

CFA program rides a rising tide

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Perpetual Investments' chief investment officer, Emilio Gonzalez, will soon spend 12 months with an extra responsibility as the chairman of the board of the CFA Institute, the group that runs the worldwide Chartered Financial Analyst program.

His appointment was announced last month and he will take up the role in September. It comes at a time when interest in the CFA

program is rapidly rising among the world's investment professionals.

Total membership is now above 90,000 (including 78,000 people who hold a CFA charter). And there are about 140,000 registered to take the exams (though only about 20 per cent get past this hurdle).

The growth in Australia has been explosive: the number of members in the Australian societies is up from only 144 in 2000 to 1076 now. The 47 per cent rate of growth of candidates for the CFA in Australia is the sixth-highest, lagging only India,

France, South Korea, China and Singapore.

Gonzalez is the first Australian to hold the position, and will serve on a 19-person board that includes members from seven countries — the US, Canada, Hong Kong, Australia, the UK, Switzerland and Singapore.

Gonzalez thinks the rise in interest in membership is a reflection of demand in the industry for top-quality people who tend to influence standards and ethics in the investment business. This goes back to the CFA's formation in 1947, he

says, when a group of Americans decided to build a professional organisation at a time when there had been a loss of trust by investors.

But today, he estimates there are more than 20 million people in the financial industry worldwide and, of these, about 830,000 are what he calls "serious" investment principals.

Compared with these numbers, the ranks of about 100,000 CFAs by the end of this year emphasises the exclusiveness of the CFA movement.