eReturns

Third Party incurring Electoral Expenditure Quick Reference Guide

AEC
Australian Electoral Commission

Contents

The basics

Common icons

Icon	What it does?
	This is the help icon in eReturns. If you click on this icon, further information will be displayed to explain what is on screen. Clicking the icon again, or the close icon in the help text area will close the help text.
	This is the close icon in eReturns. Clicking on this icon will close the help text that it is related to.
	This is the annotation icon in eReturns. Anywhere that this icon appears, you have an opportunity to record further information, be it against an individual transaction, or total. Any information you record in an annotation will be presented on the final return as a footnote. Annotations not related to a specific transaction or field are also available within the wizard. This is covered in some detail later on in this guide.

Useful information

Saving

eReturns automatically saves what you are doing while you are working. You do not need to remember to click save while working in eReturns.

Getting Started

Logging in to eReturns

Getting Credentials

Third party lodging officer will have a username and password issued to them by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) with their obligation letter. If the lodging officer changes, the new lodging officer will need to contact Funding and Disclosure on 02 6271 4552 or email fad@aec.gov.au to obtain eReturn credentials.

Logging in

eReturns credentials will appear like this in your obligation letter:

User name: AdminTestThirdParty
Password: yzc2c22C

eReturn credentials are made up of a user name and one-time password. On your first log-in to eReturns you will be prompted to change your password. You can also optionally change your user name. It is important that eReturns credentials are kept secure and not shared with anyone else.

Getting Started

Once you have your credentials you will need to navigate to the eReturns website using your browser.
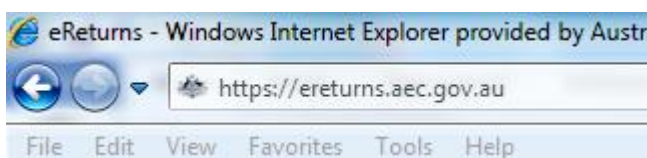
Be careful! – eReturns is a secure website which means you must type 'https://' at the beginning of the URL.

Once you have successfully navigated to the eReturns webpage you will be able to enter your credentials.

Enter your user name and password from your obligation letter and click 'Login'.

On first login

The first time you log in to eReturns you will be prompted to verify your details. To navigate through the eReturns wizard use the 'Back' and 'Next' buttons at the bottom right of the screen.
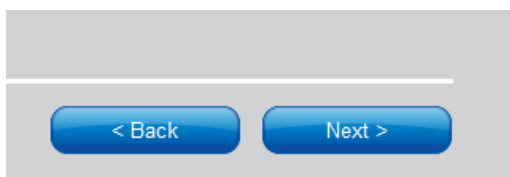
Step 1: Organisation Details

On this screen you can review and update the details which the AEC currently has on file for your third party.

Step 2: Contact Details

Please ensure you enter your email address as eReturns uses email for validation and to send you copies of any returns which you lodge.

Step 3: Account Details

On this screen you will be able to change your user name if you wish.

You will also be required to enter a new password and provide a secret question and answer and a PIN.

This secret information will be used by AEC staff to verify your identity over the phone if you need to contact the Help Desk.

Once you have completed the Account details screen, click 'Finish'.

Step 4: Confirmation

Account successfully updated
As your email address has changed, an email verification request has been sent to your new email address.
Please click on the link in the email when it arrives and your account will be activated.
You can continue to use eReturns now, however you must activate your account to lodge a disclosure return or re-login to eReturns.
You can now use eReturns.

eReturns will automatically generate a verification email and send it to your email address. Before your eReturns account can be activated you will be required to verify your email address. This is done by clicking on the link in the email.

The email account linked to your eReturns account has changed. Please activate your eReturns account by clicking this link https://ereturnstest.dev.aec.local/RegistrationWizard/ActivateAccount?activationCode=EE8C054585CD0B3C0762107FFD128271. Alternatively copy the link into your browsers address bar.

If you have any queries, please contact the Funding and Disclosure section by phone on 02 6271 4552 or by email at fad@aec.gov.au

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Clicking this link verifies that you have access to the email account.

Activation complete

You have successfully activated your account. You can login to the eReturns site using the user name and password you provided during registration.

Once you have verified your email address you are able to start using your eReturns account.

