

**HAVE YOU HAD A DODGY
CENTRELINK ROBO-DEBT?
YOU ARE QUALIFIED
TO GIVE EVIDENCE TO
THE SENATE INQUIRY.**

THE ATTACK OF ROBODEBT

*"They only want to deal with the public at election time,
otherwise they want to do whatever they damn well please"*

*"They want this to go away
and for people to be silent."*

Make **A SUBMISSION TODAY**
www.notmydebt.com.au **#NOTMYDEBT**
[/senate-inquiry](#)

The Senate Inquiry wants your submissions by **March 22**.

Turn your #notmydebt story into a Submission to the Senate Inquiry in 5 simple steps.

1. Introduce yourself
2. Which of the Inquiry's questions will you give information about?
3. Tell your story
4. Make sure it's easy to read and touches the Terms of Reference
5. Check formatting

Step 5: Check formatting

- have I used black writing on white paper? (for handwritten, typed and printed, and electronic submissions)
- is the whole document typed in the same font or written in clear plain handwriting?
- have I given my full name, address, and telephone number at either the top or bottom of my submission?
- have I started with the name of the enquiry, and listed the terms of reference I'm addressing?
- I want to remain anonymous — have I written CONFIDENTIAL at the top in big letters?
- did I double check all the addressing details?
- have I saved it as a pdf, doc, docx or txt document with a clear file name? (for both email and online portal)
- Is my supporting documentation complete and either printed out clearly (if posting) or saved as a pdf, doc, docx or txt document with a clear file name (for both email and online portal)?

Use keywords from the Terms of Reference

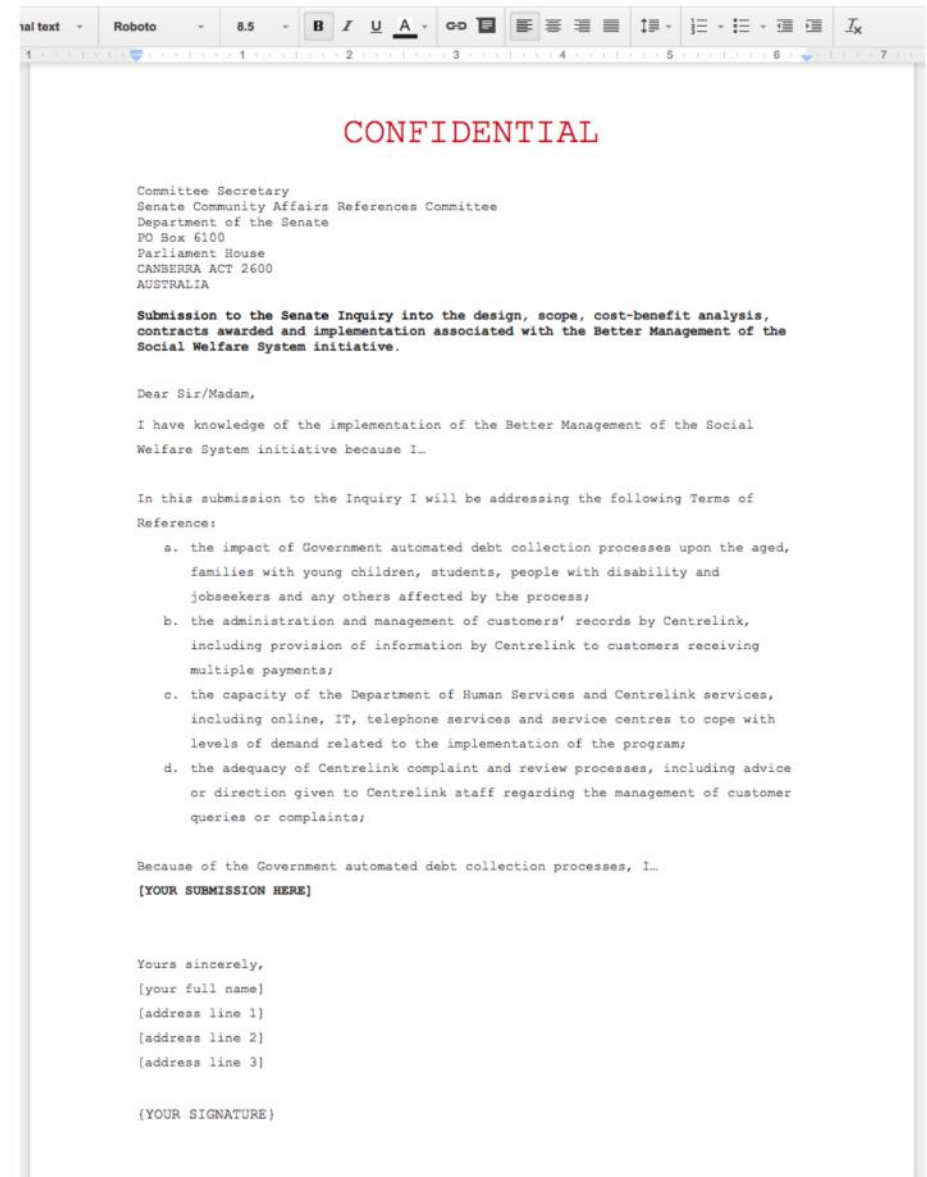
Putting in keywords from the Terms of Reference will help Committee members feel like they know where they are.

