

# #NotMyDebt

## BE HEARD

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Re: Oaic's Concluding Statement on Centrelink's Release of Personal Information

We were very disappointed to read today that the acting Australian Information Commissioner and acting Privacy Commissioner, Angelene Falk, has officially given the Federal Government the greenlight to release to the media, without consultation or consent, sensitive personal information that it has collected about citizens.

We disagree in the strongest possible terms that an Australian citizen “would reasonably expect” their private files to be released to the media as a consequence of criticising government policy. We are, furthermore, deeply concerned that the acting Commissioner appears to view silencing critics as an activity in any way “related to the primary purpose” for which citizens disclose intimate details of their life to Australia’s social security agency, Centrelink.

When the incident in question occurred in early 2017 – when then-Human Services Minister Alan Tudge chose to “correct the record” by releasing confidential details from a critic’s Centrelink file to a journalist – the impact on public discourse was immediate and chilling. People with robodebts communicated to us that they were concerned there would be retribution if they even asked for a review.

For a government to use the personal information that it gathers about citizens in the course of normal administrative activities to stifle dissent is not compatible with the basic functioning of a democratic society.

The implications of this decision are far reaching, and should be of concern to all Australians.

For further information/comment, contact:  
Lyndsey Jackson  
hi@notmydebt.com.au

[www.notmydebt.com.au](http://www.notmydebt.com.au)



@not\_my\_debt

[hi@notmydebt.com.au](mailto:hi@notmydebt.com.au)



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