



CR 2001/57 - Income tax: Approved Early Retirement Scheme - NSW Department of Mineral Resources

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Class Ruling

Income tax: Approved Early Retirement Scheme – NSW Department of Mineral Resources

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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* (‘ITAA 1936’).

Class of persons

3. The class of persons to whom this Ruling applies is all staff in the NSW Department of Mineral Resources who receive a payment under the arrangement described below in paragraphs 10 to 24.

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 24 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- (b) this Ruling may be withdrawn or modified.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 1 November 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 This Ruling is withdrawn and ceases to have effect after 30 June 2002. 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

The Scheme

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:

- correspondence from the NSW Department of Mineral Resources of 23 August 2001;
- record of telephone conversation with a representative of the NSW Department of Mineral Resources on 21 September 2001;
- e-mail from the NSW Department of Mineral Resources of 25 September 2001;
- record of telephone conversation with a representative of the NSW Department of Mineral Resources on 8 October 2001;
- e-mail from the NSW Department of Mineral Resources of 8 October 2001.

11. The NSW Department of Mineral Resources is seeking approval for an early retirement scheme.

12. The NSW Department of Mineral Resources has been reviewing its operations to ensure that it continues to provide appropriate services in an efficient and effective manner in an environment of funding constraints. Further savings are required over the next few years and the Department has called for expressions of interest in voluntary redundancy from all employees to finalise reorganisation of its operations to meet the savings targets.

13. Implementation of the early retirement scheme will enable overall streamlining of processes and the increased use of technology, including the adoption of electronic service delivery in some areas.

14. The scheme will commence on 1 November 2001 and conclude on 30 June 2002.

15. The early retirement scheme payment will comprise the following:

- four weeks notice or payment in lieu;
- an additional one weeks notice or pay in lieu for employees aged 45 years and over, with 5 or more years of completed service;

- severance pay at the rate of 3 weeks per year of continuous service with a maximum of 39 weeks.

16. In addition, those employees who accept an offer of voluntary redundancy within 2 weeks of the offer being made and terminate employment within the time nominated by the employer will be entitled to the following additional payments:

- less than 1 year's service will receive 2 weeks pay;
- 1 year and less than 2 years service will receive 4 weeks pay;
- 2 years and less than 3 years service will receive 6 weeks pay;
- 3 years service and over will receive 8 weeks pay.

17. The employees will also receive the following payments from the NSW Department of Mineral Resources but they do not form part of the approved early retirement scheme payment:

- the benefit allowable as a contributor to a retirement fund;
- pro rata annual leave loading in respect of leave accrued at date of termination;
- for a period of one year, starting from a successful applicant's last day of duty with the Department, entitlement to a maximum of \$5,000 on Department approved expenses to assist in the seeking of alternative employment or additional vocational knowledge and skills that are in demand in the broader community.

Payments made under the Scheme

18. 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.

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

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

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

22. 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.

23. 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.

24. 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

25. The early retirement scheme offered by the NSW Department of Mineral Resources is an approved early retirement scheme for the purposes of section 27E of the ITAA 1936.

26. Accordingly, so much of the eligible termination payment (ETP) as exceeds the amount of an ETP 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

27. Where a scheme satisfies the requirements of section 27E of the ITAA 1936 that scheme will be an 'approved early retirement scheme.'

28. 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.

29. 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)).’

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

30. 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).

31. The class of employees to whom the scheme is proposed to be offered is all staff in the NSW Department of Mineral Resources.

32. This class of employees is considered to have met the requirements of subparagraph 27E(1)(a)(i), that is, all employees of the employer.

33. It is noted, however that the NSW Department of Mineral Resources retains a limited right of veto to be applied to applications by key personnel who cannot be readily replaced and whose loss would impair the efficiency of the NSW Department of Mineral Resources business operations. The limitation of the scheme in this way is acceptable to the Commissioner.

2. 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

34. 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).

35. The purposes of the scheme are described at paragraphs 12 to 13 of this ruling. The proposed scheme meets the requirements set out in subparagraph 27E(1)(b)(v); accordingly the second condition for approval has been met.

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

36. The scheme is proposed to operate for a period from 1 November 2001 to 30 June 2002. Approval will be granted prior to implementation therefore the third condition is satisfied.

37. The scheme will be in operation for 8 months which is within the period recommended in TR 94/12.

Other relevant information

38. 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 resignation or retirement is an approved early retirement scheme payment.

39. 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 (ETP) 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.

40. 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.’

41. An approved early retirement scheme payment made on or after 1 July 1994 that falls within the specified limit will be exempt from income tax and called the “tax-free amount.”

42. For the year ending 30 June 2002, the tax-free amount is limited to \$5 295 plus \$2 648 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.

43. The total of the following payments qualify as an approved early retirement scheme payment:

- four weeks notice or payment in lieu;
- an additional one weeks notice or pay in lieu for employees aged 45 years and over, with 5 or more years of completed service;
- severance pay at the rate of 3 weeks per year of continuous service with a maximum of 39 weeks; and
- any additional payments as detailed in paragraph 16 for accepting and terminating employment in the nominated time.

44. The total of the payments in the previous paragraph will be measured against the limit calculated in accordance with paragraph 42 to determine the “tax-free amount”.

45. The tax-free amount will:

- not be an 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.

46. 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.

47. It should be noted that the amount of an approved early retirement scheme payment that is over the tax-free amount may be

subject to the provisions of the superannuation surcharge legislation, whether it is taken in cash or rolled-over.

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

Detailed contents list

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

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Commissioner of Taxation

31 October 2001

Previous draft:
Not previously issued in draft form

Related Rulings/Determinations:
CR 2001/1; TR 92/1; TR 92/20;
TR 94/12; TR 97/16

CR 2001/57

Subject references

- Approved early retirement scheme payments;
- Eligible termination payments
- Eligible termination payments components

- 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)(v)
- ITAA 1936 27E(1)(b)(i)
- ITAA 1936 27E(1)(b)(ii)
- ITAA 1936 27E(1)(b)(iii)
- ITAA 1936 27E(1)(b)(iv)
- ITAA 1936 27E(1)(b)(v)
- ITAA 1936 27E(1)(b)(vi)
- ITAA 1936 27E(4)
- ITAA 1936 27E(5)

Legislative references:

- TAA 1953 Part IVAAA
- ITAA 1936 27A(1)
- ITAA 1936 27E
- ITAA 1936 27E(1)(a)
- ITAA 1936 27E(1)(b)
- ITAA 1936 27E(1)(c)

ATO References:

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