

Choosing an accountant for a small business

TPB registration, what compliance really costs, and the questions that reveal whether they will save you tax or just lodge forms

A free buying guide from tasmania.biz · for Tasmania

Every accountant will file your BAS; the difference is whether they cost you money or make you money. The one thing that is not negotiable is that anyone charging you for tax agent services must be registered with the Tax Practitioners Board - using someone who is not is illegal, and the penalties fall on them, but the damage falls on you.

What it should cost

Small-business accounting fees in Tasmania typically run from about \$1,500 to \$4,000 a year for a straightforward company or sole trader - annual financials, tax return and occasional BAS - rising with complexity: payroll, GST, multiple entities, stock or a trust can push it past \$5,000. BAS lodged quarterly is often \$150 to \$400 each, or folded into a package. Hourly rates for advice commonly sit around \$150 to \$350.

Set-up and structuring advice - choosing between sole trader, company, trust or partnership, and deciding whether to register for GST once turnover passes \$75,000 - is usually a separate one-off fee, sometimes \$500 to \$2,000. If you employ staff, remember the super guarantee is 12 per cent of ordinary time earnings from 1 July 2025, and from 1 July 2026 Payday Super requires it to be paid each payday, not quarterly - a payroll setup that ignores that is a compliance problem waiting to happen.

What the law requires

Anyone who provides tax agent services for a fee must be registered with the Tax Practitioners Board under the Tax Agent Services Act 2009. An unregistered preparer is operating illegally, is often unqualified, and gives you no recourse. Check the registration on the TPB register before you engage anyone - the number should be on their letterhead and their website.

Registration is a floor, not a ceiling: it says they are licensed, not that they are any good. For GST, once your turnover reaches \$75,000 (\$150,000 for non-profits) you must be registered; below that it is optional. Directors and business owners are personally exposed for unpaid PAYG withholding and super, so the accountant's compliance work is protecting you, not just the entity.

Red flags

No TPB registration number, or a number that does not check out on the register.

A fee quoted with no scope, so every question becomes an invoice.

No advice on structure or tax planning unless you specifically ask.

BAS lodged late or sloppily, with penalties you discover later.

Payroll that still treats super as a quarterly payment after July 2026.

Pressure to sign an engagement letter without reading the scope and the fees.

What good looks like

The registration number is in front of you before you ask.

A written engagement letter with the scope and the fee.

They raise tax planning and structure unprompted.

They tell you what you cannot claim and what would fail an audit, not just what you want to hear.

A named contact who answers questions during the year, not just at tax time.

What to ask

- "What is your TPB registration number?"
- "Do you specialise in businesses like mine, and can you name a few in my industry?"
- "What is included in your annual fee, and what is charged separately?"
- "Who looks after my file day to day, and who signs off the return?"
- "Will you raise structuring and deductions proactively, or only when I ask?"
- "Are you across Payday Super and the current super guarantee rate for my payroll?"
- "How do you handle an ATO review or audit - is that included, or extra?"

tasmania.biz · <https://tasmania.biz> · hello@tasmania.biz

This guide is free and independent. No business paid to be mentioned in it. Costs, licence names and rebate amounts change; the figures here are ranges and should be confirmed before you rely on them. Every business listed on tasmania.biz is compiled from its own published material.

© 2026 tasmania.biz. You are welcome to print this, share it, or send it to someone who needs it.