

Agent linking talks ‘highly productive’, says ATO

TAX

Office optimistic that another meeting with professional bodies can address concerns.

By [Philip King](#) • 20 January 2023 • 5 minute read

A meeting with tax professional bodies yesterday to thrash out disagreements over the revised agent linking regime was “highly productive” the ATO says, and it is optimistic that the eventual result will “address concerns”.

The professional bodies went to the meeting demanding changes to the complex six-step system, unveiled by the ATO in early December, saying it will be a burden on small business.

The meeting ended with the ATO sticking to its guns, according to one participant, but the office expected further meetings to achieve agreement.

“It was a highly productive discussion in which we received a range of feedback on how the proposed solution will impact both taxpayers and their representatives,” an ATO spokesperson said.

“We expect to meet with the group again in the coming weeks to continue productive discussions and ensure the final version of the product addresses the concerns raised without comprising our objective of strengthening our systems to protect against fraud.”

The tax professional bodies concede a need to update the process but say the revisions are poorly focused, add to the problems of small business and fail to make allowances for those less technically able.

“We are really concerned at how that will impact the smaller end of town, especially those that are less computer-literate and less internet savvy,” said

Matthew Addison, who attended as executive director of the Institute of Certified Bookkeepers but who is also chair of small business body COSBOA.

The ATO said the revised client-agent linking regime was “designed to ensure the highest level of security for taxpayers and their representatives” and a key feature was that taxpayers retained full control over who had access to their tax data.

The additional steps to the process were “a small impost that helps secure the tax system for all Australians”.

“The ATO understands there is a need to balance security concerns against the importance of ensuring our systems are accessible for clients and their representatives and support them to meet their obligations. That is why consultation with the community is an important part of the development of new client platforms and tools,” a spokesperson said.

“The solution being proposed by the ATO is using the current digital tools and platforms millions of businesses are already familiar with, including myGovID and Online Services for Business.

“Against a backdrop of increasing cyber attacks and identity fraud attempts across all organisations and businesses the ATO is committed to improving the security of its systems and protection of taxpayer information.”

Attendees at yesterday’s meeting included representatives from CA ANZ, CPA Australia, IPA, ICB, the Australian Bookkeepers Association, National Tax & Accountants’ Association, Institute of Financial Professionals Australia and the Tax Institute.