

Dear Member,

AAT News

Welcome to the November 2020 edition of the AAT Australia's eNews & Views. In this edition you'll find out all about:

- BAS agent services expanded
- Super fund changes
- JobKeeper critical response account in online services
- JobMaker hiring credit
- Australian Business Register details used by emergency services
- Payment times reporting scheme starts January 2021
- FWO releases new workplace legal advice program for coronavirus issues
- Take time for yourself to review the year and plan for the coming year
- And more!

Check our [eNews & Views](#) page for previous newsletters.

It's Official - BAS Agent Services Expanded

The TPB has registered a new Legislative Instrument that allows registered BAS agents to provide a wider range of services relating to superannuation guarantee and the superannuation guarantee charge statement from 6 November 2020.

The instrument clarifies the services that BAS agents can provide relating to SGC including representing clients in interactions with the ATO.

Services Allowed Under New Legislation

- Services under the Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act 1992 to the extent that they relate to a payroll function or payments to contractors.
- Determining and reporting the SG shortfall amount and any associated administrative fees.
- Dealing with superannuation payments made through a clearing house.
- Completing and lodging the taxable payments annual report to the ATO, on behalf of a client.
- Sending a tax file number declaration to the ATO, on behalf of a client.
- Applying to the Australian Business Register for an Australian Business Number (ABN), on behalf of a client.

Remember that an agent must only provide services if they are qualified and competent. If you do not feel experienced enough to complete a superannuation charge statement for example, get training or assistance from an experienced colleague or hand it over to the tax agent for the business.

[TPB – BAS agents additional services](#)

[TPB – Tax Agent Services \(Specified BAS Services No. 2\) Instrument](#)

[TPB – Code of professional conduct for BAS agents](#)

[ATO – Super guarantee charge](#)

Federal Budget Superannuation Fund Changes

At the Federal Budget 2020-21, the government announced funding to improve superannuation protections for employees.

The ATO will develop the systems required so that new employees will select a MySuper fund from a new tool called YourSuper. This fund will then automatically follow an employee to future employment unless the employee subsequently makes a new choice of fund.

Super fund performance will also be assessed by the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) and underperformers will be barred from accepting new members. The funds' performance will be analysed to ensure transparency and maximising of retirement savings for members.

This move will make it easier for employers who engage new workers who already have an existing fund. However, it may be more onerous for employers when employees do not make a choice of fund.

The YourSuper tool that will list available MySuper funds to choose from will be available from 1 July 2021.

We await further detail on the administration, super fund choice arrangements and the impact on employers.

JobKeeper Critical Response Account in ATO Online Services

For BAS agents with JobKeeper clients, you will have noticed by now the new account listed within the BAS agent online services.

Clients who receive JobKeeper payments now have an account called Critical Response 00X. This account lists all JobKeeper transactions – monthly declarations (for JobKeeper amount, not turnover) are listed as credits and the payments by the ATO is listed as debits.

If a JobKeeper claim is investigated and rejected because of ineligibility and there is evidence of deliberate actions to claim JobKeeper incorrectly, then the JobKeeper subsidy will need to be repaid.

Administrative penalties and general interest charge will apply and will be listed in this new account. The ATO will write to the business owner to let them know why they think JobKeeper has been overpaid or paid in error, how much is to be repaid and when the repayment is due by.

Note that penalties only apply to deliberate or reckless mistakes. There will be situations where the ATO decides there has been an honest mistake and they will not pursue recovery of overpayments.

[ATO – JobKeeper overpayment](#)

JobMaker Hiring Credit

The ATO will administer the JobMaker Hiring Credit that was announced as part of the Federal Budget 2020-21.

Eligible employers will have access to a JobMaker Hiring Credit for each new job they create over the 12 months from 7 October 2020 to 6 October 2021.

The credit is available for a maximum of 12 months from the employment start date, from \$100 to \$200 per week for eligible employees based on their age.

There are strict eligibility requirements for both employees and employers, including the requirement that employers use Single Touch Payroll and are up-to-date with their tax lodgements.

We will publish more details next month once the measure is passed as law and the registration and quarterly claim process has been released by the ATO.

