

## Media release

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### Tax Ombudsman records 127% spike in complaints

In the lead-up to tax time, the Tax Ombudsman has released her first complaints data snapshot, showing a dramatic rise in complaints in recent months and highlighting debt complaints as the most significant topic of taxpayer concern.

“In the year to date, we’ve received a massive 127% increase in complaints, mostly related to debt collection, penalties, and tax debt interest and payments. This can largely be attributed to the Australian Tax Office’s increased focus on debt collection but also our efforts to raise community awareness of our service and how we can help taxpayers receive fair outcomes,” Tax Ombudsman Ruth Owen said.

Ms Owen said the complaints snapshot was developed to communicate complaints insights to the community and demonstrate the important work her agency is doing to support taxpayers with tax and super complaints

“Our data helps us to identify pain points in the tax system and determine matters that may warrant our further investigation. This first snapshot gives us a clear picture of the emerging themes we’re seeing in complaints, who is complaining to us, what they are complaining about, and the causes and outcomes. It also links to a new bank of [case studies](#) on our website about real people we’ve helped.”

Ms Owen said her agency was not only focused on helping people to resolve tricky tax and super complaints but also working to improve the fairness and integrity of tax and super administration for all Australians.

“In 31% of complaints about penalties and interest, we helped to achieve tax debt reductions or remittance (removal) of interest for our customers. How the ATO manages interest charges was the subject of a recent review we published, where we recommended improvements in how the ATO considers removing interest charges where taxpayers are trying to pay their debts. These numbers represent the very real difference we can make to people’s lives, helping to resolve or alleviate financial burden and the associated emotional stress.

“Our data also shows that giving our customers reassurance about the way the ATO has handled their matter can be just as important as receiving a positive outcome. In 22% of penalties and interest complaints, we could provide our customers with an independent review and assurance that proper process has been followed.

“By tracking our data closely, we can predict trends, anticipate problem areas, and push for change. The more we utilise our data, the more people we can help and ensure a fairer tax system for all.”

The complaints data snapshot and a supporting explanatory document will be released quarterly. To access the latest version, visit our website [taxombudsman.gov.au/complaints-snapshots](https://taxombudsman.gov.au/complaints-snapshots)

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