by parking fines every 48 seconds to raise \$116 million in revenue.

Richmond Valley Council, on the Far North Coast, had the lowest revenue from parking fines in the state, issuing one \$66 ticket for disobeying direction about vehicle use on public land.

Parkes Council revenue dropped from \$65,434 to \$13,950 in a year.