Ellerston Australian Share Fund (ASF)

Performance Report | September 20

PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Net %	1 Month	2021 FYTD	Rolling 12 Months	5 Yr p.a.	Strategy Since Inception p.a.
ASF	-2.55	1.30	-12.47	3.93	6.89
Benchmark	-3.66	-0.44	-10.21	7.31	8.73

Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance.

MARKET COMMENTARY

Market Overview

In September, global equities retreated with the more cyclical sectors namely, Energy, Financials and Communication Services dragging markets lower. An alarming rise in the cases of COVID-19 around the world, event risk from an uncertain US election outcome and a hard Brexit, plus likely slower global growth weighed on investor sentiment. Gold was also weaker despite a "risk-off" mood. The US dollar was stronger, with a weaker iron ore price pushing the Australian dollar lower. Bond yields were largely flat and an easing of inflation expectations saw real yields rise modestly.

USA

US markets took a breather from their record breaking run, recording negative returns. Rising COVID-19 cases and fears that the recovery had stalled put a lid on investor enthusiasm. Not surprisingly, the Federal Reserve left interest rates at near zero and signalled that it would hold rates there until at least 2023 to help the US economic recovery. The Fed also stated that it "expects to maintain an accommodative stance of monetary policy" until it achieves inflation averaging 2 per cent over time. However, politicians in Washington failed to agree on the size and timing of another stimulus package.

The NASDAQ Composite finished the month in negative territory with a return of -5.1%, but the index still remains up an impressive 25.3% for the calendar year to date. The S&P 500 was down 3.8%, led by a pullback in large cap tech names, with Apple recording its biggest one-day drop since March 16th and the Dow Jones posted a -2.2% return. Even a solid August jobs report, where the unemployment rate dropped to 8.4%, versus consensus of a 9.8% print failed to stem the sell-off.

Activity indicators were mixed. The manufacturing ISM lifted to 56.0 (consensus: 54.8, previous: 54.2) but the composite non-manufacturing ISM was slightly below expectations, falling to 56.9 (consensus: 57.0; previous: 58.1).

Europe

European markets were not spared in the global sell-off, impacted by similar issues to those facing the US market. Additionally, the spike in COVID-19 cases was particularly pronounced in key European countries such as Spain and Italy, leading to fears of a second lock-down, resulting in a downgrade of growth expectations.

The Euro STOXX 5.0 Index closed the month down 2.3%. Among the major exchanges, Germany's DAX's returned -1.4%, France's CAC 40, -2.7%, and the UK's FTSE 100, -1.5%.

Activity indicators in Europe were again mixed. The flash Eurozone manufacturing PMI for August rose to 53.7 (consensus: 51.9, previous: 51.7), but the composite PMI fell to 51.9 from 54.9.

Investment Objective

The Investment objective for the Ellerston Australian Share Fund is to outperform the S&P/ASX 200 Accumulation Index (Benchmark).

Investment Strategy

The Fund uses a benchmark-independent, high conviction approach that looks beyond investing in the Top 20 stocks in order to capture the neglected opportunities created by under-researched stocks in the broader Australian market.

Key Information

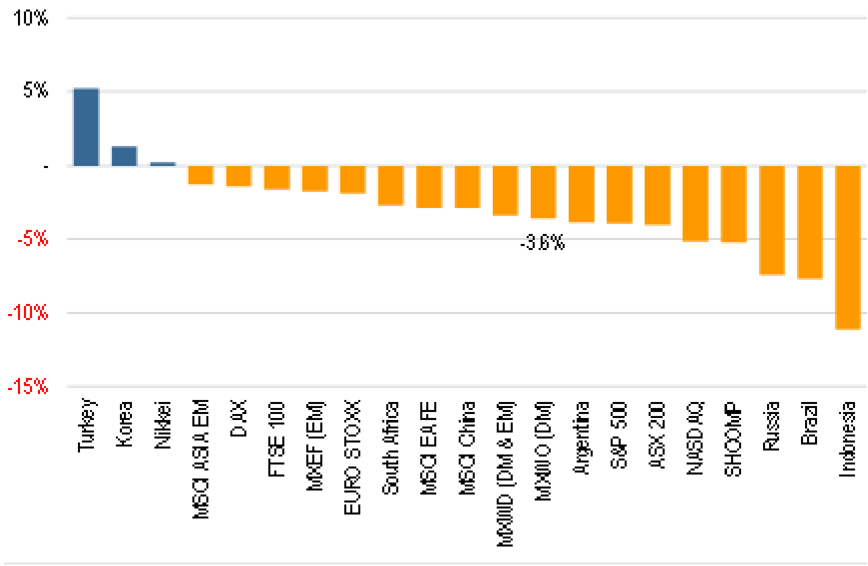
Strategy Inception Date	1 April 2009
Fund Net Asset Value	$0.8359
Liquidity	Daily
Application Price	$0.8380
Redemption Price	$0.8338
No Stocks	21
Management Fee	0.90%
Buy/Sell Spread	0.25%
Performance Fee	15%

