

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSSRN Statement on Centrelink Online Compliance System

Online Compliance System is Fundamentally Flawed and Must be Abandoned

The National Social Security Rights Network (NSSRN) has spent recent weeks trying to help people respond to debts raised by Centrelink's online compliance system. Along with many other organisations, we recently called for the system to be suspended until problems were fixed.

We welcome the changes recently announced by the Minister for Human Services. However, it has become clear that the new online compliance system cannot be patched up. It is fundamentally flawed and produces debts known to be incorrect, leaving it to individuals, many of whom are vulnerable, to try to show the debts are wrong.

This is not simply an accident, or a poorly designed system. It is a fundamentally unfair system.

It is not good enough to defend this system by saying that individuals have the chance to correct the information.

Many people will simply be unable to tell whether an error has occurred, due to the complexity of determining whether the system has made a mistake. And even if the person thinks there may be an error, some alleged debts go back so far it may be impossible to get evidence to show the debt is wrong.

We urge people affected by this to seek legal advice about their appeal rights, including from our member services.

The National Social Security Rights Network calls for this fundamentally flawed system to be abandoned.

In recent years Centrelink has done good work in developing its capacity to prevent debts from occurring in the first place. Resources wasted on the new online

compliance system would be far better spent further developing the capacity of Centrelink and other agencies to prevent debts being incurred at all, something of real benefit to individual social security recipients and the community.

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