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MEDIA RELEASE

“Centrelink debt recovery shambles a potential disaster for students”

The automated Centrelink Debt Recovery system has left thousands of Australian welfare recipients in crisis after a large number of inaccurate debt demands were distributed. A significant number of these vulnerable, low-income Australians that have been targeted are students.

The continuous failure of Centrelink and the Federal Government to remedy these issues has caused a lot of undue pressure and stress, leading to a significant mental health crisis. In some cases, people have been driven to suicidal ideation. Centrelink’s reaction to suicidal complaints through their Twitter account is inadequate and offensive.

It is the view of the Newcastle University Students Association that Centrelink and the Australian Government must immediately halt the further issue of debt recovery demands under the current automatic system and re-evaluate those that have already been issued.

Without immediate action, the lives of many students and many in the broader community, will be severely impacted.

Quotes attributable to Madelaine Knight, NUSA Welfare Officer:

"Contrary to the rhetoric that the Government is trying to peddle here, students disproportionately live on extremely low incomes."

"Students are also more at risk of developing severe mental health issues, and there's a lack of available, accessible services."

"Receiving a debt notice out of the blue, or having their payments cut altogether, can have an enormous negative impact on a student's life."

"It appears that time and time again, the Government shows that it is only concerned about its bottom line. Until they can sort this mess out, the only ethical option is to put this thinly veiled piece of class warfare on hold."

END

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