Login

Click the 'Back to login' button to return to the eReturns login page.
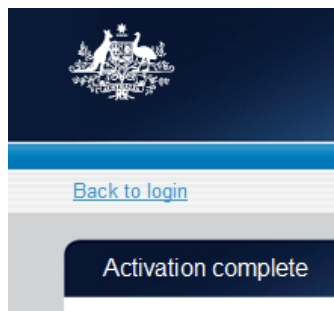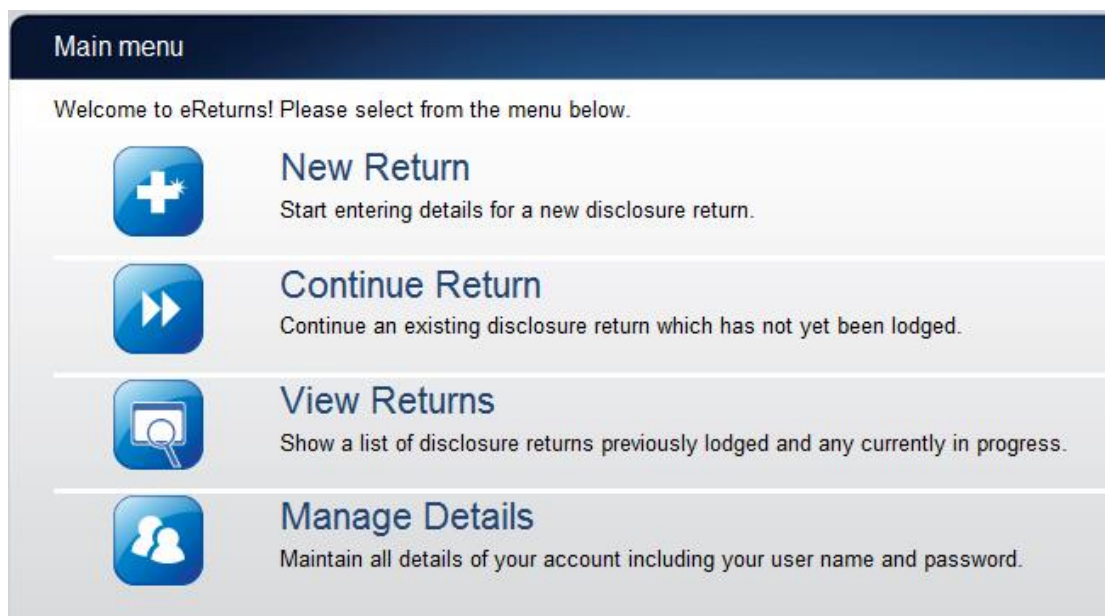

From here, enter your user name and password to login – remember you will have changed your password and may have changed your user name.

Using eReturns

Main Menu

Once you have logged in you will see the eReturns main menu.

From the main menu you can start a new return, continue a return which is partially complete, view historical returns and manage your account details.

Your account details are the details which you reviewed and updated when you logged in for the first time.

NOTE: Individuals who incur electoral expenditure and had to create an individual donor account will need to click 'Manage Details' before they can create a Third Party Return of Electoral Expenditure. This will display the manage details screen.

On the manage details screen is a checkbox titled 'Do you also incur electoral expenditure separate from your donations to political parties and candidates?' Select this checkbox, and then click 'Main menu' in the top left corner of the screen to return to the main menu. You can then follow the instructions below to complete a Third Party Return of Electoral Expenditure.

Completing a return

New Return

Click the 'New Return' button to start completing a new return.
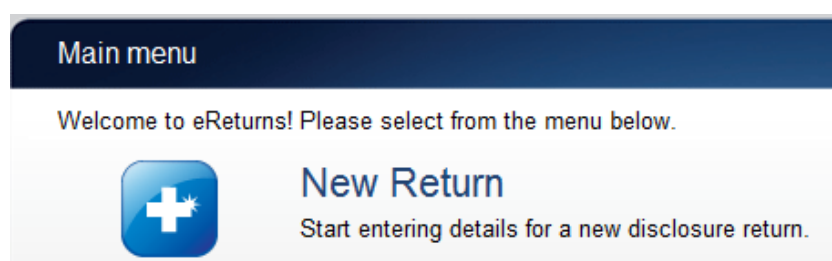
Then choose the return which you would like to complete

Click 'Continue' to launch the return wizard. Similar to when you review your account details you can use the 'Next' and 'Back' buttons to navigate through the screens.

Instructions on how to complete the return will appear at the top of each screen.

