

case study



Client: MGI Joyce Dickson

**How a collaborative approach
to SMSF audit delivered
unexpected benefits for MGI
Joyce Dickson**

MGI Joyce Dickson (MGI JD) is based in Canberra and provides a full range of accounting, business consulting, tax advice, and SMSF services. The firm is part of the international MGI ecosystem but remains independently run.

As SMSF Division Co-Principal, Janelle Byrne is responsible for approximately 500 funds and had to find a reliable, knowledgeable, and communicative external auditor in the wake of audit independence.

Initially thought to be a challenging task, it turned out that SMSF Auditing Australia (SAA) was the perfect firm for the job.

The challenges of moving to external audits

Like many accounting firms, the move to audit independence led to MGI JD looking to replace its internal auditors with external ones. This was daunting for the firm, which had already perfected its processes and workflows around audits.

There was uncertainty around what impact an external auditor would have, particularly around the need to ask auditors for timely advice on the best way to meet ATO requirements.

MGI JD had an uncharted road ahead when it came to finding an external auditor who could easily slot into the firm's existing workflows and provide the same level of advice that internal auditors previously had.



It started with a 20 fund trial...

In February 2021, MGI JD started a 20 fund audit trial with SMSF Auditing Australia.

Initially, the success metrics Janelle had identified included turnaround times, workflows, timely access to auditor advice as needed, her team's ability to prioritise their jobs if required – and of course, value for money.

What Janelle found was an auditing firm that exceeded her initial expectations, and it quickly became clear that SMSF Auditing Australia would be a fantastic addition to the firm's existing robust workflows.

Now, MGI JD sends all of its funds to SAA for audit and appreciates the collaborative style of working offered by them.



This relationship continues to deliver value to the firm in that:

- ✓ **Communication is easy** – in addition to a quarterly catch up with their Client Relationship Manager, Janelle can send a direct email and then talk through any questions, find out if more docs are required, confirm the auditor is happy with her approach, and agree on the best way forward.
- ✓ **Risk is minimised** – regular SMSF reports highlight not just where funds are non-compliant, but when they are at risk of non-compliance. This enables the firm to provide a value added service to its own clients, and proactively solve any contraventions before they need to be reported.
- ✓ **Providing workpapers and audit files became simple** – thanks to SAA's secure workflow portal that integrates with both BGL and Cloudoffis, it is easier to provide workpapers, share docs back and forth, and get reports from their auditor.
- ✓ **Turnarounds are quick (even in busy months)** – even during busy times, audits were turned around in 5-8 days and non-busy turnaround times averaged 4 working days.
- ✓ **Internal processes were improved** – the way SMSF Auditing Australia presents queries helps the firm identify where it needs to ask clients for more information, which in turn speeds up turnaround times.

Agility, scalability, and increased knowledge now embedded as on the SMSF audit standard

The seamless and year round support provided by SMSF Auditing Australia has enabled MGI JD to spread busy periods throughout the year with the bulk of its 500 annual audits completed in Oct/Nov and Feb/Mar.

The experience and accessibility of SAA auditors means that MGI JD is also able to leverage compliant but 'out of the box' solutions to satisfy ATO requirements – which is particularly useful for more complex investments like unit trusts, unlisted investments, and property.

Other benefits that have been delivered by working with SAA include:

- ✓ **Accountants have increased their knowledge** – thanks to SAA's collaborative relationship model, the firm's accountants have improved their knowledge and can proactively help mitigate queries and identify alternative areas for evidence for complex funds. This has also reduced turnaround times.
- ✓ **Workpaper preparation is seamless** – workpaper compilation is now much more efficient and timely. An improvement that may not have been possible without SAA's integrated workflow portal.
- ✓ **The firm is more agile and scalable** – thanks to SAA's scalable job model, Janelle isn't concerned about audit capacity when it comes to taking on more SMSF funds.

What started as a small trial has now turned into a relationship that delivers more than the average SMSF audit service.

Through ongoing collaboration, open communication and a commitment to quality outcomes, MGI JD and SAA are able to work together to deliver the best possible audit outcomes for MGI JD clients.

"Working with SMSF Auditing Australia has allowed us to simplify our audit compliance and reduce the pressure of busy periods, but we also benefit from the knowledge our auditor has from working on other complex audits."

–Janelle Byrne

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