

Response of Fair Go For Pensioners Incorporated Victoria (FGFP) appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Senate Inquiry's invitation to comment on the recommendations made by the Commonwealth Ombudsman in his report on Centrelink's automated debt raising and recovery system.

The seven recommendations made in **Part 4 – Conclusions and Recommendations** in the Ombudsman's report align very closely with those in the submissions of FGFP and the other organisations which attended the hearing on April 11 in Melbourne.

It was very clear at that hearing that there was many common concerns over the design of the OCI program; the apparent lack of testing of the computerised version; the lack of clarity in the Department's letters; and, in particular, the lack of access by confused and worried clients to immediate assistance from an experienced, well trained Centrelink employee.

Fair Go For Pensioners notes that the Ombudsman writes in 4.1 that "In our view the risks could have been mitigated through better planning and risk management arrangements at the outset that involved customers and other external stakeholders in the design and testing phases". This was a major concern in the FGFP submission and we were disappointed that it was not the subject of one of the recommendations.

Fair Go For Pensioners supports the recommendations of the Ombudsman's Report

Anne Learmonth

Executive Member