

**Australian Government****Australian Taxation Office**

How to claim a foreign tax credit

Information for Australian residents who receive income from overseas and who have paid foreign tax on it.

2003–04

For more information
visit www.ato.gov.au

OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

The information in this publication is current at May 2004 and we have made every effort to ensure it is accurate. However, if something in the publication is wrong or misleading and you make a mistake as a result, you will not be charged a penalty. You may have to pay interest, depending on the circumstances of your case.

If you feel this publication does not fully cover your circumstances, please seek help from the Tax Office or a professional adviser. Since we regularly revise our publications to take account of any changes to the law, you should make sure this edition is the latest. The easiest way to do this is by checking for a more recent version on our website at www.ato.gov.au

YOUR RIGHTS

It is important that you are aware of your rights and obligations when dealing with the Tax Office. These are explained in the taxpayer's charter, along with the service and other standards you can expect from the Tax Office. To view the taxpayers' charter, visit our website at www.ato.gov.au. To get a printed copy of the *Taxpayers' Charter – what you need to know* (NAT 2548), phone our distribution service on **1300 720 092**.

HOW SELF-ASSESSMENT AFFECTS YOU

Self-assessment means the Tax Office uses the information you give on your tax return to work out your refund or tax debt. You are required by law to make sure you have shown all your assessable income and claimed only the deductions and tax offsets to which you are entitled. The Tax Office does not take any responsibility for checking the accuracy of the details you provide in your tax return. However, at a later date the Tax Office may examine the details contained in your tax return more thoroughly by reviewing specific parts, or by conducting an audit on your tax affairs.

What are your responsibilities?

It is your responsibility to lodge a tax return that is signed, complete and correct. Even if someone else – including a tax agent – helps you to prepare your tax return, you are still legally responsible for the accuracy of your information.

What if you lodge an incorrect tax return?

Our audit programs are designed to continually check for missing, inaccurate or incomplete information. If you become aware that your tax return is incorrect, you must contact us straight away.

Initiatives to complement self-assessment

There are a number of initiatives administered by the Tax Office which complement self-assessment. Examples include:

- if you take reasonable care with your tax affairs, you will not receive a penalty for honest mistakes – but please note that a general interest charge on omitted income or over-claimed deductions and tax offsets could still be payable
- the process for applying for private rulings
- your entitlement to interest on early payment or over-payment of a tax debt, or the process for applying for an amendment if you find you have left something out of your tax return.

Do you need to ask for a private ruling?

If you have a concern about the way a tax law applies to your personal tax affairs, you may want to ask for a private ruling.

A private ruling will relate just to your situation. Write to the Tax Office describing your situation in detail and ask for advice. To do this, complete an *Application for a private ruling for individuals* (NAT 4106 – 3.2001). You should lodge your tax return by the due date, even if you are waiting for the reply to your private ruling. You may need to request an amendment to your tax return once you have received the private ruling.

The Tax Office publishes on its website all private rulings issued. What we publish will not contain anything which could identify you.

You can ask for a review of a private ruling decision if you disagree with it, even if you have not received your assessment. Details of the review procedures are sent to you when the private ruling decision is made. For more information on private rulings, visit the Tax Office website at www.ato.gov.au

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Who should use this publication?	1
Who can claim a foreign tax credit?	1
What can you claim for?	1
Foreign tax credit for a dividend paid from attributed income	1
Credit for foreign taxes paid after your assessment	1
What evidence do you need to prove you have paid foreign tax?	1
How do you work out your foreign tax credit?	2
Carrying excess foreign tax credits forward	4
An example to help you work out your foreign tax credit	5
More information	inside back cover
Feedback	inside back cover

INTRODUCTION

WHO SHOULD USE THIS PUBLICATION?

This publication is for Australian resident individual taxpayers who:

- paid foreign tax on income they received from outside Australia, and
- intend to use *TaxPack 2004* to fill in their tax return.

