

12 February 2009

Dear stakeholder

Last week saw the conclusion of the 2008 tax season campaign with ever-increasing numbers of taxpayers making their personal contribution to our country's growth and development. Changes to automate and simplify this process over the past two year are showing impressive gains in efficiency with over 86% of income tax returns submitted electronically and almost 76% processed within just 24 hours!

One of the improvements we introduced was the pre-population of income tax returns for the majority of employees (over 97% contained IRP5/IT3(a) information) made possible by a very successful inaugural "tax season for employers". We also introduced our free software package – e@syFile – to help employers and practitioners to meet their PAYE and PIT requirements quickly, easily and electronically. The e@syFile suite of applications was a huge success with over 85% of PAYE reconciliation and tax certificates submitted using the software. And the software package was a finalist in both the North American and European Adobe Max awards at the end of the year!

Especially encouraging was the response to our call to "join the march to 2 million eFilers". By the end of the deadline on 5 February, 2 103 493 returns had been registered to be submitted via eFiling!

We realise that the changes we introduced over the past two years have required significant adaptation and cooperation from you, our partners in the income tax process – taxpayers (corporates, individuals, trusts and exempt institutions), employers, practitioners, payroll administrators and many others. But we are sure that for the vast majority of taxpayers the results speak for themselves! The benefits of the changes are well summed up in this note sent to us by a taxpayer recently:

'I am humble and very proud of the work that SARS is doing in our country, considering where we come from. I am working for Brand South Africa (International Marketing Council), a company that markets South Africa abroad for Trade, investment and Tourism. I filed my tax return sometime last week and I received my IT34 today. Just under a week!! I was able to find my IRP5 on e-filing and to do a rough calculation of the IT34 on the e-filing. I am very impressed. I love you SARS!! You continuously show improvement each and every time. This is a kind of leadership that ordinary South African like me appreciates. You are making our lives better and the compliance much easier! I am indeed happy to pay tax. I have seen that my money is doing many wonderful things in my country. It shows that this Government cares for the people of South Africa.....'

Of course, the process is not perfect yet! But with your help and cooperation we will continue to refine and improve it this year and in the future.

After postponements in the tax season annual timetable to accommodate all these changes over the past two years, you will be pleased to know that you can look forward to the return of relatively traditional tax season deadlines this year!

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In this regard, the 60 day PAYE reconciliation period for employers will begin on 1 April and end on **30 May** and the filing period for individual income tax returns will follow from 1 July. This year's deadlines for submission of income tax returns for individuals and trusts are **18 September** for manual filers and **20 November** for electronic submissions.

To help you plan your year ahead, here is a summary of the timetable for Tax Season 2009:

PHASE	PERIOD	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY
Preparation for submission of PAYE reconciliation declaration	1 March – 31 March	SARS Employers Payroll companies Practitioners
Submission of EMP501 PAYE reconciliation declaration and employee tax certificate	1 April – 30 May	Employers Practitioners
Data reconciliation in preparation for pre-population of returns	1 June – 30 June	SARS
Preparation for submission of income tax returns for individuals (ITR12) including issue of ITRR return request forms to manual filers	1 June – 30 June	SARS Taxpayers Practitioners
Manual submission of ITR12 income tax returns for individuals	1 July – 18 September	Individual taxpayers Practitioners
Manual submission of IT12TR income tax returns for trusts	1 July – 18 September	Trusts Practitioners
Electronic submission of ITR12 income tax returns for individuals	1 July – 20 November	Individual taxpayers Practitioners
Electronic submission of ITR12TR income tax returns for trusts	1 July – 20 November	Trusts Practitioners
Submission of IT14 and IT12EI income tax returns for companies and exempt institutions	12 months after financial year-end	Companies Exempt Institutions Practitioners

We look forward to working with you in the year ahead to ensuring that taxpayers who seek to make their fair and honest contribution to our country enjoy a swift, smooth and easy process and that those who do not, do not!

Together, we can make a difference!

Warm regards

Nathaniel Mabetwa
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