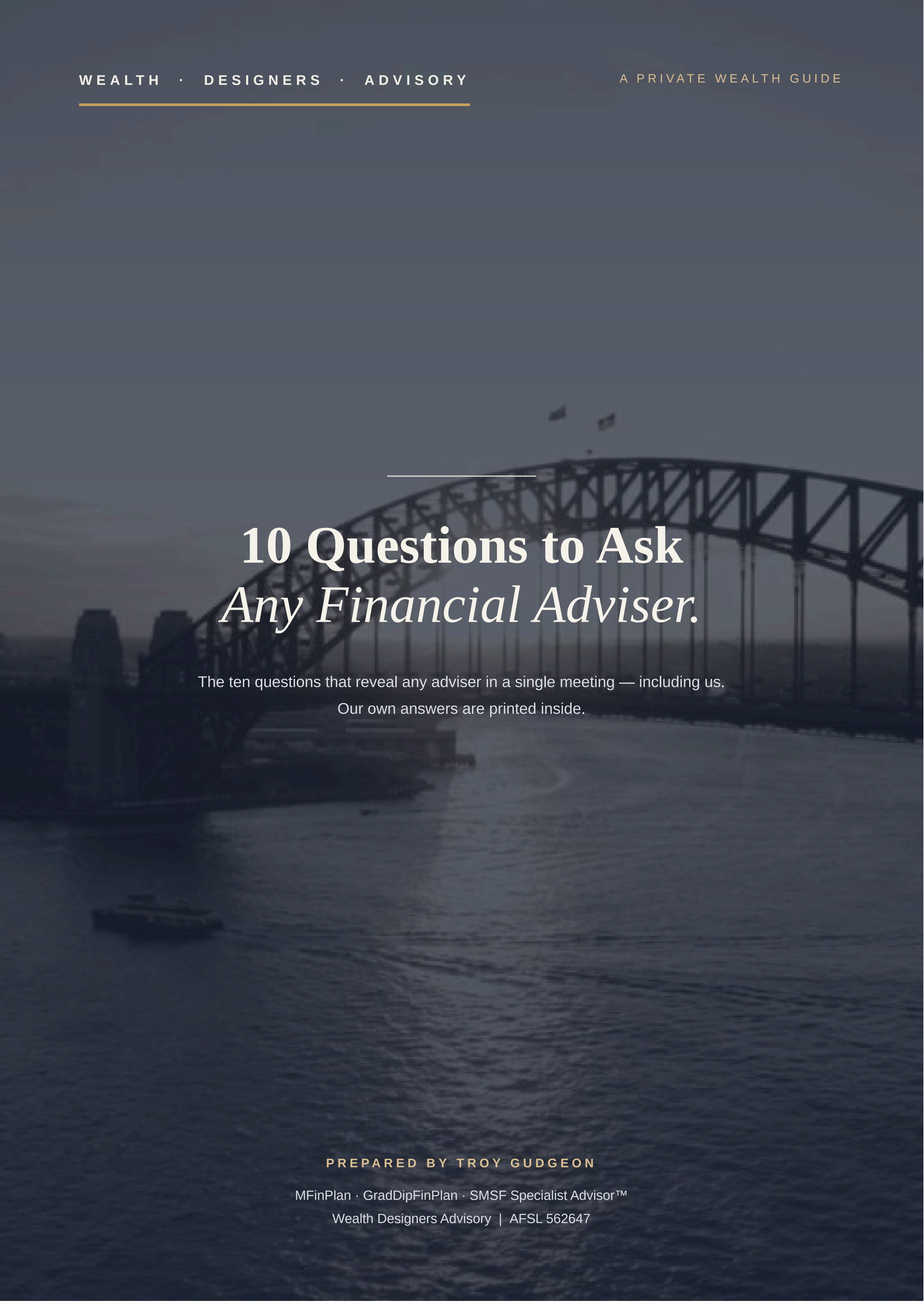
WEALTH · DESIGNERS · ADVISORY

A PRIVATE WEALTH GUIDE



10 Questions to Ask *Any Financial Adviser.*

The ten questions that reveal any adviser in a single meeting — including us.
Our own answers are printed inside.