WHO CAN CLAIM A FOREIGN TAX CREDIT?

If you receive foreign income that is taxable in Australia and you paid foreign tax for which you were personally liable in respect of that income, you may be entitled to a foreign tax credit.

If you are claiming a foreign tax credit in respect of a foreign capital gain, you should include a note on your income tax return that specifies the amount of the foreign capital gain included in your net capital gain.

WHAT CAN YOU CLAIM FOR?

A credit can be allowed for:

- a foreign tax which is similar to Australian income tax or capital gains tax
- foreign withholding taxes similar to Australian withholding taxes on interest, dividends or royalties
- foreign taxes listed in Australia's double taxation agreements.

! NOTE

You are not allowed a credit for penalties, fines or interest.

If you are not sure whether you can apply for a foreign tax credit, print SCHEDULE OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION—QUESTION 19 on the top of a separate piece of paper and explain your situation. Include:

- your name, address and tax file number
- the precise name of the tax and the country in which it was levied
- the name of the law under which the tax was imposed
- whether the tax was levied by a national, state or local authority and the name of the authority
- a description of the tax and why you had to pay it.

Print **X** in the **YES** box at Taxpayer's declaration question 2a on page 8 of your tax return.

Sign and attach your schedule to page 3 of your tax return.

FOREIGN TAX CREDIT FOR A DIVIDEND PAID FROM ATTRIBUTED INCOME

If you are an Australian resident and you receive a dividend that has been wholly or partly paid out of income that was previously attributed to you and therefore already subject to Australian tax, the whole or part of the dividend will be exempt from tax.

Attributed income is income that arises from an investment in a controlled foreign company, a foreign investment fund or foreign life policy, or from a transferor trust. Attributed income is shown at item **18** on your tax return (supplementary section).

CREDIT FOR FOREIGN TAXES PAID AFTER YOUR ASSESSMENT

You are only allowed a credit for foreign tax which you have actually paid.

If you do not pay the foreign tax until after your original assessment, you will need to ask for an amended determination of your foreign tax credit entitlement if you wish to receive a credit.

Your assessment may also need to be amended to take account of any additional foreign tax that you may have paid.

WHAT EVIDENCE DO YOU NEED TO PROVE YOU HAVE PAID FOREIGN TAX?

You will need written evidence of payment of foreign tax, such as:

- a notice of assessment from the foreign tax authority and a receipt for the tax paid
- a statement from the foreign tax authority setting out the particulars that would normally be recorded on a notice of assessment and a receipt for payment
- a certificate for deduction of withholding tax issued by the person who pays the interest, dividend or any other income that is subject to foreign tax.

Keep the evidence with your other records. You may need to produce it later.

HOW DO YOU WORK OUT YOUR FOREIGN TAX CREDIT?

NOTE

You will not be able to work out your foreign tax credit if you have shown exempt foreign employment income at **N** item 19 on your tax return (supplementary section). The Tax Office will work it out for you.

If this is the case, print SCHEDULE OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION—QUESTION 19 on the top of a separate piece of paper and explain your situation. Include:

- your name, address and tax file number
- each type and amount of foreign income received, and
- any foreign tax paid.

Print **X** in the **YES** box at Taxpayer's declaration question 2a on page 8 of your tax return.

Sign and attach your schedule to page 3 of your tax return.

If you do not have exempt foreign employment income, work through the following steps to find out your foreign tax credit. A practical example is on page 5 of this guide.

STEP 1: Work out your taxable income

You will need to fill in the rest of your tax return before you can do this. Your taxable income is the amount at **\$** on page 3 of your tax return.

STEP 2: Work out the amount of gross tax, Medicare levy and, if applicable, Medicare levy surcharge (MLS) payable on your taxable income

Refer to the calculation pages in *TaxPack 2004*.

