## AMYF SERIES QUARTERLY UPDATE

## 31 DECEMBER 2016-31 MARCH 2017



## SUMMARY

## AUSTRALIAN MASTERS YIELD FUND SERIES (AMYF SERIES) HIGHLIGHTS

AMYF Series announced the following quarterly dividends and capital returns:

| FUND | DIVIDEND | FRANKED | TOTAL | CAPITAL RETURN $^{1}$ | EXPECTED PAYMENT DATE |
| :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| AMYF1 | $\$ 0.75$ | - | $\$ 0.75$ | - | 13 June 2017 |
| AMYF2 | $\$ 0.70$ | - | $\$ 0.70$ | - | 13 June 2017 |
| AMYF3 | $\$ 0.50$ | $\$ 0.05$ | $\$ 0.55$ | - | 13 June 2017 |
| AMYF4 | $\$ 0.45$ | $\$ 0.19$ | $\$ 0.64$ | - | 13 June 2017 |
| AMYF5 | $\$ 0.42$ | - | $\$ 0.42$ | - | 13 June 2017 |

Over the March quarter, Bank of America February 2017 subordinated debt, held in AMYF1, AMYF2 and AMYF3 matured. This capital was returned to shareholders with the Q4 2016 dividend announced 31 January 2017.
Additionally, the Morgan Stanley February 2017 senior notes, held in AMYF3 matured, and bank hybrid positons held across AMYF4 and AMYF5 were sold.

All existing fixed-income securities held in the portfolios of the AMYF Series performed as expected. The Fund Manager is proactively managing the cash balances of the funds and will return capital to shareholders when it is practical to do so.

## MARKET HIGHLIGHTS

## Global markets:

- The US Federal Reserve increased the target range for the federal funds rate by 25 basis points to 0.75\%-1.00\% at the March meeting of the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC). FOMC members also signalled their expectations of further monetary tightening and highlighted the potential for the quantitative easing program (QE) to be unwound.
- The European Central Bank (ECB) left key policy rates unchanged, eurozone unemployment levels declined to the lowest level since the financial crisis and economic indicators strengthened.
- The 10-Year US Treasury yield declined marginally over the quarter, from $2.44 \%$ to 2.39\%.

1 The Manager intends, subject to Shareholder and/or board approval, to anounce capital returns in May 2017 for AMYF1, AMFY3, AMYF4 and AMYF5.

## Australian markets:

- The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) maintained their accommodative monetary policy position; The RBA cash rate was unchanged at 1.50\%.
- In line with international yields, the 10-Year Australian Government Bond yield declined slightly over the quarter, from 2.77\% to 2.70\%.
- Corporate bond spreads tightened as investor confidence in the global economy improved.


## GLOBAL MARKETS UPDATE

Economic data from the US and China continued to fuel optimistic global growth expectations. In the US the FOMC again raised the federal funds rate target range as inflation moved closer to its long-run $2 \%$ target. China's trade data exceeded consensus expectations and the recent trend of declining Chinese foreign currency reserves was halted. The Eurozone Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) was at its strongest level since April 2011, also indicative of global economic strengthening.

In the US, the FOMC, as signalled, raised the federal funds rate target range by 25 basis points, to $0.75 \%-1.00 \%$ in March. Steady economic growth, job gains, rising inflation and continued asset price stability were reasons behind this decision. The FOMC maintained its outlook for two additional rate hikes this year and three in 2018, flagging expectations of a gradual advance towards a neutral rate. It is important to note that recent increases in the federal funds target rate have only matched increases in inflation and that while the moves appear more hawkish, the FOMC position remains accommodative. Comments towards the end of the quarter also indicate that the Federal Reserve may start to partly unwind its balance sheet as the economy continues to strengthen.
The Chinese Government lowered their 2017 GDP growth target to $6.5 \%$, as officials continue to look to stabilise the economy by placing an emphasis on employment, tackling overcapacity and deleveraging the corporate sector. Foreign exchange reserves, which have been declining from their 2014 peak of \$US4 trillion stabilised this quarter at \$US3 trillion.

