

Webmaster recommends

– Initiatives in investor relations, financial markets research, microfinance, compliance, online publishing, sustainability and social trends

AUSTRALIAN SERVICE GIVES INVESTORS A VOICE

www.dearceo.com.au

DearCEO, a Melbourne-based start up, has responded to the renewed interest in and concern about personal investment in shares following the global financial crisis, with the creation of an online communication tool that empowers shareholders and companies. Acting as a proxy for all its members, DearCEO provides a live repository of Questions and Answers (Q&A) between listed entities and investors. Its unique platform is one of the most advanced market disclosure mechanisms that gives all investors equal access to top level company management, whether institutional or retail.

DearCEO has plans to extend its free service to US and UK investors next. Watch how DearCEO works on www.vimeo.com/8956803

NEW EDHEC-RISK POSITION PAPER ON US OIL FUTURES MARKETS

www.edhec-risk.com

On 20 October 2009, the US Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) released three years of enhanced market-participant data for 22 commodity futures markets in its new 'Disaggregated Commitments of Traders' report. Following the release of this data, Hilary Till, Research Associate with the EDHEC-Risk Institute, has produced an EDHEC-Risk Position Paper, entitled 'Has there been excessive speculation in the US oil futures markets? What can we (carefully) conclude from new CFTC data?'. Using a traditional metric for evaluating speculative participation finds, the paper finds that the level of outright position-taking in US exchange-traded oil derivatives contracts has largely fluctuated in a normal range based on historically relevant benchmarks.

MICROFINANCE ACTIVITIES AND THE CORE PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE BANKING SUPERVISION – CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT

www.bis.org under Basel Committee on Banking Supervision

In February 2010, the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision issued a report for consultation that contains the guidance for the application of the Basel Core Principles for Effective Banking Supervision (BCP) to microfinance activities, and the range of practices on regulating and supervising microfinance activities. Comments on the report are open until 7 May 2010.

The report provides a careful analysis of key regulatory and supervisory issues relevant to microfinance activities as identified through a questionnaire conducted by the Basel Committee, as well as secondary research to provide a more comprehensive snapshot of current practices and experience in countries from different geographical regions and income levels. The main conclusions from the report essentially illustrate the general applicability of the BCP to the supervision of microfinance activities and highlight four key operational considerations.

OECD CALLS ON BUSINESSES TO STEP UP THEIR FIGHT AGAINST BRIBERY

www.oecd.org under News releases

A new guidance announced on 3 March 2010, and agreed to by the 38 countries that are party to the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention, encourages companies to put in place strict internal controls and establish ethics and compliance programs as part of a strategy to combat bribery in international business deals.

On 10 February 2010, the OECD also published the results of a new study into obstacles to social mobility in its report, *Intergenerational Social Mobility: a family affair?*. The report found that weak social mobility can weaken equal opportunities, productivity and economic growth.

NEW WEBSITE FOR US BANK DIRECTORS

www.BankDirectorsDesktop.org

On 1 February 2010, the Federal Reserve launched a new website to help new bank directors learn how they can work to ensure the safety and soundness of their institutions. The website also provides a refresher course for experienced board members. See www.federalreserve.gov under Press releases.

GOOGLE BOOK SETTLEMENT

– A MUST-READ FOR AUTHORS AND PUBLISHERS

www.googlebooksettlement.com

This is the settlement administration website for the Google Book Search Copyright Class Action Settlement, set up to inform interested parties of a proposed Settlement of a class action lawsuit brought by authors and publishers, claiming that Google has violated their copyrights and those of other Rightsholders of Books and Inserts, by scanning their Books, creating an electronic database and displaying short excerpts without the permission of the copyright holders. Google denies the claims.

An Amendment has been negotiated to the original settlement, and is potentially relevant to non-US authors and publishers as follows:

Under the Amended Settlement, however, if the works are not United States works, they are only included in the Amended Settlement if they were published by January 5, 2009 and either were registered with the U.S. Copyright Office by that date or their place of publication was in Canada, the United Kingdom ('UK') or Australia.

The key issue for many will relate to the phrase 'commercially available', as this may be a grounds for complaint against Google's actions.

Claims for any cash payments for any books or inserts already scanned by Google must be made before 31 March 2011. Other categories of actions are possible. All queries should go to the settlement administrator at the website above.

