

SES TALKING POINTS

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION INTO THE ROBODEBT SCHEME

Background

- The Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme was established on 18 August 2022. Ms Catherine Holmes AC SC was appointed as the Commissioner.
- 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.
- 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.
- The talking points below are to support SES officers and other leaders in talking to staff about the Robodebt Royal Commission and the Government response.

Talking points

Release of the Government's Robodebt Royal Commission Response

- The Australian Government has carefully considered the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme report and has released its response, available at www.pmc.gov.au.
- The Government accepts or accepts in-principle, all 56 recommendations made by the Royal Commission.
- The Royal Commission 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.
- It exposed failures in the APS and it was a hard lesson for us, one we aren't shying away from.
- We know there were failures of leadership and judgement and that people felt they couldn't speak up, or weren't listened to.
- It's important to remember, at the same time many good people were trying to do the right thing.
- You matter, your work matters, and your integrity matters.
- The response will likely bring renewed attention to the Robodebt scheme and the harm it caused to many Australians.
- Many people in the community and APS staff were affected by the Robodebt Scheme and many bravely gave evidence to the Royal Commission.

EMBARGOED UNTIL ROBODEBT RESPONSE IS RELEASED

The wellbeing of our staff

- You may be experiencing a range of emotions in response to the renewed attention on Robodebt.
- The wellbeing of our people is our top priority.
- APS staff can be proud of the work they do to support the community and serve the Government.
- 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.
- Speak to your manager, a friend or family member if you are feeling upset or distressed.
- Ask for help if you need it. Support is available for you through agency wellbeing support services like the Employee Assistance Program.
- Other support is also available for staff who are experiencing distress.
 - [Beyond Blue Support Service](#) – Provides immediate, short-term counselling, advice and referral services. Phone 1300 224 636, [webchat](#), or search their [forum](#) for free.
 - [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.
- I encourage you to read the Response and discuss it in your teams.
- It's important we are all part of leading the change we want to see and building a stronger APS.

Where to next

- Confidential processes are underway to ensure that public servants are appropriately held to account if they have not met their obligations as professional public servants.
- Work is also underway to implement the report's recommendations.
- Achieving real change will mean a commitment from all of us about how we go about our work.
- There will be a focus on integrity and accountability, and how we can bring empathy and understanding to the way we engage with people and communities.
- There will also be changes to process and a bigger focus on proper decision-making and record keeping, and enhanced statutory powers for oversight bodies.
- This complements other reform work underway, like the APS Reform program and other reforms that focus on building a strong public service that puts people at the centre.
- Across the APS, there is a strong push to elevate the importance of integrity in everything the APS does – both at the systemic and individual levels.
- There will be many opportunities ahead to boost capability and integrity through the recommendations and the APS Reform program.
- Through the response the Government has committed to ensuring that the APS works in partnership with the community to improve the lives of Australians and deliver better services.

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