STEP 3: Work out the average rate of Australian tax payable on your taxable income

Use the following formula:

$$\text{Average rate of tax} = \frac{\text{gross tax} + \text{Medicare levy} + \text{MLS} - \text{qualifying tax offsets}}{\text{taxable income}}$$

The qualifying tax offsets you can use to work out your average rate of Australian tax are:

- spouse, child-housekeeper or housekeeper
- overseas forces or zone
- medical expenses
- invalid relative
- parent or spouse's parent
- certain low income taxpayer.

A description of these offsets can be found in the tax offsets sections of *TaxPack 2004* and *TaxPack 2004 supplement*. Step 3 of the example on page 6 shows you how to work out your average rate of Australian tax.

STEP 4: Work out if you have foreign income from more than one class

Foreign income is divided into different classes for the purpose of allowing a foreign tax credit. These are:

- passive foreign income
- lump sum payments from non-resident superannuation funds that are taxed under section 27CAA of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1936* (ITAA 1936)
- other foreign income.

Most taxpayers will only have passive foreign income and other foreign income.

What is passive foreign income?

Passive foreign income includes:

- foreign dividends, interest, rental income and royalties
- assessable foreign annuities
- amounts for the assignment of a patent or copyright
- foreign capital gains and passive commodity gains
- attributed foreign income.

If you paid foreign tax in respect of a foreign capital gain, you will need to work out how much of that foreign capital gain is reflected in your net capital gain (for an individual, your net capital gain is the amount shown at **A** item 17 on your income tax return). This will depend on:

- the amount of the capital gain calculated for Australian tax purposes
- how you have applied any capital losses and net capital losses from earlier years
- whether any capital gains tax (CGT) concessions apply to the capital gain (for example, the CGT discount or small business concessions).

Capital losses and net capital losses can be applied against capital gains in the order that you choose. To maximise your foreign tax credit entitlement, you may choose to offset losses first against domestic capital gains or foreign gains in respect of which you have not paid tax.

EXAMPLE

You sell a property that you acquired in January 2000 in a foreign country. Under that country's tax laws, you make a capital gain of \$12,000 and you pay tax in relation to that gain. For Australian tax purposes, your capital gain calculated in accordance with parts 3-1 and 3-3 of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997* (ITAA 1997) is \$10,000.

You have made a capital loss of \$2,000 in relation to the sale of another property in Australia. You must apply this loss against your foreign capital gain. You then apply the CGT discount to the remaining capital gain. Your net capital gain is \$4,000. Because your net capital gain relates entirely to a foreign capital gain in respect of which you have paid foreign tax, this is the amount that is included in working out your passive foreign income.

What are lump sum payments from non-resident superannuation funds?

Certain lump sum payments made from non-resident superannuation funds are subject to special tax rules under section 27CAA of ITAA 1936. These payments form their own class of foreign income.

What is 'other foreign income'?

'Other foreign income' is foreign income that does not fit into either of the other classes of income. It includes income from commercial activities, salary or wages and most pensions.

STEP 5: Work out your net income for each class of foreign income

Net foreign income is so much of your assessable income as is foreign income of that class, less the following deductions:

- expenses directly related to that class of foreign income other than relevant debt deductions
- any domestic loss carried forward from a previous year that you have elected to use against your foreign income
- other deductions relating to that class of foreign income other than relevant debt deductions.

What is a debt deduction?

Debt deductions are, broadly, deductible costs incurred in obtaining and maintaining debt finance. The term is defined in section 820-40 of ITAA 1997. Examples of debt deductions include interest, amounts in the nature of interest and fees in respect of debt.

What is a 'relevant debt deduction'?

A 'relevant debt deduction' is a debt deduction to the extent that it is not attributable to any of the taxpayer's overseas permanent establishments.

The example on page 5 shows you how to work out your net income for each class of foreign income.

STEP 6: Work out the adjusted net foreign income (ANFI) for each class of foreign income

This involves allocating any apportionable deductions that you are able to claim between each class of foreign income. Apportionable deductions are those deductions of a concessional nature which do not relate directly to income-producing activities—for example, gifts to eligible charitable organisations.

