



Class Ruling

Income tax: early retirement scheme – Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance Limited

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This publication (excluding appendixes) is a public ruling for the purposes of the *Taxation Administration Act 1953*.

A public ruling is an expression of the Commissioner's opinion about the way in which a relevant provision applies, or would apply, to entities generally or to a class of entities in relation to a particular scheme or a class of schemes.

If you rely on this ruling, the Commissioner must apply the law to you in the way set out in the ruling (unless the Commissioner is satisfied that the ruling is incorrect and disadvantages you, in which case the law may be applied to you in a way that is more favourable for you – provided the Commissioner is not prevented from doing so by a time limit imposed by the law). You will be protected from having to pay any underpaid tax, penalty or interest in respect of the matters covered by this ruling if it turns out that it does not correctly state how the relevant provision applies to you.

What this Ruling is about

1. This Ruling sets out the Commissioner's opinion on the way in which the relevant provisions identified below apply to the defined class of entities, who take part in the scheme to which this Ruling relates.

Relevant provisions

2. The relevant provisions dealt with in this Ruling are:
- section 83-170 of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997* (ITAA 1997); and
 - section 83-180 of the ITAA 1997.

All legislative references are to the ITAA 1997 unless otherwise indicated.

Class of entities

3. The class of entities to which this Ruling applies is those employees of Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance Limited (LRQA) who receive a payment under the scheme described in paragraphs 10 to 27 of this Ruling.

Qualifications

4. The Commissioner makes this Ruling based on the precise scheme identified in this Ruling.
5. The class of entities defined in this Ruling may rely on its contents provided the scheme actually carried out is carried out in accordance with the scheme described in paragraphs 10 to 27 of this Ruling.
6. If the scheme actually carried out is materially different from the scheme that is described in this Ruling, then:
 - this Ruling has no binding effect on the Commissioner because the scheme entered into is not the scheme on which the Commissioner has ruled; and
 - this Ruling may be withdrawn or modified.
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Date of effect

8. This Ruling applies from 18 May 2011 to 30 June 2011. The Ruling continues to apply after 30 June 2011 to all entities within the specified class who entered into the specified scheme during the term of the Ruling. However, this Ruling will not apply to taxpayers to the extent that it conflicts with the terms of a settlement of a dispute agreed to before the date of issue of this Ruling (see paragraphs 75 and 76 of Taxation Ruling TR 2006/10).

Scheme

9. The following description of the scheme is based on information provided by the applicant.
10. Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance Limited (LRQA) is seeking the Commissioner's approval to implement an early retirement scheme (ERS) in accordance with section 83-180.
11. The scheme is to be known as the 'LRQA Early Retirement Scheme'.

12. The class of persons to whom this scheme applies is all employees of LRQA who are full time assessors and who are over the age of 55 years, except aerospace systems management assessors.
13. The purpose of the scheme is to re-organise LRQA's workforce to facilitate growth in other areas of its business.
14. The objectives of the ERS are to facilitate early retirement of a number of employees in a division of its business that is no longer in demand and to employ professionals with specialist qualifications that are better skilled to service LRQA in other high growth areas of its business.
15. Following approval of the scheme, all eligible employees within the class will have until 1 June 2011 to express an interest in the scheme.
16. All eligible employees will be made an offer within a week of submitting their expression of interest. Once an offer is made an eligible employee will have two weeks to decide whether to accept the offer.
17. It is proposed the scheme will be implemented from the date after the Commissioner's approval to 30 June 2011.
18. Participation in the ERS is entirely voluntary.
19. All eligible employees under the ERS will be offered a payout calculation based on an employee's age and years of service. The formula to calculate the payment is:
- $(\text{Age factor} + \text{Service factor}) \times \$50,000$
- Age factor = 'age of oldest employee' *divided by* 'age of employee' in question
- Service factor = 'service length of employee' in question *divided by* 'service of longest serving employee'
20. All eligible employees who retire under the scheme will terminate employment and receive the payment on a date negotiated with each individual employee based on their operational requirements but no later than 30 June 2011.
21. The payment made under the scheme is in excess of any superannuation and any other benefits to which eligible employees would otherwise be entitled.
22. Any employee who terminates employment other than under the proposed scheme, will not be entitled to receive the payment.
23. All employees terminated under the ERS will receive any unused annual leave and long service leave entitlements however they do not form part of the payment made under the scheme.
24. The payment made under the ERS is at arm's-length.

25. The retirement of employees under the ERS will occur before they turn 65 years of age.

26. There is no agreement in place between the employee and LRQA, or between LRQA and another person to employ the employee after retirement.

27. Eligible employees are covered under the Professional Employees Award 2010.

Ruling

28. The early retirement scheme to be implemented by LRQA is an early retirement scheme for the purposes of section 83-180.

29. Accordingly, so much of the payment received by an employee that exceeds the amount that could reasonably be expected to be received by the employee in consequence of voluntary termination of his or her employment at the time of the retirement will be an early retirement scheme payment.

30. In addition, so much of the early retirement scheme payment as falls within the threshold calculated in accordance with section 83-170 is not assessable income and is not exempt income.

Appendix 1 – Explanation

❶ *This Appendix is provided as information to help you understand how the Commissioner's view has been reached. It does not form part of the binding public ruling.*

31. Where a scheme satisfies the requirements of section 83-180 that scheme will be an 'early retirement scheme'.

32. Subsection 83-180(3) states that:

A scheme is an **early retirement scheme** if:

- (a) all the employer's employees who comprise such a class of employees as the Commissioner approves may participate in the scheme; and
- (b) the employer's purpose in implementing the scheme is to rationalise or re-organise the employer's operations by making any change to the employer's operations, or the nature of the work force, that the Commissioner approves; and
- (c) before the scheme is implemented, the Commissioner, by written instrument, approves the scheme as an early retirement scheme for the purposes of this section.