[ATO – JobMaker Hiring Credit](#)

ABN Helps Identify Clients During Emergency or Natural Disaster

Did you know that government agencies use Australian Business Register data to help identify businesses and individuals in communities affected by disaster?

This can make contacting affected businesses fast and efficient and also allows for immediate emergency services assistance.

It is always important to keep ABN details up to date, but for your clients in disaster prone areas, it is especially crucial as this can make all the difference with getting help quickly. Emergency services can also access contact details from the ABR, which means affected businesses can get important updates and assistance from emergency services.

Urge your clients to check ABR details including authorised contact, physical address, postal address, email and phone numbers. The details should reflect the client details, not the tax professional representative.

[ABR – Update your ABN details](#)

[ABR – Accessing ABR data for disaster response and recovery](#)

Payment Times Reporting Scheme Starts January 2021

The government has introduced the Payment Times Reporting Scheme in an effort to reduce payment times for small businesses. The *Payment times reporting act 2020* will commence on 1 January 2021.

The scheme requires large businesses and government enterprises to report on the payment terms and times for their small business suppliers.

This will increase transparency around large business' payment performance, help small businesses decide who to do business with, create incentives for large businesses to improve

their payment times and practices and will help the general public make decisions about the large businesses they buy from.

Reporting Requirements

Entities with income of more than \$100 million are required to report on their payment terms and practices. This includes large businesses and government enterprises, controlling corporations where combined total income is more than \$100 million and entities that are a member of an eligible controlling corporation group that have more than \$10 million annual income.

Reports will be submitted to the Payment Times Reporting Regulator twice per year.

The first reports will be due between July and September 2021 and will then be available on a public register.

Small Business Identification Tool

This tool allows large businesses to identify their small business suppliers.

We will publish further details on the small business tool, the reporting portal and the administration of the scheme as they become available.

For more details visit the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources [Payment Times Reporting Scheme](#) webpage.

Fair Work Ombudsman Workplace Legal Advice Program

The Fair Work Ombudsman has released a new program to provide eligible employers with free independent legal help to assist with workplace issues resulting from COVID-19.

The program is for more complex issues that cannot be answered from the website information or by advisors on the FWO coronavirus hotline.

Advice can be sought for issues such as stand downs, flexible work arrangements, pay and entitlements and the Fair Work Act JobKeeper provisions.

If an enquiry with the FWO is referred to the Workplace Legal Advice Program, one of the partner law firms will make contact with the business within two business days and will arrange a meeting to discuss the enquiry. Businesses may also [apply directly to the program](#) for assistance.

The program allows for up to four hours of advice to deal with immediate needs or challenges.

For more details and eligibility visit [FWO Workplace Legal Advice Program FAQs](#).

Take time for the Health and Wellbeing of Yourself and Your Business

December and January – Time to Recharge

For many bookkeepers and BAS agents, this year has just been about surviving and lurching from one demand to another deadline. We have been doing our best to keep on top of information overload from the ATO and government. We are trying to stay current with

software updates. We are looking after existing clients and helping new clients who have realised they need an advisor in this challenging time of business. We are navigating difficult conversations with clients and possibly staff. And somehow trying to look after ourselves as well.

Many are exhausted and yet we still have to look after our clients and ourself and our own businesses.

Now the end of the year is looming... we can slow down, breathe and take a rest before we have to do the next round of JobKeeper retesting by mid-January.

If you haven't taken a break all year then start planning now (if you haven't already) to take a break during December and/or January. You will feel better as soon as you block out time in your calendar!

Every business owner needs time out from the stress of running their own show, and operators in our industry even more so, as we are at the front line of listening to clients' stresses about their businesses. This year we have had to field a lot more questions, demands, responsibilities and stresses than ever before.

So, what are you going to do to give yourself some rest and recharge your energy?

