

Bookkeeper Industry Advisory Group (BIAG) Meeting
6 December 2005
Meeting Summary

A Bookkeeper Industry Advisory Group (BIAG) meeting was held on 6 December 2005 at the Tax Office in Hurstville, NSW.

Items discussed at the meeting included:

- **Electronic lodgment options for bookkeepers**
The second bookkeeper pilot of the electronic option to lodge BAS via Electronic Commerce Interface (ECI) was recently completed. The number of activity statements lodged by the 44 participants actively involved was 497. The overall feedback from the pilot participants has been very positive, with the ease of use and direct lodgment with the Tax Office seen as some of the main benefits from using ECI to lodge activity statements electronically. A campaign to attract eligible bookkeepers to use ECI is planned to be launched in March '06.
- **Bookkeeper Consultations: Information and Education preferences**
The results of two weeks of bookkeeper consultations conducted in August '05 have revealed that the Tax Office's web site and emails are seen as preferred information channels. While acknowledging the wealth of information on the web site, it was suggested that improved 'navigation' would increase usage of the site. A bookkeeper specific page was generally seen as a preferred means of getting the Tax Office's focussed messages to bookkeepers. Product design work is currently underway which should see this and other initiatives implemented in early 2006. The objective of this work is to make it easier for bookkeepers to access information in their role supporting their business clients.
- **S251L(6)(b) 'working under the direction of a registered tax agent'**
The S251L(6)(b) Quality Assurance Guidelines and Feedback papers have been distributed to the ATPF and BIAG. BIAG members will be advised when the QA Guidelines are finalised for publishing on ato.gov.au.
- **Industry Working Group - update**
The Industry Working Group provided an update to the BIAG. The main outcomes were that the group wanted to be more industry rather than BAS focussed and to be a more vocal representative for the bookkeeping industry.
- **Environmental scan for industry – moving forward for 2006**
This session focussed on how the industry has developed in the two years since the Bookkeeper Symposium. This involved a workshop covering how the bookkeeper industry has developed and how further progress should be made. Moving forward there was agreement between the BIAG members on the focus areas for the industry including standards, education and recognition.

BIAG meetings are hosted by the Tax Office and have been held bi-monthly. Membership consists of representatives from the Tax Office, professional associations, bookkeeper associations and franchises, and bookkeepers.

It is planned that future BIAG meetings will be held quarterly. Dates for 2006 have yet to be finalised.