

## Media Releases 2009

### SARS Media Release - Launch of Tax Season 2009 for South African Taxpayers

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**Pretoria 1 July 2009** – Today marks the start of the 2009 Tax Season with the opening of the filing period for income tax returns for millions of South Africa's individual taxpayers and trusts.

From today these taxpayers can begin to submit their income tax returns to the South African Revenue Service (SARS) electronically, or request SARS to issue them with a customised, pre-populated tax return (the paper version) for manual submission. On 9 May 2007 SARS introduced a process of significant change to the traditional way taxpayers filed their returns. We simplified and reduced the tax return to two pages, we tried to make it easier and simpler for taxpayers to submit, we reduced the turn-around times for processing returns with new technologies and automation and we strived to provide better service.

SARS wants to thank the growing number of compliant taxpayers in this country for their response to these changes, for submitting their returns on time and for working with us to grow the base of compliant taxpaying citizens.

SARS believes the changes introduced two years ago have delivered huge benefits to taxpayers and, at the same time, improved our organisation's ability to become more effective and to better detect non-compliance and abuse. Over the past year 76 per cent of assessments were returned to taxpayers within 48 hours of submission. More than 3 million individual taxpayers now make use of SARS eFiling and have experienced a massive improvement in ease, convenience and improved turnaround times. We can only hope many more will convert to electronic filing this year

Personal Income Tax remains the biggest contributor to annual revenue collection. The annual Tax Season represents the biggest public engagement between SARS and millions of taxpayers in our country. It is a key indicator of the levels of awareness and compliance amongst citizens and SARS will again commit our organisation to provide the highest levels of quality services to all taxpayers who demonstrate a willingness to comply with the law.

In turn, and in the current context of slower economic growth and lower revenues, SARS particularly wants to appeal to taxpayers this year to again display the kind of compliant behaviour that contributed to sustained growth of the tax base at an average of 10% per year for more than a decade.

#### **DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSION--As in previous years, different deadlines apply for submission:**

- The deadline for manual submissions (the paper version) is 18 September 2009
- The deadline for electronic submissions through SARS eFiling is 20 November 2009. SARS will this year again assist taxpayers to submit returns electronically at a SARS branch office in order to extend the benefits of automation to taxpayers.

SARS is hoping to continue the strong growth trend in electronic submission over the past two years. In 2008 more than 76% of all income tax returns were submitted electronically. A major benefit of the electronic process is the swift processing of returns and payment of refunds (where applicable) - with an average turnaround time of 48 hours.

In preparation for 2009 Tax Season, SARS from last week posted over 2 million Income Tax Return Request (ITRR) forms which allow manual taxpayers to order from SARS a customised return which will contain only those income and deduction sections relevant to the taxpayer.

Over 3 million taxpayers who submitted electronically last year are NOT required to submit an ITRR and can simply visit a branch with all their supporting documents or obtain their customised return on their eFiling profile.

Following on last year, taxpayers who earn a salary below R120 000 a year (total income before tax) from a single employer and who have no further income and have no deductions to declare, are not required to submit an income tax return.

SARS must remind taxpayers again that it is essential to provide their correct banking details on the tax return to prevent fraud and delays. Due to inaccurate or incomplete banking details provided by taxpayers last year, more than 150 000 refund payments were delayed.

#### **Other enhancements to this year's income tax process include:**

- A revised Notice of Assessment (ITA34): The Notice of Assessment, the document which explains whether a taxpayer owes SARS additional tax or is due a refund and how the tax calculation was done, has been significantly simplified to make it easier to understand.
- A Statement of Account (ITSA): The Notice of Assessment will be accompanied by a Statement of Account showing all financial transactions between the taxpayer and SARS relating to income tax over the past 12 months. This will help taxpayers to keep track of their affairs with SARS and will show any outstanding amounts, penalties or returns due.
- Complex tax calculator: Following on last year's success this feature on eFiling has been expanded to cater for all types of income tax returns including those involving relatively complex tax calculations such as foreign investment income, CGT, farming operations and business income. eFilers can use the tax calculator prior to submitting their return to check it for accuracy and to receive an indication of their likely assessment.

As always SARS staff in our Call Centre (0800 00 SARS) and our branches around the country stand ready to assist taxpayers with their obligations. Last year we helped almost 1 million taxpayers submit their forms!

Taxpayers visiting branches (open between 8am and 4pm weekdays) must ensure they have all their relevant supporting documents with them so that we can complete their income tax returns on their behalf. These include proof of ID, their employee tax certificates [IRP5/IT3(a)], medical aid, retirement annuity and pension certificates, details of business travel expenses, lump sum certificates and banking particulars.

Please [click here for the Tax Season 2009 for Individuals on the sars.gov.za website](#)

or [click here for the eFiling website](#).

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