

NEWS RELEASE

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Aussie love affair with shares continues

- **Investors tip Aussie shares to outperform all other investments in next 12 months**
- **Retail brokerage client numbers continue to climb**
- **Full service brokers outperform online rivals for customer satisfaction**

Sydney, 11 July 2006: Australia's high performing equities market continues to attract record numbers of new investors, with Aussie shares tipped to outperform all other investments over the next 12 months, a report by major market research company ACNielsen has revealed.

ACNielsen's bi-annual *Retail Brokerage Report*, released today, combined responses from over 23,000 Australian consumers on retail broking and provided insights on retail broker market share, service strengths and weaknesses and market dynamics such as trends, trading frequency, source of investment information and use of asset classes.

The report found the vast majority of Australian investors (61%) tipped Australian shares as the best performing investment in the next 12 months. This compared to just 15 percent who thought owning a home would be their best investment option and 13 percent who chose investing in international shares (see Chart 1).

The excellent performance of the share market had also resulted in strong growth in retail brokerage client numbers. In particular, online trading had seen strong growth with 63 percent of new trading accounts now opened online. The jump in online

trading account numbers was the biggest increase experienced in the past five years – up 27 points to an estimated 690,000 over the past year.

“The booming Australian equities market has acted as a magnet in attracting new clients to share trading,” sites Glenn Wealands, Director, Finance, ACNielsen.

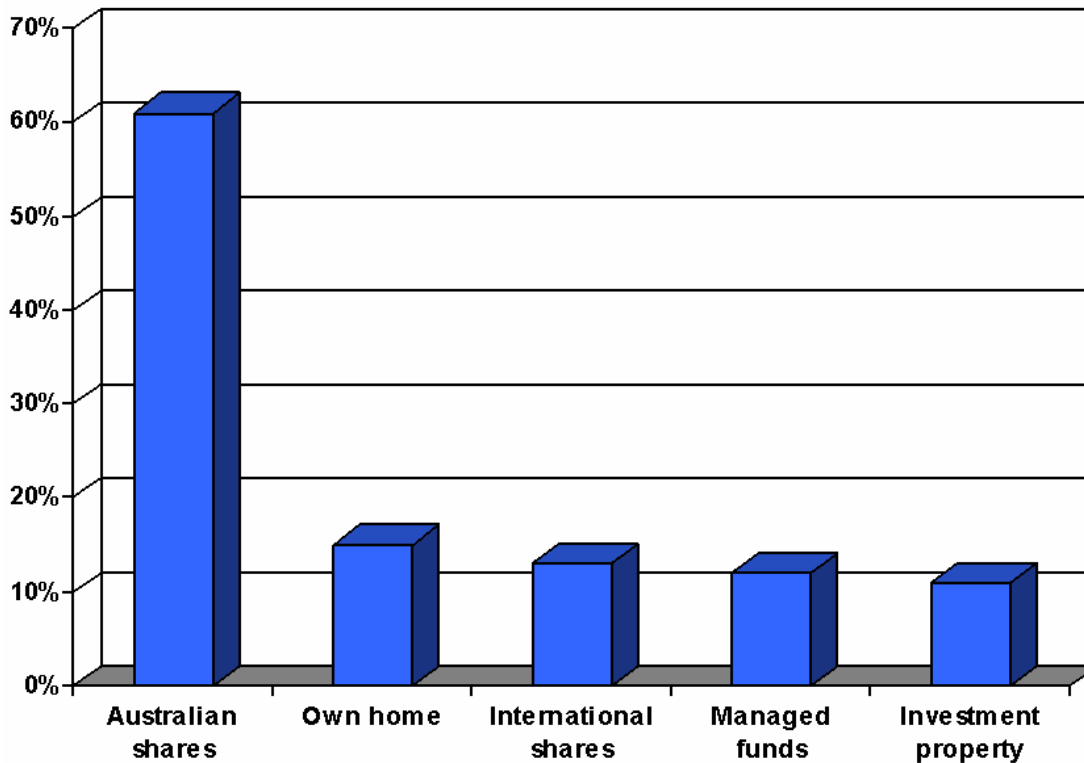
“However, the threat of a downturn in markets means that brokerage firms need to maintain their relevance by keeping their clients engaged and aware of future trading opportunities.”

Although the report showed CommSec continuing to hold the lion’s share of the market, it had seen a decline in share in the past 12 months, while E*Trade celebrated a successful year having seen the strongest share growth of the top 20 brokers in the past two years and securing the largest percentage of new accounts.

In terms of customer satisfaction, investors had little to complain about with the majority (59%) saying they made greater than 10 percent gains in the past 12 months. Full service brokers such as ABN AMRO, Macquarie Equities, GSJBWere and Citigroup continued to differentiate themselves from online brokers with the highest levels of customer satisfaction, particularly in the areas of customer service, research and IPOs.

“The firms that have been most successful in acquiring new market entrants have been those able to demonstrate ease of use, good quality market information, a reputation for being trustworthy in the market and competitive pricing,” notes Wealands.

Chart 1: Investments tipped to perform the best in next 12 months



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About ACNielsen

ACNielsen, a VNU business, is the world's leading marketing information company. Offering services in more than 100 countries, the company provides measurement and analysis of marketplace dynamics and consumer attitudes and behaviour. Clients rely on ACNielsen's market research, proprietary products, analytical tools and professional service to understand competitive performance, to uncover new opportunities and to raise the profitability of their marketing and sales campaigns.

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