Progress through the wizard is tracked down the left-hand side of the screen.
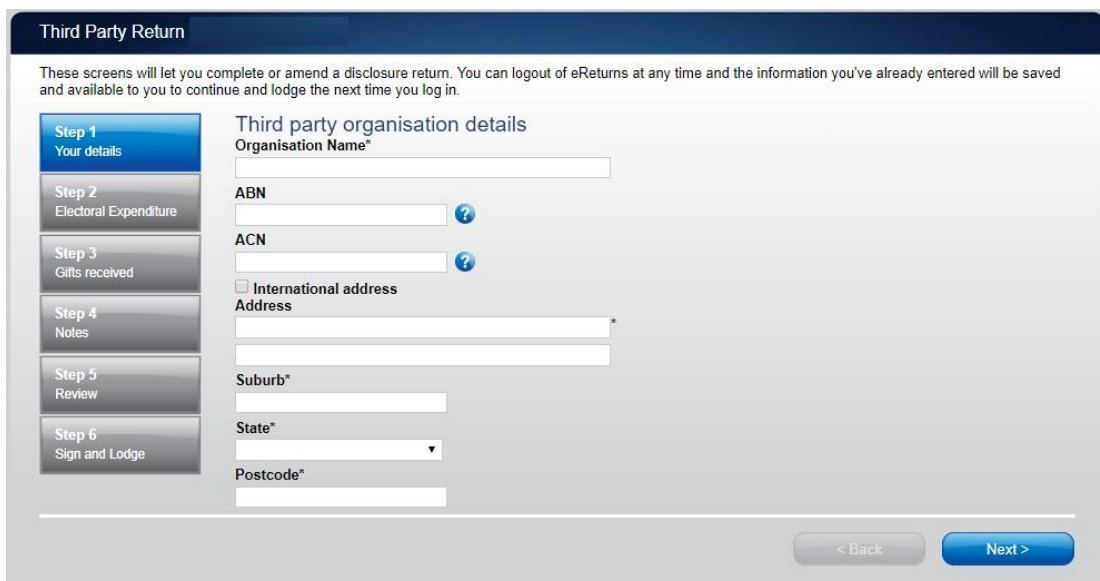
As you navigate through the wizard, you will be prompted to enter the information which will make up the return.

Step 1 - Your details

This screen can be used to record your organisation details. By default this information is pre-filled from your account.

NOTE: Individuals lodging a Third Party Return of Electoral Expenditure will not see this screen, instead they will be taken directly to the Lodging officer details screen.

Once you have checked and updated your organisation details, click 'Next' and you will be taken to the Lodging officer details screen where you can review your details.

Once you have entered your details as the lodging officer click 'Next' to move to the Electoral expenditure screen.

Step 2 – Electoral expenditure

This screen will allow you to record the electoral expenditure you have incurred during the financial year.

Once you have recorded your electoral expenditure, click 'Next' to move to the Gifts received screen.

Step 3 - Gifts received

This screen can be used to record details of gifts received that were used to incur the electoral expenditure that was recorded at Step 2–Electoral expenditure.

