

NEW PUBLICATIONS AND SERVICES TO BE LAUNCHED BY NICRI

As the President of A.I.R., I attended my first Committee meeting of the National Information Centre on Retirement Investments Inc (NICRI) in Canberra on 6 December 2007.

Rather than attempting a full report of that meeting, I am focussing here on the services and new publications which are to be launched by NICRI.

The most visible change, the brochures have a new style, and the content has also been updated. Hence for A.I.R. branches and members who hold a supply of NICRI information brochures, a phone call and update may be in order.

Two new information brochures were presented. The first, title *Risk Meter*, uses colour pie-graphs to describe the risk vs return balance for various investments, against a time frame for holding such an investment. The investment included in the brochure are term deposits, fixed interest and managed funds, debentures, managed funds, property trusts, equity/share trusts, direct property and direct shares. On the back of the brochure, there is a glossary with a short explanation.

The second brochure titled *Debentures* covers the debenture categories and the risk factor for 'high yield, unlisted and unrated debentures'.

The level of activities, as reported to the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, illustrates how enquirers are accessing NICRI:

- distributed 145,432 publications;
- answered 4,826 telephone enquiries;
- received 30,186 hits to the NICRI website;
- submitted 17 articles to various newspapers/journals;
- completed a range of training sessions and seminars.

For the quarter, July-September 2007, the number of calls was 1,107 and the NICRI web hits was 6,656. Just on half of the callers identified themselves as pensioners, 10% were self-funded retirees. What is also interesting is the comparison figure between the number of calls, and the number of hits on the website; obviously enquirers are willing to navigate the website more than ringing the phone number!

General discussion involved the representation of consumers in the current membership of the Committee. Would the Committee benefit from the participation of an industry organisation?

It was also apparent that NICRI does wish to involve its committee members in project ideas, input of ideas and review of brochures.

The question to A.I.R.'s branch office bearers and members: do we generate interest for new topics and provide feedback to NICRI through our experiences? As active consumers, A.I.R. members are well placed to observe and report their experiences with spending money, the required budget and income adjustments that may be needed to maintain a comfortable retirement lifestyle standard.

A recent survey by ASIC titled *All we have is this house* interviewed home-owners with a reverse mortgage to identify factors which impact on the decision to borrow money using the equity in the family home (media release dated 21/11/07 is available from the Secretariat). NICRI already has an information brochure *Accessing the equity in your home - some issues to consider* for enquirers.

Discussion revolved around the need for further education, if some of the observations from the ASIC survey and the growth of these products in the marketplace are any indicators of the uptake and use of reverse mortgages. As at June 2007, the reverse mortgage market consisted of 31,500 loans with a total book loan outstanding of over \$1.81 billion. New lending has grown at over 60% per annum to date, although now slowing to about 10-20% per annum according to SEQUAL, peak body for the reverse equity industry.

A.I.R. has been a member of the NICRI Board for several years. As a result, our knowledge and appreciation of the services provided by NICRI are evident and understood by our members; now comes the opportunity for A.I.R. members to provide feedback to NICRI's Committee and input on the policies.

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