

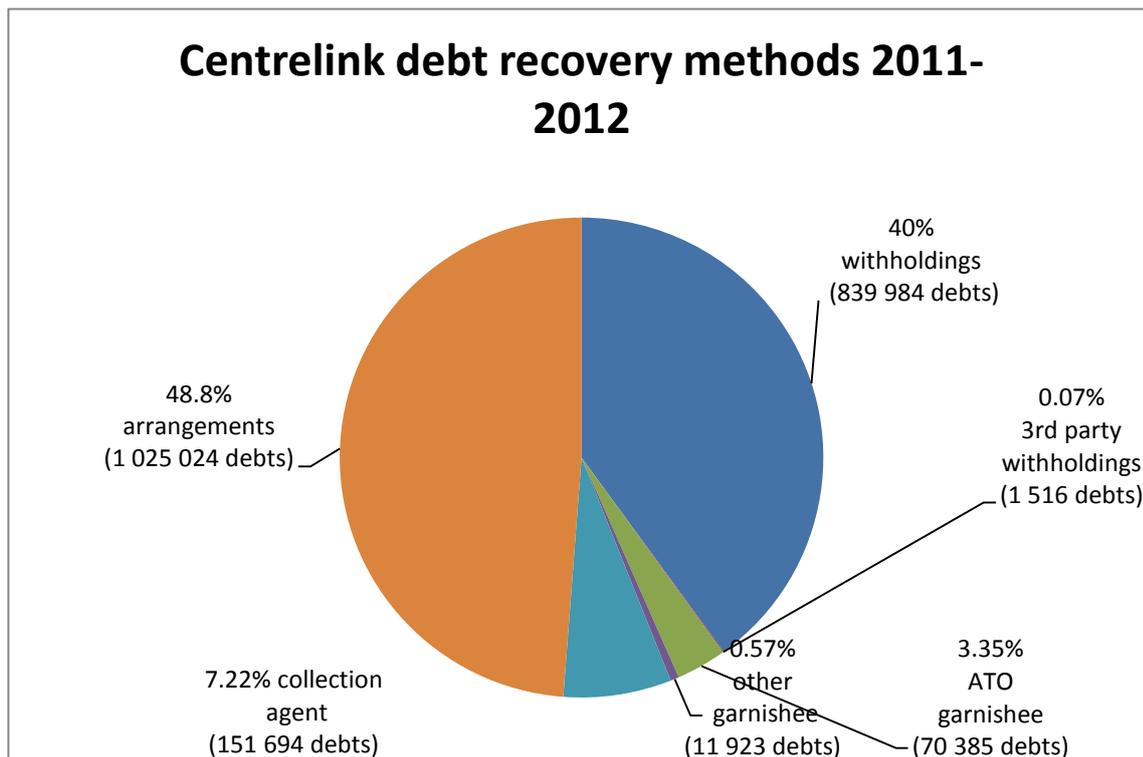
Red Tape... ALERT!

THINGS YOU MIGHT WANT TO KNOW...

How Centrelink collects debts (in answer to a question the National Welfare Rights Network asked in Parliament)

The following is a breakdown of the methods used by Centrelink to recover social security debts (family assistance debts are a little different) during the last financial year. As a reminder:

- **"Withholdings"** are deductions from a person's Centrelink payment.
- **"Third party withholdings"** are voluntary deductions from another person's Centrelink payment.
- **"ATO garnishee"** is where Centrelink recovers money from a person's tax return.
- **"Collection agent"** is where Centrelink recovers debt through a debt recovery company by full settlement or instalments.
- Centrelink may also garnish money from a person's bank account, compensation payout, or where a person's employer forwards money to Centrelink from a person's wage.
- **"Arrangements"** are agreements between Centrelink and a person with a Centrelink debt to pay regular instalments and/or lump sums.
- **"Civil action"** is where Centrelink goes to Court to secure payment of a debt or seize assets.



Freedom of Information requests

Advocates should be aware of recent changes to Centrelink Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. These include requests for clients' Centrelink records, and requests to change Centrelink records.

Centrelink may refuse FOI requests if they don't comply with the strict requirements of the legislation.

FOI requests must:

- **Be in writing;**
- **State that the request is "a request under the Freedom of Information Act";**
- **Provide sufficient information to enable Centrelink to identify relevant document(s); and**
- **Give contact details to enable Centrelink to respond to the request.**

The FOI request may be:

- Delivered to a Centrelink office;
- Posted to PO Box 7820, Canberra BC, ACT 2610;
- Emailed to Freedomofinformation@humanservices.gov.au

Disability Support Pension (DSP) warning

Advocates are advised to warn DSP clients who intend to travel overseas for longer than six weeks, that they will be subjected to a medical review.

Where persons receiving DSP haven't undergone a medical review for some years, they will be reviewed under radically different impairment tables and they may risk losing eligibility altogether.

Please contact SSRV for information or advice about the new impairment tables or if you think your client may be at risk.

Job seeker safeguard reduced

DEEWR is reducing the requirements for Jobs Services Australia (JSA) and Disability Employment Services (DES) providers to make contact with job seekers following non-attendance at appointments or activities.

From 4 March 2013, providers will only have to make one contact attempt on the day of the missed appointment or on the day of becoming aware of non-attendance at an activity. Currently providers are required to make two attempts on two consecutive business days.

DEEWR is also reducing the time period in which providers may submit a Participation Report from five to two business days.