Like, instead of saying:

This *robo-debt stuffed up my budget* by...

You could say:

The *impact of the Government automated debt collection processes* on my budget was...



The image shows a word processing document template for a Senate Inquiry submission. The document is titled "CONFIDENTIAL" in red. It includes a header for the Committee Secretary, a submission title, a salutation, a paragraph of text, a list of terms of reference, a placeholder for the submission, and a signature block.

CONFIDENTIAL

Committee Secretary
Senate Community Affairs References Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the design, scope, cost-benefit analysis, contracts awarded and implementation associated with the Better Management of the Social Welfare System initiative.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I have knowledge of the implementation of the Better Management of the Social Welfare System initiative because I...

In this submission to the Inquiry I will be addressing the following Terms of Reference:

- 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;
- the administration and management of customers' records by Centrelink, including provision of information by Centrelink to customers receiving multiple payments;
- 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;
- the adequacy of Centrelink complaint and review processes, including advice or direction given to Centrelink staff regarding the management of customer queries or complaints;

Because of the Government automated debt collection processes, I...

[YOUR SUBMISSION HERE]

Yours sincerely,
[your full name]
[address line 1]
[address line 2]
[address line 3]

(YOUR SIGNATURE)

Above: Your submission to the Senate Inquiry might look like this. This template text is available for download on the website.

Contributing to a Senate Inquiry is much easier than you probably expect, but because it is a formal government process you just have to make sure the t's are crossed and the i's have dots so that your contribution will be accepted.

It doesn't need to be long — 4 pages is the absolute maximum length, and the shorter the better.

I'm not going to lie to you and say that it's *fun*, exactly — but it is worth doing because this is an important issue and you deserve to be heard.

What format should submissions be in?

The committee prefers online portal submissions, but they are still have to take letters and emails too.

We recommend the online portal, but it does make you register, and your Submission will still have to be typed up on the computer and saved as a PDF, DOC, DOCX, or TXT document and then uploaded.

Use whichever submission method you're most comfortable with.

Step 4: Make sure it's easy to read and touches the Terms of Reference

Read back through your story and make sure that it says what you want it to say.

Check for any mistakes, and make sure it goes through everything in order, from beginning to end.

If you have a friend or family member that you trust and who is good with words, it's a very good idea to ask them to help you with this part.

Even just a few (gentle) comments like “I'm not entirely sure I know what you mean in this bit, can you explain” or “I think you already mentioned this thing” can help you see it with fresh eyes.

Okay, nearly there.

Now read back through your story again and see how many keywords from the list at the top you can swap in.

Step 3: Tell your story

If you've shared your story with #notmydebt, then you've got a huge head start here.