PREPARED BY TROY GUDGEON

MFinPlan · GradDipFinPlan · SMSF Specialist Advisor™
Wealth Designers Advisory | AFSL 562647

Troy Gudgeon

Director & Financial Adviser

MFinPlan · GradDipFinPlan · SMSF™

A NOTE FROM YOUR ADVISER

Ask better questions.
Get honest answers.

Choosing a financial adviser is one of the few decisions that shapes the next thirty years of your life — and most people go into it with less scrutiny than they'd apply to buying a car. Not because they don't care, but because nobody ever tells you what to ask.

So here it is: the ten questions I believe every Australian should put to any adviser they're considering. There's no trick. Some of these questions have answers that favour a firm like mine, and where that's true I've said so. Others cut squarely against us — and I've left them in, because a list that only flatters its author isn't worth your time.

Our own answers to all ten are printed on the scorecard near the back. Mark us against them. Ask all ten of anyone — a good adviser will enjoy answering them, and that reaction alone will tell you plenty.

— Troy

SELF-LICENSED	FIDUCIARY STANDARD	MASTER OF FIN PLANNING	SMSF SPECIALIST
AFSL 562647	Best Interests Duty	Kaplan Professional	SMSF Association™

This guide contains general information only — see Important Information on page 14.

THE TEN QUESTIONS

Ten questions, *one designed decision.*

No single answer settles it. But these ten, asked plainly in a first meeting, will tell you more about an adviser than any brochure ever will.

01 **Who owns your licence — and who makes the products you recommend?**
The structural question. Who profits from the recommendation?

02 **If my adviser leaves — or the adviser is the firm — what happens to me?**
Continuity cuts both ways. Ask the version that stings them.

03 **How many retirements have you guided — and what qualifies you beyond the minimum?**
Verifiable specifics — not adjectives. The legal minimum is a floor.

04 **When I need to talk to someone, who picks up?**
Retirement means more contact with your money, not less.

05 **When will I actually be better off — and how will I know?**
The value must clearly outweigh the cost — in writing, before you commit.

06 **The super rules are changing — what's your plan at my balance?**
Division 296, transfer caps, closing windows. Fluency is the minimum standard.

07 **How will my super become an income — and what happens in a bad year?**
Sequencing risk is the retirement risk nobody mentions. Demand the plan.

08 **What happens to my super when I die?**
Super doesn't follow your will — and the tax bill can run six figures.

09 **Can I check you — and will you help me do it?**
Register, licence, complaints avenue. All public, all free.

10 **What does the first meeting cost — and what am I committed to?**
The answers you want: nothing, and nothing.

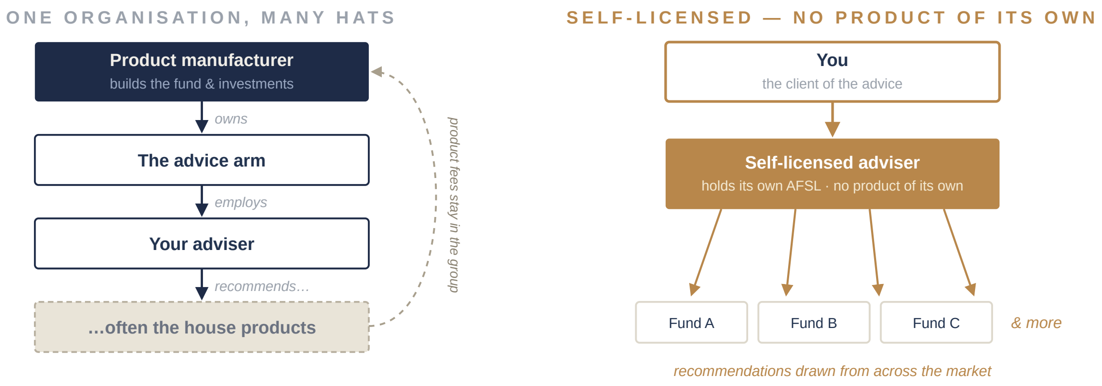
QUESTION 1 OF 10

Who owns your licence — *and who makes the products?*

Some of Australia's biggest names in advice are also product manufacturers — the same organisation builds the super fund, runs the investments, and employs the adviser telling you where your money should go.