To add details of a gift received, click the '+Add' button. This will launch the 'Add a gift received' window.
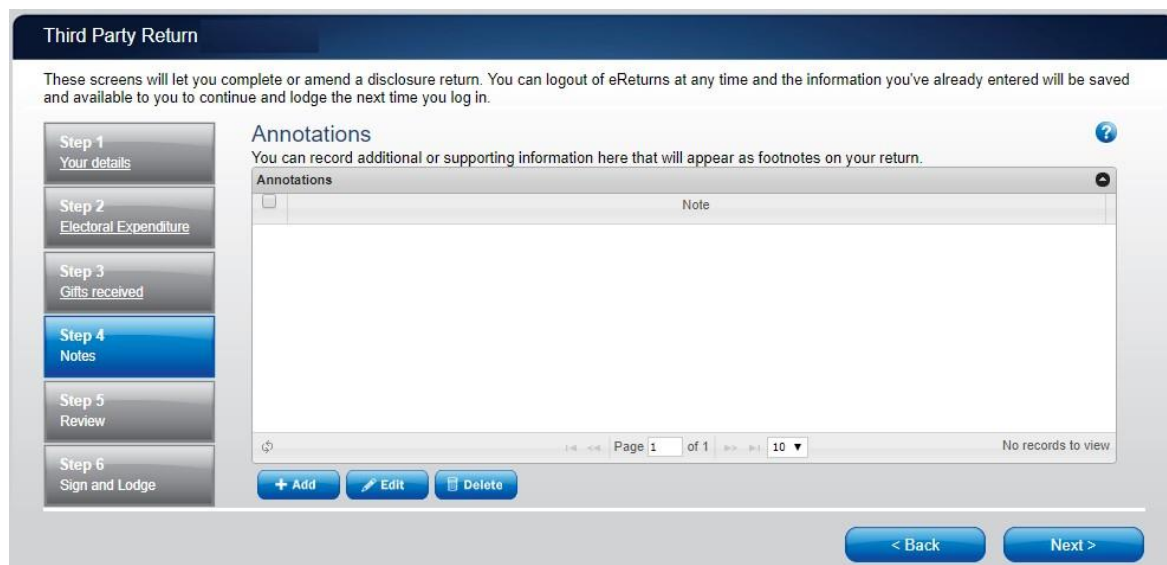
In the 'Add a gift received' window you can fill in the details of each gift received. For each gift that you have received you must include the name and address of the donor, the transaction date and the amount. Once you have finished recording the details of a gift, click the 'Add' button, to add the gift to the list. The 'Add a gift received' window will remain open, allowing you to enter more gifts.

Once you have added all your gifts received, click 'Close'.

You can then click 'Next' to move to the Notes screen.

Step 4 - Notes
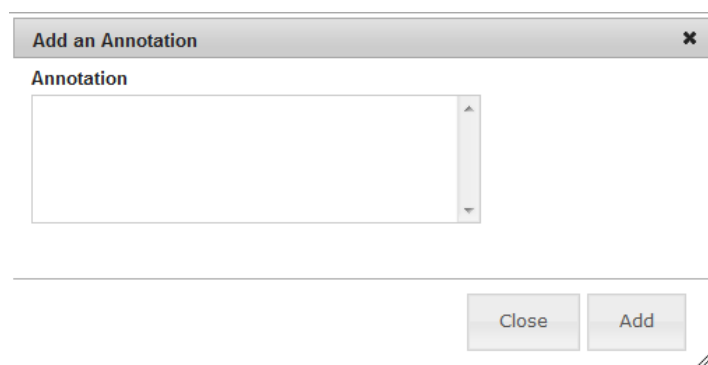
The Notes screen allows you to record annotations against the return.

These annotations will be presented on the return as footnotes.

To add an annotation, click the 'Add' button. This will launch the 'Add an annotation' window.

Enter the text of your annotation and click 'Add' to save it. Click 'Close' once you have entered all your annotations.

When you have finished recording annotations, click 'Next'.

Step 5 - Review

The next screen is the review screen.

Here you will be presented with an image of what the data in your return will look like. Use the scroll bar on the right of the screen to view all of the pages of the return.

You'll notice that there is nothing in the signature or date fields on the front of the return. These fields will be populated once you have completed the lodgement screen and will appear on the final version of your return.

If you need to make changes to the data in the return, click 'Back'. Once you have reviewed the image of your return and all data is correct, click 'Next' .This will take you to the Sign and Lodge screen.

NOTE: At the bottom of this screen, above the 'Next' and 'Back' buttons is a checkbox. Checking this box will allow you to lodge a Notice of Incomplete Return. For more detail on this, go to the Lodging a Notice of Incomplete Return section of this guide.

Step 6 – Sign and Lodge

Once you have reviewed your return you will be able to lodge it with the AEC.

On this screen, you will need to select the box next to the certification. Type your name into the Signature box and type your password into the Password box.

Once you have done this, click 'Lodge' to lodge your return.

Upon lodging your return you will be presented with a confirmation screen.

From this screen you may save a PDF copy of your return. The AEC recommends that you save a copy of your return in case you need to print or refer to it at a later date. The unique reference number presented on this screen is also recorded on the return form in the bottom right hand corner. eReturns will also email you a copy of your lodged return by default.

Lodging a Notice of Incomplete Return

eReturns will allow you to lodge a Notice of Incomplete Return online. For more information about when it is appropriate to lodge a Notice of Incomplete Return please consult the *Financial Disclosure Guide for Third Parties* available on the AEC's website at www.aec.gov.au.

To lodge a Notice of Incomplete Return in eReturns you will need to tick the checkbox at the bottom of the review screen.

