

Good response to new Tourist Refund Scheme

More than 3500 departing passengers a week are utilising the Government's new Tourist Refund Scheme (TRS) with claims increasing by about 200 per week.

To be eligible for a refund of GST, travellers are required to meet certain conditions. These include having both a tax invoice and the goods themselves (which must be part of a passenger's personal hand luggage) available for Customs inspection at an Australian air or sea port prior to departure.

At international airports, Customs TRS booths are all inside the departure lounges - hence the need for any goods (on which passengers wish to claim a GST refund) to be packed as hand luggage. Eligible passengers travelling overseas may claim the 10 per cent GST paid on goods worth more than a total of \$300 purchased from the one retailer.

Following seven weeks of operation, 84 per cent of TRS claims were approved for payment by Customs for a total refund of \$1.5 million on goods worth \$15 million.

Eligible travellers can obtain a refund of GST in several forms:

- a cash refund at the airport in Australian dollars;
- a cheque in Australian dollars mailed to a nominated address;

- a cheque in a foreign currency mailed to a nominated address;
- a direct deposit into an Australian bank account in Australian dollars, or
- a credit to one of five international credit cards in Australian dollars which the card company converts (if the traveller lives overseas) into their home currency at the prevailing exchange rate.

Sydney, Brisbane/Coolangatta, and Melbourne are accounting for 76 per cent of all TRS claims. While the initial TRS take-up rate has been low nationwide (one per cent of all departing passengers), the rate in Sydney (two per cent), Perth (two per cent) and Cairns (three per cent) has doubled in recent weeks.

The number of complaints received to date is less than one per cent of total TRS claims - and this percentage is falling as people get used to the new scheme. The bulk of early complaints centred on passengers having pre-packed their TRS goods inside their check-in baggage - rather than having such goods available for Customs inspection as hand luggage.

Customs is therefore undertaking a public awareness program to ensure that international travellers are aware that Customs needs to be able to view the goods (as hand luggage) and a tax Invoice to be able to approve a TRS claim.



Further information:

Internet: www.customs.gov.au/taxref/trs.htm

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