INVESTOR SUMMIT ON CLIMATE RISK 2010

www.incr.com/investorsummit

The Investor Summit on Climate Risk, held at UN Headquarters on 14 January 2010, focused on carbon and other topics including the December talks in Copenhagen, potential Congressional action, and the potential of new cleantech solutions to set us free from our fossil fuel addiction. Mindy Lubber of CERES, a national network focusing on sustainability issues, quoted a survey showing that almost half of the world's leading money managers do not consider carbon risks when making investments, despite the fact that the European Union already imposes carbon pricing costs and over half the states in the United States are poised to do so by 2012.

Investment bankers such as Abbey Joseph Cohen of Goldman Sachs and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon both spoke of the major uncertainties around the regulation of carbon. The clear message was that investors are waiting for government to offer transparency, longevity and certainty before they shift money from high-carbon old technologies to the new, low-carbon ones.

STRONG RELATIVE PERFORMANCE

BY SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE MUTUAL FUNDS IN 2009

www.socialfunds.com under News

A recent survey by the Social Investment Forum (SIF) reviewed the performance of 160 socially responsible mutual funds from 22 of its members, and found that 65% outperformed their benchmarks in 2009. The SRI funds reviewed by SIF outperformed their benchmarks across nearly all asset classes. The performance data was provided by Thomson Reuters, an independent third party.

PERSONAL UNDERINSURANCE SURVEY

REPORT RELEASED

www.ifsa.com.au under Publications

One in five Australian families will suffer the death of a parent or a serious accident or illness that renders a parent unable to work, according to new Lifewise/NATSEM research released on 2 March 2010.

The research, titled the Lifewise/NATSEM Underinsurance Report, released at the IFSA Life Insurance Conference in Sydney, found the underinsurance of parents with dependent children and a mortgage will cost the Australian Government an estimated \$1.3 billion in additional social security payments over the next decade.

The research was completed in February 2010 by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) at the University of Canberra for Lifewise – a public awareness initiative aimed at encouraging Australians to protect themselves from financial hardship that can result from accident, sickness or death.

ECONOMIC VITALITY REPORT RELEASED

www.commbank.com.au/vitality

The inaugural Commonwealth Bank *Viewpoint* report was released on 10 March 2010, providing an in-depth look at the effect of the global financial crisis (GFC) on Australian consumers with analysis carried out on the bank's own data by NATSEM, an independent research institute at the University of Canberra. The analysis found that the GFC had a divergent impact across different age groups in terms of perception as well as income and spending patterns, including the effect on employment, disposable income and consumer confidence.

The report reveals Australians aged 18–24 years suffered more than most. Data shows this group experienced relatively higher unemployment, greater reliance on government support, and lower salary payment growth than other age groups over the December 2008 to December 2009 period. Quarterly updates of the report are planned.

POPULAR ECONOMICS AND FINANCE BLOGS

– MARKET WATCH

On 21 November 2009, *The Australian Financial Review* listed the most popular economics and finance blogs in the United States. Included on the list were: *Calculated Risk* (www.calculatedriskblog.com); *Zero Hedge* (www.zerohedge.com); *Bronte Capital* (<http://brontecapital.blogspot.com>); *Baseline Scenario* (<http://baselinescenario.com>); *Mish's Global Economic Trend Analysis* (<http://globaleconomicanalysis.blogspot.com>); *Naked Capitalism* (www.nakedcapitalism.com); and *The Big Picture* (www.ritholtz.com/blog). John Roskam of the Institute of Public Affairs added *Greg Mankiw* (<http://gregmankiw.blogspot.com/>) and *Tyler Cowen* (www.marginalrevolution.com) in his newsletter of 26 November 2009.

Webmaster will be glad to receive suggestions from readers to include in occasional updates on relevant blogs in JASSA.

MAKING NET COLLABORATION EASIER

www.philb.com/iwantto.htm

Phil Bradley's website offers over 1,000 Web 2.0 application and collaboration tools, covering a wide range of areas from project management and file sharing to mind-mapping and screen-casting, and many are free. Many subscription-based products have free trials.

Disclaimer: *Inclusion of any website in the JASSA webmaster column is not an endorsement by Finsia of any advice or content provided on any topic therein. Website addresses are mentioned for general reference, assistance and guidance only.*

Do you have any websites you would like us to cover in this column? Please email JASSAcontent@finsia.com with your comments and suggestions.