



Australian investors to gain access to Islamic bonds after BLME partner with Crescent Wealth

Sydney, 10 October 2012 – Australian Islamic wealth manager Crescent Wealth today announced it has partnered with the Bank of London and The Middle East (BLME), the largest Islamic bank in Europe, in a deal that gives Australian retail investors exposure to the growing Islamic bonds market for the first time.

Following the partnership, investors in the Crescent Islamic Cash Management Fund will be able to gain exposure to the US\$150 billion + global market for Sharia'a-compliant bonds or 'Sukuk'. Sukuk generate ethical returns backed by real assets. The portfolio will be managed by BLME, a leading global provider of Sharia'a-compliant fixed income product.

Crescent Wealth founder and Managing Director, Talal Yassine, said: "Our partnership with BLME, Europe's largest Islamic bank, is significant because it is further evidence that Australia is being taken seriously as a viable growth market for Islamic funds management.

"The partnership rounds out Crescent Wealth's Sharia'a-compliant product suite by adding a fixed income option to our existing Australian and global equities, property and cash offering. It also brings exposure to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) market, and gives our investors added confidence that our fixed income option is being managed by the best in the industry."

Nigel Denison, Head of Wealth Management at BLME, said: "Recently we have seen increased demand from international investors for Sukuk because of good credit performance that has proven Sukuk to be resilient to the global economic downturn. The strong performance of our fixed income products has been supported by a buoyant Sukuk market with 2012 looking to be a record year both in terms of our product performance and for the Sukuk market overall."

Islamic banking is one of the fastest growing financial sectors today. Global Islamic banking assets exceed US\$1 trillion and are forecast to grow to US\$2 trillion by 2017.¹ In addition, there is an estimated US\$58 billion in managed funds invested in Sharia'a compliant equities. The Sukuk has exceeded pre-financial crisis levels and is expected to grow exponentially over the coming years.

Nigel Denison added: "At BLME we operate under the principles of fairness, integrity and transparency. We provide innovative products that allow clients to diversify their portfolios and generate a sustainable return whilst encouraging sound risk-management procedures and avoiding excessive speculation and credit creation.

"These principles underpin BLME's investment philosophy, our decision-making and our dealings with clients and partners. The positive and consistent performance across our range of funds validates this approach. We look forward to working closely with Crescent Wealth in Australia."

¹ HSBC Amanah Global Sukuk Market: Current Status and Growth Potential 18 May 2012

Established in 2010, Crescent Wealth has launched an Australian equities fund and a cash management fund. An international equities fund and property fund will be launched later this year, which will together make up Australia's first Islamic superannuation option.

Crescent Wealth Managing Director, Talal Yassine, said his firm was tapping the significant potential for Islamic funds in Australia, estimated to grow to as much as \$22 billion(AUD) in funds under management by 2020.

"The population of people in Australia who identify as Muslim has increased by 40% since 2006, up to 487,000 in 2011, which is a natural investor base for our products. Add to that the genuine appetite in the broader community for a low risk, low-leverage investment profile and Crescent Wealth is a compelling proposition," said Mr Yassine.

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About Crescent Wealth

Crescent Wealth is Australia's only wealth manager with a specialist focus on Islamic investing. It launched the Crescent Australian Equity Fund (CAEF) in October 2011 and the Crescent Islamic Cash Management Fund in May, 2012 as the first two of four Islamic-compliant funds for the Australian market, the others being Crescent International Equity Fund and the Crescent Diversified Property Fund will be launched in late 2012. Crescent Wealth manages all aspects of its funds in accordance with its Australian Financial Services Licence (AFSL 365260) including product development, registration, legal, accounting, auditing, marketing and distribution. Crescent Wealth does not invest in activities prohibited by Sharia'a such as arms production or trade, alcohol, pornography and gambling.

About Bank of London and the Middle East (BLME)

Bank of London and The Middle East plc ("BLME") is an independent UK wholesale Sharia 'a compliant bank based in London. BLME received FSA authorisation in July 2007 and is the largest of its peers in Europe. It is led by a management team that brings together a combination of experienced international bankers and leading experts in Islamic finance. BLME has three key business areas; Corporate Banking, Treasury and Wealth Management that includes Asset Management and Private Banking. BLME is dedicated to offering innovative Islamic investment and financing products to businesses and high net-worth individuals in the European, US, Asian and MENA regions. To ensure that BLME's services and operations are wholly Sharia 'a compliant, the Bank has a dedicated Sharia 'a Supervisory Board ("SSB"). The SSB's role is to review contracts and agreements relating to all transactions ensuring that they are consistent with the principles of Islamic jurisprudence.

Media contacts

Adam Bell
Senior Consultant
Sefiani Communications, Sydney
T +61 (2) 8920 0700
M +61 448 302 533
E abell@sefiani.com.au

Michelle Arnold
Head of Marketing & Communications
BLME, London
T +44 207 618 0078
M +44 741 234 5844
Michelle.Arnold@BLME.com