

CR 2001/20 - Income Tax: Department of Human Services - Approved Early Retirement Scheme

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 This document has changed over time. This is a consolidated version of the ruling which was published on *13 June 2001*



Class Ruling

Income Tax: Department of Human Services – Approved Early Retirement Scheme

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Preamble

*The number, subject heading, and the **What this Class Ruling is about** (including **Tax law(s)**, **Class of persons** and **Qualifications** sections), **Date of effect**, **Withdrawal**, **Arrangement** and **Ruling** parts of this document are a ‘public ruling’ in terms of Part IVAAA of the **Taxation Administration Act 1953**. CR 2001/1 explains Class Rulings and Taxation Rulings TR 92/1 and TR 97/16 together explain when a Ruling is a public ruling and how it is binding on the Commissioner.*

What this Class Ruling is about

1. This Ruling sets out the Commissioner’s opinion on the way in which the ‘tax law(s)’ identified below apply to the defined class of persons, who take part in the arrangement to which this Ruling relates.

Tax law(s)

2. The tax law dealt with in this Ruling is section 27E of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1936*

Class of persons

3. The class of persons to whom this Ruling applies is staff in the Direct Care areas at:

- Malmsbury Juvenile Justice Centre, Loddon Mallee Region, Department of Human Services;
- Melbourne Juvenile Justice Centre, Western Metropolitan Region, Department of Human Services;
- Parkville Youth Residential Centre, Western Metropolitan Region, Department of Human Services,

who are Juvenile Justice workers employed in the Child, Adolescent, Family Welfare officer classification structure with classifications ranging from CAFW1 to CAFW6 with salaries from CAFW1 \$16 746 minimum to CAFW6 \$87 108 maximum, and who receive a payment under the arrangement described below in paragraphs 10 to 29.

Qualifications

4. The Commissioner makes this Ruling based on the precise arrangement identified in this Ruling.
5. The class of persons defined in this Ruling may rely on its contents provided the arrangement described below at paragraphs 10 to 29 is carried out in accordance with the details of the arrangement provided in this Ruling.
6. If the arrangement described in this Ruling is materially different from the arrangement that is actually carried out:
 - (a) this Ruling has no binding effect on the Commissioner because the arrangement entered into is not the arrangement on which the Commissioner has ruled, and
 - (b) this Ruling may be withdrawn or modified.
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Date of effect

8. This Ruling applies from 13 June 2001. However, the Ruling does not apply to taxpayers to the extent that it conflicts with the terms of settlement of a dispute agreed to before the date of issue of the Ruling (see paragraphs 21 and 22 of Taxation Ruling TR 92/20).

Withdrawal

9. This Ruling is withdrawn and ceases to have effect after 30 June 2001. The Ruling continues to apply, in respect of the tax law(s) ruled upon, to all persons within the specified class who enter into the specified arrangement during the term of the ruling. Thus, the Ruling continues to apply to those persons, even following its withdrawal, for arrangements entered into prior to withdrawal of the Ruling. This is subject to there being no change in the arrangement or in the persons' involvement in the arrangement.

Arrangement

10. The arrangement that is the subject of the Ruling is described below. This description is based on the following documents. These documents, or relevant parts of them, as the case may be, form part of and are to be read with this description. The relevant documents or parts of documents incorporated into this description of the arrangement are letters dated 3 May 2001 and 16 May 2001.

The scheme

11. The Department of Human Services (hereafter referred to as the DHS) is seeking approval for an early retirement scheme known as the Voluntary Departure Package scheme (hereafter referred to as the VDP scheme).

12. The purpose of the scheme is to assist in the service redevelopment and enhancement of the Juvenile Justice system in Malmsbury Justice Centre, Melbourne Juvenile Justice Centre and the Parkville Youth Residential Centre.

13. The aim of the VDP round is to seek expressions of interest from staff affected by the service redevelopment and enhancement in the Direct Care area at each of the three locations.

14. It is proposed that the scheme will be in operation from 23 May 2001, until 30 June 2001.

15. The scheme applies to staff in the Direct Care areas at:

- Malmsbury Juvenile Justice Centre, Loddon Mallee Region, Department of Human Services;
- Melbourne Juvenile Justice Centre, Western Metropolitan Region, Department of Human Services;
- Parkville Youth Residential Centre, Western Metropolitan Region, Department of Human Services,

who are Juvenile Justice workers employed in the Child, Adolescent, Family Welfare officer classification structure with classifications ranging from CAFW1 to CAFW6 with salaries from CAFW1 \$16 746 minimum to CAFW6 \$87 108 maximum.

16. The number of eligible staff employed in the Direct Care is:

- Malmsbury Juvenile Justice Centre 53
- Melbourne Juvenile Justice Centre 164
- Parkville Youth Residential Centre 44.