If you don't have any apportionable deductions, your ANFI will equal your net foreign income.

There are three methods for working out ANFI. Where net foreign income is less than the sum of taxable income and apportionable deductions, as is most often the case, ANFI for each class of income equals:

$$\text{Net foreign income} \times \frac{\text{taxable income}}{\text{taxable income} + \text{apportionable deductions}}$$

The other methods of working out ANFI are:

- If your net foreign income consists of one class of income and the amount exceeds the sum of your taxable income plus apportionable deductions, your ANFI will equal your taxable income.
- If your net foreign income consists of two or more classes of income and your combined net foreign income from all classes exceeds the sum of your taxable income plus apportionable deductions, your ANFI for each class will equal your taxable income divided proportionately into each class of income.

STEP 7: Work out the foreign tax credit limit for each class of foreign income

The foreign tax credit that you are entitled to receive is limited to the lesser of:

- the foreign tax you have paid on that class of foreign income, and
- the Australian tax payable on that class of foreign income.

The Australian tax payable in relation to a class of foreign income equals:

$$\text{ANFI} \times \text{average rate of Australian tax.}$$

The amount of credit you are able to claim in Australia may be further limited by a double tax agreement Australia has with the country in which you earned the income. If you received income from a country which has a double tax agreement with Australia and that agreement limits the amount of tax that the foreign country can levy on your income, the amount of foreign tax credit you are allowed is limited to the amount payable under the agreement. If the foreign country has deducted more tax than is permitted under the agreement, you will need to seek a refund of the excess tax from the tax authority of that country. The double tax agreements can be found as Schedules to the *International Tax Agreements Act 1953*. This Act is available on the Tax Office's legal database at www.ato.gov.au

For further information, phone the Tax Office on **13 28 61**.

EXAMPLE

If you receive a foreign pension or annuity which is taxable in Australia and tax has been deducted from the payment by the country that paid it, you may have to claim a refund of that tax rather than a foreign tax credit. This would be the case if tax was deducted from a pension or annuity you received but, because of a double tax agreement Australia has with that country, Australia is the only country allowed to tax your pension. Claiming a refund generally involves filling in a special claim form. This is available from the tax authority of the country that paid the pension or annuity. Step 7 of the example on page 6 will show you how to work out your foreign tax credit limit.

STEP 8: Enter your foreign tax credit amount on your tax return

Write the amount of credit you are able to claim—from step 7—at **o** item **19** on your tax return (supplementary section).

CARRYING EXCESS FOREIGN TAX CREDITS FORWARD

You will have an excess foreign tax credit for an income year if the amount of foreign tax you have paid in respect of a class of foreign income exceeds the Australian tax payable on that class of foreign income.

You may carry forward an excess foreign tax credit for the five years immediately following the income year when it arose. You may only use the excess credit for a class of foreign income if there is a credit shortfall for the same class of income in a later year. A credit shortfall occurs if the credit allowed for a class of income is less than the Australian tax payable on that class of income.

You cannot claim a foreign tax credit in a year that you incur a loss for a class of foreign income because the Australian tax payable for that class of income is nil. You may, however, carry forward the foreign tax credit to a later year to apply to the same class of income.

However, you are required to keep your own records of your excess foreign tax credits if you are carrying the credits forward to a later date.

AN EXAMPLE TO HELP YOU WORK OUT YOUR FOREIGN TAX CREDIT

Albert is an Australian resident and is not married. He previously lived in the United Kingdom and now receives a pension and dividend, interest and rental income from the United Kingdom. Albert worked for and was paid by an American company in the United States for 80 days during the year and by his Australian employer in Australia for the remainder of the year.

All foreign income, deductions and foreign tax paid must be expressed in Australian dollars. The following table, **Convert to Australian dollars**, shows you how to do this. Phone the Tax Office on **13 28 61** to find out the exchange rates.