Asia

Fears of global growth tapering off severely impacted certain Asian markets in September. The Hang Seng Composite Index returned -6.4%, the Chinese SSE Composite Index was down 4.8%, but Japan's Nikkei 225 Index bucked the trend on better than expected dividends and closed up 2.2%.

Despite concerns over global growth, September PMIs and August trade reports suggest a further broadening of the economic recovery in China. Manufacturing PMI for September beat expectations rising 0.5 points to 51.5 and non-manufacturing PMI registered a further gain of 0.7 points to 55.9. Export activity, up 1.3%, was also stronger.

Global markets performance in September 2020

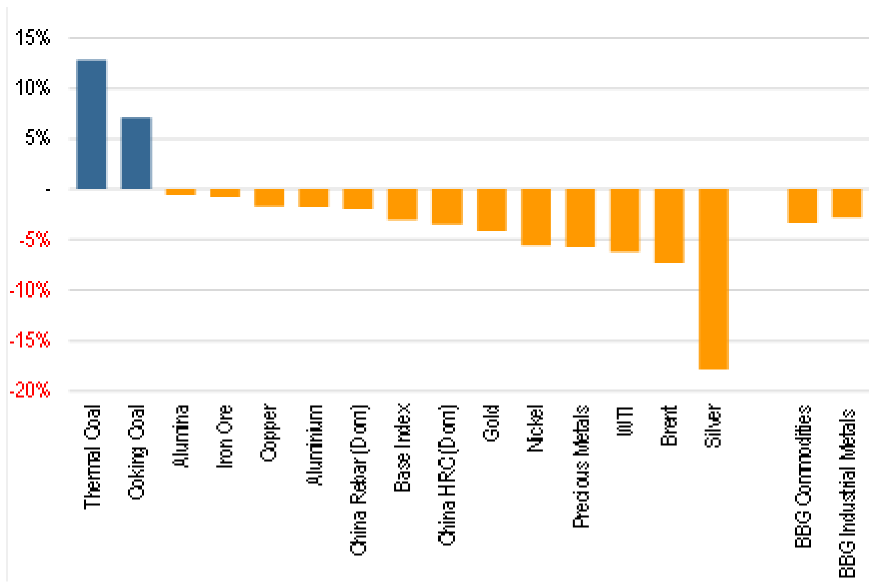


Source: JP Morgan, Bloomberg

Commodities

Commodity prices fell in September as global growth expectations declined. Brent Oil fell 8% to $42/bbl. Iron Ore declined to $123/t, as Chinese iron ore inventories rose in line with supply increases. Gold prices decreased again, falling 4% to $1,887/oz on the back of a stronger US dollar and higher real interest rates. Coal prices were the only outlier for the month and squeezed higher from recently bombed out levels as supply cuts by marginal producers were starting to impact.

Global commodity performance in September 2020



Source: JP Morgan, Bloomberg

Bonds

Global bond yields were also lower in September, with the US 10-year treasury yields retracing 2 basis points to 0.68%. However inflation expectations fell on lower growth expectations and a lower oil price. The Australian 10-year government bond yields also fell 19 basis points to 0.79% as the market increasingly expected the RBA to cut official rates to 10 basis points following a dovish speech by the RBA's Guy Debelle.

Australia

The S&P/ASX 200 Accumulation Index was down -3.7% for the month, breaking its 5-month run of positive returns. The Australian market was impacted by concerns over slowing global growth and an uncertain US election outcome.

The Health Care sector was the stand out performer in terms of contribution to the index's performance, with a contribution of +0.1%. No other sector delivered a positive return in the month. The second best performing sector was Industrials (with a contribution of -0.0%), followed by Utilities (-0.1%). The bottom three sectors, were Financials (-1.6%), Materials (-0.6%) and Energy (-0.4%).

