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Financial advice is important to help you make the right decisions for your future. The choices you make today can affect the way you live in years to come. That's why it's important to spend some time researching your options and finding an adviser who is best suited to your individual needs.

What is personal financial advice?

Personal advice can help you clarify your current situation, define your future goals and help you take the necessary steps to implement them.

A well-informed financial adviser will tailor their advice around your own unique situation. Depending on the adviser's qualifications and experience, the advice could cover a range of topics like budgeting, investing, saving, paying off debt, tax effectiveness and retiring.

Do you need personal financial advice?

Personal advice may not be for everyone. Some people can successfully handle their own finances, including super and investments.

However, if you are considering personal advice, make sure you only approach advisers who are employed by or are authorised to represent a business that holds an Australian Financial Services (AFS) licence. An AFS licence can cover advice on super, insurance, shares, managed funds and other general banking products.

How to find an adviser

You can search for an adviser through a professional association such as the Financial Advice Association of Australia (FAAA) or Certified Practising Accountants (CPA) Australia, who will have a list of their members who are financial advisers in your area.

Make sure your adviser holds a licence, or is employed by a licensed advisory business. The Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) licenses and regulates the financial advisory industry. You can check licence details at moneysmart.gov.au/financial-advice/financial-advisers-register.

To protect yourself, you should also be aware of individuals and companies listed on ASIC's register of unlicensed providers, available at moneysmart.gov.au/companies-you-should-not-deal-with.

If an unlicensed provider offers you services, you can help warn others by reporting them to a government agency. For information on how to report a scam, visit asic.gov.au/about-asic/contact-us/how-to-complain/where-asic-can-help/scams.

Preparing for financial advice

This document provides you with a list of questions that may help you when choosing an adviser for both general super advice and for more specific advice about GESB Super. See page 2 for general super questions and page 3 for questions about GESB Super.

It's important that you choose a financial adviser who understands our unique super schemes. This is especially important if you also have a West State Super or Gold State Super account, as these schemes have features that are not generally available with other super funds. Your adviser should understand the complexity and benefits of defined benefit and untaxed schemes.

Questions to ask when choosing an adviser

Do you hold an Australian Financial Services (AFS) licence?

Make sure your adviser has an AFS licence provided by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC).

To check whether a business or person is licensed, visit moneysmart.gov.au/financial-advice/financial-advisers-register or call ASIC's information line on 1300 300 630.

Who is the owner of the business?

Ownership of the business can affect the products and services you are offered, for example if the business is owned by a large financial institution such as a bank.

Ask for a copy of their Financial Services Guide (FSG). The FSG will tell you who owns the business or if the business is associated with other companies. It will also include information on the products and services they offer, their fees and commissions and their complaints resolution process.

What are your areas of expertise?

Check if the services offered are the services you are looking for. Advisers may have a large portfolio but may not cover all the products you have or need.

This is especially important when it comes to super as the adviser may not be able to advise you on your current fund if it is not on their approved product list.

Are you a member of a professional association?

Check the adviser is a member of an industry organisation such as the Financial Advice Association of Australia (FAAA), the Association of Financial Advisers (AFA), Certified Practising Accountants (CPA) Australia, Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand (CA), the Financial Services Institute of Australasia (FINSIA) or the Stockbrokers and Investment Advisers Association (SIAA).

What are your fees?

Financial advisers set their own fees and may be able to charge a commission on the products they sell, or by the hour for their time. Some advisers may also charge an ongoing fee. The FSG should also explain these fees.

How long have you been a financial adviser?

The more experienced, the better. You would hope they have more than five years' experience. If they have less than two years' experience, ask if anyone else in the business will be assisting in preparing your advice.

Who are your typical clients?

If your adviser helps clients who are similar to you, then they will have experience in the type of advice you are looking for. You may even want to ask for a reference from an existing client.

What products do you advise on?

You are looking for a wide range of products from numerous providers, so that the advice you get is not limited to a narrow product range from only a few providers.

What information will you need to provide me with financial advice?

The adviser should ask you about your personal circumstances and what you are looking to achieve.

You will need to provide information on income and expenses, what you own, what you owe, your family situation including dependants as well as both your short and long-term financial goals.

Super questions to ask your adviser

What are the benefits of investing in super?

Super is a tax-effective way to save for your future. With ongoing contributions from your employer, the ability to make extra contributions and choose your investment plan, it makes sense to get the most from your super.

Should I consolidate my super into one account?

Generally yes, but this depends on the features of the super accounts you have.

Consolidating your super accounts will help you to keep track of your super, and make sure you're not paying duplicate fees and charges. You can roll in money from other funds to your GESB account. All you need to do is download and complete a 'Super consolidation' form, available at gesb.wa.gov.au/forms under 'Roll in other super'.

If you're considering rolling out of a GESB scheme, your adviser should be able to explain the implications of this to you. This is especially important if you have a West State Super or Gold State Super account, as these schemes have some unique features that are not available in most other Australian super funds. They are also both closed to new members, so if you change your mind you cannot re-join.

When you transfer your super, your entitlements under that fund may end. This may include any insurance you hold in the fund, such as death, disability or salary continuance insurance. You should consider all relevant information before you make a decision to transfer your super. If you ask for information, your super provider must give it to you.

