

Australian Taxation System

What is Tax?

Tax is money the government collects from people who earn income. It funds public services like schools, hospitals, roads, police, and welfare support. Everyone earning income in Australia must pay tax according to the law.

Tax File Number (TFN)

A TFN is a unique number issued by the ATO. It's FREE to apply online at ato.gov.au (takes about 28 days). Keep it safe - only share with your employer or bank. Without a TFN, your employer must withhold tax at the highest rate (47%).

Tax-Free Threshold: \$18,200

You don't pay tax on the first \$18,200 you earn per financial year (July 1 - June 30). This amount may change - check the ATO website after each Federal Budget in May.

Special Rules for Under 18s

Employment income (wages from a job) is taxed at normal rates. However, investment income from parents, trust distributions, or passive income may be taxed at higher rates.

Key Takeaways:

- Apply for your TFN online at ato.gov.au - it's free
- The first \$18,200 you earn per year is tax-free (subject to change)
- Always lodge a tax return to get back any overpaid tax
- Never pay anyone for a TFN - it's always free from the ATO

Superannuation (Super)

What is Superannuation?

Super is money your employer pays into a retirement savings account for you. It's paid ON TOP of your wages - not deducted from them. You can access it when you retire (usually age 60-67).

Superannuation Guarantee: 12%

Employers must pay 12% of your ordinary earnings into your super. Example: Earn \$800/week = \$96 extra goes to super. This rate may change - typically announced in the Federal Budget in May, effective from 1 July.

Eligibility for Under 18s

If you're under 18, you must work MORE THAN 30 HOURS in a week to be eligible for super. If you're 18 or over, you're eligible regardless of hours worked.

Why Super Matters

Compound interest makes early savings powerful. Money saved in your teens can be worth much more by retirement because it has decades to grow through investment returns.

Key Takeaways:

- Super is paid BY your employer, not deducted from wages
- You can't access super until retirement (except special circumstances)
- You can choose which super fund your employer pays into
- Check your super balance regularly through myGov

Employment Rights & Responsibilities

Types of Employment

Full-time: 38+ hours/week with leave entitlements. Part-time: Regular hours less than 38/week with pro-rata leave. Casual: Irregular hours with 25% loading but no paid leave.

National Employment Standards (NES)

11 minimum entitlements for all employees including: Maximum 38-hour week, annual leave (4 weeks), personal/carer's leave (10 days), public holidays, and notice of termination.

Minimum Wage

As of July 2024, the national minimum wage is \$24.10/hour (\$915.90/week). Junior rates apply for workers under 21. Check Fair Work for current rates as they change annually on 1 July.

Your Rights at Work

You have the right to: Be paid correctly and on time, a safe workplace, take breaks, not be discriminated against, and join a union. Your employer cannot force you to work unpaid hours.

Key Takeaways:

- Know your employment type and entitlements
- Keep records of hours worked and pay received
- Fair Work Ombudsman: 13 13 94 for help with workplace issues
- You cannot be fired for asking about your rights

Finance & Budgeting

The 50/30/20 Rule

A simple budgeting framework: 50% for NEEDS (rent, food, transport), 30% for WANTS (entertainment, dining out), 20% for SAVINGS (emergency fund, goals).

Smart Money Habits

Pay yourself first (save before spending). Track your spending. Avoid 'buy now, pay later' traps. Build an emergency fund (3-6 months expenses). Compare prices before buying.

Banking Basics

Transaction account: For everyday spending. Savings account: For goals (look for high interest). Debit card: Spends your own money. Credit card: Borrows money (avoid until you understand interest).

Understanding Your Payslip

Gross pay: Total before deductions. Tax withheld: Sent to ATO. Super: Paid to your super fund. Net pay: What you actually receive in your bank account.

Key Takeaways:

- Create a budget and track your spending
- Save at least 20% of your income
- Build an emergency fund before other goals
- Avoid debt - especially high-interest debt

Mental Health & Wellbeing

Work-Life Balance

Set boundaries between work and personal time. Take your breaks - they're your right. Don't overcommit to shifts. Make time for friends, family, hobbies, and rest.

Signs You May Need Support

Feeling overwhelmed or anxious regularly. Difficulty sleeping or changes in appetite. Losing interest in things you used to enjoy. Feeling isolated or withdrawing from others. It's okay to ask for help!

Self-Care Strategies

Physical: Regular exercise, healthy eating, enough sleep. Social: Stay connected with friends and family. Mental: Take breaks, practice mindfulness, limit social media. Emotional: Talk about your feelings, journal, seek support.

Support Services

Headspace: 1800 650 890 (youth mental health). Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 (24/7 counselling). Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636. Lifeline: 13 11 14 (crisis support 24/7).

Key Takeaways:

- Your mental health is just as important as physical health
- It's okay to say no to extra shifts if you're overwhelmed
- Talk to someone you trust if you're struggling
- Free, confidential support is available 24/7