If you haven't shared your story, then writing it out using [the #notmydebt story form](#) might help you to organise your thoughts, even if you decide not to click "save" when you're done.

Use the bits of your story that explain how your debt was generated, why it's wrong, and what the whole mess has done to your life.

That's your Submission!

Now you just need to pretty it up a little bit and do some double checking, so...

If your robodebt is still in review they still want to hear from you

If your robo-debt is still waiting for a review, in review, or going through an appeal then you should be thorough and provide supporting documentation, so get that prepared.

"Providing supporting documentation" means give them the same evidence that you've given Centrelink to prove your debt is wrong: payslips, ADEX debt schedule if you have it, anything else relevant. They need to know that this is not your debt.

If you are going to email or upload your submission, save your documents in pdf, doc, docx or txt format. If you are printing or writing to post in then photocopies or printed scans are okay.

Keep all of your originals yourself!

If your case has been resolved or reduced you shouldn't need to do this because they can access your Centrelink file and look at that.

Above all else be honest, and be aware that you are going on the record.

Be serious and careful, but not afraid.

Step 1: Introduce yourself

The Inquiry needs to know what qualifies you to advise them about this issue — you have direct first-hand experience of the system’s workings, so you are very qualified.

You don’t have to put your name in the main part of your submission, but you do need to tell them how you came to have your knowledge. You also need to directly mention the inquiry.

If you’re not sure how to do that it’s okay to copy this sentence below and then finish it by adding what payment you were/are on and when, and then the date that the system contacted you.

I have knowledge of/information about/familiarity with the implementation of the Better Management of the Social Welfare System initiative because I...

(of course, don’t keep all of “knowledge of/information about/familiarity with”! Just pick one, or use something else similar.)

It’s a good idea to put keywords from the question into your answer, so come back to this list later to find some that will work for your story.

Keywords:

- impact
- the Government automated debt collection process
- automated debt collection
- Centrelink customer
- customer records
- payments
- provision of information by Centrelink
- capacity to cope with demand / capacity to cope with level of demand
- adequacy of response
- telephone services
- online systems
- service centre
- adequacy
- complaint and review process
- queries
- complaints
- government response
- remedy actions taken

The Terms of Reference are:

In this submission to the Inquiry into the design, scope, cost-benefit analysis, contracts awarded and implementation associated with the Better Management of the Social Welfare System initiative I will be addressing the following 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;

Step 2: Which of the Inquiry's questions will you give information about?

That's what "addressing the Terms of Reference" means, really: answering one or more of their questions.

You don't need to answer all of the questions, but you do need to answer at least one of them.

On the next page you'll see the Terms of Reference that you might be able to address, so make a mark next to each question that sounds like something you know about...

- a) Has robo-debt had an impact on people's lives? What sorts of people (aged pensioners, families with little kids, students, sick people or people with disabilities, the unemployed) have been affected? How has it affected them?
- b) Has Centrelink been doing a good job looking after people's information? Has Centrelink been giving people good advice about what their payments are, how those payments are decided, and what the 'customers' need to do?
- c) Is the Centrelink online system coping with how many people are using it? Does it work properly? Has Centrelink's phone system been coping with how many calls it's had? Is it busy? Are wait times long? What about the special numbers just for robo-debt? Are they any better? Are there enough staff at Centrelink offices to help people? Are the wait times long?
- d) Is it harder than it should be to make a complaint to Centrelink? Is it hard to get a review? Is the review process accessible? Do Centrelink staff give any advice about making complains or getting a review? Is that advice any good?

If you just copy and pasted in the parts of your #notmydebt story where you explain how your debt affected you, your life, your family, and your physical and mental health, then you will have already addressed one of the Terms of Reference: (a) the impact of Government automated debt collection processes.

See? You're already an expert.

Any more information you want to add about b, c, or d is a bonus, as are any (short, polite, and practical) suggestions you have for how it could be fixed.

Tell the senate inquiry which question you are answering: copy the question you are responding to.

You need to make it clear to them which question your answer is for, so start with this... but only copy the Terms of Reference that match the letters you just wrote down.