The Small Ordinaries Accumulation Index was the best performing sub-index, with a return of -2.8%, followed by the ASX 200 Industrial Accumulation Index, returning -3.2% and the ASX 200 Resources Accumulation Index, -5.3%.

The top five stocks that detracted from the performance of the S&P/ASX 200 Accumulation Index were: Commonwealth Bank of Australia (-50 points), BHP Group (-27 points), Woolworths Group (-22 points), Wesfarmers (-21 points) and Australia and New Zealand Banking Group (-18 points).

The top five stocks that made a positive contribution to the index's return were Transurban Group (+10 points), CSL (+8 points), James Hardie Industries (+6 points), Aristocrat Leisure (+6 points) and Sonic Healthcare (+5 points).

On September 25, the Morrison Government announced their intention to repeal responsible lending obligations from March 2021 except for credit contracts and consumer leases. This would replace the current practice of 'lender beware' with a 'borrower responsibility' principle. Bank shares rallied on the news, led by Westpac (+7.4%), NAB (+6.9%), ANZ (+6.3%) and CBA (+3.0%).

Towards month end, restrictions in Melbourne were loosened. Night time curfews were removed, while children began a staged return to schools. Allowable exercise time was also increased from one to two hours per day. COVID 19 cases continued to decline in Australia, with an average of 41 local transmitted cases per day through September (down from 283 local cases per day on average in August).

In economic news, the RBA left rates unchanged, 2Q GDP slumped by a record 7.0% quarter-on-quarter and the Australian dollar ended the month lower at 0.72 US cents.

COMPANY SPECIFIC NEWS

The Market Misses

Zip Co (Z1P -32.6%)

Zip completed its acquisition of US 'Buy Now Pay Later' player QuadPay at the beginning of the month. The shares traded sharply lower during the month on concerns of increasing competition, led by the announcement of PayPal introducing its own BNPL offering.

IOOF Holdings (IFL -25.9%)

IFL raised just over $1 billion via a deeply discounted institutional placement and accelerated entitlement offer, plus $250 million of senior debt and a $200 million subordinated loan to pay $1.44 billion for NAB's MLC shrinking wealth business. IFL claimed that the acquisition was transformational and accretive on a pro-forma basis. But the market soon took fright once the long-dated, year three earnings accretion from synergies and complexity of the merger were fully digested. The stock fell to an intra month low of $3.05, well below the placement and entitlement offer price of $3.50, leaving underwriters and sub-underwriters red faced, with on-going concerns that the combined group could continue to lose funds to more nimble competitors like Netwealth and HUB24.

Virgin Money UK PLC (VUK -24.9%)

VUK's shares were hit hard as two previously identified risks re-emerged. First, the prospect of a hard Brexit was again in the headlines, as the UK government threatened to break international law by breaching a treaty it signed with the European Union. This would likely compound the economic hit to the UK economy (on top of the hit from COVID-19), materially impacting VUK's lending growth prospects and increase their bad debt risk. Second, the Bank of England speculated publically that it was once again considering negative interest rates. This would be significantly negative for net interest margins and earnings. While the BOE subsequently back pedalled from these comments, the damage to sentiment was already evident. VUK now trades on less than 0.3x book value!

Origin Energy (ORG -21.7%)

ORG was impacted by a combination of weaker oil prices affecting its 37.5% interest in the APLNG project in Queensland and further retail pricing pressure from lower draft VDO price caps, with a 9% price decline in Victoria over CY21. Whilst the VDO will result in less than a 9% fall in revenue for ORG in Victoria, given existing customer discounts, it adds additional earnings pressure to its weaker Energy Markets guidance that the company provided with its annual results in August.

Nearmap (NEA -23.1%)

Nearmap slumped during the month following an opportunistic capital raising. It raised $72.1 million at $2.77 via an Institutional placement and is seeking to raise a further $20 million with a non-underwritten Share Purchase Plan to accelerate growth opportunities. Whilst the institutional placement was completed at the upper end of the range, the broader market was clearly not as enthused, immediately sending the share price down more than 10% below the raise price, upon resumption of trading.

Oil Search (OSH -19.3%)

A weaker oil price, down 8%, together with demands by the PNG government for a higher fiscal take on two of OSH's proposed LNG projects, weighed heavily on its stock price.

Cleanaway Waste Management (CWY -18.3%)

Cleanaway and its CEO Vik Bansal spent a disproportionate amount of time in the press throughout the month as the AFR reported on an independent investigation which claimed the CEO oversaw "a culture of bullying and harassment". Immediately after and despite his overly-assertive behaviour in the workplace, the Board confirmed their support of the CEO. The company also announced the retirement of CFO Brendan Gill. All of this followed a $10 million share-sale by the CEO at the end of August, which has raised further eyebrows.