Ask yourself how often that advice concludes with *"you'd be better off somewhere else."* A self-licensed firm — one that holds its own Australian Financial Services Licence and isn't owned by any institution, fund or product provider — has no super or investment product of its own to sell, and its recommendations can be drawn from across the market. That doesn't make any adviser conflict-free — no adviser is — but it removes one structural conflict from the room.

So ask: *who owns your licence?* — *how broad is the list of products you can actually recommend?* — and the question that reveals the most: *"If the best thing for me was to move away from your organisation's products, would you tell me — and can you show me a time you have?"*



Two very different maps. Left: the organisation manufacturing the product also employs the adviser recommending it. Right: a self-licensed firm with no product of its own removes that structural conflict from the room.

THE EXPENSIVE VERSION OF NOT ASKING

You discover who the advice really serves only after you've taken it — and by then, unwinding the products it put you in has a cost of its own.

QUESTION 2 OF 10

If my adviser leaves — or the adviser is the firm — *what happens to me?*

Continuity matters most at exactly the stage of life you're entering. This question cuts both ways — ask the version that stings whoever you're sitting across from.

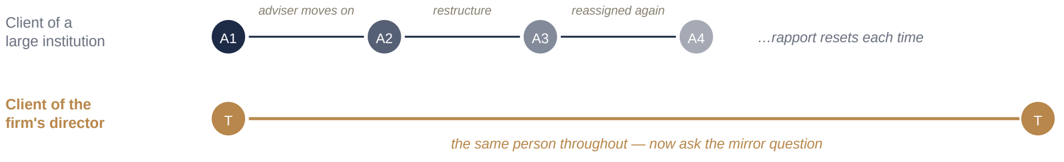
At a large institution

You're a client of the business, not of the person. You can spend two or three years building trust with an adviser who knows your family, your fears and your plans — and when they move on, you're reassigned to someone you've never met. The rapport starts again from zero. Ask who owns the relationship. If you're dealing with the director of the firm, they won't be reassigned away from you.

At a boutique — including us

Turn the same question around. If the adviser *is* the firm, ask the mirror question: *"What happens to me if something happens to you?"* Who steps in, what happens to your file, could the client book be sold without you having a say? A firm worth your trust answers that one straight, without bluffing. Our answer — imperfections included — is on the scorecard.

THE RELATIONSHIP, YEAR BY YEAR



Continuity cuts both ways. An institution can reassign you; a boutique can't — but a boutique carries key-person risk an institution doesn't. The honest test is how straight they answer the version that cuts against *them*.

WORTH KNOWING

Whichever way this cuts, your money itself is held by the super fund or platform in your name — not by the adviser. If an adviser leaves, retires or closes, your investments don't go anywhere; what's at stake is the advice relationship, not the assets.

QUESTION 3 OF 10

How many retirements have you guided — *and what qualifies you?*

Every adviser in Australia must now meet a legal minimum — an approved degree, a national exam, ongoing training. That floor matters, and it's worth confirming. But it is a floor. What you're really paying for is pattern recognition: someone who has personally taken many households from working life into retirement income, and who has managed real clients' money through a serious market fall — not just read about one.

So ask two specific things: *how many retirements have you guided, start to finish?* and *where were you and your clients in 2008, or 2020?* Years alone prove survival. Specific answers, willingly given, prove judgement — and they're checkable against the public register (see Question 9).

THE LEGAL FLOOR

Degree · Exam · CPD

Every adviser must meet it. Confirm it — then keep asking.

WHAT YOU'RE PAYING FOR

Pattern recognition

Many retirements guided personally, start to finish.

THE PROOF

2008 · 2020 · 2022

Where were they — and their clients — in the bad years?

QUESTION 4 OF 10

When I need to talk to someone, *who picks up?*

This matters more after you retire, not less. Drawing an income, adjusting pension payments, responding to markets — retirement means *more* interaction with whoever manages your money, not a set-and-forget arrangement.

So test it. Is there a direct line to the person who knows your file — or a call-centre queue, a reference number, and whoever happens to be rostered on? Ask how long a call-back typically takes, and whether the person returning it will know your name without looking it up. And connect this to Question 3: *ask how many clients the adviser personally serves* — the answer decides whether the access they promise today survives the growth they're planning tomorrow.

