



When too much scrutiny is never enough

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) will face greater scrutiny than ever before when Tax Commissioner Michael D'Ascenzo AO fronts the federal parliament's Public Accounts and Audit Committee this Friday 23 September.

In a new format the ATO will be joined by the Auditor General, the Inspector General of Taxation, the Tax Ombudsman and representatives from tax professional organisations.

Committee Chair Rob Oakeshott MP (Member for Lyne, NSW) said the Tax Office claims to have the greatest external scrutiny and consultative arrangements of any tax administration in the world, including over 50 consultative forums with community and industry bodies. But at its March hearing the Committee determined to become the central monitoring body of ATO administration - the apex of the pyramid of scrutiny activity.

"The committee intends to use the published work of the external review bodies, their in-depth knowledge of the workings of the ATO and their collected experiences of dealing with ordinary tax payers to help the committee raise relevant issues and assess the performance of the ATO," Mr Oakeshott said.

Mr Oakeshott indicated the ATO would be questioned on issues including:

- handling of compromised tax file numbers;
- long running complaints;
- growth of collectable debt; and
- refund delays.

Mr Oakeshott said the ATO had provided a thorough submission, detailing improvements being made, innovative approaches being trialled and impressive operational statistics. The ATO's submission, can be found at the inquiry's website: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jcpaa/taxationbiannual0911/index.htm>

In their submission to the Committee the ATO reported they had issued more than 14,000,000 refunds worth over \$70 billion last tax year and had already processed 3.4 million tax refunds this year.

"However if you are one of those with a compromised tax file number, an employee whose boss neglected to pay your superannuation or a small business undergoing an audit in a busy period, then you may not be as satisfied with the ATO's performance."

Details for the hearing are as follows:

Date: Friday, 23 September 2011

Venue: Parliament House, Committee Room 2 R1

Time: 9:15am – 1:00pm

The hearing will be broadcast live from Committee Room 2R1, Parliament House, Canberra from approximately 9:15am via: <http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>

For media comment: please contact the Committee Chair, Rob Oakeshott MP, on telephone (02) 6584 2911

For more information: for information about the hearing, please contact the Committee Secretariat on telephone (02) 6277 4615.