

portion, which means that you could potentially pay less tax.

Expanded instant asset write-off for businesses

If you've purchased assets for your business, remember that you may be eligible to claim an immediate deduction under the instant asset write-off, which was recently expanded.

From 12 March to 30 June 2020 inclusive, the instant asset write-off threshold for each asset increased to \$150,000 (up from \$30,000) for business entities with aggregated annual turnover of less than \$500 million (up from \$50 million).

To get it right, remember:

- check if your business is eligible;
- both new and secondhand assets can be claimed, as long as each asset costs less than \$150,000;
- assets must be first used or installed ready for use between 12 March and 30 June 2020;
- a car limit applies for passenger vehicles;
- if the asset is for business and private use, only the business portion can be claimed;
- you can claim a deduction for the balance of a small business pool if its value is less than \$150,000 at 30 June 2020 (before applying depreciation deductions); and
- different eligibility criteria and thresholds apply to assets first used or installed ready for use before 12 March 2020.

Additional cash flow boost coming for businesses

If your business is one of many that received the initial cash flow boosts as a part of the government's COVID-19 economic stimulus measures, prepare for more help coming your way. When you lodge your monthly or quarterly activity statements for June to September 2020, your business will receive additional cash flow boosts.

Generally, the additional amount will be equal to the total amount that you initially received and will be split evenly between the lodged activity statements. Quarterly payers will generally receive 50% of their total initial cash flow boost for each activity statement, while monthly payers will generally receive 25% of their total initial cash flow boost for each activity statement.

However, if you've made adjustments or revised your activity statements after lodgment, the amount of additional cash flow boost payments you receive may be different.

Remember, if you haven't made payments to employees subject to withholding, you need to report zero for PAYG withholding when lodging your activity statements to ensure you receive the additional cash flow boost payments. It's important that you don't cancel PAYG withholding registration until you have received the additional cash flow boosts.

ATO scam calls may soon be a thing of the past

Last year, some 107,000 ATO impersonation scam calls were reported to the authorities. The real number is likely to be much higher, given that most of these type of calls go unreported. Scammers are increasingly using technological advances to appear more legitimate and nab unsuspecting victims.

One technique commonly used is "spoofing", where scammers use software to mislead the caller ID technology on mobile phones and modern fixed line phones. Rather than transmitting the actual, typically overseas, phone number the call is coming from, the software "overstamps" it with another phone number. Commonly, the numbers used are widely publicised, such as the legitimate numbers used by the ATO.

TIP: The ATO has recently alerted the community to an SMS scam which claims that you're due to receive a tax refund and asks you to click on a link. The ATO will never send an email or SMS asking people to access online services via a hyperlink.

Due to the prevalence of these scams and the large amount of money lost by individuals, Australian telcos, the ATO and the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) recently collaborated on a three-month trial of technology to block scam calls appearing to originate from legitimate ATO phone numbers. Under the Scam Technology Project, participating telcos used software to identify calls which had been "overstamped" with specified ATO phone numbers and blocked them.

According to the government, the trial has been "highly successful" in blocking spoof calls from specified ATO numbers. While this blocking technology will not stop scammers randomly ringing Australians pretending to be from the ATO, it will stop specific ATO numbers appearing in the caller ID on the recipient's phone, making the scam seem less convincing.

TIP: If you receive a call from someone who says they are from a government department, such as the ATO, but you're not sure whether the call's legitimate, the best course of action is to hang up and phone back on a widely publicised number from an official website or source.

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