

Herald Sun

Australia's biggest-selling daily newspaper - [Newspaper of the Year 2005](#)

07 APR 2006, Page 003

\$26m fines for video dodgers

*** 100,000 blacklisted**

*** One owed \$91,980**

By Craig Binnie

MORE than 100,000 Victorian video-store customers have been banned after collectively racking up more than \$26 million in overdue fines.

Desperate Victorian video stores are banning customers at the rate of 2200 a month and enlisting debt collectors to recoup the fees.

Video Defaulters' Managing Director Andrew Wall said more than 70 per cent of video stores were now using the national registry to ban customers from hiring movies.

Customers on the National Default Registry will be refused membership at most video stores until the debt is repaid. Undated registry lists are provided to member stores each month.

Stores approached by a banned borrower have access to the name of the store the borrower owes money to and the size of the debt. They can then call the store to check whether the debt has been paid.

According to the default registry:

THE largest current Victorian debt is owed by a Sale video-store customer who owes \$3060 for failing to return nine new release DVDs and three games borrowed in March, 2003.

THE second-highest debt is held by a Collingwood customer who owes \$2625 on six new releases and two games.

A Broadmeadows borrower is third with a \$2595 debt on five games.

THE longest it took a customer to return a video was seven years. During that time the six overnight videos at \$6 each per night racked up debts of \$91,980. The video store happily accepted \$2000.

Mr Wall said stores were tired of customers running up bad debts and joining other video shops instead of paying what they owed.

There are 101,227 banned borrowers in Victoria, who collectively owe \$26,806,711.

Nationally, more than 461,389 borrowers, who owe \$106 million, are banned.

The list includes only customers who owe more than \$30. Mr Wall said if smaller debts were included, the amount owed to video shops would more than double. Video Defaulters charges video stores half of the fines it recoups for its debt collection services.

Video Defaulters also offers a mediation service to enable borrowers to negotiate a better deal with the video stores.