Checking this box will take you to the Notice of Incomplete Return screen.

Here you are required to fill in the fields, detailing the information that is missing from your return, the reason why you were unable to obtain that information, who you believe may have the information which is missing, and why you believe that person has it. Once you have completed all of the fields on the screen, click 'Next' to review the Notice of Incomplete Return.

Once you have reviewed your Notice of Incomplete Return you can click 'Next' to go to the Sign and Lodge screen. To lodge your return and Notice of Incomplete Return follow the instructions at Step 6–Sign and Lodge of this guide.

Amending a Return

Returns lodged using eReturns can also be amended using eReturns. To amend a return click the 'View Returns' button on the main menu.

The view returns screen will display.
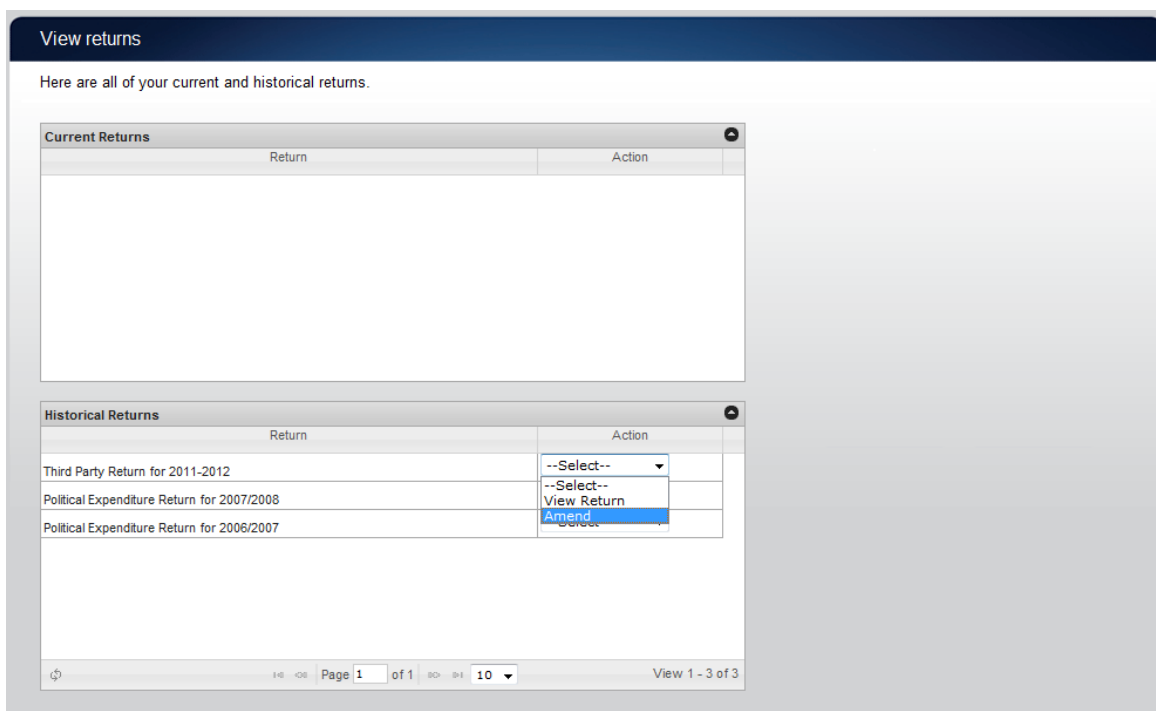
Use the 'Amend' option in the drop down list next to the return you wish to amend. Only returns lodged online can be amended online.

This will launch the amendment wizard. The amendment wizard is exactly the same as the return wizard, except it already contains all of the data from your original return. To amend something, simply add, edit or delete as appropriate. Once you have finished working your way through the wizard, the system will generate an amendment form for you to review which will detail the changes. This amendment form can be lodged just like the original return.

Creating an account

Third parties that incur electoral expenditure can register online and create an account for themselves instead of waiting for an obligation letter with credentials. To do this, go to https://ereturns.aec.gov.au.

This is the eReturns homepage. To create an account, click 'Create an eReturns account'. This will take you through a wizard to create your account.

To navigate through the wizard use the 'Back' and 'Next' buttons at the bottom right of the screen.

