

Privacy Commissioner welcomes \$25,000 damages ruling against Orcon

21 May 2015

Privacy Commissioner John Edwards welcomes a ruling by the Human Rights Review Tribunal awarding \$25,000 in damages to a young soldier after the telecommunications provider, Orcon, wrongly referred his disputed debt to collection agencies, adversely affecting his credit rating.

Mr Edwards says the Tribunal's decision means that if there is a disputed debt, companies should not refer it to a debt collector unless the dispute is settled.

"If there is a debt in dispute, companies have a very high duty to check they are not in error because there can be profound consequences for the individual if they get it wrong. Here we had a soldier with a young family who was unable to gain rental accommodation as a result of this particular failure. There's simply no excuse for companies to be as ignorant of their basic obligations under the Privacy Act as Orcon was found to be."

Mr Edwards says if companies want to avoid similar failures, he urges them to use the newly launched online privacy training modules on the Office of the Privacy Commissioner's website to help educate their employees about the Act and a company's obligations and responsibilities with the personal information it holds.

ENDS

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