17. These staff are covered by the following awards/agreements:

Public Service (Non Executive Staff – Victoria) Interim Award 1996 and the Public Service (Non Executive Staff – Victoria) (Section 170MX) Award 2000 with its accompanying DHS Negotiating Document, and the Victorian Public Service (Non Executive Staff – Victoria) Agreement 2000.

18. The DHS retains a limited veto on applications for this round of VDPs insofar as:

- staff changes are consistent with Region objectives and strategic direction;
- the skills required by the Region to meet its future role are not reduced; and
- opportunities to improve productivity can be realised.

19. To be eligible to express interest in a VDP, staff must meet the following criteria as at 22 May 2001:

- be less than 65 years of age
- be on the payroll and not on any form of unpaid leave
- not be in receipt of non-medical WorkCover payments
- be employed on an open-ended and continuing basis.

20. Benefits payable under the scheme are as follows:

- four weeks pay in lieu of notice; plus
- two weeks pay for each year of service, up to a maximum of fifteen years;

subject to a total maximum of 34 weeks pay, plus

- a lump sum VDP incentive of \$10 000.

21. There is no compulsory retirement age applying to DHS staff, however, staff reaching the age of 55 can voluntarily retire at any time.

22. The VDP payments outlined above do not include any benefits that employees may be entitled to as members of superannuation funds.

Payments made under the Scheme

23. For a payment made under the above mentioned scheme to qualify as an approved early retirement scheme payment, the following conditions must be met. Please note, any payment made under the scheme that does not satisfy these requirements is not covered by this Ruling.

24. The payment must be an eligible termination payment made in relation to the employee in consequence of his or her employment being terminated under the approved early retirement scheme.

25. The payment must not be made from an eligible superannuation fund.

26. The payment must not be made in lieu of superannuation benefits.

27. The employee terminated his or her employment before the earlier of:

- age 65; or
- the date on which his or her employment would have necessarily terminated under the terms of employment because of the taxpayer attaining a certain age or completing a certain period of service.

28. Where 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 what would have been paid to the employee had they been dealing at arm's length.

29. At the termination time, there is no agreement in force between the employee and the employer or the employer and another person, to re-employ the employee after the date of termination.

Ruling

30. The Voluntary Departure Package (VDP) scheme is an approved early retirement scheme for the purposes of section 27E of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1936*.

31. Accordingly, so much of the eligible termination payment as exceeds the amount of an eligible termination payment that could reasonably be expected to have been made in relation to the taxpayer if the termination of employment had occurred at the termination time otherwise than in accordance with the approved early retirement scheme, is an approved early retirement scheme payment in relation to the taxpayer.

Explanations

32. Where a scheme satisfies the requirements of section 27E of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1936* (the Act), that scheme will be an 'approved early retirement scheme.'

33. The Commissioner of Taxation (the Commissioner) has issued Taxation Ruling TR 94/12 titled: *'Income tax: approved early retirement scheme and bona fide redundancy payments'* which sets out guidelines on the application of section 27E.

34. Paragraph 14 of TR 94/12 states that:

'Three conditions need to be satisfied for a scheme to qualify as an approved early retirement scheme. Those conditions are:

- (i) the scheme must be offered to all employees within a class identified by the employer (paragraph 27E(1)(a));
- (ii) the scheme must be entered into with a view to rationalising or re-organising the operations of the employer with an identified purpose in mind (paragraph 27E(1)(b)); and
- (iii) the scheme must be approved by the Commissioner prior to its implementation (paragraph 27E(1)(c)).'

The scheme must be offered to all employees within a class identified by the employer

35. In order to satisfy the first condition, the scheme must be offered to all employees within one of the categories specified in subparagraphs 27E(1)(a)(i) to (v).

36. Participation in the scheme is open to the class of employees described at paragraph 3 of this ruling. This class of employees does not come within any of subparagraphs 27E(1)(a)(i) to (iv), therefore it must be considered under subparagraph 27E(1)(a)(v), namely, all employees of the employer who constitute a class of employees approved by the Commissioner for the purposes of this paragraph. 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 subparagraph 27E(1)(a)(v).

37. It is noted that employer retains a limited right of veto on applications insofar as staff changes are consistent with Region objectives and strategic direction, the skills required by the Region to meet its future role are not reduced and opportunities to improve productivity can be realised. The limitation of the scheme in this way is acceptable to the Commissioner.

The scheme must be entered into with a view to rationalising or re-organising the operations of the employer with an identified purpose in mind

38. The proposed scheme must be implemented with a view to rationalise or re-organise the operations of the employer by means of one or more of the objectives set out in subparagraphs 27E(1)(b)(i) to (vi).

39. The purposes of the VDP scheme are described at paragraph 12 of this ruling. The proposed scheme meets the requirements set out in subparagraphs 27E(1)(b)(v); accordingly the second condition for approval has been met.