THE EXPENSIVE VERSION OF NOT ASKING

You find out what the service really is in the week you need it most — a falling market, a pension change, a family emergency — on hold, with a reference number.

QUESTION 5 OF 10

When will I actually be better off — *and how will I know?*

Good advice is an investment — and like most investments, the payoff isn't always immediate.

Some people see benefits in year one: a contribution strategy, a tax saving, a restructure that pays for itself quickly. For others, the real value compounds quietly over twelve to twenty-four months and beyond — better structures, fewer costly mistakes, income that lasts longer than it otherwise would. Value here means more than returns: risk avoided, tax not paid unnecessarily, and decisions you didn't have to make alone all count — and none of it is a performance guarantee.

Ask any adviser to be straight about which camp you're in, where the value will come from in your case, and roughly when. Before you commit, ask for one thing in writing: *the total cost — advice, platform and investments together — in dollars per year.* Then hold them to one standard: *the expected value of the advice should clearly outweigh its cost.* A good adviser will happily be measured against that test — and will tell you honestly if you don't need full advice yet.

BEFORE YOU SIGN ANYTHING, YOU SHOULD BE HOLDING A PAGE THAT SAYS:

Total cost of advice, platform and investments:	**$ ________ per year**
What the advice is expected to deliver, and when:	*in writing — before you decide*

The behaviour test. Not a lecture on fee models — one page, in dollars, before any commitment. An adviser who can't produce it is telling you something.

The question behind the question

“Why shouldn't I just stay where I am?” is a completely fair thing to ask an adviser — and the answer should be specific to you, in dollars and outcomes, not a brochure. If staying put is genuinely your best move, a good adviser says so.

THE EXPENSIVE VERSION OF NOT ASKING

Paying for advice on faith, with no stated timeline and no test — so neither you nor the adviser ever has to confront whether it was worth it.

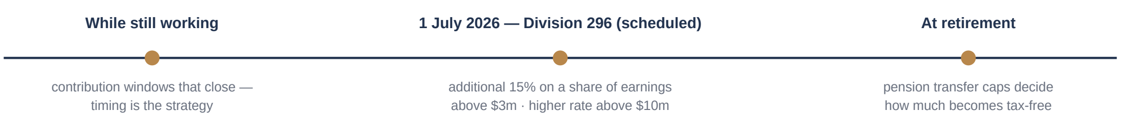
QUESTION 6 OF 10

The super rules are changing — *what's your plan at my balance?*

The rules governing larger super balances are moving right now. You don't need to master them. Your adviser must.

What's moving

Under changes scheduled to commence on 1 July 2026, a new measure — Division 296 — is set to impose an additional 15% tax on the share of earnings attributable to total super balances above $3 million, with a higher rate again above $10 million (both thresholds indexed). Transfer caps limit how much can move into the tax-free pension phase. And some of the most valuable contribution strategies depend on your age and work status, and close permanently once their window passes — much of the best planning can only be done *before* you retire, not after.



Timing is the strategy. Several of the most valuable moves exist only in the window before you retire. Rule details current at time of writing — confirm their status with your adviser.

Ask any adviser: *what's changing, what does it mean at my balance, and what should be done before I retire rather than after?* Confident, current, specific answers are the minimum standard. Vague ones are disqualifying.

THE EXPENSIVE VERSION OF NOT ASKING

Arriving at retirement with caps unused, windows expired, and structures set by default — none of it visible on any statement, all of it permanent.

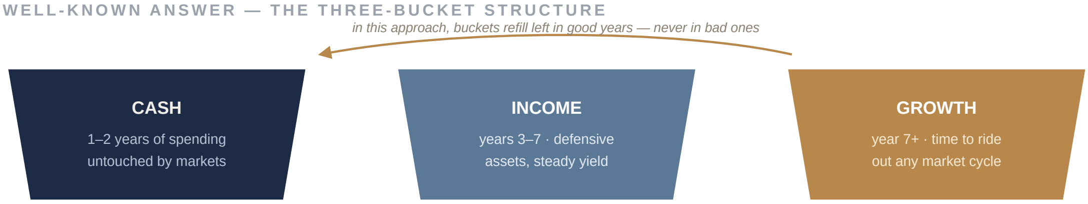
QUESTION 7 OF 10

How will my super become an income — *and what happens in a bad year?*

Accumulating money and drawing it down are different disciplines — and the retirement risk nobody mentions at barbecues is *sequencing*.

