

Money Weekend

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Melbourne, Australia

Australia's Own Sheriff of Nottingham

By Kris Sayce

We think the news story we read on Thursday evening of this week is perhaps one of the most distasteful items we've ever read. Or it felt like it at the time anyway.

Your editor's blood was within a couple of degrees of boiling point when we read the headline:

"Tax office crackdown on work expenses"

We truly have reached a time when the money you earn from working eight hours a day, five days per week is not yours. In modern management speak, you are merely the facilitator.

You facilitate the money going from your boss' bank account into the Government's bank account via the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

Isn't it amazing how you have to work forty hours per week in order to live comfortably, yet you only get to keep about half of what you earn? Because by the time the federal government, state government and local governments have swiped their share, you're left with about 50% of your salary.

But don't think the lecherous public servants [*one Money Morning reader suggests we use a different term, more on that later*] are grateful to you for giving them all your hard-earned.

Far from it, they want more. And you better give it to them when they ask for it otherwise you're in big trouble.

According to a [41-page report](#) by the ATO (paid for by taxpayers of course!):

"The ATO's objective is to foster an environment that promotes high levels of voluntary compliance with Australia's tax and superannuation laws, including easy access to lawful entitlements, at minimum cost to taxpayers and other stakeholders."

We love the "voluntary compliance" part. What's voluntary about the government expropriating your money before it even finds its way to your pocket?

What a sad state of affairs that the government is able to set one of its agencies on its own population to intimidate them into making sure they don't deprive the glutinous government of its 'rightful' dues.

It's almost like something out of medieval England.

We're just trying to work out who the characters are.

The Fairy Ruddfather is obviously King John, and the Commissioner of Taxation, Michael D'Ascenzo must be the Sheriff of Nottingham.

And Wayne Swan? Well, he's clearly Robin Hood. Only this Robin Hood isn't a hero. Because he's stealing from everyone and handing the cash out to his favourite special interest groups.

As for the suggestion made by Money Morning reader Bob. He suggests:

"Please stop talking about 'the public sector' and 'the private sector.'"

*"Please start using the more accurate terms '**the coercive sector**' and '**the voluntary sector.**'"*

So we will. We will henceforth call the public sector the "coercive sector", and the private sector the "voluntary sector."

Good luck with your tax return readers!

Cheers.

Kris.