

ESTIMATES BRIEF – Hot Issue**COMCOVER MATTERS****Supplementary Budget Estimates – October 2025****Comcover matters****Subject/Issue**

Comcover claims: Brett Cattle, Robodebt, Fiona Brown, and Linda Reynolds.

Key points**Brett Cattle**

- Judgment on the number of lost exports was delivered on 5 June 2025.
 - The Court rejected the class's claim for additional lost exports and found that there were only 88,000 lost exports, consistent with the Commonwealth's position.
 - The Commonwealth seeks its costs of the latest hearing on the basis that it was successful in that hearing.
- The class filed a notice of appeal on 5 August 2025. The future timetabling of the matter, including the appeal hearing date, is expected to be determined by 3 November 2025.
- The Commonwealth remains committed to resolving the claim, consistently with the Court's findings.

Robodebt

- The Commonwealth has agreed to pay \$475m (plus administrative and legal costs) to settle the matter.
- The Court must now consider the settlement and determine if it is fair and reasonable. If so, they will approve the settlement agreement.
- This settlement is in addition to the repayment by the Commonwealth of all debts and interest following the first Robodebt class action (*Prygodicz*).
- All other enquiries should be directed to the Attorney-General's Department.

Fiona Brown

- On 10 March 2025, Ms Fiona Brown (Senator Reynolds' former chief of staff) filed a claim against the Commonwealth in the Federal Court of Australia.
- The matter is being managed by Comcover in accordance with the *Legal Services Directions 2017*.

COMCOVER MATTERS

- As the matter is before the Court, it would be inappropriate to comment further.

Linda Reynolds

- On 28 April 2025, Ms Linda Reynolds filed a claim against the Commonwealth in the Federal Court of Australia.
- A case management hearing is scheduled for 8 October 2025.
- The matter is being managed by Comcover in accordance with the *Legal Services Directions 2017*.
- As the matter is before the Court, it would be inappropriate to comment further.

COMCOVER MATTERS**Background****Brett Cattle**

- This class action arises from the decision of Justice Rares on 2 June 2020 in *Brett Cattle Company Pty Ltd v Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry & Anor* [2020] FCA 732. His Honour found that the order made by the then Minister Ludwig on 7 June 2011 to suspend live exports to Indonesia was unlawful and that the former Minister had committed the tort of misfeasance in public office.
- Since Justice Rares handed down his decision, the class has consistently argued that the suspension caused a much higher number of lost exports: up to 800,000 head of cattle. The Commonwealth could not resolve the claim on that basis.
- Settlement negotiations have been unsuccessful to date. The Commonwealth offered to resolve the claim for \$215 million (all inclusive) in December 2022, with the class providing a counteroffer of \$510 million plus interest and costs in November 2023.

Robodebt

- The Attorney-General's Department managed the final stages of this matter on behalf of the Commonwealth.
- Prior to that point, Services Australia and Comcover managed the claim.
- Comcover is covering the first \$100 million of the costs associated with the claim.
- A public statement is available on the Attorney-General's Ministerial website.

Fiona Brown

- Ms Brown's claim generally arises from the circumstances surrounding the incident involving Brittany Higgins and Bruch Lehrmann, and the subsequent management of that incident in the workplace.

Reynolds

- Ms Reynolds' claim makes allegations concerning the Commonwealth's management of the claim brought by Ms Brittany Higgins, including the mediation and settlement of that claim.
- An amended statement of claim was filed on 11 June 2025.

COMCOVER MATTERS**Questions on Notice**

- QoN F153. Brett Cattle. Finance and Public Administration - 05/11/2024. Date of response – 03/12/2024

Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

- No FOIs asked

Recent Ministerial Comments

- Nil

Relevant Media Reporting**Brett Cattle**

- [Cattle claimants 'bitterly disappointed' after court downplays compensation claim from live export ban - ABC News](#), Nathan Morris and Matt Brann, ABC News, 9 June 2025
 - Article covers the outcome of the April 2025 Hearing which found in favour of the Commonwealth on the question of the number of lost live exports.

Robodebt

- [Robodebt victims to get further \\$475 million compensation after class action settled - ABC News](#), Samantha Dick, ABC News 4 September 2025
 - Article covers the settlement agreement including quotes from Gordon Legal.

Fiona Brown

- [Fiona Brown sues Commonwealth government in fair work case claiming 'breach of general protections'](#), Jessica Wang, News.com, 18 March 2025
 - Article covers the Federal Court lodgement of the claim.
- [Janet Albrechtsen: Torn apart by mob, Fiona Brown sues Commonwealth over Higgins scandal workplace treatment | The Australian](#) Janet Albrechtsen, The Australian, 5 September 2025
 - Article covers a speech by Sue Crysanthou (Barrister) on 'cancel culture' and discusses treatment of Fiona Brown by peers and media.

Reynolds:

- [Linda Reynolds demands apology from PM over handling of Brittany Higgins case](#), Cason Ho, ABC News, 30 August 2025
 - Article covers the outcome of Ms Reynolds' defamation case against Ms Higgins, with the WA Supreme Court finding in Ms Reynolds' favour on 27 August 2025.

Date sent to MO: 16/09/2025
Cleared by (SES): Rachel Antone
Telephone No: 6215 3382 | S22
Group/Division: Commercial Group / Risk, Claims and Regulatory Review
Contact Officer: S22
Telephone No: S22
Consultation: Attorney-General's Department
PDR Number: SB25-000085