



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

Senate Community Affairs References Committee

Centrelink's automated debt-recovery system date for submissions extended

The Senate Community Affairs Committee has reopened the submission period for its inquiry into Centrelink's automated debt-recovery system.

Submissions should be received by 19 April 2017 and can be lodged online via the committee's website: www.aph.gov.au/senate_ca

The committee is examining the design, scope, cost-benefit analysis, contracts awarded and implementation of the Better Management of the Social Welfare System initiative, and is particularly interested to hear from individuals who have experience of the automated debt-recovery system.

"The committee is extending the time available to people to make a written submission to the inquiry", said committee Chair, Senator Rachel Siewert "We are particularly interested to hear from individuals who have experience of the automated debt-recovery system", she said.

"If anyone would like to make a submission, but needs more time to write their submission or has questions about writing a submission, I encourage them to contact the committee's secretariat," Senator Siewert said.

You may find it helpful to read the guide to making a submission available on the Senate website: [Preparing a submission to an inquiry](#)

Further information about the inquiry, including published submissions and hearing programs, is also available on the committee website: www.aph.gov.au/senate_ca.

DATE REFERRED

8 February 2017

SUBMISSIONS CLOSE

19 April 2017

NEXT HEARINGS

10 April—Adelaide

11 April—Melbourne

19 April—Sydney

21 April—Perth

26 April—Hobart

27 April—Launceston

3 May—Townsville

16 May—Wyong

18 May—Brisbane

and Caboolture

REPORTING DATE

21 June 2017

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Senator Rachel Siewert
(Chair)

Senator Jonathon Duniam
(Deputy Chair)

Senator Sam Dastyari

Senator Louise Pratt

Senator Linda Reynolds

Senator Murray Watt

Senator Helen Polley

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Inquiry Terms of Reference

- a. the impact of Government automated debt collection processes upon the aged, families with young children, students, people with disability and jobseekers and any others affected by the process;
- b. the administration and management of customers' records by Centrelink, including provision of information by Centrelink to customers receiving multiple payments;
- c. the capacity of the Department of Human Services and Centrelink services, including online, IT, telephone services and service centres to cope with levels of demand related to the implementation of the program;
- d. the adequacy of Centrelink complaint and review processes, including advice or direction given to Centrelink staff regarding the management of customer queries or complaints;
- e. data-matching between Centrelink and the Australian Taxation Office and the selection of data, including reliance upon Pay As You Go income tax data;
- f. the process of awarding any contracts related to the debt collection system;
- g. the error rates in issuing of debt notices, when these started being identified and steps taken to remedy errors;
- h. the Government's response to concerns raised by affected individuals, Centrelink and departmental staff, community groups and parliamentarians;
- i. Centrelink's Online Compliance Intervention (OCI) and its compliance with debt collection guidelines and Australian privacy and consumer laws;
- j. the adequacy of departmental management of the OCI, including:
 - i. the adequacy of staff numbers to manage the workload associated with the OCI, including customer complaints,
 - ii. what impact the roll-out of the OCI has had on other areas of work and whether resources have been diverted from other areas,
 - iii. training and development provided to staff who are working on this program or in related areas (for example, telephony and complaints),
 - iv. how the Department of Human Services and Centrelink are tracking the impact of the OCI rollout on staff, including stress and incidents of customer aggression,
 - v. any advice and related information available to the Department of Human Services in relation to potential risks associated with the OCI and what action was taken as a result, including feedback arising from system testing and staff, and
 - vi. decisions taken in relation to IT systems and service design that may have contributed to problems experienced by Centrelink clients; and
 - k. any other related matters.