A market fall in your first years of drawdown does far more damage than the same fall later, because you're selling assets at low prices to fund your living costs. Ask any adviser to explain, in plain English: *how will my income be structured, where does next year's spending money sit, and what specifically happens to my pension payments when markets fall 20%?* If the whole answer is "we stay the course," keep interviewing.

ONE WELL-KNOWN ANSWER — THE THREE-BUCKET STRUCTURE



One common approach, shown for illustration — the right structure depends entirely on your circumstances.

The question behind the question

Buckets are one answer, not the only one — what you're really testing is whether the adviser has *a* named structure, can explain it without jargon, and can tell you where next year's spending money sits today. An account-based pension must pay you a legislated minimum every year, in good markets and bad — which is exactly why the answer "we stay the course" isn't a plan.

THE EXPENSIVE VERSION OF NOT ASKING

Discovering your drawdown plan is "sell whatever, whenever" in the middle of the first real downturn of your retirement — the one your portfolio never fully recovers from.

QUESTION 8 OF 10

What happens to my super *when I die?*

Two facts most people learn too late — and one of them can cost your family six figures.

Your super is *not* automatically covered by your will. And death benefits paid to adult children are typically taxed at 15% plus the Medicare levy on part of the balance — and where the fund includes insurance proceeds, as much as 32%. On larger balances that's often a six-figure cost, and often avoidable with planning done in advance.

Ask: *what nominations do I need, are mine currently valid and binding, and what exactly would my beneficiaries receive if something happened to me tomorrow?* If an adviser hasn't raised this with you unprompted, that silence is itself an answer.

A $500,000 TAXABLE COMPONENT LEFT TO ADULT CHILDREN — AN ILLUSTRATION

Unplanned	**up to $85,000 to the ATO — not your children**
Planned in advance	**often substantially reduced — sometimes to zero**

Illustrative — the outcome depends on your components, beneficiaries and structure. That's precisely why you ask.

The most expensive letter a family can receive — often avoidable.

Worth knowing before you ask

A “binding” nomination is only binding while it's valid — many lapse every three years, and an expired or defective one hands the decision to the fund's trustee, not your will. Ask when yours was last checked, whether it's lapsing or non-lapsing, and who is actually eligible to receive your super under the rules. The answers take five minutes and are worth six figures.

THE EXPENSIVE VERSION OF NOT ASKING

An invalid or lapsed nomination, a taxable component nobody managed, and a cheque to the ATO your family didn't need to write — all discovered at the worst possible time.

QUESTION 9 OF 10

Can I check you — *and will you help me do it?*

Every adviser authorised to advise everyday Australians is listed on ASIC's public Financial Adviser Register — qualifications, licence, employment history, any bans. Their licence can be verified on ASIC's registers, and unresolved disputes go to the Australian Financial Complaints Authority, free for any retail client. A confident adviser hands you the links themselves. Run the check on anyone you're considering — *including us.*

1 · THE ADVISER

Financial Adviser Register

moneysmart.gov.au

2 · THE LICENCE

AFSL search — ASIC

asic.gov.au

3 · THE COMPLAINTS AVENUE

AFCA

afca.org.au

QUESTION 10 OF 10

What does the first meeting cost — *and what am I committed to?*

The answers you want are *nothing* and *nothing.* A first conversation should be free and obligation-free, and it should end with you knowing what advice would cost and what it would cover — *before* you decide anything. Ask, too, what happens if you ever want to leave: how fees stop, what notice is required, whether anything locks you in. How an adviser treats you before you're a client — and how gracefully they'd let you go — is the best preview of the next thirty years.

OUR ANSWERS, FOR THE RECORD

The first conversation with us is a free 30-minute call — no pitch, no pressure, no obligation. You'll leave knowing what advice would cost, in dollars and in writing, before you commit to anything — and if we're not the right fit, we'll say so first. Our answers to all ten questions are on the next page.

