

Sunday November 26, 2006

Media Statement

PEAK BODY NOW REPRESENTS 90% OF INDUSTRY

Australia's largest mutual building society, Heritage, has joined Abacus – Australian Mutuals, the peak body for Australian credit unions and mutual building societies.

Abacus Chairman, John Brogden, welcomed the decision by Toowoomba-based Heritage to join Abacus, and the appointment of Heritage CEO John Minz to the Abacus Board.

Abacus was established in July 2006 and now represents 90% of the mutual ADI industry by assets. Credit unions and mutual building societies are the 6th largest deposit-taking force in Australia.

"All mutual building societies are now members of Abacus, along with 80% of Australia's credit unions," Mr Brogden said.

"This is the first time the mutual financial services sector has been united to such an extent in the 150-year history of mutual finance providers in Australia.

"This unity is critical at a time when predators are attempting hostile takeovers of mutuals against the interests of their members.

"With \$6 billion in assets, Heritage will be our largest member, enabling us to further improve our representation of the sector and ensure yet further stability for the future," he said.

Heritage CEO, John Minz, said Heritage is strongly committed to retaining its mutual structure and is keen to work with Abacus to promote and protect the interests of the entire sector.

"Mutual organisations like Heritage go that extra mile in serving our members," Mr Minz said.

"True mutuals like Heritage, continue to fill a niche within the market offering a competitive low cost, service-orientated banking alternative.

"By joining Abacus we are signalling our determination to remain a mutual and to work with other mutuals to ensure that the benefits we offer over the big banks are recognised."

ENDS

For more information please contact:

Julie Sheather, Senior Adviser Media & Public Affairs, Abacus
0409 514 643; or
Elissa Lewis, Heritage Manager Public Relations
0419714204

For a full list of Abacus members around Australia go to www.abacus.org.au