

Global investing — preserving long term value

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The quote

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In March this year, the newly-named Australian Centre for Financial Studies (ACFS) will stage its blue-ribbon event, the Melbourne Financial Services Symposium, in tandem with its highly anticipated investment management awards.

MICHELLE BALTAZAR finds out more.

The financial services industry is a stage that plays a constant battle of the wits. With more than \$1.2 trillion of superannuation assets at stake and the investment sector to amass trillions of dollars in the future, a rigorous debate on how to manage money over the long term is essential for small and big investors.

If left unchecked, and without a vision, Australia could lose its position as one of the leading investment sectors in the world.

But to have an effective dialogue on how the public's purse should be managed, the sector must cast its net wide and engage its best minds and decision makers, namely the government, the practitioners and the academia.

This is where the Australian Centre for Financial Studies (ACFS) plays an instrumental role. Formerly called the Melbourne Centre for Financial Studies, the centre changed its name last July to reflect its expanded role and to ramp up its national presence.

The centre's overarching strategy remains the same. It will continue to facilitate industry-relevant and rigorous research and consulting, thought leadership and independent commentary.

Championing leading edge finance and investment research, the centre aims to boost the global credentials of Australia's finance industry, bridge the gap between research and industry and support Australia as a global hub for finance practice, research and education.

At this point, ACFS remains a not-for-profit consortium of Monash University, the University of Melbourne, RMIT University and Finisia having received seed funding from the Victorian Government five years ago. Through its consortium partners, ACFS has links not just with industry practitioners but with over 100 finance academics and over 200 postgraduate students engaged in finance research.

What to expect from the symposium

For the second year running, the Centre will be hosting the Melbourne Financial Services Symposium on March 1, this year, at the Park Hyatt in Melbourne, followed by a Gala Dinner that will recognise high calibre fund managers and super funds across three award categories.

The half-day symposium features eminent speakers namely Elise F. Bos, Deputy Chairman, PGGM Investments (Netherlands); Jane

Diplock AO, Chairman of the Securities Commission (New Zealand) and Dr Danyelle Guyatt, Global Head of Research, Responsible Investment, Mercer (London, UK).

There will also be a roundtable discussion titled, 'Sustainable investment manager fees in a maturing superannuation market'.

Awards and finalists

Fund managers can go in the running for two Investment Stewardship Awards, one for the investment manager category and, separately, for superannuation funds. Both awards are sponsored by Victorian Funds Management Corporation (VEMCO), the Melbourne-based investment manager with around \$35 billion in assets managed on behalf of the state's public authorities. The independent judging panel would assess candidates based on six key criteria namely investment performance, governance, risk management, investment philosophy, service quality and product innovation.

Last year's winners were AVIVA Investment Management (investment manager category) and Cbus (superannuation category). The 2010 judging panel also awarded a "commendation" to UCA Fund Management for their integration of UNPRI in all their processes.

Another award unique to the centre is the Victorian Innovation in Funds Management Award, which recognises the many smaller Victorian-based, owned, and operated fund managers. It is sponsored by the Victorian Government to showcase Melbourne's funds management sector, an important part of the state's financial services market.

Financial Standard is this year's official media partner of the Australian Centre for Financial Studies. For more information, visit <http://www.australiancentre.com.au/> or check our regular media coverage online and on print of the Melbourne Financial Services Symposium and Gala Dinner (Awards) in March.