QBE Insurance (QBE -18.9%)

Nothing fundamentally changed in the month for QBE from a re-insurance perspective, but two key factors negatively impacted sentiment. First, the well-respected CEO, Pat Regan was fired for breaching the Group's code of ethics and conduct, a very serious matter which unlike Cleanaway, was swiftly dealt with by the QBE Board. Second, there was a judgement from the UK's High Court on the Financial Conduct Authority's test case with respect to business interruption. The Court ruled in favour of QBE in two of the three policies tested. This did not change QBE's previously notified net exposure in the UK for this business line, but it concerned some market participants. QBE continues to experience one of the best conditions for hardening rates in almost 20 years.

Platinum Asset Management (PTM -14.7%)

PTM's shares continued to drift lower following another weak update on its funds under management. Outflows in August were only slightly below the rolling 12-month average, with the mix now shifting to lower margin institutional business. Performance has been mixed. While PTM has de-rated to a mid-teens PE ratio, its earnings profile is negative for the next couple of years.

EML Payments (EML -16.4%)

EML declined during the month on no company specific news, although the ASX issued a speeding fine for the late lodgement of a director's notice of sale by Chairman Peter Martin.

The Market Hits

SKYCITY Entertainment Group (SKI +21.15%)

SKC released a very encouraging trading update and outlook statement at its FY20 results in early September. The removal of COVID related restrictions in NZ in September is likely to support further improvements in domestic trading for the casino operator. Talk of an international travel bubble between parts of Australia and NZ before Christmas also spurred the share price, given SKC normally generates a material proportion of its revenue from international tourists.

CSR (CSR +16.7%)

Economic stimulus specifically directed at the housing sector continues to support all building materials stocks, with CSR no exception. A steady recovery in the AUD price of aluminium was also a tailwind for the CSR share price. The combination of factors resulted in market upgrades for earnings and price targets.

Boral (BLD +13.7%)

Confirmation that Seven Group Holdings continued to build its ownership stake to just under the takeover threshold of 20% and several changes to personnel on the Board, was well received by the market. BLD also benefited from the broader support for building materials related stocks, underpinned by government stimulus measures.

Whitehaven Coal (WHC +12.4%)

WHC hit a multi-year share price low, early in the month, as did thermal coal prices. Thermal prices recovered later in September after Chinese domestic supply disruptions pushed domestic prices higher. This raised expectations that China might relax import restrictions, pushing the Newcastle export price up 23% above the intra-month low and 13% higher for the month.

Washington H. Soul Pattinson and Company (SOL +12.3%)

The company delivered its 20th annual dividend increase with its full year results during the month, pleasing investors.

Clinuvel Pharmaceuticals (CUV +12.3%)

The company announced a trial for its core drug, SCENESSE, will commence shortly to assess its effectiveness in treating another rare skin condition, where patients have a 10,000-fold risk of developing skin cancer. Initial clinical results are expected to be reported in 2021.

Corporate Travel Management (CTD +10.9%)

CTD raised $375 million in fresh equity to fund the acquisition of the Nebraska based Travel and Transport for US$200m and positioned itself as the 5th largest corporate travel player globally and largest SME market player. The deal was highly earnings accretive and well received by investors.

Westgold Resources (WGX +10.8%)

Against a backdrop of a flat Australian dollar gold price, WGX outperformed the gold sector and the market following a restructure of its hedge book, increasing gold price leverage, together with the shares being added to the ASX200 on 21 September.

Auckland International Airport (AIA +10.2%)

Auckland International Airport outperformed during the month on the back of increasing speculation that as the level of New Zealand COVID restrictions are eased, it will allow greater domestic travel, coupled with the potential for international travel to resume on a modest scale Nonetheless, passenger volumes continue to be understandably depressed, with August passenger volumes declining 85.1% YoY.

