

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Australian Shareholders' Association Reveals 2024 Focus Issues for ASX-listed companies

ASA CEO Rachel Waterhouse said, "The ASA's AGM Focus Issues ensures that ASX-listed boards are held accountable, requiring directors to possess a diverse set of skills aligned with the company's strategic plan. We advocate for the inclusion of a board skills matrix in the Annual Report, detailing each director's accredited skills to aid shareholders in informed voting decisions on director elections. Our Focus Issues also emphasise the fair treatment of retail shareholders and the alignment of CEO remuneration with both short-term and long-term performance."

During May, the ASA launched its new Investor Sentiment Survey to all members, to draw insights on topical investor issues to support advocacy and company monitoring initiatives. This first survey addresses analyst meetings and Annual General Meetings to support the launch of the focus issues for monitoring ASX-listed companies in 2024.

The Focus Issues will be launched at [ASA's Investor Conference](#) in Melbourne at 9.45am, Monday, 20 May 2024 and media are welcome to attend or ask for a Zoom link. Debby Blakey, CEO, Hesta and Chair, ASIC and Jacob Varghese, CEO, Maurice Blackburn will be a part of the panel.

### Highlights

448 retail investors completed the first ASA Investor Sentiment Survey and you can find the results below:

#### ***Analyst Market briefings***

- 76% want to be given at least a week's notice of all analyst market briefing webcasts?
- 80% want to be able to listen to all analyst market briefing webcasts live?
- 91% want analyst market briefing webcasts be made available online so retail shareholders can access at any time?

#### ***Annual General Meeting (AGM format)***

- The first choice for AGM format (54%) is hybrid (where those in the room and those online can vote and ask questions)

#### ***Director workload***

The focus on the Board reinforces the need for directors and investors to insist on the best decisions for the company and oversight of risk – which will provide better profits, returns and longevity.

Retail shareholders commented that directors should only have 3-5 director roles in order to effectively service organisations.

## Appendix

### Focus Issues

1. Fair treatment of shareholders;
2. Building better oversight - directors and boards;
3. Driving sustainable practices and improving ESG strategy; and
4. Advocating for transparent and appropriate remuneration.

#### **Fair treatment of shareholders**

We expect retail shareholders to receive fair and equitable treatment in all capital raisings.

We also expect companies to respect shareholder requested preferences for postal or electronic distribution of communications.

Shareholder meetings should be held in a hybrid format, enabling physical and online participation, allowing more voices to be heard and recognised. Virtual-only meetings are inadequate.

Retail shareholders should be invited to analyst market briefings, and these should be recorded and made available on the company website.

#### **Building better oversight - directors and boards**

Boards should comprise directors with the diverse skills as required to fulfill the company's strategic plan. The required skills and each director's suitably accredited skills should be communicated in a board skills matrix in the company's Annual Report. The matrix should support the shareholders' decisions on voting for a director's election or re-election.

Directors should avoid being overcommitted to multiple boards. Their workload must permit sufficient time and attention to each role, ensuring both the formal and informal requirements to be adequately met.

We expect boards to actively oversee the company's efforts in identifying, managing, and communicating cyber and data risks to shareholders, as well as developing an appropriate and resilient culture within the company.

#### **Driving sustainable practices and improving ESG strategy**

We expect companies to disclose the sustainability and ESG strategy information shareholders require to make investment decisions. We expect companies will be on track to meet the imminent climate disclosure requirements.

We review the companies we monitor in regards to resource efficiency, the prevention of greenwashing, and the impact of remuneration plans on cultivating a genuinely sustainable culture.

## **Advocating for transparent and appropriate remuneration**

A company's remuneration report should be transparent and understandable for retail investors, demonstrating a logical relationship between rewards and financial performance and corporate governance. The ASA will assess the reasonableness of the remuneration by comparing it with similar companies.

ASA prefers hurdles for executive remuneration that measure long-term performance over at least four years.

### **For more information or an interview, please contact:**

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Australian Shareholders' Association (ASA) is the voice of Australian shareholders, advocating for shareholder rights to keep the investment community fair for the everyday, self-directed shareholder. The organisation was founded in 1960 and is the nation's largest, independent, not-for-profit individual shareholder association.

ASA's vision is to be the leading independent voice and community serving all Australian shareholders and ASA has built a strong community of engaged shareholder groups, members, and volunteers around Australia. This active community participates in engagement activities and receives independent education from ASA and ASX Corporate partners.

ASA welcomes shareholders at all stages of their investment journey into our thriving community and offers regular professional learning opportunities. Members are also supported with access to CEOs and thought-leaders, professional educators and like-minded shareholders. ASA champions the rights of all Australian shareholders and supports our valued members on their investment journey.

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