Start Planning

- Notify your clients soon that you are taking a break and be clear about the dates that you are closing business. Include helpful links for them and if you are handing over to a staff member or colleague provide contact details.
- Set up an automatic email response for the time of your break.
- Start planning now with your clients for alternative arrangements if needed – for example, set up as much as possible before you take a break, organise business owners or staff to do some tasks for you or organise alternative payment times where possible.
- Get support from a colleague – if you have clients that will need assistance while you are not answering calls and emails, talk to a colleague about taking calls for you. You can do the same for them another time.
- Be strict about your boundaries. If you have notified clients about your dates and allowed for alternative arrangements, don't answer their calls while on holiday.
- Even if you don't leave home, still take a proper holiday from work!
- Start making a list now of all the things that you would like to do while on your break and schedule some of them now if possible.
- Remember it is your right to take a break every year, in fact multiple times a year. Too many bookkeepers think they have a responsibility to be on call all the time for their clients. Don't feel guilty about taking time off.
- Temporarily deactivate all work-related apps from your phone and mobile gadgets during your time off, so that you are not tempted to look!

Business Review and Planning

Consider taking a day towards the end of your break to reflect on where your business is now and where you want to go next year.

Think about your business as if it were a valued staff member. Are you taking care of it? Are you listening? Are you devoting thought and energy to the growth of your business? Is your business supporting you?

There has been so much that has been out of our control this year, but nevertheless, it is also good to reflect on the year that has been and think about what you could have done differently, what caused the most stress, what took the most time and so on.

Similarly, reflect on your achievements – congratulate yourself on how well you did navigate this crazy year! Think about all that you have learned – both technical knowledge and about yourself and your work and your clients. Think about how much your clients appreciate all that you have done for them.

It can be great to do this review process with a colleague or a small group. Get together in person or online with a couple of people. Give some time to reviewing the year but then devote more time to thinking about the coming year.

- What plans or goals have you put on hold because of this year's unexpected demands? Can you reconnect to those plans or have your goals changed now?
- Are there topics you would like to study to further your professional development?
- Assess your workload and clients – is it time to let some go? Or do a marketing push for new business?
- Are there areas of your business that you struggle with? If so, can you outsource to someone else? Or can you rearrange things in your own operations? Or perhaps it is a matter of trying new tools and technology to make the most of your time?
- Do you know the proportion of billable and non-billable hours you devote each week to your business?
- How are your boundaries around work and personal time? Do you need to pull back your working hours so that you can reclaim time and energy for your own health and wellbeing?
- Are you meeting the needs of your clients or are there areas that you could do better or differently?
- Do all your clients know all the services that you offer?
- Is it time to engage staff or contractors or to collaborate with a colleague?
- What are the things that you both enjoy and do well and could you do more of them?

Benefits of Taking a Proper Break

In case you need convincing to take time out...

- Rest, adventure and play improves your immune system and general health and wellbeing.
- Exhaustion increases the likelihood of mistakes, accidents and illness. Overwork increases the likelihood of anxiety, depression and chronic stress issues.
- Living from a relaxed state improves enjoyment, effectiveness and productivity.
- Taking a break allows you to re-evaluate your life and how you are living it.
- You simply feel better about yourself and life in general.
- Take a break before you burnout – not after.
- Do not underestimate the relief and rest that comes from putting your responsibilities to others on hold for time.

What will you do during your break?

In the News

- **Supporting Small Business Advisors for Better Mental Health.** The government has approved \$2.24 million for training 5,000 accountants by 2022 in mental health first aid. The program is a collaboration between Deakin University, Beyond Blue, Mental Health First Aid, WorkSafe Victoria and professional accounting bodies IPA, CPA Australia and CAANZ.
- **Fair Work Commission Minimum Wage Increase Second Stage.** Minimum wage rates this year have been introduced in three stages for specific groups of awards. The

[second group of awards](#) has new rates applying from the first full pay period starting on or after 1 November 2020.