GWA Group (GWA +11.4%)

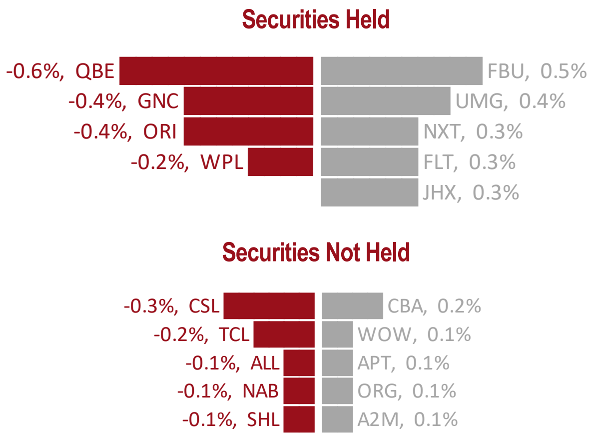
Another stock in the building materials space to benefit from optimism around government stimulus that targets the housing market. GWA is expected to see a surge in demand for its range of bathroom and kitchen fittings.

FUND PERFORMANCE

In a month where the market "took a breather" following its recent period of strength, the Fund returned -2.55% outperforming the benchmark return of -3.66% by 111 bpts.

RETURNS[1] (%)	GROSS	BENCHMARK*	EXCESS	NET
1 MONTH	-2.47	-3.66	1.20	-2.55
2021 FYTD	1.57	-0.44	2.01	1.30
ROLLING 12 MONTHS	-11.53	-10.21	-1.32	-12.47
5 YEARS (P.A.)	5.03	7.31	-2.28	3.93
SINCE INCEPTION (P.A.)	8.04	8.73	-0.68	6.89

Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance.



Source: Ellerston Capital.

The main positive contributors to this month's relative performance were overweight positions in: Fletcher Building (FBU +9.2%), United Malt Group (UMG +5.1%), Nextdc (NXT +0.7%), Flight Centre (FLT +4.1%) and James Hardie (JHX +7.5%).

Zero weight positions that helped performance included Commonwealth Bank (CBA -6.8%), Woolworths Group (WOW -7.5%), Afterpay (APT -12.5%), Origin Energy (ORG -21.7%) and A2 Milk (A2M -17.4%).

The main detractors to relative performance for the month were overweight holdings in: QBE Insurance (QBE -18.9%), please refer to the write-up in the preceding hits and misses section, Graincorp (GNC -12.1%), Orica (ORI -11.2%) and Woodside Petroleum (WPL -10.2%).

Not holding larger cap shares that outperformed the broader market and also constrained returns included: CSL (CSL +0.9%), Transurban Group (TCL +4.8%), Aristocrat Leisure (ALL +5.6%), National Australia Bank (NAB -1.0%) and Sonic Healthcare (SHL +5.1%).

[1] The return figures are calculated using the redemption price for Class A Units and on the basis that distributions are reinvested. The Gross and Excess return figures are before fees and expenses whereas the Net Return figures are net of fees and expenses for the Class A Units. Returns of the Fund may include audited and un-audited results. Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance.
* The benchmark was changed from the S&P/ASX 200 Accumulation Ex REITS Index to the S&P/ASX 200 Accumulation Index on 1 July 2012.

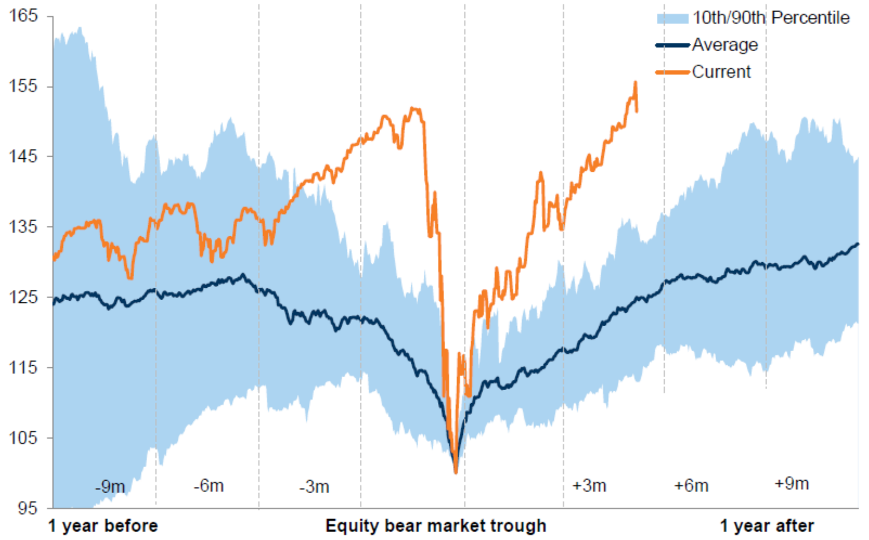
FUND ACTIVITY

Fund activity was rather subdued. We trimmed a number of the Fund's positions following recent share price rallies. Conversely, we strengthened core holdings in both Northern Star and QBE Insurance Group that were weaker during the month, but where we still believe that fundamental valuation support exists and their shares are mispriced.

