10 things to know from our report

1. Agents play a vital role in the Australian tax system, representing 62% of individual taxpayers and 96% of other taxpayers. Evidence suggests their engagement with their clients drives up compliance.

2. Agents perceive that the ATO does not value the role they play in the tax system in maintaining a strong and effective tax system. In consultations they feel their views are not genuinely heard and acted on.

3. There is a mismatch of expectations between what agents expect and the ATO's service offer to agents, leading to increasing frustration in the agent community.

4. The registered agent phone line cannot be looked at in isolation. Agents frequently call the ATO as they cannot fulfil their transactions through the ATO's online channels. The only secure online channel for agent correspondence with the ATO (practice mail) is not fit for purpose and can lead to delays in fulfilling clients' business.

5. Agents report a poor experience calling the registered agent phone line, citing inconsistency and a lack of relevant knowledge or expertise in the officers they speak with. They also noted that this issue appears to have worsened in the last 2 years.

6. There is no dedicated team servicing the registered agent phone line. Calls from agents are prioritised in the call queues but are routed to the same officers answering calls from the general public. These officers are relatively junior staff with very little tax technical training and should not be expected to be able to answer complex or overly technical calls.

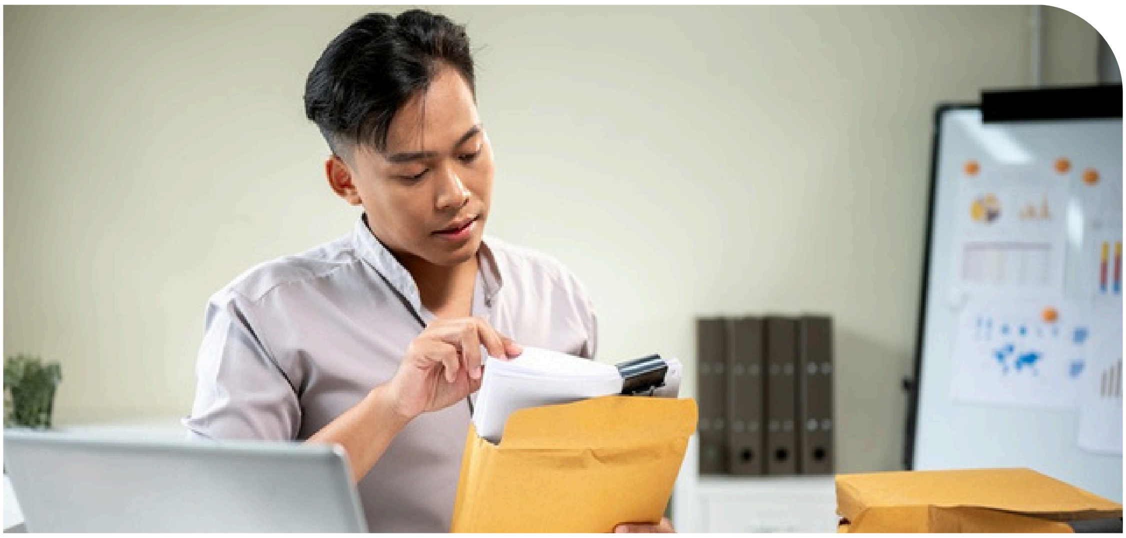
Most agents' calls are being routed to externally contracted call centre officers, around half of whom have less than 12 months experience working with the ATO.

7. Most agents' calls are being routed to externally contracted call centre officers, around half of whom have less than 12 months experience working with the ATO. Changes in the call centre providers, and resultant turnover in the contracted call centre officers in the last 2 years may explain why agents perceive the call quality has declined.

8. Getting agents involved in designing the services they use and how they are measured, will help to ensure better outcomes for all. When agents are involved in co-design, ATO services are more effective and better received for the benefit of both agents and their clients.

9. Support for client-to-agent linking (CAL), which helps taxpayers to nominate their agent with the ATO, can be hard to find. It is not widely known that taxpayers with special circumstances can complete the nomination in a single phone call.

10. This is not the first report to highlight the above issues. The ANAO highlighted the same issues in 2022 and similar issues are also raised in the APSC Capability Review of the ATO (2025).



ATO's registered agent phone line and service offer to agents