PALMER
& ASSOCIATES

CERTIFIED PRACTISING ACCOUNTANTS

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Superannuation reform and its impact on you!

The wide ranging superannuation reforms originally announced in the 2016-17 Federal Budget have now been passed in Parliament.

As the majority of the reforms start from 1 July, 2017, it's important to consider how these might impact on you and whether you need to take any action before then.

In this newsletter we have summarised the key reforms for you.

Should you wish to discuss the changes in further detail or take advantage of our tax planning service please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Non-concessional contributions capped at $1.6 million

Once your super balance has reached $1.6m, from 1 July 2017 you will no longer be able to make non-concessional contributions to super. This does not stop you from making non-concessional contributions in the current 2017 financial year.

Pension accounts limited to $1.6 million

If the balance of your superannuation pension account exceeds $1.6m at 1 July 2017, the Tax Commissioner will direct your fund to reduce your retirement phase interests back to $1.6m and you will be subject to an excess transfer balance tax. Your overall super balance can be more than $1.6m but only $1.6m can be in a tax-free pension. Keeping the excess balance in super, albeit in accumulation phase, may still be worthwhile because of the low 15% tax rate.

Non-concessional contributions reduced to $100,000 per annum (from the current $180,000)

If you are under 65, you have until 30 June 2017 to use the current caps and contribute up to $540,000 this financial year. You can do this using the 'bring forward' rule that allows you to bring forward up to three years worth of non-concessional contributions in one year (and then make no or limited contributions for the next two years).

The advantage of using the bring forward rule now is that your three years worth of contributions utilise the current caps. If you contribute more than $180,000 this financial year but not the full $540,000, you still trigger the bring forward rule but any further contributions from 1 July 2017 are subject to the new $100,000 cap.

Concessional contributions reduced to $25,000 per annum

From 1 July 2017 the concessional contribution cap will be reduced from $30,000 (or $35,000 if you are 50 years old or over) to $25,000.

More high income earners to pay higher tax rate

High income earners with incomes of $300,000 or more pay 30% tax on super contributions they make, rather than the usual 15%. From 1 July 2017, this threshold will reduce to $250,000.

Earnings on Transition to Retirement fund income no longer tax-free

From 1 July 2017, the income from assets supporting transition to retirement income streams will no longer be exempt from tax but included in the fund's assessable income.

For example, if your super fund earns interest from a term deposit, that interest is currently tax-free in a transition to retirement pension. From 1 July, that interest will be included in the fund's assessable income.

There are also some positives in the reforms:

Claiming a tax deduction on super contributions

If you are under the age of 75, from 1 July 2017, you will be able to claim a tax deduction for personal superannuation contributions in your individual tax return.

Currently, you need to earn less than 10% of your income from salary or wages. This effectively allows all individuals, regardless of their employment circumstances, to make concessional superannuation contributions up to the concessional cap. Note that if you are over 65 you will need to meet the work test to make contributions to super.

'Carry forward' unused super cap

Where your superannuation balance is less than $500,000, from 1 July 2018 you will be able to make additional (carry forward) concessional contributions if you have not fully utilised your concessional contributions cap in previous years.

With the delayed start date of this reform, the first year that the carry forward amount can be used is 2019-20.

How can we help?

If you are about to enter into pension phase or are considering contributing a sizable amount into superannuation, we consider it prudent that you take advantage of our tax planning service. This will allow you to capitalise on the advantages of the of the new reforms or make full use of the existing rules before the new reforms take place on 1 July 2017.