


TD 96/D12 - Income tax: if a parcel of land acquired after 19 September 1985 is subdivided into lots ('blocks'), is a disposal of a block of the subdivided land treated by Part IIIA of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936 as the disposal of part of an asset (the original land parcel) or the disposal of an asset in its own right (the subdivided block)?

 This cover sheet is provided for information only. It does not form part of *TD 96/D12 - Income tax: if a parcel of land acquired after 19 September 1985 is subdivided into lots ('blocks'), is a disposal of a block of the subdivided land treated by Part IIIA of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936 as the disposal of part of an asset (the original land parcel) or the disposal of an asset in its own right (the subdivided block)?*

This document has been finalised by [TD 97/3](#).

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Draft Taxation Determination

Income tax: if a parcel of land acquired after 19 September 1985 is subdivided into lots ('blocks'), is a disposal of a block of the subdivided land treated by Part IIIA of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1936* as the disposal of part of an asset (the original land parcel) or the disposal of an asset in its own right (the subdivided block)?

Purpose of this Taxation Determination

Depending on the view adopted as to the effect of a subdivision of land, there are arguably two provisions in Part IIIA, section 160ZH and section 160ZI, that can apply to determine the cost base of a subdivided block. Section 160ZI apportions costs on the basis of market values, whereas section 160ZH merely requires that the apportionment be reasonable. In particular cases, the use of one provision rather than another may lead to materially different CGT outcomes.

Answer

1. The disposal of a subdivided block is treated as the disposal of an asset in its own right, and not as a disposal of part of an asset being the original land parcel.
2. We consider that the effect of registration of separate new titles under the subdivision is, for Part IIIA purposes, to divide the original land parcel into two or more assets (viz., the subdivided blocks). The subdivided blocks are then treated as separate assets under the capital gains provisions. They are taken to have been acquired by the owner of the original land parcel when that parcel of land was acquired.

Alternative view: An alternative view is that the effect of a subdivision of land is merely to change the way the original asset is owned. That is, the original land parcel is now held by way of a number of separate titles rather than the original title.

Reasons

3. We consider that the 'split asset' view is the better view because it recognises, firstly, that the land owner has assets after the subdivision which can be dealt with separately and, secondly, that title to the original land parcel, on subdivision, will often cease to exist. The original asset has been divided into two or more assets (the subdivided blocks).

4. If an original land parcel is divided into two or more blocks without any change in beneficial ownership, subsections 160ZH(12) and (13) provide that the relevant cost base (e.g., indexed cost base) of the original asset is, to such extent as is reasonable, included in the relevant cost bases of the subdivided blocks.

5. The consequences above should be contrasted with a situation where a person disposes of an **interest** in land. For example, a person may dispose of a 50% interest in land the person owns. 'Land' is defined in subsection 160K(1) to include a legal or equitable estate or interest in land. The disposal of the 50% interest in the land constitutes a disposal of part of the land to which sections 160R and section 160ZI apply.

Note: In determining, for the purposes of subsections 160ZH(12) and (13), the extent to which it is reasonable to attribute the amount of the relevant cost base of the original land parcel to the relevant cost bases of the subdivided blocks, we would accept any approach that is appropriate in the circumstances of the particular case, e.g., on an area basis or relative market value basis.

Example 1

Albert subdivides land, which he purchased in 1986 for \$150,000, into 5 blocks of equal size and value. On the registration of new titles, the original asset (the land) is 'split' into 5 separate assets for CGT purposes (i.e., the subdivided blocks). In this case it would be reasonable to attribute \$30,000 of the original cost to each block. Albert then sells one block for \$200,000. Ignoring indexation and incidental costs, a capital gain of \$170,000 (i.e., \$200,000 less \$30,000) would accrue to Albert on the disposal.

Note: *In any land subdivision, the potential application of the revenue provisions must be considered. In the example above, we have assumed that the land is not trading stock and that the net profit is not assessable income under subsection 25(1).*

Example 2

John subdivides his post-CGT land into two blocks with a view to selling one and retaining the other. He incurs the following costs:

survey fees; legal fees; subdivision application fees; and cost of connecting electricity and water only to the subdivided block to be sold.

John includes all of these costs in the relevant cost base of the block to be sold. We consider that this is not a reasonable apportionment. It is reasonable to apportion the survey, legal and subdivision application fees over both blocks. If the blocks are of unequal market value, an apportionment of costs in proportion to the market value of the blocks would usually constitute a reasonable apportionment. As the cost of connecting the electricity and water relates only to the block to be sold, it would be reasonable to attribute this cost solely to the cost base of this block.

A reasonable apportionment of the cost of the land itself can usually be achieved on an area basis if all the land is of similar market value or on a relative market value basis if this is not the case.

Example 3

Jane purchases one hectare of land in 1992. The land has a good quality building block (one-quarter of a hectare) worth 75% of the total market value of the property. The balance of the land is low-lying flood-plain. In 1995, Jane subdivides off the flood-plain. It would be reasonable in

the circumstances to apportion 75% of the original acquisition cost of the property to the 'building block' and 25% to the 'flood-plain'.

Commissioner of Taxation

21 August 1996

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Related Determinations:

Related Rulings:

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