- **ATO PAYGI error.** The ATO failed to update the company tax rate for instalment default calculations to the 26% that should have applied from 1 July 2020. Businesses that have lodged PAYGI based on the previous rate of 27.5% will be refunded in November. The error has been fixed now but it is worth checking the PAYGI amount for any clients who have not yet lodged the September BAS and vary downwards to 26% if the correct amount is not listed.
- **Tax gap estimate of \$31.2 billion.** The ATO has published its tax gap analysis for the whole of the tax and superannuation systems. The data is from the 2018 financial year and collates information on individuals, high-net-wealth private groups, small business and large corporations. Overall the gap represents 6.9% of the total tax collections the ATO expected to collect for that year.
- **\$120 million JobKeeper recovered so far.** This amount has been recouped from businesses that were deemed to have made deliberate or reckless mistakes and were not eligible for JobKeeper. The ATO says it will be keeping a close eye on actual decline in turnover tests and incorrect tier 1 payments.
- **JobKeeper data matching program.** The ATO's [data matching program](#) continues to collaborate with the Department of Home Affairs and Services Australia to gather data on JobKeeper compliance and eligibility. The Department of Home Affairs investigates visa records to assess whether employers, visa sponsors and migration agents are meeting their tax, superannuation and JobKeeper obligations. Services Australia investigates people who received both JobKeeper and JobSeeker but may not have declared JobKeeper income.
- **Payroll tax relief.** Further announcements have recently been made by several states' Office of State Revenue, including NSW incentives for up to four years. Visit your state's payroll tax website to check that you are making the most of available payroll tax relief and to check any changes to exemptions.

AAT Australia Member Events

Tech Talk: LinkedIn for Bookkeepers

Learn about the value of LinkedIn for professionals. This Tech Talk will focus on updating your LinkedIn profile so that you can be found easily and build your online network.



Thursday 26 November



Free for AAT Members



12:30pm - 1:30pm AEDT



Online (Recorded)



Sue Ellson



Total CPD Hours: 1

[BOOK NOW](#)

In case you missed it – listen to the Tech Talk recording of ATO Cash Flow Coaching Kit


Catch up with the ATO's presentation on the cash flow coaching kit and learn what it offers business owners and how you can use it to offer extra advisory services to your clients.


WATCH NOW

Online Discussion Groups


For those who are not already part of a regular group, join an online discussion group to chat about current news and industry topics.


These informal discussion groups also provide a forum for bookkeepers to put questions to fellows in the industry, share information and stay supported and connected with colleagues.


 Thursday 19 November

 5:00pm - 6:00pm AEDT


 Jo Voight


 Free for AAT Members


 Online (Not Recorded)


 Total CPD Hours: 1


BOOK NOW


 Wednesday 2 December

 4:00pm - 5:00pm AEDT

 Eric Ohlson

 Free for AAT Members

 Online (Not Recorded)

 Total CPD Hours: 1

BOOK NOW

AAT Australia Bookkeepers Support Group

Join the [AAT Australia Facebook](#) group for sharing information and getting help from colleagues. Talking with colleagues can really help us work things out, whether it's a curly bookkeeping question or whether it's needing a sounding board for help with a difficult situation; you don't have to operate in total isolation.

What is Going on in the Industry?

IPA Podcast

Andrew Conway discusses events of 2020 that have left a lasting impact on the accounting profession. Listen [here](#).

ATO Open Forums

Upcoming ATO Open Forums are now being offered online.

Check the [ATO Open forums](#) webpage for November and December sessions focussing on supporting you and your clients through COVID-19 and digital services.

- There are also dedicated sessions for BAS agents to discuss the recent updates to BAS services.

ATO Tax inVoice Podcast

Keep updated about the latest tax and super information. The latest instalment is [Episode 27: Cybersecurity for business and intermediaries - Part 2](#), discussing what the ATO and other agencies are doing to assist in protecting the community from cyber criminals.

ATO TV

Handy [ATO TV videos](#) on a range of topics that may be useful for you or your clients. Includes short videos on topics such as managing authorisations in RAM, and longer videos on more complex topics such as WET or GST at settlement.

TPB Webinars

Upcoming Tax Practitioners Board free webinars for registered agents.

- Wednesday 25 November 11:00am ADST – Professional indemnity insurance: why it's important and what your policy should cover.
- Wednesday 25 November 3:00pm ADST – Compliance matters: current TPB compliance projects and case studies.

Visit the [TPB webinars webpage](#) to register for the webinars.

Visit the [TPB YouTube](#) channel for recordings of all previous webinars.

Feedback

AAT welcomes your feedback. Please share your thoughts and ideas, let us know what your concerns are as well as the support and CPD that you need, so that we can deliver the best possible outcome for all of our AAT community. [Contact us](#)



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