

Written compilation – Royal Commission on the Robodebt Scheme

Document	Information
IN[short]FORM newsletter circulated 23 November 2023 by email	<p data-bbox="564 394 1399 461">Government response to the Royal Commission into the Robodebt scheme</p> <p data-bbox="564 501 1399 607">The Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme was established on 18 August 2022. Ms Catherine Holmes AC SC was appointed as the Commissioner.</p> <p data-bbox="564 647 1399 902">Over the course of its inquiry, the Royal Commission published over 8,000 exhibits, and heard from over 100 witnesses across nine weeks of public hearings. It brought to light the harm caused to affected members of the Australian community. The Royal Commission delivered a report with its findings to the Governor-General on 7 July 2023. The final report is published on the Royal Commission’s website.</p> <p data-bbox="564 943 1399 1122">In response to the Royal Commission’s recommendations, the Government formed a taskforce with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Attorney-General’s Department and the Australian Public Service Commission. The Government Response has now been released.</p> <p data-bbox="564 1162 1399 1234">You may be experiencing a range of emotions in response to the renewed attention on Robodebt.</p> <p data-bbox="564 1274 1399 1491">The events surrounding the Robodebt Scheme affected many APS staff. Some may have had close involvement with the Royal Commission. Some may have been personally affected by the Robodebt Scheme. Some may feel a direct impact as a public servant because we take pride in delivering for the community and upholding the APS Values each day.</p> <p data-bbox="564 1532 1399 1637">The wellbeing of our people is our top priority. Speak to your manager, a friend or family member if you are feeling upset or distressed.</p> <p data-bbox="564 1677 1399 1749">Ask for help if you need it. Support is available for you through the Employee Assistance Program.</p> <p data-bbox="564 1789 1399 1861">Other support is also available for staff who are experiencing distress:</p> <ul data-bbox="616 1865 1399 1998" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="616 1865 1399 1998">• Beyond Blue Support Service – Provides immediate, short-term counselling, advice and referral services. Phone 1300 224 636, webchat, or search their forum for free.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifeline Crisis Support – This is a confidential service providing you with support for when you feel overwhelmed, for when you have difficulty coping, or are thinking about suicide. Phone 13 11 14 or chat to a crisis supporter online. • 13YARN – Provides crisis support for First Nations people. Phone 13 92 76 or view their services online at www.13yarn.org.au.
<p>National Current Awareness Review No. 22, dated 24 November 2023</p>	<p>Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme : Government response Australia. Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 13 November 2023</p> <p>The Australian Government has released this response to the report of the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme. The Australian Government has carefully considered the Royal Commission’s report and recommendations. The Government has <i>accepted</i> or <i>accepted in principle</i> all 56 recommendations made by the Royal Commission.</p>
<p>Email from the Chief Executive Officer and Principal Registrar of the Court dated 22 November 2023</p>	<p>Dear Colleagues</p> <p>I have received correspondence from Professor Glyn Davis, Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and Gordon De Brouwer, Commissioner of the Australian Public Service Commission regarding the release of the Government Response to the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Report last week.</p> <p>I have been requested to advise “<i>all APS staff are made aware of the Government’s response, what it means for the APS, and how to seek support for staff who are affected</i>”.</p> <p>The response addresses the 56 recommendations and the closing observations made by the Commissioner, Ms Catherine Holmes AC SC. It reiterates the Government’s commitment to restoring public trust and embedding reforms that put people at the centre and strengthen integrity.</p> <p>The Royal Commission delivered a report with its findings to the Governor-General on 7 July 2023.</p> <p>In response to the Royal Commission’s recommendations, the Government formed a Taskforce with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Attorney-General’s Department and the Australian Public Service Commission.</p>

	<p>The attached talking points prepared by the APSC have been developed to support SES officers and other leaders in talking to staff about the Robodebt Royal Commission and the Government’s response. Please familiarise yourselves with them so you are prepared to discuss this issue with your staff if they have been affected.</p> <p>A general update and wellbeing information will be included in IN[short]FORM on 23 November 2023.</p> <p>Kind regards</p>
<p>CEO Briefing Session Agenda July 2023 – CEO’s report on the AGD Secretary’s Briefing Session</p>	<p>4 Robodebt Royal Commission Report</p> <p>4.1 Robodebt Royal Commission report and recommendations summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report and recommendations summary developed by AGD. The recommendations can be categorised into the following issues: <p><u>Effects of Robodebt on individuals</u></p> <p><u>The concept of vulnerability</u></p> <p><u>The roles of advocacy groups and legal services</u></p> <p><u>Experiences of Human Services employees</u></p> <p><u>Failures in the Budget process</u></p> <p><u>Data-matching and exchanges</u></p> <p><u>Automated decision making</u></p> <p><u>Debt recovery and debt collectors</u></p> <p><u>Lawyers and legal services</u></p> <p><u>Administrative Appeals Tribunal</u></p> <p><u>The Commonwealth Ombudsman</u></p> <p><u>Improving the Australian Public Service</u></p>
<p>CEO Briefing Session Agenda August 2023 – CEO’s report on the AGD Secretary’s Briefing Session</p>	<p>Robodebt Royal Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AGs is a key driver in preparation of the government’s response. • AGD is also interested in leading some work in government on automated decision-making and regulation of AI, in coordination with the AI Taskforce

	<p>set up out of the Department of Industry Science and Resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is perceived to be value in a whole-of-government/coordinated approach and information sharing, without holding up action in some areas that is time-critical (e.g. disaster payments, which need to be lawful but timely) or urgent legislative reform in some areas. <p>...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some discussion also about the impact of the Robodebt Royal Commission report on encouraging frank and fearless advice.
<p>CEO Briefing Session Agenda September 2023 – CEO’s report on the AGD Secretary’s Briefing Session</p>	<p>Robodebt: The Code of Conduct Taskforce in APSC has now reported and Cabinet will consider its report in October. AGD is leading the government response on 21 of the recommendations of the royal commission, and 11 recommendations are being led by other departments where AGD is an impacted agency. We are likely to agree to all recommendations either completely or in principle. We will need to get funding to ensure we are able to take all this on. AGD has a really significant role to play in AI (including ADM), including assessment of how much AI is relied on for decision-making and payments; do we have sufficient capability; are we across all the issues. AGD will look at legal issues associated with existing use of AI (including privacy and administrative law issues); is it fit for purpose; and what should be put in place consistently and appropriately across the APS.</p>