



27th January

For immediate release

Students burn 'fake' debt notices

Today the National Union of Students held a protest at a South Melbourne Centrelink to protest the ongoing crisis of fake debt notices being sent out to students, young people and the vulnerable. A recipient of a fake debt notice burnt his letter in front of the crowd.

The recipient, who didn't want to be named said before he burnt his notice "I'm one of the many victims of Centrelink's automated debt fiasco. Like all the other cases, this so-called debt is based purely on the data-matching algorithm from ATO's records of my income. No evidence has been produced to prove that I was overpaid. None of the relevant information has been made available to me: my fortnightly income, my declared income each fortnight, or even my fortnightly Working Credit, which further factored into my Newstart allowance in each fortnight. And every step of the way, the Govt has made it nearly impossible to challenge these baseless accusations." he went on to say "The priorities of the government are clear - it's a system of profits to the rich at our expense. And it galls me all the more to hear that, not content with kicking students and jobseekers in the teeth, the govt is planning to role out the same robo-debt collection racket against old-aged pensioners and the disabled! What a disgrace. We need to stand against this - So here is my debt letter. I reject Centrelink's accusation of debt against e and every other of the 20,000 people! receiving these extortionate letters, and we're gonna burn this letter to show our disgust at this rotten, Sheriff of Nottingham-style robo-debt racket."

The national education officer pointed out the disregard the government has for ordinary students "While they attack ordinary people, students, the disabled and the aged, the government passes through tax cuts for the rich, the powerful and for business. It's outrageous the that Alan Tudge denies the failings of this system" said Anneke Demanuele.

"today just proves that this government is in denial by ignoring the horrific stories these fake debts have on real australians" said Jill Molloy, National Welfare officer "students stand for all victims of the automated system. The innocent and vulnerable recipients of the letters but moreover, the workers at Centrelink who are forced to comply with Mr Tudge's instructions".

The welfare department has launched a campaign 'Your Rights at Work, Uni and Home', with a focus on centrelink through a petition titled '#FixCentrelinkNow'. Along with the Education department and its campagin 'Make Education Free Again' NUS will gather to protest attacks to students and higher education on March 22nd in all major cities.

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