THE ADVISER SCORECARD

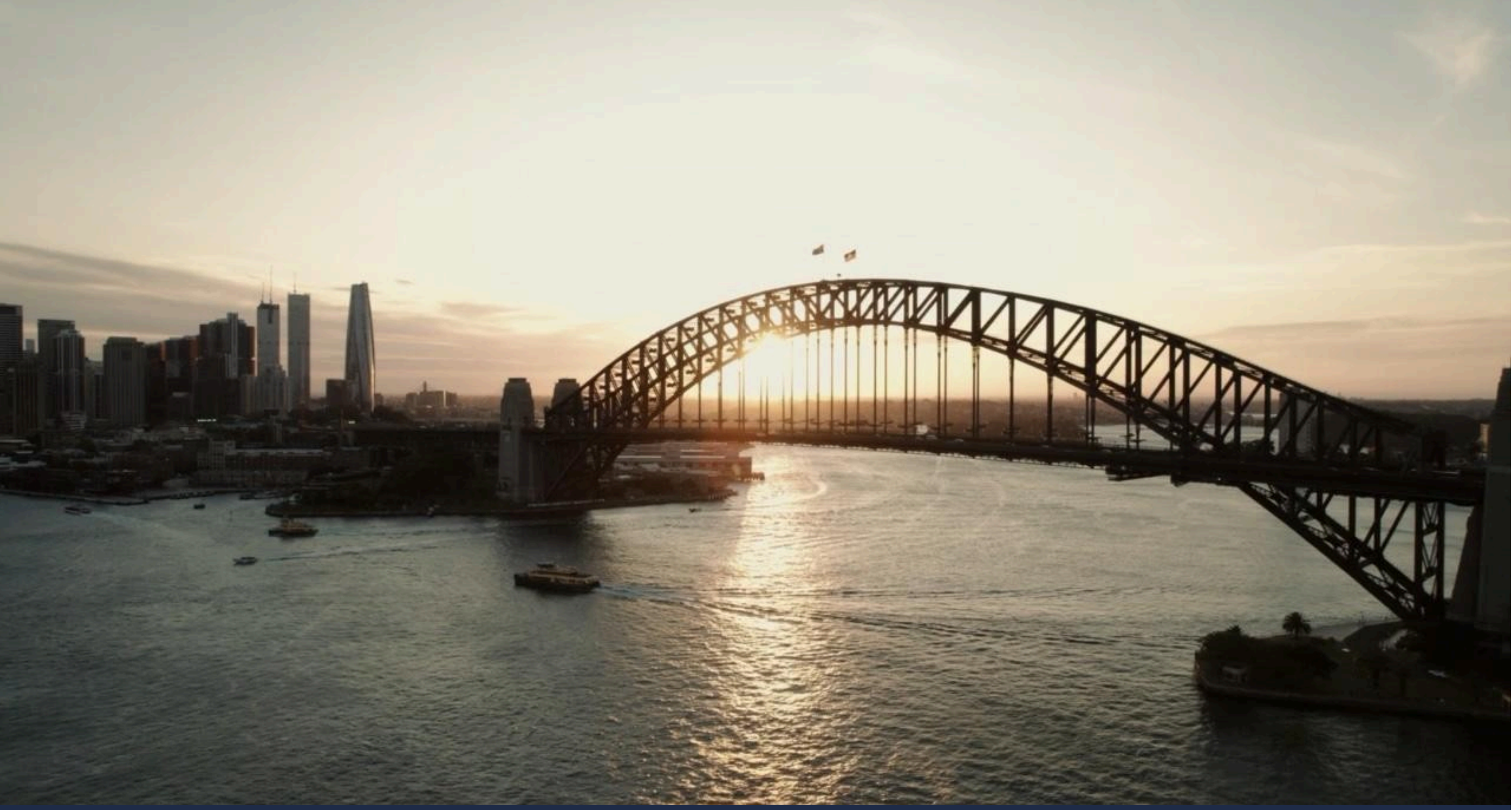
Ten questions, *scored in one meeting.*

Take this page to any first meeting — including one with us. Tick each question when it's answered plainly, without flinching. Our answers are on the right: **hold us to them.**

