

PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT

For immediate release

24 November 2003

Thomas Murray rates NCS Europe AA- for Global Custody

LONDON – Thomas Murray, the specialist custody rating, risk management and research firm has awarded National Custodian Services (NCS) Europe, a division of National Australia Bank, a public global custody rating of:

Global Custody Rating – NCS Europe													
Core Services												Value Added	
Overall Rating	Credentialed	Settlement	Safeguarding	Income Collection	Corporate Actions	Corporate Governance	Trade Management	Strategic Cash Mgmt	Taxation	Securities Lending	Internal Operations	Discre	Investment Accounting
AA-	AA-	AA-	AA	AA	AA-	AA-	A	BBB	AA-	A	AA-	AA-	AA-

NCS Europe demonstrates a very strong global custody offering and has been upgraded from A+ to AA- overall (with a stable outlook) by Thomas Murray as a result of the improvements made over the last year. NCS Europe also achieved an AA- for investment accounting as a separate value added service.

The strategy at NCS Europe in recent years has been to reinvigorate the business by the infusion of senior staff from Australia and to extend the product offering from the core trustee custodian product, to UK sub-custody and master custody (including investment accounting/reporting and fund accounting services), by the implementation of a new investment accounting system, Eagle. There has also been significant emphasis on automation and STP.

Simon Thomas, CEO and Chief Ratings Officer of Thomas Murray said: “Thomas Murray is delighted to be able to announce the public global custody rating of NCS Europe. NCS Europe is a well-established provider of global custody services in the UK market. The UK market custody market has over consolidated in recent years to the detriment of the service provision offered to institutional investors by custodians. NCS’s commitment to the business is good for competition and the fund community.”

The global custody rating is a business rating that assesses the operational performance of global custodians – financial institutions that hold securities in safekeeping on behalf of institutional and banking clients. The methodology considers not only the business credentials and service capabilities of global custodians, but also the quality and effectiveness of their operational infrastructure and their willingness and ability to protect their clients from losses. As part of the rating, a risk analysis of the custodian is performed and the breadth and quality of the custodian’s services is assessed. The ratings are on a consistent global scale, using the familiar AAA to C ratings methodology. Once the rating is assigned there is an ongoing surveillance process to monitor the custodian.

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Thomas Murray

Thomas Murray is a specialist custody rating, risk management and research firm specialising in the global securities services industry. Thomas Murray was established in 1994. The Company tracks and analyses over 250 custodians globally and monitors the risk of over 100 capital market infrastructures. The Company has a strong position as a provider of public and private ratings and risk assessments on global custodians, domestic custodian banks and capital market infrastructures.

www.thomasmurray.com

National Custodian Services

To be completed by NCS. You will also need to update the custody website (perhaps go for a separate background type page for the UK as the one on the site talks mostly about Australia?)

www.nationalncs.com