



*Prepared by Maria Benardis*

## **AAPB BAG Meeting Notes May 2007**

The next BAG meeting will be held on the 29th and 30th of May 2007. The primary focus of the two day BAG meeting is to discuss the release of the draft Tax Laws Amendment Regulations and relevant explanatory materials.

If members have any agenda items or issues they would like to raise please email these to [aapb@aapb.org.au](mailto:aapb@aapb.org.au)

### **Outstanding BAG Agenda Items**

AAPB still has outstanding BAG agenda items with the ATO raised as far back as November 2006.

We have been informed by the ATO our outstanding agenda items will be finally addressed at the next BAG meeting.

After the meeting we will publish the ATO response and what actions have been taken.

### **New BAG Agenda Items**

AAPB has had calls from members expressing concerns and confusion in relation to comments made by ATO officers at BAS service provider advisory visits (BSP visits) they have participated in.

Areas of concern are:

1. The application requirements in order to use the BAS electronic lodgment facility available to bookkeepers (e.g. supplying a Tax Agent Number)
2. Encouragement to use the Business Portal to lodge the BAS when not able to meet Section 251L of the ITAA 1936
3. Associated "feedback" form completed after a BSP visit

AAPB finds these instructions and comments extremely concerning and places our members in a difficult and confusing position.

In light of the above AAPB is reluctant to promote to our members to take up the offer of a BSP visit until these questions are clarified and responded to.

### **Other issues sent to the ATO for a response**

1. ATO seminars in WA

The ATO has sent an invitation to attend a seminar to bookkeepers to discuss topics that include tax basics, e-Record and online products workshops, and employer obligations.

After reviewing the content to be discussed at the seminar, AAPB discovered the topics being addressed are primary income tax business deductions and special rules for income tax.

<http://www.ato.gov.au/businesses/content.asp?doc=/content/80340.htm>

AAPB believes these seminars are a great initiative and a positive move by the ATO however, we are concerned that bookkeepers may attend these sessions and view that it is now acceptable for them to assist clients with income tax related matters given that the ATO is marketing such seminars.

The ATO needs to develop seminars that are specific to Bookkeepers and meet the proposed draft legislation.



## 2. Senior Representatives for Tax Practitioners

The role of the senior representative is to consult with tax practitioners in order to gain a better understanding of practice issues.

<http://www.ato.gov.au/distributor.asp?doc=/content/content/00097720.htm>

AAPB has requested the ATO to consider establishing a similar relationship manager role for bookkeepers sometime in the near future.

### **AAPB Attends May BAG Meeting**

Maria Benardis attended the two day ATO Bookkeepers Advisory Group (BAG) meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> May 2007. The meeting focused on BAG related issues and the New Regulations – Tax Agent Services, in particular the Provisions that will impact on the bookkeeping industry and BAS preparers.

The ATO undertook to prepare meeting notes and will forward these to BAG members for publication on their website in the near future. These will be published on the AAPB website as soon as they are received from the ATO.

The following issues were discussed at the BAG meeting:

- The ATO informed members the minutes from the meeting on 29 Nov 2006 were up on the ATO website and can viewed at:

<http://www.ato.gov.au/taxprofessionals/content.asp?doc=/content/00095914.htm>

- The New Charter for the BAG committee was tabled for consideration. AAPB raised concerns in relation to the need for consistency with other ATO committees in terms of membership and the need for visibility in relation to issues raised by members of the committee. We also raised concerns in relation to the Charter remaining silent on the management of technical issues and how these would be managed given that AAPB agenda items from November 2006 had not been responded to by the ATO.

The Chair acknowledged the AAPB agenda items and stated that technical issues in the future should be sent to PALU for a response. The technical issues will be registered on an Issues Log and published on the ATO website.

- The ATO outlined all minutes and issues log items will now be published on the ATO website. This was recommended to the ATO by AAPB in November 2006.
- AAPB raised concerns in relation to the lack of acknowledgment received from the ATO on emails and submissions forwarded to the ATO by AAPB. We outlined that it was difficult to establish whether comments made by the professional associations had been received and whether they had been taken on board by the ATO. A new procedure will be implemented by the ATO to issue an acknowledgment to members.
- BSP integrated project - an update was provided by the ATO. A summary will be forwarded by the ATO to members of the committee. AAPB will publish this on the website as soon as it is received from the ATO. AAPB raised concerns in relation to issues raised out of session by email. The email was reproduced in the May AAPB newsletter. The ATO undertook to forward a formal response to this email in the near future.



- The ATO outlined a proposed new Bookkeeper Portal view. This would be similar to the Tax Agents Portal however it would have a more limited view. For example a bookkeeper would not be able to view income tax related information. This is a work in progress and updates will be provided in future newsletters.
- The ATO provided an overview of a new internal CRM/accounting system and a proposed implementation schedule.
  - Release 3.1 would include income tax/FBT - scheduled for Jan 2008
  - Release 3.3 would include BAS/GST/Excise - scheduled for January 2009
- The ATO will advise if there are disruptions to services. More updates will be provided in future meetings.
- The ATO's channel strategy was discussed at the meeting. The ATO is looking at ways of electronic lodgments eg: electronically lodging PAYG-W and TFN applications online. The ATO would like taxpayers to ideally lodge these documents electronically and not in paper form. Ideas were discussed as to how this could be done and the education strategies that would be required.

The next BAG meeting will be held in August 2007. If members have any agenda items or issues they would like to raise please email these to [aapb@aapb.org.au](mailto:aapb@aapb.org.au)

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