

Financial Standard

www.financialstandard.com.au

Tuesday, 27 May 2008

WEALTH MANAGEMENT

BT and Asgard to lead platform market

Tuesday, 27 May 2008 12:21PM

Nearly one third of all Australian financial planners will call the combined BT/Asgard their primary platform should the Westpac and St.George merger come to fruition.

Westpac and St.George yesterday signed a merger implementation agreement – taking the two institutions a step closer to creating Australia's largest platform provider with funds under administration of \$108 billion.

"A combined BT and Asgard would have something close to a third of all financial planners in Australia saying that [the combined entity] is their primary platform," said Mark Johnston, principal of Investment Trends.

Johnston said BT and Asgard currently hold a 16 per cent each primary market share in the platform space. If merged, BT/Asgard will have over 1000 financial planners under its wing.

"Assuming they don't lose too many planners from the merger process, they'll land close to a third of the Australian financial planning market.

"The next biggest competitor in that sense would be First Choice with 11 per cent primary market share, and then Navigator at nine and Macquarie Wrap at eight," said Johnston.

Westpac chief executive, Gail Kelly said the merger "creates a springboard for growth".

"The customer-focused cultures of both St.George and Westpac are fundamental to this merger. Customer service will be enhanced as the increased scale and integration of operations will drive further investment in our back office processes.

"Each bank's customers will also benefit from greater diversity and choice of products from both organisations," Kelly said.

Ruth Liew

[<Close>](#)