What fees will be charged in my super account?

Your adviser should explain your super account's management costs – this includes the administration and investment costs to run your account. They should also inform you of the cost of any activity or transaction fees.

Is insurance included or do I have the option of insurance with my super account?

You may want to check the insurance options for your super account such as the premiums, the level of cover, and the type of cover such as death, disability, and salary continuance.

Find out if you have the option to receive cover and if any medical examinations are required. Make sure you check restrictions for age, type of work you do, part-time or casual employment and maternity leave.

How has my fund been performing?

Investment performance makes a significant difference to how much money you will have in retirement. Make sure your adviser can demonstrate how your fund has been performing at least over the last one, three and five years, while keeping in mind that past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance.

What are contribution caps and are there any caps on my super contributions?

Concessional (before-tax) contributions

Concessional contributions are generally taxed at the concessional rate of 15%¹. A general concessional contribution cap applies each financial year.

Carry forward rules allow you to make extra concessional contributions above the general concessional contributions cap without having to pay extra tax. For more information, read the 'Contributing to your super' brochure at gesb.wa.gov.au/brochures.

The total of your concessional contributions to all of your super funds (i.e. both taxed and un taxed) in a financial year are counted towards your concessional contributions cap.

The cap does not apply to limit concessional contributions to West State Super and Gold State Super as they are constitutionally-protected funds and different rules apply. However, any concessional contributions you make to West State Super and Gold State Super will count towards the cap for the purposes of making concessional contributions to a taxed scheme (such as GESB Super).

¹ If you are a high income earner then you may be liable for Division 293 tax. For more information, see the 'Tax and super' brochure available at gesb.wa.gov.au/brochures.

There may be tax implications if you exceed your concessional contributions cap.

For more information, read the 'Tax and super' brochure, available at gesb.wa.gov.au/brochures.

Non-concessional (after-tax) contributions

Non-concessional contributions are contributions that are not included in the assessable income of the fund. They are often referred to as after-tax contributions.

All non-concessional contributions to all of your super funds in a financial year are counted towards your non-concessional contributions cap.

The ability to bring forward contributions also applies to non-concessional contributions.

The amount available under the bring-forward rule depends on your total super balance as at 30 June in the previous financial year. This is tested each 30 June, including during the bring-forward period.

There may be tax implications if you exceed your non-concessional contributions cap.

For more information, read the 'Tax and super' brochure, available at gesb.wa.gov.au/brochures.

How can I contribute to my super account?

Superannuation Guarantee (SG)

Your employer is legally required to contribute a percentage of your eligible salary into your super account.

For more information about employer SG including the current rate, read the 'Contributing to your super' brochure at gesb.wa.gov.au/brochures.

Salary sacrifice

These contributions are made from your before-tax salary. The money you 'sacrifice' gets paid directly from your salary into your super account before you pay income tax.

This is generally one of the most tax-effective ways to make additional contributions to your super account. You can make salary sacrifice contributions through an agreement with your employer.

Tax deductible personal contributions

These are personal contributions you can claim as an income tax deduction in your tax return if you meet certain eligibility criteria.

Co-contributions

This is a Australian Government initiative designed to increase the retirement savings of Australians, who meet certain eligibility criteria, by matching up to 50 cents for each dollar of your personal after-tax contributions up

to a maximum payment of \$500. You must provide your fund with your tax file number (TFN) to be able to receive a co-contribution.

Spouse contributions

Spouse or partner contributions allow you to contribute money to your spouse or partner's super account. These contributions assist in growing your joint retirement savings. You may also be eligible for a tax offset if certain eligibility criteria are met.

What are the benefits of my GESB Super account?

GESB Super is a taxed accumulation scheme, similar to most other Australian super funds. This means that your account balance builds up over time from contributions made by you and your employer, as well as from investment earnings, and that tax is deducted from concessional contributions and investment earnings while the money is accumulating.

Your adviser should explain the benefits of your GESB Super account – including the choice of investment plans, below-median fees², and automatic insurance offered.

How can I contribute to my GESB Super account?

In order to contribute to a GESB Super account through employer SG contributions, you need to be currently employed in the WA public sector.

You can make additional voluntary contributions to your GESB Super account by:

- Salary sacrificing
- Making extra non-concessional contributions (from your after-tax pay, or by making lump-sum contributions)
- Consolidating your super from other accounts to your GESB Super account (also called rolling in)

Similar to most other Australian super funds, contributions made to your GESB Super scheme count towards your contribution caps.

Ask your adviser to explain the benefits and obligations of each contribution type, and what kind of contribution might best suit your circumstances.

For more information on the features of your GESB Super account, please read the 'GESB Super Product Information Booklet' available at gesb.wa.gov.au/brochures.

Further information

If you're looking for additional information on GESB that will help you when talking to your adviser, visit our website at gesb.wa.gov.au. Here you will find a range of useful information including tools, calculators, fact sheets and brochures.

² Based on an average balance of \$50,000, GESB Super fees are below the industry median. Read our member outcomes assessment at gesb.wa.gov.au/memberoutcomes.

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