



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE
Senate Community Affairs References Committee

**Centrelink's debt recovery process
Opportunities to speak to the committee**

Issue date: 23 September 2019

The Senate Community Affairs Committee would like to hear from people who have experience of Centrelink's debt recovery process.

The committee is examining the design, performance and results of the process through which Centrelink investigates possible overpayments and seeks to recover debts.

'It is very important for the committee to hear from people who have been impacted by Centrelink's debt recovery processes,' said Committee Chair, Senator Rachel Siewert. 'The committee is making time available so people can tell us about their experiences,' Senator Siewert said.

When and where are the hearings?

- Mandurah – 4 October
- Melbourne – 9 October
- Launceston – 7 November
- Burnie – 8 November
- Cairns – 10 December
- Brisbane – 11 December
- Gosford – 12 December

Information about the venue and program for each hearing will be placed on the [committee's website](#) as it becomes available.

How to register your interest in speaking to the committee

If you, or someone you know, would like to speak to the committee, please email the following information to the committee as soon as possible to register your interest (community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au):

- your name;
- a telephone number and email address so that we can contact you; and
- the hearing location at which you would like to speak to the committee.

What happens next

One of the committee's staff will contact you to arrange a time for you to speak to the committee. They will also provide you with information about what to expect on the day of the hearing.

Requests to speak to the committee will be processed in the order in which they are received.

If all of the time available at the hearing you would like to attend has been allocated, the committee's staff will contact you to let you know this.

You can still attend the hearing and listen to what is being said.

DATE REFERRED

31 July 2019

SUBMISSIONS CLOSE

20 September 2019

NEXT HEARINGS - 2019

3 October – Canberra
4 October – Mandurah
9 October – Melbourne
7 November – Launceston
8 November – Burnie
10 December – Cairns
11 December – Brisbane
12 December – Gosford

REPORTING DATE

March 2020

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Senator Rachel Siewert (Chair)
Senator Wendy Askew (Deputy Chair)
Senator Hollie Hughes
Senator Malarndirri McCarthy
Senator Deborah O'Neill
Senator Anne Urquhart

CONTACT THE COMMITTEE

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Further information

Media enquiries: Office of Senator Rachel Siewert, Committee Chair on (02) 6277 3587

For background information: contact the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 3515 or community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Terms of reference for the inquiry

Centrelink's compliance program, with specific reference to:

- (a) the ongoing impact of the Federal Government's automated debt collection processes upon current and past income support recipients;
- (b) data-matching techniques used by Centrelink, including limitations and uncertainties of data-matching techniques and error-handling processes;
- (c) the handling of under-payment errors, including the number of payments identified and made through data-matching following an under-payment error;
- (d) the use of real-time wages data and other techniques to prevent overpayment;
- (e) the capacity and adequacy of Centrelink and the Department of Human Services to deliver the program, including the use of contract staff and the impact of staff performance targets on the program;
- (f) the error rates in the issuing of initial letters and debt notices, the causes of these errors and what steps are routinely taken when errors are identified;
- (g) the procedures that have been put in place to prevent future errors;
- (h) the number of initial letters and debt notices sent out and the number of debts that have been recovered;
- (i) the review process and appeals process for debt notices, including the number of reviews and appeals undertaken;
- (j) the use and legality of the debt collection processes used by Centrelink and the Department of Human Services;
- (k) the use of debt collectors in the compliance program; and
- (l) the cost of the compliance program to date, including the projected and actual amount raised from the program.

Attending a public hearing

Most committee hearings are held in public and anyone is welcome to come and listen. The audio and video of each hearing will also be broadcast live on the internet: www.aph.gov.au/News_and_Events/Watch_Parliament

Further information about what to expect when attending a Senate committee hearings is available on the Senate website: [Attending a public hearing](#)

Inquiry Terms of Reference