

CR 2003/62 - Income tax: Approved Early Retirement Scheme - Riverina Wool Combing Pty Ltd

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Class Ruling

Income tax: Approved Early Retirement Scheme – Riverina Wool Combing Pty Ltd

Contents	Para
What this Class Ruling is about	1
Date of effect	10
Withdrawal	11
Arrangement	12
Ruling	25
Explanation	28
Detailed contents list	51

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.
2. Broadly, this Ruling approves the particular early retirement scheme and acknowledges the availability of tax concessions for persons receiving payments under the scheme. There are many conditions attached to this Ruling and readers should be careful to ensure that these conditions are met before relying on this Ruling.

Tax law(s)

3. The tax laws dealt with in this Ruling are sections 27E and 27CB of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1936* (ITAA 1936).

Class of persons

4. The class of persons to which this Ruling applies is all employees of Riverina Wool Combing Pty Ltd who receive a payment under the arrangement described in paragraphs 12 to 24.

Qualifications

5. The Commissioner makes this Ruling based on the precise arrangement identified in this Ruling.

6. The class of persons defined in this Ruling may rely on its contents provided the arrangement actually carried out is carried out in accordance with the arrangement described in paragraphs 12 to 24.

7. If the arrangement actually carried out is materially different from the arrangement that is described in this Ruling, then:

- (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- (b) this Ruling may be withdrawn or modified.

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

Date of effect

10. This Ruling applies from 23 June 2003 unless and until it is withdrawn (see paragraph 11). However, this 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 this Ruling (see paragraphs 21 to 22 of Taxation Ruling TR 92/20). Furthermore this Ruling applies to the extent that the relevant tax laws are not amended.

Withdrawal

11. This Ruling is withdrawn and ceases to have effect after 22 June 2004. 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

12. The arrangement that is the subject of this 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 Riverina Wool Combing Pty Ltd; and
- record of telephone conversation with a representative of Riverina Wool Combing Pty Ltd on 4 July 2003.

13. Riverina Wool Combing Pty Ltd is seeking approval for an early retirement scheme.

14. As a result of a market decline of the wool top market and a continued worsening of the market in Asia, the United States and Europe it will be necessary for Riverina Wool Combing Pty Ltd to reduce production levels.

15. In addition, drought in Australia has resulted in the processing of under-matured wool and lower production yields. These results of the drought, coupled with increased costs for greasy wool and increased value of the Australian dollar have also had an effect on Riverina Wool Combing Pty Ltd's production.

16. The payment under the scheme is as follows:

- termination pay equivalent to two weeks ordinary wages; and
- the following scale of payments (expressed as week's pay) to be paid to employees:

Completed years of Service	Weeks Pay
<1	0
1	4
2	6
3	7
4	8

CR 2003/62

5	10
6	12
7	14
8	16
9	18
10	20
11	22
12	24
13 and over	26

17. The employees will also receive the following payments but these do not form part of the approved early retirement scheme payment:

- accrued sick leave;
- accrued annual leave; and
- accrued long service leave, where time in service is greater than five years.

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 conditions set out in paragraphs 19 to 24 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 must terminate 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 (e.g. 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 employ the employee after the date of termination.

Ruling

25. The early retirement scheme offered by Riverina Wool Combing Pty Ltd is an approved early retirement scheme for the purposes of section 27E of the ITAA 1936.

26. Accordingly, so much of the 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.

27. In addition, so much of the approved early retirement scheme payment as falls within the threshold calculated in accordance with subsection 27A(19) of the ITAA 1936 is non-assessable and is ignored in working out whether a capital gain has been made via the operation of section 27CB of the ITAA 1936.

Explanation

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

29. 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.

30. 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

31. 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).

32. The class of employees to which the scheme is proposed to be offered is:

- all employees of Riverina Wool Combing Pty Ltd.

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

34. It is noted, however, that the Riverina Wool Combing Pty Ltd 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 Riverina Wool Combing Pty Ltd's business operations. 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

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

36. Paragraphs 14 and 15 describe the nature of the rationalisation or re-organisation of Riverina Wool Combing Pty Ltd's operations. The proposed scheme meets the requirements set out in subparagraph 27E(1)(b)(iii). Accordingly, the second condition for approval has been met.

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

37. The scheme is proposed to operate for a period from 23 June 2003 to 22 June 2004. Since the implementation date has already passed, the scheme fails to meet the requirement of paragraph 27E(1)(c).

38. 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....

39. Based on the full circumstances of the application 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)(c).

40. The scheme will be in operation for 12 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 resignation or retirement 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):

- the payment must be an 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 (e.g. 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 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 limit will be exempt from income tax and called the 'tax-free amount'.

45. For the year ending 30 June 2003, the tax-free amount is limited to \$5,623 plus \$2,812 for each whole year of completed employment service to which the approved early retirement scheme payment relates. For the year ending 30 June 2004, the tax-free amount is limited to \$5,882 plus \$2,941 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.

46. The total of the amount received on the termination of employment calculated in accordance with paragraph 16 qualifies as an approved early retirement scheme payment.

47. The total of the payments in the previous paragraph will be measured against the limit calculated in accordance with paragraph 45 to determine the 'tax-free amount'.

48. 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.

49. Any payment in excess of this limit will be an ordinary ETP and split up into the pre-July 1983 and post-June 1983 (untaxed element) components. This ETP can be rolled-over.

50. 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.

Detailed contents list

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

	Paragraph
What this Class Ruling is about	1
Tax law(s)	3
Class of persons	4
Qualifications	5
Date of effect	10
Withdrawal	11
Arrangement	12
The Scheme	12
Payments made under the Scheme	18
Ruling	25
Explanation	28
The scheme must be offered to all employees within a class identified by the employer	31
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	35
The scheme must be approved by the Commissioner prior to its implementation	37
Other relevant information	41
Detailed contents list	51

Commissioner of Taxation

6 August 2003

Previous draft:

Not previously issued as a draft

Related Rulings/Determinations:

CR 2001/1; TR 92/1; TR 92/20;
TR 97/16; TR 94/12

CR 2003/62

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)
- Copyright Act 1968
- TAA 1953 Pt IVAAA

Legislative references:

- ITAA 1936 27A(1)
 - ITAA 1936 27A(19)
 - ITAA 1936 27CB
 - ITAA 1936 27E
 - ITAA 1936 27E(1)
 - ITAA 1936 27E(2)
 - ITAA 1936 27E(1)(a)
 - ITAA 1936 27E(1)(b)
 - ITAA 1936 27E(1)(c)
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ATO References

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