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## Quarterly Newsletter - September 2025

### Message from the Ombudsman, Ruth Owen CBE

Welcome (or welcome back) to our newsletter. It's been a while since we've sent out a newsletter and we are excited to kick start our communications again.

I recently marked my 12-month anniversary as Tax Ombudsman – it's been a pleasure to meet so many hard-working and passionate people in the sector and achieve some important goals as an agency. But there's still a lot more to be done and I look forward to updating you on the key pieces of work to come.

Our new [Corporate Plan](#) is out now! It outlines the considerable progress we've made over the last 12 months, our strategic priorities going forward and where we will be focusing our efforts. I encourage you to have a read.

Please enjoy this rebooted first edition newsletter. We'd love to hear from you with any feedback or ideas you have for future content – please [email us](#). We plan to send this newsletter out quarterly – please share it with others in your network who may be interested.

You can also visit our [website](#) for news and updates or follow us on [LinkedIn](#). We'll also be getting our Facebook page up and running again soon.

### In this issue

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### **New look Tax Ombudsman**

You may have noticed our new look and feel, and a slight change to our name. We have been working hard in the past few months to improve the way we work with you and to make it easier for taxpayers to recognise us and understand who we are and how we can help.

We have also refreshed our website and made it easier for you to find the information you need.

Our official name is the 'Office of the Inspector-General of Taxation and Taxation Ombudsman', but research showed that this is overly long and hard to understand, so we are making it easier for you to recognise us and what we do.

In future, we will use 'Tax Ombudsman' and our new colours on all communications. It is clear, concise and most people know what to expect from an Ombudsman, which makes us easier to work with.

**[Check out our new look website](#)**



### **Catching up on complaints**

We recently marked 10 years since the role of the Tax Ombudsman was transferred to the Inspector-General of Taxation, combining two roles into one office to improve efficiency and better serve the Australian public.

Since then, we have collected and resolved some 20,000 complaints and completed 19 reviews of the tax system. This work has led to important improvements in our tax and superannuation systems, creating a fairer and more transparent approach for all Australians.

However, in the last few years our service levels have fallen short of expectations, and we grew a significant backlog of complaints. Customers were waiting far too long to have their complaints resolved. We are proud to say that we have cleared that backlog in the last year. We can now deal with complaints as they are received, without lengthy waiting times.

We have established new KPIs for our complaints service. We aim to clear the majority in 50 calendar days. While complex complaints will take longer, we aim to complete 85% of them within 80 calendar days. That is a substantial improvement, and we hope an assurance to the community and the tax profession that we take complaints seriously and want to provide a much better service.

**Find out how our complaints service can help you**



## **REVIEW: ATO service to agents**

Our current review is investigating the ATO's service to tax and BAS agents, through the registered agent phone line. We have received feedback from many agents about the deterioration of service they have experienced on the phone line and are looking into why this has happened and opportunities to improve service levels.

We can't share our recommendations just yet however, we want to assure all our agent readers that we have heard their strong feedback, and it has informed our review.

We believe what is most important is to recognise the role of agents and the value of a productive ATO-agent relationship for our tax system. Agents support 62% of individuals and more than 96% of entities to comply with their tax obligations. Based on the feedback we have heard, agents don't feel valued by the ATO and we see that as a risk to the health of the tax system of Australia.

We have also followed up on agent feedback about the poor service they receive by phone from the ATO and the limitations of the ATO's online services.

You can access the review terms of reference on our [website](#). Look out for our report due in early October.



## **REVIEW: Victim-survivors foot the bill for financial abuse in the tax system**

Our report into identification and management of financial abuse within the tax system was released in April and shone a spotlight on how perpetrators are weaponising the tax system.

Australian Bureau of Statistics data suggests that 1 in 6 women and 1 in 13 men have experienced economic abuse by an intimate partner. Perpetrators use coercive control or fraud to access superannuation early, appoint company directors without consent, and falsify tax returns; all to land their victims with significant tax bills.

We were shocked to find that the tax system is being used as a weapon against unsuspecting and vulnerable individuals. The stories we heard during our review were very disturbing, particularly as so many victims only find out about the abuse when they receive a bill from the ATO. By then, it is usually too late.

Although there are limits to how the ATO can provide release from these debts, the report identified how the ATO can better respond through prevention, detection and support for the victim-survivors.