NEW STOCKS ADDED	STOCKS EXITED
• None	• None
INCREASED	**DECREASED**
• Northern Star	• Reliance Worldwide
• QBE Insurance Group	• Sydney Airport
	• James Hardie
	• Fletcher Building

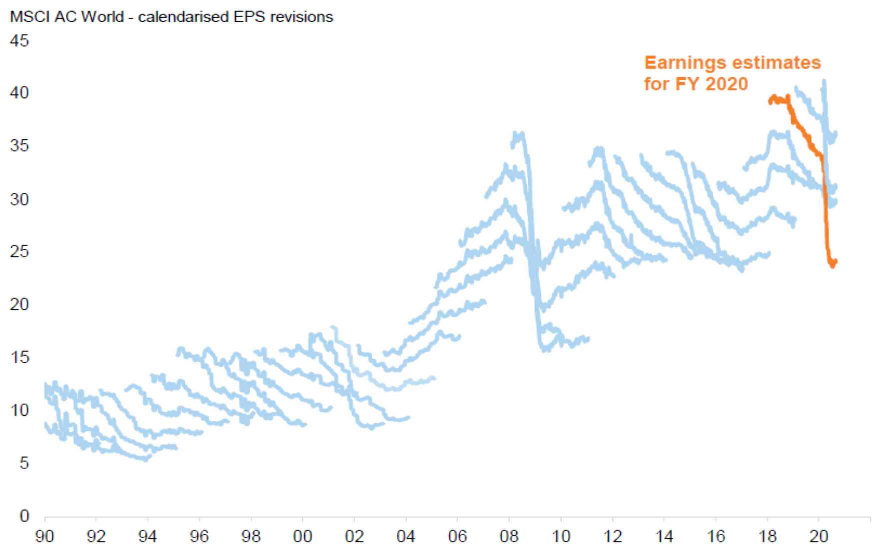
FUND STRATEGY AND OUTLOOK

Global markets delivered negative returns in September. This marked a reversal of the spectacular rebound in equities since the end of March. In fact, the rebound has been sharper than the usual post-bear market recoveries (as the chart below highlights).



Source: Datastream, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research

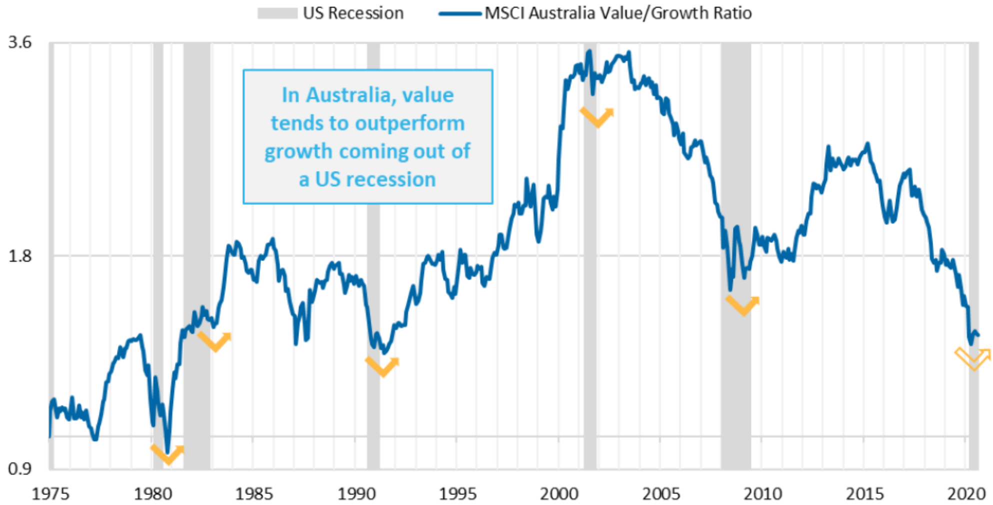
There is some evidence that economic and earnings revisions are turning up despite most years experiencing a downward revision in analysts' earnings forecasts (see chart below). Earnings forecasts typically start at the top left of the chart and then snail-trail off to the bottom right progressively as downward revisions progressively come through. We are currently seeing some tentative signs of an uptick.