CONVERT TO AUSTRALIAN DOLLARS

Type of foreign income	Convert foreign income to Australian dollars at:
Foreign employment income, pensions and annuities	the exchange rate that applied at the time you were paid or had the income applied or dealt with on your behalf or as you directed (such as into a bank account), even if no amount was remitted to Australia.
Foreign business income and other income such as dividends and interest	the exchange rate that applied at the earlier of when you received OR derived the income (or, for statutory income, the earlier of when you received the income or were first required to include it in your assessable income)
Foreign capital gains	the exchange rate that applied at the time of the transaction or event for each transaction or event involving an amount of foreign currency (or the market value of property expressed in a foreign currency). For example, if an amount included in the cost base of an asset is expressed in foreign currency, convert that amount into Australian currency on the date that the expenditure was incurred. Convert capital proceeds on the date of the CGT event.
Foreign tax paid	the exchange rate that applied at the time the foreign tax was paid
Foreign deductions (other than capital allowances)	the exchange rate applicable at the earlier of when the amount was paid OR when it became deductible
Depreciating assets	the cost of a depreciating asset is to be converted at the exchange rate that applied at the earlier of when you begin to hold the asset OR satisfied your obligations for it (ie, when you paid for it). This converted cost is then used to calculate the capital allowance deductible

IMPORTANT NOTE

At the time of publication, the tax law did not permit the use of average rates. However, there is a regulation-making power under which methods of conversion other than those set out in the **Convert to Australian dollars** table may be specified. For more information on converting foreign amounts to Australian dollars refer to the Tax Office fact sheet *Forex – the general translation rule*, available at www.ato.gov.au

Below are details of Albert's income, expenses and the foreign tax he paid. All of Albert's foreign income amounts have been converted to Australian dollars.

Gross income	\$
Employment income from Australia	22,000
Employment income from United States	6,000
Pension income from United Kingdom	4,000
Rental income from property in United Kingdom	1,000
Dividend income from United Kingdom	600
Interest income from United Kingdom	400
Total gross income	34,000

Expenses	\$
Medical expenses	2,500
Expenses incurred in deriving employment income from Australia	2,000
Expenses incurred in deriving employment income from United States	450
Expenses incurred in deriving rental income from United Kingdom	250
Gift to an eligible charitable organisation	200
Interest (debt deductions) incurred in deriving dividend income	70
Expenses (debt deductions) incurred in deriving interest income	30
Total expenses	5,500

Foreign tax paid	\$
Employment income from United States	1,800
Dividend income from United Kingdom	60
Interest income from United Kingdom	40
Rental income from United Kingdom	300
Total foreign tax paid	2,200

EXAMPLE

Working out Albert's foreign tax credit

Step 1: Work out Albert's taxable income.

	\$
Assessable income	34,000
less allowable deductions*	3,000
Taxable income	31,000

*Albert cannot claim a deduction for his medical expenses but he can claim a tax offset for them for amounts above \$1,500. He does this at step 2.

Step 2: Work out Albert's tax and Medicare levy.

	\$
Tax payable on taxable income	5,680
Medicare levy payable on taxable income (\$31,000 × 1.5%)	465
Total tax and Medicare levy	6,145
less tax offset for medical expenses (\$2,500 – \$1,500) divided by 5	200
Total tax payable	5,945

Albert has reduced his tax payable by the medical expenses tax offset he is able to claim. As Albert is not married and his taxable income is less than \$50,000, he is not liable for the Medicare levy surcharge.

Step 3: Work out the average rate of tax payable on Albert's taxable income.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Albert's average rate of Australian tax} \\ &= \frac{5,945}{31,000} \times \frac{100}{1} \\ &= 19\% \end{aligned}$$

Step 4: Work out if Albert has more than one class of foreign income.