The European Central Bank (ECB) kept key policy rates unchanged at its March meeting. The unemployment rate in the eurozone fell to $9.5 \%$ in February, its lowest level since the financial crisis. There was further expansion in the manufacturing sector, with the Eurozone Manufacturing PMI rising 0.7 points to 56.7 points in March. Strong PMI figures and positive economic growth have now raised expectations that the ECB will further scale back its quantitative easing program.

Global bond markets were broadly flat over the quarter, however they exhibited some intra-period volatility, initially spurred by US President Trump and the global growth outlook. The 10-Year US Treasury yield declined from 2.44\% to 2.39\% over the quarter, touching 2.63\% in mid-March. European bond prices fell as the benchmark 10-Year German Bund yield rose from $0.21 \%$ to $0.33 \%$.

## DOMESTIC RATES

During the quarter statistics released highlighted that the Australian economy continued its relatively healthy transition away from the mining and energy investment boom, expanding by approximately $2.5 \%$ in 2016 . Measures of business and consumer confidence continue to trend in a positive direction, however labour markets across the country continue to be mixed, with wages growth (1.9\% year on year) now at multi-decade lows and below inflaton at 2.1\%.

The RBA maintained interest rates at $1.50 \%$ in Q1, a level they view as "consistent with sustainable growth in the economy and achieving the inflation target over time".

In his March Monetary Policy Statement, the RBA Governor, Phillip Lowe noted monetary policy considerations included: recent strength in commodity prices and the boost to national income; consumption growth; business and consumer sentiment measures that are above average; the strength of financial institutions; a positive forward outlook for employment; low inflation; and variable housing market strength.
With regard to the housing market, the RBA's stance has moved to one of muted caution. While there is continued strength in the eastern capital city markets (and some concerns around overheating) there is significant price divergence across the country. In addition, a considerable supply of apartments is scheduled for completion over the coming years. The course of the labour and housing markets are expected to be two of the primary considerations driving the RBA's monetary policy decisions in the short-term.

The Australian dollar (AUD) appreciated 5.8\% against the US dollar (USD) during the quarter (unwinding the depreciation in Q4 2016) affected by adjustments to the relative growth outlook for the two countries and general US dollar weakness. The US dollar declined 3.5\% over the quarter against a basket of 10 major trading currencies².

The Australian bond market followed the lead of the US government bond market. As the following chart highlights, the 10-Year Australian Government Bond yields experienced a minor retracement over the quarter, down from $2.77 \%$ to $2.70 \%$. The yield curve was almost unchanged, with the spread between long-term bond yields (10-year) and shortterm bond yields (2-year) expanding one basis point.

## AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT YIELD CURVE



## DOMESTIC CREDIT

Australian corporate bond yields declined, reflecting both the decrease in Australian government bond yields and tightening credit spreads. Australian A-rated five-year corporate yields fell from 3.64\% to 3.38\% and BBB-rated five-year corporate bond yields fell from $4.45 \%$ to $3.97 \%$ over the quarter, continuing to trade well below the 5 year Laverage (illustrated in the following chart). ${ }^{3}$

## AUSTRALIAN BBB 5YR CORPORATE BOND YIELDS



Source: Bloomberg

In the March quarter, domestic debt issuances totalled \$17.1 billion, dominated by $\$ 14.3$ billion of issuance from the major banks.

Overall pricing of credit risk tightened as investors seeking yield outstripped supply in an environment where improving global economic data, market stability and the policy positions of US President Trump are currently viewed tas supportive of risk assets. The Australian A-rated five-year corporate bond spread decreased marginally to 85 from 102 basis points, and the Australian BBB-rated five-year corporate bond spread declined to 143 basis points from 183 basis points. ${ }^{3}$

Overall Australian credit risk, as measured by the iTraxx Australia index (five-year tenure), declined. This index began the quarter at 103 and ended at 93.