Source: Datastream, IBES, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research

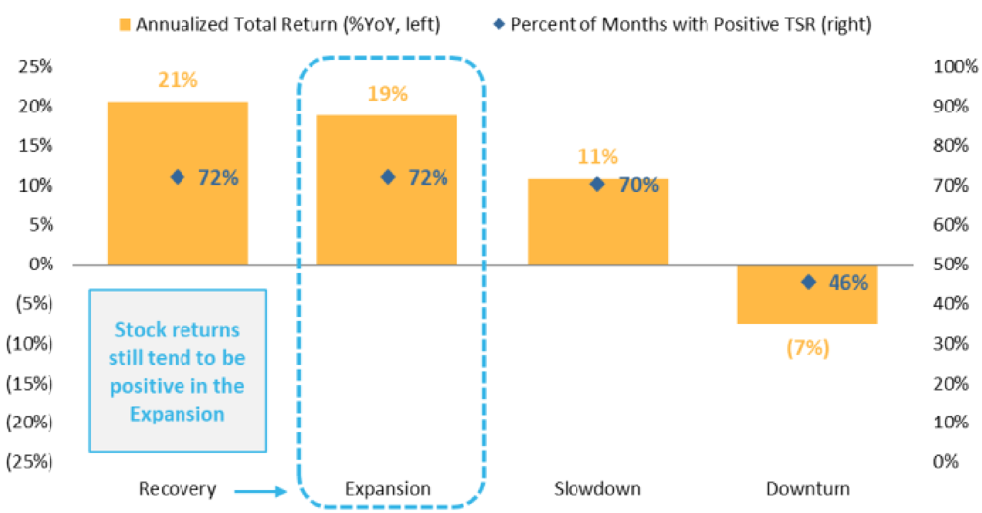
While we have highlighted this thematic several times in recent communiqués, it is worth reiterating that in Australia, value has outperformed growth in five of five cases in the year after a US recession, the relative returns ranging from +7% to +28% year-on-year.

Australia - Value vs Growth Share Price Performance (log scale)



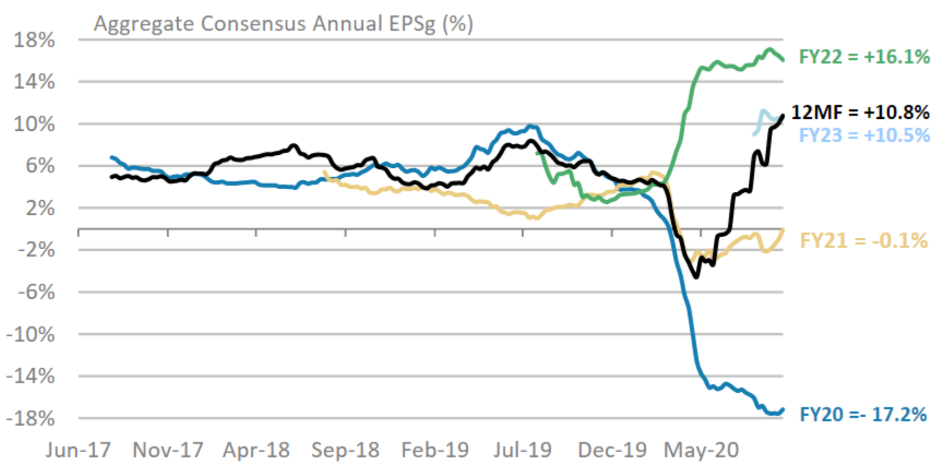
Australia stock returns are usually the strongest in both the recovery and expansion phases of the cycle. Since 1994, the average annualised return across these two phases is approximately 20% and the likelihood of a positive return in any given month is above average at 72%. The challenge for the market participants remains the quest for predictable earnings growth (despite a modest uptick and the outer years looking strong).

All Ords - Equity Returns Over US Cycle (1994-2020)



Source: Factset, Macquarie Research

Earnings continue to be under pressure, with FY20 down -17.2%



Source: Morgan Stanley, IBES

As we write, we are on the verge of what is likely to be a very expansionary budget. The key aspects of the budget already leaked to the press suggest an anticipated pull forward and backdating of billions of dollars' worth of tax relief for businesses and low to middle income earners and significant infrastructure spending. This has understandably triggered a short-term rally in equity markets. Additionally, the political theatre in the US – with President Trump being infected with COVID-19 and then hospitalised, his subsequent show of bravado including a drive by in the 'beast' while infected, and return to the White House a few days later – has added to market confusion and volatility.

