

ROYAL COMMISSION INTO ROBODEBT

As a national organisation that advocates for Australians living with complex mental health needs, watching the evidence being presented at the Royal Commission on Robodebt has been harrowing to say the least.

Tens of thousands of those impacted by the Robodebt scheme would have been receiving support because they were struggling with severe or lifelong mental illness and were instead persecuted with false debts.

It must be recognised that Robodebt targeted the most vulnerable group of Australians, who in many cases would not have had the executive function to understand the situation or manage the enormous administrative burden associated with clearing their name.

Through the SANE community, we've heard from many about the profound impact of the scheme - the distress they experienced when harassed for money that they simply weren't able to repay, the frustration and helplessness at being stuck in a hellish bureaucratic loop of being unable to prove their innocence, and the fear of having their already limited benefits reduced or removed.

The Government must seek alternatives to managing this administrative burden and recognise that even a small amount of debt has a huge impact on a community who often struggle to even find housing or afford the basics of food and utilities.

It's our hope that the Royal Commission puts political debate to one side and places people with lived experience at the centre of Departments and at Centrelink to ensure that this type of harmful and truly tragic failure of public policy never occurs again.

Need support or assistance?

If you've been affected by the Robodebt scheme or the Royal Commission process has caused you distress, the following services may be of help -

For crisis support, please contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or lifeline.org.au

For general phone or online counselling, or for connection to others like you, check out SANE support services at <https://www.sane.org/get-support>

For free advice on your financial rights or managing debt, contact the National Debt hotline on 1800 007 007 or <https://ndh.org.au>