



## **EFA Condemns Centrelink Tactics To Avoid Scrutiny of Robodebt Program**

**Australia, 5 May 2019:**

Electronic Frontiers Australia, the premier digital rights body promoting and protecting digital rights since 1994, is calling for the incoming government to rewind the infamous Centrelink data matching program known as Robodebt.

“EFA condemns the actions of the Department of Human Services in deliberately evading scrutiny of the program,” said EFA Chair Lyndsey Jackson. “Dropping the complainant’s \$4000 debt at this late stage is suspiciously convenient, and consistent with the Department’s ongoing efforts to avoid public scrutiny of this abusive program.”

“Denying people transparency and fair process is a disgrace, particularly given the widespread administrative flaws in the Robodebt system”, Jackson said. Those flaws include crude incoming averaging, data errors like duplicate employers, and its reversal of the onus of proof.”

“Digital rights are at the intersection of human rights and digital policy, and Robodebt is a severe example of what happens when poorly considered policy is combined with equally poor implementation of digital systems. It’s become a cautionary tale to the rest of the world, yet another algorithm of oppression.”

“Those in technology, public policy, and the law have been waiting to see how this court case unfolded. We believe the flimsy pretense for this program will collapse under legal scrutiny, and it seems the Department does too, since it has struck off a debt rather than defend it in court.”

“The Department has not been transparent with details of Robodebt. Freedom of Information requests have been refused, questions asked at Senate estimates get answered evasively and late, and now this. You add automation to a culture of subterfuge, and you end up with systems that hurt people en masse, and this is what we have here.”

“The cost of the program and the damage to the integrity of the welfare system make this a program that needs to be stopped. We are calling for the incoming government to urgently rewind Robodebt within its first 100 days”.

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