

Washington H Soul Pattinson and Company Limited

ASX & MEDIA RELEASE

31 MARCH 2004

W H SOUL PATTINSON LIFTS PROFIT AFTER TAX AND NON-REGULAR ITEMS 116% TO \$98M

- **Significant contribution from Brickworks**
- **Earnings per share up from 19 cents to 41 cents**
- **Dividend up 14% to 8 cents per share**

Washington H Soul Pattinson & Co Limited (WHSP) has lifted total profit after tax and non-regular items to \$98 million, an increase of 116.1 per cent on \$45.4 million in the previous corresponding period, with underlying operating profit steady at \$40.4 million (\$40.9 million previously).

Profit on non regular items amounted to \$57.6 million and included an equity accounted \$35.2 million from sale of the Brickworks investment portfolio, \$13.6 million from part settlement of a contract through PT Indonesia Bulk Terminal and profits on sale of properties, businesses and investments.

WHSP is a diversified investor in basic commodities such as bricks, coal, equities, media, telecommunications, food and pharmaceuticals and half year results were boosted by a significant contribution from 49.8 per cent owned Brickworks Limited

Brickworks is now a national building products business following the acquisition of Bristile, becoming Australia's biggest brick and a major roof and floor tile producer.

This enabled it to lift its profit after tax contribution to WHSP earnings from \$9.9 million in the previous corresponding half year to \$45.8 million, with WHSP's coal interests in Australia and Indonesia, through 63.5 per cent owned New Hope Corporation, contributing \$21.9 million after tax.

WHSP's listed equities portfolio, valued at \$1.48 billion, returned 14.2 per cent for the half year compared with the benchmark S&P/ASX 300 of 7.2 per cent and lifted dividend income to \$5.8 million.

Earnings per share was 116 per cent higher at 41.1 cents (19.0 cents previously) and directors have increased interim dividend by 14.3 per cent to 8.0 cents a share fully franked (previously 7.0 cents).

Among main contributors to WHSP group profit, after tax and outside equity interests and before non-regular items, were coal, 30.8 per cent, equities investments, 17.5 per cent, building products, 26.1 per cent, pharmaceuticals, 8.0 per cent, media, 9.5 per cent and telecommunications, 5.9 per cent.

According to WHSP chairman, Mr Robert Millner, WHSP's diversified investment model, focused on basic industries, again proved to be valuable with a steady underlying performance lifted by strategic decisions in the various businesses.

"Both clay products and coal continued to perform well, although coal was affected by the stronger Australian dollar, and we saw the telecommunications and functional foods businesses, SP Telecommunications and Clover Corporation, improving further, with telecommunications demonstrating it will be a significant contributor in the future," Mr Millner said.

"In addition, NBN Television, which for the eighth time in 10 years is Australia's highest rating TV station, lifted its contribution due to a recovery in the advertising market, a national marketing campaign, cost controls and benefits from strong ratings.

"These improved performances offset the pharmaceutical and food businesses which did not perform as strongly.

"However, at Keith Harris there is a focus on future growth from the acquisition of 63 per cent of the Balfours baking business, with the Orchy juice operations now having been divested and a \$20 million capital raising initiated to fund expansion," Mr Millner added.

Interim dividend will be paid on 13 May to shareholders registered on 28 April 2004.

ISSUED FOR : WASHINGTON H SOUL PATTINSON & CO LIMITED (ASX CODE: SOL)

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For a full copy of this news release and Directors' Review of Operations, see www.westbrookfin.com.au

About Washington H Soul Pattinson & Company Limited

Washington H Soul Pattinson is Australia's fourth oldest listed company. Beginning as a chemist shop in Pitt Street in 1872, the company listed on the Australian Stock Exchange 30 years later. Over the 102 years since listing, WHSP is the only Australian company to pay a dividend every year, including throughout the depression of the 19030s.

Today, WHSP is a diversified investor in basic commodities such as bricks, coal, equities, media, telecommunications, food and pharmaceuticals.

Its investments include a 49.8 per cent holding in Brickworks Limited, 63.5 per cent of New Hope Corporation, full ownership of regional television station, NBN Television, 55.6 per cent of SP Telecommunications, 22.9 per cent of Australian Pharmaceutical Industries, 28.9 per cent of Clover Corporation, 84.2 per cent of Keith Harris and 50 per cent of Pitt Capital Partners.