

Not all bookkeepers are “dodgy”!

Leading bookkeeper association, AAT Australia is still seething since the “dodgy bookkeeper” claims reported by Brett Warfield transpired.

AAT Australia CEO, Mr Robert Comelli said; “Further to the article regarding “dodgy bookkeepers” it is particularly concerning as we are not certain as to whether the bookkeepers referred to in the article were working under any Code of Conduct or received formal training or education.”

In March 2010 the Tax Agents Services Act 2009 (TASA) was introduced into Australian Law. This Act was the beginning of the necessary reforms that would compel bookkeepers to become qualified and competent in their workplace.

AAT Australia supported this movement and was at the forefront of providing submissions to government that would try and ensure that unskilled and undertrained people who claim to be bookkeepers become skilled and trained to the level of standards that are necessary in Australian business.

“The introduction of appropriate standards for bookkeepers contributes greatly to improving the quality of services provided by BAS Agents particularly those who are not members of a professional body – and give the accounting technician profession improved credibility in the eyes of the general public and accountants alike.” Mr Comelli said.

AAT Australia’s membership requirements and services are consistent with the standards outlined in the TASA. This includes a minimum qualification requirement for full membership, a commitment to the professional Code of Conduct and members being subject to disciplinary procedure that in turn would deter from unethical practices.

In addition, Mr Comelli said; “AAT Australia wanted to ensure that accounting technicians are not only qualified, but would continue to be trained in the skills necessary to maintain the ethical practices and strict standards that will fulfill their role in the workplace. AAT Australia would also provide the necessary services to facilitate the education of accounting technicians in line with the Code of Professional and Ethical Conduct.”

The introduction of TASA signalled the final phase to achieve statutory recognition for competent Bookkeepers and the introduction of appropriate standard benchmarks for the account keeping tier.

The Law provides for anyone wishing to register and work as a **BAS Agent** for a fee must eventually:

- Hold at minimum qualification of a **Certificate IV in Financial Services (Accounting or Bookkeeping)**; awarded by a TAFE, registered training organisation or private provider.
- Have undertaken at least **1,400 hours** of relevant experience in the preceding 3 years.

Key points

- The Act commenced on **1 March 2010**
- **The Act covers Fee for service bookkeepers only, i.e.: contractors (not employees, PAYG)**
- Registration is with the National Tax Practitioners Board (TPB)

Enquiries

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- BAS Agents must work under a Code of Conduct and be a Fit and Proper Person
- Professional Indemnity Insurance is **mandatory for BAS Agents from 1 July 2011** which is intended to create a Safe Haven for Business Owners

In summary, when engaging a Bookkeeping contractor to do your BAS work please ensure that they are registered with the TPB. An additional safe guard is that the bookkeeper would also be a member of a professional account keeping association such as AAT Australia.

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