The first screen will ask you to select the type of return you need to complete. For organisations that incur electoral expenditure this will be the 'Third Party Return of Electoral Expenditure'.

NOTE: Individuals who incur electoral expenditure will need to register as an Individual Donor (by selecting 'Donor to Political Party Disclosure Return – Individual') and then lodge a Third Party Return of Electoral Expenditure from within that account.

Once you have selected the return type click 'Next'.

If you selected a Donor to Political Party–Organisations Return the following screen will appear and you will need to enter the details of the organisation you are lodging on behalf of.

NOTE: Individuals lodging a Third Party Return of Electoral Expenditure will not see this screen, instead they will be taken directly to the Your details screen.

Once complete, click "Next' and the Your details screen will appear.

On this screen you will be asked to enter your details as the person lodging the return. Please ensure you enter your email address correctly as eReturns uses email for validation and to send you copies of any returns which you lodge.

Once you have completed entering your details click 'Next' to move to the Account details screen.

On this screen you will be asked to choose a user name and password for your account and provide some secret information which can be used to verify your identity over the phone if you need to contact the Help Desk.

Once you have completed entering all the information requested, click 'Next'. A confirmation screen will appear advising you to verify your account by clicking a link in an email which will be sent to the email address you provided.

Email verification required
You have succesfully registered your account.
An activation email has been emailed to the email address you provided. Please click on the link in the email when it arrives and your account will be activated. You will then be able to login to eReturns using the username and password you provided.

The email sent to you will look like this.

The email account linked to your eReturns account has changed. Please activate your eReturns account by clicking this link https://ereturnstest.dev.aec.local/RegistrationWizard/ActivateAccount?activationCode=EE8C054585CD0B3C0762107FFD128271. Alternatively copy the link into your browsers address bar.

If you have any queries, please contact the Funding and Disclosure section by phone on 02 6271 4552 or by email at fad@aec.gov.au

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When you click the link in the email you will get a confirmation from the system that the verification has succeeded.

Activation complete

You have successfully activated your account. You can login to the eReturns site using the user name and password you provided during registration.

You can now log in to your eReturns account with the credentials you created earlier.

Troubleshooting

Forgotten Password

If you have forgotten your password, you can reset it online. This can be done using the forgotten password link on the eReturns front page. eReturns will send you an email with a new single use password in it.

Clicking forgotten password will take you to the password reset screen where you will need to enter your user name and the CAPTCHA text on screen.
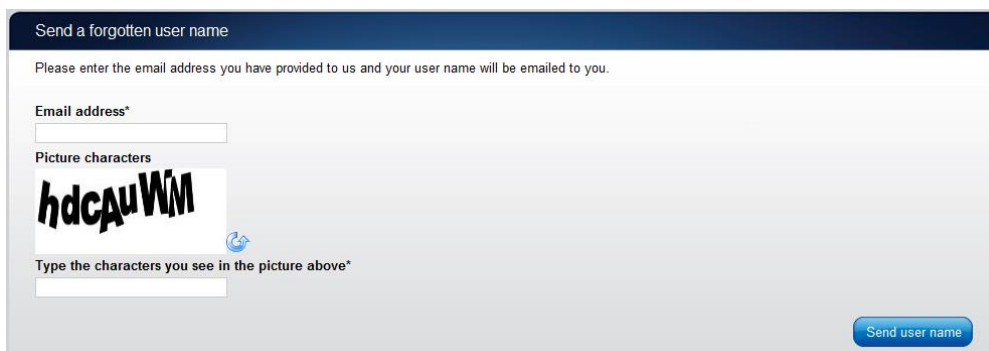

Alternatively you can contact Funding & Disclosure on 02 6271 4552 or by email at fad@aec.gov.au.

Forgotten User name

If you have forgotten your user name, you can retrieve it online. This can be done using the forgotten user name link on the eReturns front page. eReturns will send you an email containing your user name.

Clicking forgotten user name will take you to the user name retrieval screen where you will need to enter your email address and the CAPTCHA text on screen.

Alternatively you can contact Funding & Disclosure on 02 6271 4552 or by email at fad@aec.gov.au.

Note – If there is more than one user name related to an email address eReturns will not be able to retrieve your user name online. You will need to contact Funding and Disclosure to retrieve you user name in this instance.

Other problems

If you experience any difficulties while using eReturns, please contact Funding & Disclosure on 02 6271 4552 or by email at fad@aec.gov.au.