

**Senate Economics Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Treasury Portfolio**

Supplementary Budget Estimates

2016 - 2017

**Division/Agency:** Australian Taxation Office

**Question No:** 252

**Topic:** Complaints/Workforce

**Reference:** Written (19 October 2016)

**Senator:** Ketter, Chris

**Question:**

- 1) The ATO's 2014-15 annual report says complaints have risen 3 per cent since 2013-14. What is the latest figure for 2015-16 and what are the reasons behind the increase?
- 2) What are the issues or areas that are the primary sources of these complaints?
- 3) What would you attribute the uptick in complaints to?
- 4) Do ATO commissioners personally intervene in some tax cases? Is this commonplace?
- 5) How common would intervention in a case by a commissioner be?
- 6) What justification is there for intervening in a case?
- 7) Is there pressure to resolve cases quickly?
- 8) Does under-resourcing create pressure to resolve cases in a sub-optimal fashion?
- 9) Can the ATO provide a figure of net job losses since 2014?

**Answer:**

- 1) The ATO received 34,323 complaints for the 2015-16 financial year.
- 2) 3) The increase in complaints for 2015-16 was mainly due to:
  - a. Progress of returns during Tax Time 2015. Our improved digital services have increased expectations of a quick turnaround for a refund, even though our performance measures for income tax returns were exceeded.
  - b. Processing delays with the ATO system not automatically issuing timely ABN and TFN registrations to clients. These were issues from the Client Register System Release in January 2015. Permanent fixes for this issue were implemented in the second half of 2015-16.

Both of these issues have been addressed and complaints received from July – October 2016 are 27% lower than compared to the same period last year.

- 4) Yes. It is not commonplace.
- 5) . Our staff managing complaints are well trained and our approach is to work with taxpayers to understand their issue and resolve the problem, so it is not common for a Commissioner to be involved.
- 6) ATO Commissioners become involved if a referral from the Inspector General of Taxation is escalated to a Commissioner and at other times where the complaint represents a significant risk to revenue or reputation, or where the issue may impact a large number of taxpayers. .]

- 7) The ATO aims to resolve 85% of complaints within 15 business days, or within the date negotiated with the client.
- 8) The ATO is resourced appropriately to manage complaints. The ATO continues to exceed its service commitment to the community.
- 9) From July 2014- July 2016, the ATO has had a net staffing reduction of 3,347 On-going employees. Under the former Government, total staffing reductions of 4,700 were to occur over the forward estimates period to 2017-18. The Government brought forward the previous Government's budgeted 2015/16 job cuts to 2014/15.