These three conditions are now considered.

All employees within a class approved by the Commissioner may participate in the scheme

33. In order to satisfy the first condition, the scheme must be offered to all employees in a class approved by the Commissioner under paragraph 83-180(3)(a).

34. The class of employees to whom early retirement will be offered is set out in paragraph 12 of this Ruling.

35. The Commissioner considers that this is an appropriate class of persons for the scheme to be offered. In approving this class of employees the Commissioner has considered the nature of the rationalisation or re-organisation of the operations of the employer. It is therefore considered that these employees meet the requirements of an approved class of employees for the purposes of paragraph 83-180(3)(a).

The employer's purpose in implementing the scheme is to rationalise or re-organise the employer's operations in a way approved by the Commissioner

36. The proposed scheme must be implemented by the employer with a view to rationalising or re-organising the operations of the employer as described in paragraph 83-180(3)(b).

37. Paragraphs 13 and 14 of this Ruling describe the nature of the rationalisation or re-organisation of the employer's operations. In approving the scheme, the Commissioner has had regard to the changes in the operations and nature of the workforce of the employer. It is therefore considered the scheme is to be implemented by the employer with a view to rationalising or re-organising the operations of the employer for the purposes of paragraph 83-180(3)(b). Accordingly, the second condition for approval has been met.

The scheme must be approved by the Commissioner prior to its implementation

38. The Scheme is proposed to operate for a period from the date of the Commissioner's approval to 30 June 2011. Approval will be granted prior to implementation therefore, for the purposes of paragraph 83-180(3)(c), the third condition is satisfied.

39. The scheme will be in operation for approximately 2 months. This is considered to be appropriate in this case due to the circumstances of the restructure and for those employees that will be given the option of early retirement under the scheme.

Other relevant information

40. Under subsection 83-180(1) so much of the payment received by an employee because the employee retires under an early retirement scheme as exceeds the amount that could reasonably be expected to be received by the employee in consequence of the voluntary termination of his or her employment at the time of the retirement is an early retirement scheme payment.

41. It should be noted that, in order for a payment to qualify as an early retirement scheme payment, it must also satisfy the following requirements (as set out in subsections 83-180(2), 83-180(5) and 83-180(6)):

- the retirement occurred before the employee turned age 65 or such earlier date on which the employee's employment would have terminated under the terms of employment because of the employee attaining a certain age or completing a particular period of service (as the case may be);
- if the employee and the employer are not dealing with each other at arm's length (for example because they are related in some way) the payment does not exceed the amount that could reasonably be expected to be made if the retirement was made at arm's length;

- at the time of retirement there was no arrangement between the employee and the employer, or between the employer and another person, to employ the employee after the retirement;
- the payment must not be made in lieu of superannuation benefits; and
- it is not a payment mentioned in section 82-135 (apart from paragraph 82-135(e)).

42. The term 'arrangement' is defined in subsection 995-1(1) as meaning 'any arrangement, agreement, understanding, promise or undertaking, whether express or implied, and whether or not enforceable (or intended to be enforceable) by legal proceedings'.

43. An early retirement scheme payment that falls within the specified limit is referred to as the 'tax-free' amount and will not be assessable income and will not be exempt income.

44. For the 2010-11 income year, the tax-free amount is limited to \$8,126 (base amount) plus \$4,064 (service amount) for each whole year of completed employment service to which the early retirement scheme payment relates. It should be noted that 6 months, 8 months or even 11 months do not count as a whole year for the purposes of this calculation. In accordance with section 960-285, the base limit and service amount limits will be indexed in line with average weekly ordinary time earnings for each income year.

45. The total of the amount received on the termination of employment calculated in accordance with paragraph 19 may qualify as an early retirement scheme payment.

46. The total payment in paragraph 45 will be measured against the limit calculated in accordance with the formula mentioned in paragraph 44 to determine the 'tax-free' amount of the early retirement scheme payment.

47. The 'tax-free' amount will:

- not be an employment termination payment; and
- not be able to be rolled-over into a superannuation fund.

48. Any payment in excess of this limit will be an employment termination payment and split up into tax-free and taxable components. The tax-free component of an employment termination payment includes the pre-July 83 segment of the payment. The tax-free component is not assessable income and is not exempt income.

Appendix 2 – Detailed contents list

49. The following is a detailed contents list for this Ruling:

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References

Previous draft:

Not previously issued as a draft

Related Rulings/Determinations:

TR 2006/10

Subject references:

- early retirement scheme
- employment termination

Legislative references:

- ITAA 1997
- ITAA 1997 82-135
- ITAA 1997 82-135(e)
- ITAA 1997 83-170

- ITAA 1997 83-180
- ITAA 1997 83-180(1)
- ITAA 1997 83-180(2)
- ITAA 1997 83-180(3)
- ITAA 1997 83-180(3)(a)
- ITAA 1997 83-180(3)(b)
- ITAA 1997 83-180(3)(c)
- ITAA 1997 83-180(5)
- ITAA 1997 83-180(6)
- ITAA 1997 960-285
- ITAA 1997 995-1(1)
- TAA 1953
- Copyright Act 1968

ATO references

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