

# Adel El Hassan & Co Pty Ltd

Accounting, Auditing, Taxation & Financial Consultants



## ATO, TPB combine to take down unregistered agents

*A concerted effort by the ATO and Tax Practitioners Board to stamp out unregistered agents is underway, with the community called to do in any suspected activity*

ATO assistant commissioner Karen Foat said the agency is concerned with a number of people claiming to be tax agents, often promising refunds that sound too good to be true, or providing discounted services much cheaper than legitimate registered tax agents.

Such unregistered preparers often use a taxpayer's personal login details to access their ATO Online account through myGov to lodge tax returns.

“These unregistered preparers pose a threat to vulnerable taxpayers and risk the reputation of registered tax agents” Ms Foat said.

“They pretend to offer legitimate services to the community, but in reality they pose a serious threat not only to the people that use them, but to the broader community and the tax system as a whole.”

“Unfortunately, we see too many instances where people have unwittingly used an unregistered preparer, which has resulted in a significant tax debt and loss of money. We also see instances where people do not receive their refund, or where fraudulent claims are lodged in their name without their knowledge.”

Ms Foat said the ATO will work closely with the TPB, as well as law enforcement agencies throughout Australia, to identify and put a stop to unregistered preparers. She also called on the community to make a complaint to the TPB or tip-off the ATO, should they know of someone providing tax agent services for a fee or other reward who is not registered.

At the start of tax time 2019, TPB chair Michael O’Neill said the board was intent on stamping out the illegal practice, with the regulator [currently investigating 37 cases](#) involving unregistered agents.

“Members of the community and tax practitioners frequently report information about the unlawful activities of unregistered agents,” said Mr O’Neill.

“The TPB takes this intelligence very seriously... the worst cases will be brought to the Federal Court of Australia for prosecution.”

Court-awarded penalties for breaching tax agent services laws can be as high as \$52,500 for each offence by an individual and \$262,500 for a company.



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