

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Treasury Portfolio
Additional Estimates
2016 - 2017

Division/Agency: Australian Taxation Office
Question No: 205
Topic: Rise in complaints in the ATO
Reference: Written
Senator: Ketter

Question:

1. Can the ATO confirm there was an increase in complaints from 2013-14 to 2015-16 of 44 per cent?
2. Can the ATO provide a breakdown of the complaints by type?
3. Which areas saw the most complaints?
4. Which areas saw the largest proportional increase in complaints?
5. Have additional staff been allocated to areas with a rise in complaints?
6. What measures is the ATO taking to address these complaints?
7. Has the ATO made approaches or representations to Government about staff resources being linked to a rise in complaints?
8. When were these approaches or representations made?
9. What was the Government response?
10. Does the ATO measure response times to correspondence and phone calls?
11. Can the data on response times be provided?
12. Have response times slowed in recent years?

Answer:

1. A 44% increase in complaints did occur from 2013-14 to 2015-16.
2. The following table provides a breakdown of complaints by type for each financial year from 2013-14 to 2015-16.

Issue	2014	2015	2016
Registrations	31%	20%	22%
Form Processing	13%	19%	23%
Account Management	13%	10%	15%
Guidance & Information	11%	14%	11%
Debt & Payments	8%	8%	5%
Interpretive Assistance	3%	3%	2%
Lodgment & Penalties	5%	5%	4%
People & Privacy	3%	4%	3%
Access to systems	5%	10%	5%
Audit & review	8%		

Post Issue Audit		1%	1%
Pre Issue Audit		3%	2%
Superannuation		3%	7%
Total	100%	100%	100%

3. The increase in complaints was attributable to three main areas:
 - Progress of returns during Tax Time 2015
 - Processing delays with the ATO system not automatically issuing timely ABN and TFN registrations to clients
 - Superannuation related matters.
4. See Question 3.
5. Additional resources were allocated to deal with the increase in complaints in 2015-16.
6. The ATO is addressing these complaints through a number of activities.
 - Improvements in the system to reduce the processing of standard income tax returns by one day
 - myTax prevented a number of lodgement errors up front resulting in faster processing
 - Implementation of new analytics to automatically resolve errors reducing the need for manual intervention
 - Updated client messages and ato.gov.au content to assist clients get things right
 - Earlier contact with clients to request more information to speed up the processing time
 - Trialling SMS messages notifying clients that their refund is being processed which assists in reducing the number of complaints around 'where's my refund.'
7. No.
8. Not applicable.
9. Not applicable.
10. Yes.

11.

Performance measure¹	15–16 Result	16–17 YTD (28 Feb)
General calls answered within 5 minutes	91%	91%
90% of tax practitioner calls answered within 2 minutes	95%	92%
85% of electronic taxpayer requests are finalised in 20 business days	93%	
90% of electronic taxpayer requests are finalised in 15 business days		92%

12. Response times have generally remained consistent across recent years.

¹ The electronic taxpayer request commitment changed between 15/16 and 16/17 financial years.