☐	**1 · Who owns your licence — and who makes the products you recommend?** Looking for: a firm that holds its own licence and has no product of its own.	OUR ANSWER *Our own AFSL — 562647. No product of our own.*
☐	**2 · If my adviser leaves — or IS the firm — what happens to me?** Looking for: a straight answer to whichever version cuts against them.	OUR ANSWER — THE HONEST ONE *Fair cop: one director. Ask us the succession question — you'll get a straight answer, not a bluff.*
☐	**3 · How many retirements have you guided — and what are your qualifications?** Looking for: specifics you can verify on the register — not adjectives.	OUR ANSWER *15+ years — through the GFC, 2020 and 2022. MFinPlan · GradDipFinPlan · SMSF™.*
☐	**4 · When I need to talk to someone, who picks up?** Looking for: a direct line to the person who knows your file.	OUR ANSWER *Troy's direct line. In a meeting? Same-day call-back — not instant.*
☐	**5 · When will I actually be better off — and how will I know?** Looking for: an honest timeline, one all-in dollar figure in writing, and "value must clearly outweigh cost" accepted as the test.	OUR ANSWER *All costs in dollars, in writing, before you decide anything.*
☐	**6 · The super rules are changing — what's the plan at my balance?** Looking for: fluent, current, specific — including what must happen before you retire.	OUR ANSWER *Modelled as standard — including the pre-retirement windows.*
☐	**7 · How will my super become an income — and what happens in a bad year?** Looking for: a named structure, a home for next year's money, a plan for a 20% fall.	OUR ANSWER *A named structure and a written bad-year plan, in plain English.*
☐	**8 · What happens to my super when I die?** Looking for: nominations checked and valid; the tax outcome for your beneficiaries, explained.	OUR ANSWER *Nominations reviewed as standard; beneficiary outcomes shown in dollars.*
☐	**9 · Can I check you — and will you help me do it?** Looking for: they volunteer the register links before you ask. (FAR · ASIC · AFCA)	OUR ANSWER *We volunteer the links — check us first.*
☐	**10 · What does the first meeting cost — and what am I committed to?** Looking for: nothing, and nothing. Full cost transparency before any commitment.	OUR ANSWER *Nothing, and nothing. Free 30 minutes; costs in writing first.*

SCORING — AND THIS PAGE IS YOURS

Ten ticks — have the serious conversation. Seven to nine — ask the missing ones again, slower. Six or fewer — keep interviewing. Print this page, photograph it, send it to anyone about to sit across from an adviser — including the one they already have. Our answers correct as at August 2026.



READY WHEN YOU ARE — NO OBLIGATION, NO PRESSURE

Ask us all ten.
We'll enjoy it.

If anything in this guide — or in The Designed Retirement — raised questions about your own situation, the next step is a 30-minute discovery call: Zoom, phone, or in person in Brisbane or Sydney. We'll give you straight answers about where you stand, and tell you honestly whether advice would clearly be worth it for you. If we're not the right fit, we'll say so on the call.

OPTION 1

Book a Discovery Call

calendly.com/troy-wealthdesignersadvisory/30min

OPTION 2

Email Troy Directly

troy@wealthdesignersadvisory.com.au

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(02) 8526 5889 | wealthdesignersadvisory.com.au

Level 35, Tower One, International Towers, 100 Barangaroo Avenue, Sydney NSW 2000

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

General advice warning *& disclosures.*

GENERAL ADVICE WARNING

This document contains general information only. It does not take into account your personal objectives, financial situation or needs. Before acting on any information in this guide, you should consider its appropriateness having regard to your circumstances — and seek personal financial advice.

ILLUSTRATIVE FIGURES

Any figures or examples in this guide are illustrative only. They are not forecasts, guarantees or recommendations. Actual outcomes will depend on your personal circumstances, tax position, market conditions and other factors.

REGULATORY INFORMATION

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TAX AND SUPERANNUATION SETTINGS

Tax and superannuation rules referred to in this guide are those current or announced at the time of writing (August 2026), including the Division 296 measure scheduled to commence 1 July 2026. All settings are subject to change through legislation and indexation; where measures are described as scheduled or proposed, confirm their current status before acting.

PRIVACY

If you engage with us, your personal information is collected and handled in accordance with our Privacy Policy, available at wealthdesignersadvisory.com.au/privacy-policy.

COMPLAINTS

We are members of the Australian Financial Complaints Authority (AFCA). If you have a concern that cannot be resolved with us directly, you may lodge a complaint with AFCA at afca.org.au or by phone on 1800 931 678.

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