We know more can be done within existing legislation to provide support and relief for victim-survivors. We are also contributing to broader government work to combat financial abuse, including providing advice on future legislative changes for the Government to consider.

[Access our report, case studies and recommendations](#)



## **REVIEW: Tax letters not well understood**

The ATO must improve the clarity and tone of the letters it sends to taxpayers to avoid unnecessary confusion, stress or anxiety, our most recent review found.



The ATO sends more than 140 million letters and messages to Australians each year and invests considerable resources into developing and distributing them. But people still say some letters are confusing, too technical, and their tone can cause unnecessary stress.

The ATO has a responsibility to engage with taxpayers in ways that make it easy to understand their obligations and any actions they need to take.

Our July report recommended improvements to the ATO's process for designing and testing bulk letter templates.

[Access our report and other resources](#)



## **Work plan 2025-26 released: GIC remission is next!**

Every year we conduct reviews into a range of topics on the tax and superannuation system. We publish our planned reviews at the start of the financial year to give industry players and taxpayers notice to prepare their submissions well ahead of time.

Our reviews work plan for the 2025-26 financial year is now available, and in the coming year we will review:

- General Interest Charge remission – keep an eye on our [website](#) for how to participate – we encourage you to have your say!
- Online services for agents
- Compromised accounts
- Support for First Nations taxpayers.

[Access our full forward work plan and information on how to contribute](#)



## **Welcome to our new Deputy Ombudsman – Complaints**

We are delighted to welcome Victoria Haffey as our new Deputy Ombudsman – Complaints.

Victoria brings more than a decade of experience in the Australian Public Service, with a strong background in tax administration, operational policy and process. Her career has spanned key areas including complaints management, risk strategy, and stakeholder engagement.

In her new role, Victoria will lead the Tax Ombudsman's complaints service, overseeing the independent investigation of taxpayer concerns. She and her team will work closely with individuals, tax practitioners, and government agencies to resolve tax administration disputes. They also gather data, identify the root causes of complaints, and share insights to inform opportunities for service and system improvements.

Prior to joining us, Victoria held senior leadership roles in the Australian Taxation Office, where she led frontline operations, provided law and policy advice, and oversaw national programs, including the delivery of major economic stimulus measures.

We are excited to welcome Victoria to the team and look forward to the expertise, leadership, and fresh perspective she'll bring to our work.

## **Key dates**

If you are holding an event at which you'd like us to attend (in person or online) please don't hesitate to ask. We are keen to stay well connected with all our stakeholders and keep building our relationships and our profile. Contact us at [engage@igt.gov.au](mailto:engage@igt.gov.au)

We are attending the following upcoming events:

- **3-5 September 2025** – The Tax Institute's Tax Summit, Melbourne
- **3-4 September 2025** - Financial Counsellors Australia Conference, NSW
- **25-25 September 2025** - Macquarie University Accounting and Finance Conference 2025, Sydney
- **28 October 2025** – Financial Counsellor Association of Western Australia Conference, Perth
- **30 October 2025** - The Tax Institute – WA Women in Tax, Perth
- **11-12 November 2025** – South Australian Financial Counsellors Association Conference, Adelaide
- **11-13 November 2025** - ASFA Conference, Gold Coast
- **19-21 November 2025** – Institute of Public Accountants National Conference, Hamilton Island
- **21 November 2025** – Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand National Conference, Auckland
- **26 November 2025** – Women's Legal Service Tasmania – Brewed for Change, Launceston.

## Media and Publications

- Corporate Plan 2026-29
- Institute of Financial Professionals Australia – read an interview with the Tax Ombudsman about our work to promote fairness and accountability in the tax system (5 minutes).
- Chartered Accountants ANZ – listen to the Tax Ombudsman talk about the evolving landscape of tax administration and support for Tax Practitioner Board matters on this podcast (15 minutes).
- Financial Freedom Forum podcast - listen to the Tax Ombudsman yarn about tax and the help available on a podcast hosted by the Marra Worra Aboriginal Corporation (7 minutes).
- Tax Practitioners Board webinar – listen to the Deputy Tax Ombudsman discuss financial abuse in the tax system and how the tax community and government can work together to protect and support victim-survivors (1 hour).
- Tax Vibe podcast – listen to the Tax Ombudsman discuss our Letters from the ATO review, and early findings from our [soon to be released] review into the Effectiveness of the ATO's Registered Phone Line (53 minutes).

## Contact us

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