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

40. Application for approval of the scheme was received in this office on 3 May 2001. The scheme is proposed to operate for a period from 23 May 2000 to 30 June 2001. Since the implementation date has already passed, the scheme fails to meet the requirement of paragraph 27E(1)(c).

However, subsection 27E(2) allows the Commissioner to overlook the failure to comply with any of the three conditions if special circumstances exist in relation to the scheme. Paragraph 30 of TR 94/12 states:

“Special circumstances include circumstances where: a scheme is implemented before approval has been obtained because, for example, there has been a delay in processing an application made for its approval...”

It is considered that this case falls within special circumstances as set out in subsection 27E(2), and the Commissioner will waive compliance with the third requirement of subsection 27E(1).

The scheme will be in operation for three months, which is within the period recommended in TR 94/12.

Other relevant information

41. Under section 27E, so much of the payment received by a taxpayer under the approved early retirement scheme, that exceeds the amount that would ordinarily have been received on voluntary retirement or resignation is an approved early retirement scheme payment.

42. It should be noted that, in order for a payment to qualify as an approved early retirement scheme payment, it must also satisfy the

following requirements (as set out in subsections 27E(4) and (5) of the Act):

- the payment must be an eligible termination payment made in relation to the taxpayer in consequence of the taxpayer's employment being terminated under an approved early retirement scheme;
- the payment must not be from an eligible superannuation fund;
- the payment must not be made in lieu of superannuation benefits;
- if the taxpayer 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 what would have been paid to the taxpayer had they been dealing at arm's length;
- the date of termination was before age 65 or such earlier date on which the taxpayer's employment would necessarily have had to terminate under the terms of employment because of the taxpayer attaining a certain age or completing a certain period of service, whichever occurs first; and
- there was no agreement at the date of termination between the taxpayer and the employer, or the employer and another person to re-employ the taxpayer after the date of termination.

43. The term 'agreement' is defined in subsection 27A(1) as meaning 'any agreement, arrangement or understanding whether formal or informal, whether express or implied and whether or not enforceable, or intended to be enforceable, by legal proceedings.'

44. An approved early retirement scheme payment made on or after 1 July 1994 that falls within the specified limits will be exempt from income tax, and called the "tax-free amount."

45. For the year ending 30 June 2001, the tax-free amount is limited to \$5062 plus \$2531 for each whole year of completed employment service to which the approved early retirement scheme payment relates. Please note that 6 months, 8 months or even 11 months do not count as a whole year for the purposes of this calculation. The \$5 062 and \$2 531 limits will be indexed to rise in each subsequent year in line with increases in average weekly ordinary time earnings.

46. Furthermore, the tax-free amount will:

- not be an eligible termination payment (ETP);

- not be able to be rolled-over;
- not include any amount from a superannuation fund or paid in lieu of a superannuation benefit; and
- not count towards the recipient's Reasonable Benefit Limit.

47. Any payment in excess of this limit will be an ordinary ETP and split up into the pre-July 83 and post-June 83 (untaxed element) components. This ETP can be rolled-over.

48. It should be noted that the amount of an approved early retirement scheme payment that is over the tax-free amount may be taxed under the provisions of the superannuation surcharge legislation, whether it is taken in cash or rolled-over.

49. The following payments qualify as an approved early retirement scheme payment and are exempt from tax within the limits described above:

- four weeks pay in lieu of notice; plus
- two weeks pay for each year of service, up to a maximum of fifteen years;

subject to a total maximum of 34 weeks pay, plus

- a lump sum VDP incentive of \$10 000.

50. A copy of this Ruling must be given to all employees eligible to participate in the approved early retirement scheme.

Detailed contents list

51. Below is a detailed contents list for this Class Ruling:

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Commissioner of Taxation

6 June 2001

Previous draft:

Not previously issued in draft form

Related Rulings/Determinations:

CR 2001/1; TR 92/1; TR 97/16;
 TR 92/20; TR 94/12; TR 94/12ER
 Notice of Erratum

Subject references:

- approved early retirement scheme payments
- eligible termination payments
- eligible termination payments components

Legislative references:

- ITAA 1936 27A(1)
- ITAA 1936 27E
- ITAA 1936 27E(1)(a)(i)
- ITAA 1936 27E(1)(a)(ii)
- ITAA 1936 27E(1)(a)(iii)
- ITAA 1936 27E(1)(a)(iv)
- ITAA 1936 27E(1)(a)
- ITAA 1936 27E(1)(b)
- ITAA 1936 27E(1)(b)(i)
- ITAA 1936 27E(1)(b)(iv)
- ITAA 1936 27E(1)(c)
- ITAA 1936 27E(4)
- ITAA 1936 27E(5)

ATO References

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