

AUSTRALIAN TAX ADVISER

2305: NOVEMBER 2022

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IN THIS ISSUE

| SECTION 1 – PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS1 | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| EMPLOYEE OR CONTRACTOR?1 | | | |
| ¶5.1 | The Federal Court Decision2 | | |
| ¶5.2 | The Full Federal Court decision3 | | |
| ¶5.3 | The High Court Decision3 | | |
| ¶5.4 | Key considerations | | |
| SECTION 2 - PROFESSIONAL CURRENCY7 | | | |
| BILLS A | ND LEGISLATION7 | | |
| ¶5.5 | Bills under debate7 | | |
| ¶5.6 | FBT exemption for child care staff discounts | | |
| ¶5.7 | GST adjustment note information requirements: ATO Legislative Determination | | |
| ¶5.8 | GST and deferred farm-out arrangements: ATO Legislative Determination10 | | |
| ¶5.9 | Seniors Health Card income threshold: Bill passes without amendment11 | | |
| ¶5.10 | Pension changes to assist workforce participation: Bill introduced11 | | |
| ¶5.11 | Pensioner work bonus temporary increase11 | | |
| ¶5.12 | ACNC regulations remade12 | | |
| ¶5.13 | Simplifying FBT record-keeping requirements12 | | |
| ¶5.14 | Franked distributions funded by capital raising13 | | |
| ¶5.15 | GST: Margin Scheme valuations | | |
| ¶5.16 | Withholding tax removed for low-income minors14 | | |
| ¶5.17 | PBO costings: Stage 3 tax cuts; fuel efficient cars15 | | |
| ¶5.18 | 120% deduction for digital take-up expenditure16 | | |
| ¶5.19 | 120% deduction for external training expenditure17 | | |
| ¶5.20 | Hearings and examinations that can be held virtually19 | | |



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IN THIS ISSUE

| ¶5.21 | Cryptocurrency not a foreign currency20 | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|--|
| ¶5.22 | Veterans' support legislation20 | | |
| ¶5.23 | Electronic Payment System transactions exempt from reporting 21 | | |
| CASES AND DECISIONS22 | | | |
| ¶5.24 | Part IV A applied to non-resident beneficiaries22 | | |
| ¶5.25 | Share buy-back scheme involved a reimbursement agreement24 | | |
| ¶5.26 | Court imposes \$7.2m penalty for breaches of best interest obligations27 | | |
| ¶5.27 | AMP companies fined for charging fees for no service28 | | |
| RULINGS AND GUIDELINES29 | | | |
| ¶5.28 | CGT: ATO discretion to extend two-year period to dispose of deceased's dwelling29 | | |
| ¶5.29 | Withholding tax exemption for interest derived by UK or US financial institutions29 | | |
| ¶5.30 | Non-profit sporting and games clubs | | |
| ¶5.31 | Non-commercial loss rules31 | | |
| ¶5.32 | GST-free supplies by Residential Colleges32 | | |
| SECTION 3 - QUESTIONS & ANSWERS32 | | | |
| ¶5.33 | Deceased estate and UPE to trust beneficiary32 | | |
| ¶5.34 | Motor vehicle depreciation33 | | |
| ¶5.35 | Realisation of pre-CGT commercial property by a private company34 | | |
| ¶5.36 | Director resignation in sole director company35 | | |
| ¶5.37 | Residency – change of circumstances | | |
| ¶5.38 | Balancing adjustments – pool account37 | | |
| ¶5.39 | Refinancing of LRBA37 | | |
| ¶5.40 | Property taxation – CGT | | |

SECTION 1 - PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

EMPLOYEE OR CONTRACTOR?

One of the more challenging questions that practitioners faced was working out whether an individual was an employee or a contractor. The default position of the ATO has until recently been to treat all individuals as employees unless there were compelling reasons why they ought to be treated as contractors.

The following table was published by the ATO to assist in determining whether an individual was an employee or a contractor:

| Employee | Contractor |
|---|--|
| Ability to subcontract/delegate: the worker can't subcontract/delegate the work – they can't pay someone else to do the work. | Ability to subcontract/delegate: the worker can subcontract/delegate the work – they can pay someone else to do the work. |
| Basis of payment – the worker is paid either: • for the time worked | Basis of payment: the worker is paid for a result achieved based on the quote they provided. |
| a price per item or activitya commission. | A quote can be calculated using hourly rates or price per item to work out the total cost of the work. |
| Equipment, tools and other assets: | Equipment, tools and other assets: |
| your business provides all or most of the equipment, tools and other assets required to complete the work, or | the worker provides all or most of the equipment, tools and other assets required to complete the work |
| the worker provides all or most of the equipment, tools and other assets required to complete the work, but your business provides them with an allowance or reimburses them for the cost of the equipment, tools and other assets. | the worker does not receive an allowance or reimbursement for the cost of this equipment, tools and other assets. |
| Commercial risks: the worker takes no commercial risks. Your business is legally responsible for the work done by the worker and liable for the cost of rectifying any defect in the work. | Commercial risks: the worker takes commercial risks, with the worker being legally responsible for their work and liable for the cost of rectifying any defect in their work. |
| Control over the work: your business has the right to direct the way in which the worker does their work. | Control over the work: the worker has freedom in the way the work is done, subject to the specific terms in any contract or agreement. |
| Independence: the worker is not operating independently of your business. They work within and are considered part of your business. | Independence: the worker is operating their own business independently of your business. The worker performs services as specified in their contract or agreement and is free to accept or refuse additional work. |

Readers who routinely address these matters will recognise the similarity between these criteria and the so-called 'results test' conditions referred to in the Alienation of Personal Services Income regime outlined in