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10 October 1999

The Secretary,
House of Representatives,
Standing Committee on Economics,
Finance and Public Administration,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA, ACT, 2600
Fax (02) 6277 2774

Dear Sir,

Soon after I attempted to obtain an application form for a tax number I noticed your advertisement concerning your Inquiry and decided to pass on my experiences.

I believe that the ATO needs to:

- Develop a user-friendly web page, and
- Allow correspondence to be received by fax.

I bought shares in Telstra for my 3 grandsons - ages between 2 and 12 years. Telstra want to know their Tax File Number and. I believe, eventually if it is not received, they will take provisional tax out of their dividends.

I looked at the ATO web site and attempted to download the necessary forms. I easily downloaded a large file but I have not been able to print out the forms. I think the problem is that I use Netscape and I think that the ATO site is not compatible with it.

My plea is to keep it simple. Surely a system to simply download a 7 page form can be developed. I can imagine that consultants have been engaged to develop a sophisticated web site. I am sure that it would look impressive when demonstrated by experienced operators. However, it is certainly not flexible enough for my system and its operator.

I then decided to look up last year's TaxPack for advice. Inside the back page I found "if you have access to a fax machine tax information is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week." Hooray! "Ring 13 2860 and follow the instructions to obtain a list of available documents."

Well, I did that and received a recorded message to say that the helpline is only open during working hours.

The easiest option is to ring the ATO in working hours. I object to that being done in the employer's time, including no doubt a long wait. It looks as though ATO encourages it. As no fax number is available for information, I have resorted to snail mail.

Yours sincerely,

Warren Muirhead