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## ITRAXX AUSTRALIAN CREDIT SPREADS

## $\frac{8}{2}$



The iTraxx Australia index is a liquid financial instrument generally used for hedging credit exposure. The index is constructed of 25 Australian Credit Default Swaps (CDS) evenly weighted, and is heavily represented by some of the largest and highest rated issuers in the domestic market. The liquidity of the index exceeds that of the underlying CDS and as such can move more rapidly as the risk profile of the market changes.

## HYBRID MARIKET UPDATE

Following a prolonged period of trading well below par, hybrids' more recent price strength continued throughout the first quarter, with the majority of large bank hybrids trading near to, or above, face value. The Manager took this opportunity to exit hybrid positions held in AMYF4 and AMYF5 issued by Westpac Banking Group, ANZ Limited and National Australia Bank.

The quarter saw three major domestic hybrid issuances. Challenger Limited launched a $\$ 350$ million capital notes (Capital Notes 2) offer at 4.4\%-4.6\% over bank bill swap in February and Suncorp Group Limited launched -a $\$ 250$ million capital notes (Capital Notes 9) offer at 4.1\%-4.3\% over bank bill swap in March. Of greater interest was the Commonwealth Bank's (CBA's) Perls IX $\$ 750$ million offer launched in February at 3.9\%-4.1\% over bank bill swap, which gave priority to holders of the maturing Colonial Group sub-notes. The CBA offer closed significantly oversubscribed.
Money markets were broadly flat over the quarter, with three-month bank bills closing at 1.79\%.



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| ISSUER | MATURITY | CALL DATE | FACE VALUE | CONSIDERATION | GICS INDUSTRY |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| McAleese Finance* | 03-Apr-15 |  | \$10,000,000 | \$10,000,000 | Mining Services |
| UPMG* | 30-Jun-18 |  | \$5,250,000 | \$5,000,000 | Industrials |
| Loy Yang Power Projects* | 12-Nov-15 |  | \$21,114,242 | \$20,196,856 | Utilities |
| BIS Industries* | 21-Dec-15 |  | \$7,500,000 | \$7,500,000 | Mining Services |
| Morgan Stanley* | 29-Sep-16 |  | \$3,600,000 | \$3,774,500 | Diversified Financials |
| IMB Building Society | 29-Jun-22 | 29-Jun-17 | \$4,500,000 | \$4,500,000 | Diversified Financials |
| AMIT | 09-Nov-22 | 9-Nov-17 | \$3,500,000 | \$3,500,000 | Diversified Financials |
| AMP Bank | 21-Dec-22 | 21-Dec-17 | \$4,500,000 | \$4,500,000 | Diversified Financials |
| Morgan Stanley | 22-Feb-18 |  | \$10,000,000 | \$10,354,499 | Diversified Financials |
| Westpac* | 08-Mar-21 | 8-Mar-19 | \$2,500,000 | \$2,500,000 | Diversified Financials |
| NAB* | 22-Mar-21 | 19-Mar-19 | \$2,500,000 | \$2,500,000 | Diversified Financials |
| Lend Lease^ | 13-May-20 |  | \$15,000,000 | \$14,985,150 | Infrastructure |
| Sydney Airports | 20-Nov-20 |  | \$6,200,000 | \$7,514,834 | Airline Infrastructure |
| TOTAL |  |  | \$96,164,242 | \$96,825,839 |  |

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 financial advisor. You should obtain a copy of the relevant Prospectus or offer document before making any decisions to purchase the product.


[^0]:    3 Source: RBA, Statistical Tables, "Aggregate Measures of Australian Corporate Bond Spreads and Yields".
    Corporate bond spreads are expressed as the spread over the swap rate of a corresponding tenor (as reported by the RBA).