Albert has foreign rental income, foreign dividends and foreign interest, which all fall into the passive foreign income class. He also has foreign employment and foreign pension income, which fall into the other foreign income class. As Albert has income from both classes, he will have to do two separate calculations.

Step 5: Work out Albert's net foreign income for each class.

Albert needs to work out the net foreign income for two classes of income—passive foreign income and other foreign income.

Albert's passive foreign income	\$
Gross foreign rental income less expenses (\$1,000 – \$250)	750
Gross foreign dividend income less expenses (other than relevant debt deductions)	600
Gross foreign interest income less expenses (other than relevant debt deductions)	400
Net passive foreign income	1,750

Albert's other foreign income	\$
Gross employment income from the United States less expenses (\$6,000 – \$450)	5,550
Gross pension from United Kingdom	4,000
Net other foreign income	9,550

Step 6: Work out Albert's adjusted net foreign income (ANFI) for each class.

This involves allocating the apportionable deduction—a \$200 donation to a charitable organisation—across both classes of foreign income.

ANFI for Albert's passive foreign income:

$$\begin{aligned} &= 1,750 \times \frac{31,000}{31,000 + 200} \\ &= 1,739 \end{aligned}$$

ANFI for Albert's other foreign income:

$$\begin{aligned} &= 9,550 \times \frac{31,000}{31,000 + 200} \\ &= 9,489 \end{aligned}$$

Step 7: Work out the foreign tax credit limit for each class of foreign income.

Work out the amount of Australian tax payable on each class of foreign income. This is done by multiplying Albert's ANFI—worked out at step 6—by his average rate of Australian tax—worked out at step 3—for each class of income.

Foreign income that has borne foreign tax is eligible for a foreign tax credit. For each class of income the credit is the lesser of the foreign tax paid, or the Australian tax payable ascertained by applying the average rate of Australian tax to the adjusted net foreign income of that class.

$$\text{Passive foreign income} = \$1,739 \times 19\% = \$330.41$$

$$\text{Other foreign income} = \$9,489 \times 19\% = \$1,802.91$$

These are the amounts of Australian tax payable on each class of income.

Albert can claim a tax credit for the lesser of foreign tax paid or Australian tax payable on his foreign income from each class.

Tax payable on his passive foreign income

As Albert paid \$400 in foreign tax on this income and this is more than the amount of \$330.41 of Australian tax payable, he can claim a foreign tax credit of \$330.41. The extra \$69.59 of foreign tax that he paid can be carried forward and applied against the Australian tax payable on any passive foreign income he may earn in the next five years.

Tax payable on his other foreign income

As Albert paid \$1,800 in foreign tax on this income and this is less than the amount of \$1,802.91 of Australian tax payable, he can only claim a credit of \$1,800.

Albert must now add the amount of tax credit he can claim on his passive foreign income to the tax credit he can claim on his other foreign income.

Tax credit Albert can claim on his passive foreign income	\$330.41
Tax credit he can claim on his other foreign income	\$1,800.00
Total foreign tax credit he can claim	\$2,130.41

Step 8: Enter the foreign tax credit amount on Albert's tax return.

Albert would write \$2,130.41 at **o** item **19** on his tax return (supplementary section).

MORE INFORMATION

To get any publication referred to in this book:

- visit our website at www.ato.gov.au
- phone our Publications Distribution Service on **1300 720 092** for the cost of a local call, or
- visit a Tax Office shopfront.

Publications referred to in this book include:

- *Application for a private ruling for individuals* (NAT 4106—3.2001)
- *TaxPack 2004* (NAT 0976—6.2004)
- *TaxPack 2004 supplement* (NAT 2677—6.2004)

FEEDBACK

Reader feedback helps us to improve the information we provide. If you have any feedback about this publication, please write to:

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Australian Taxation Office
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CIVIC SQUARE ACT 2608

As this is a publications area only, any tax matters will be passed on to a technical area; alternatively you can phone our Personal Tax Infoline on **13 28 61** for help.

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