



Shadow Assistant Treasurer
Shadow Minister for Financial Services

Mr Grant Hehir
Auditor-General
Australian National Audit Office
GPO Box 707
CANBERRA ACT 2601

5 August 2020

Dear Auditor-General,

I write to ask that you review the integrity and performance of the Government's early release scheme for superannuation, as established through the *Coronavirus Economic Response Omnibus Package Act 2020*.

The scheme was designed to provide financial relief for people experiencing income loss and hardship caused by the economic impact of COVID-19. This was the clear intent of Parliament in legislating for increased early access.

The Government administration of the scheme appears to have departed from this legislated purpose. Evidence given to the Senate Select Committee overseeing the Government's response to COVID-19 has revealed major problems with the scheme, including:

- major theft and fraud issues, resulting in the loss of significant quantities of superannuation;
- the lack of any verification mechanism for access to the scheme;
- inaccurate and misleading promotion of the scheme; and
- a \$12 billion blowout in estimates of how much superannuation would be withdrawn.

The consequences of these administrative failures for taxpayers are dire:

- fines of up to \$12,600 for false declarations and withdrawals;
- tax liabilities on fund withdrawals; and
- disqualification from income support such as JobSeeker.

Government ministers and senior public servants have acknowledged many of these failings, but have not provided any details as to the Government's response. Despite these failings, the scheme is now being extended by the Government for a further three months.

I thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Jones'.

Stephen Jones MP
Shadow Assistant Treasurer
Shadow Minister for Financial Services