We had expected the market to take a breather last month. That, in fact, transpired. While we do not rule out a further correction, we can see the market firming on better sentiment in the short-term due to further stimulatory measures across the globe. We of course remain concerned about slowing global growth, the rise in COVID-19 cases, and the prospect of a disputed or unclear outcome in the upcoming US presidential election. These are likely to delay the recovery in earnings.

Against this backdrop, we've been refreshing and improving the quality and risk characteristics of the portfolio.

To summarise your portfolio's positioning:

With the **right mix of sensibly priced growth stocks** and **deeper value cyclicals**, we believe the fund is reasonably well placed to navigate the current developments and expect our stocks to deliver solid returns in the years to come. The current themes and strategies that will drive the portfolio are summarised as follows:

1. Quality Franchises, Growth at Reasonable, Attractive Valuations

Solid companies with strong/leading market positions and credible management with good balance sheets
James Hardie Industries, NextDC, Goodman Group, Reliance Worldwide, Ramsay Health, Telstra, Sydney Airport, United Malt and Treasury Wines

2. Businesses that are highly cyclical or seasonal in nature, facing headwinds

Heavily discounted companies with strong market positions and strategic assets, but very sensitive to economic conditions/seasonality/weather
Graincorp, Nufarm, Downer EDI and Flight Centre

3. Turnarounds

Sound businesses that have historically generated poor returns, have been poorly managed, under-earned versus their potential, are in transition and where we think earnings/returns will improve over the medium term. Out of favour with the market, somewhat contrarian positions
Orica, QBE, Fletcher Building and Janus Henderson

4. Deep Value Resource Plays

Stocks trading at discounts to NPVs, where much of the heavy lifting has been done (cost out, self help deleveraging)
South32, Woodside Petroleum and Northern Star Resources

UNDERWEIGHT FINANCIALS, ESPECIALLY BANKS WHERE WE OWN 1 OF THE BIG 4

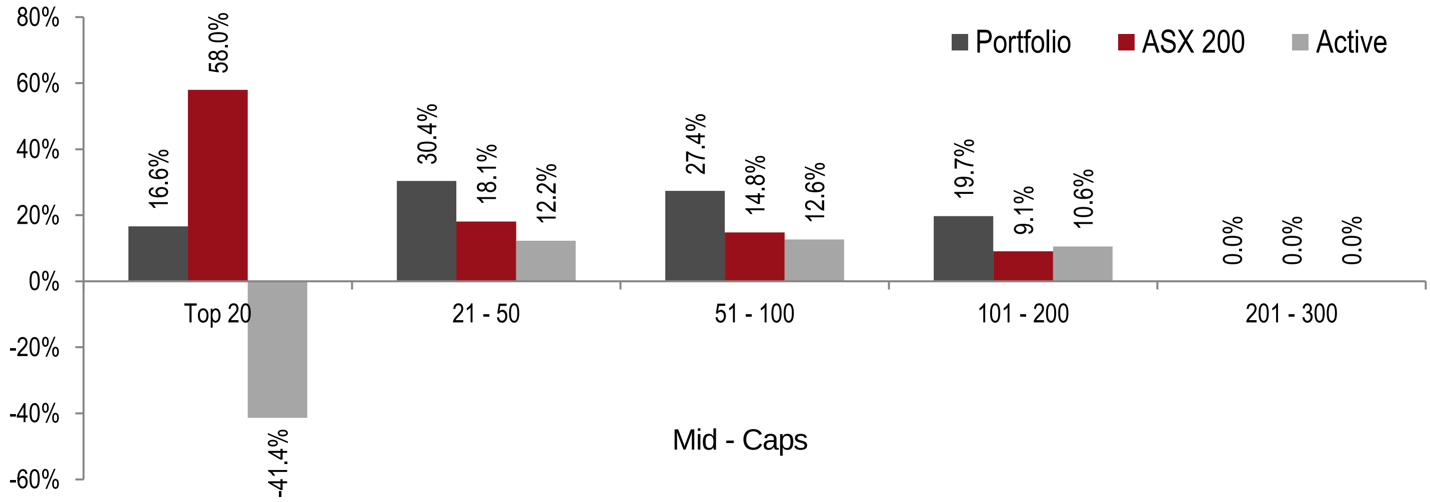
Warm Regards,

Chris Kourtis

Portfolio Manager

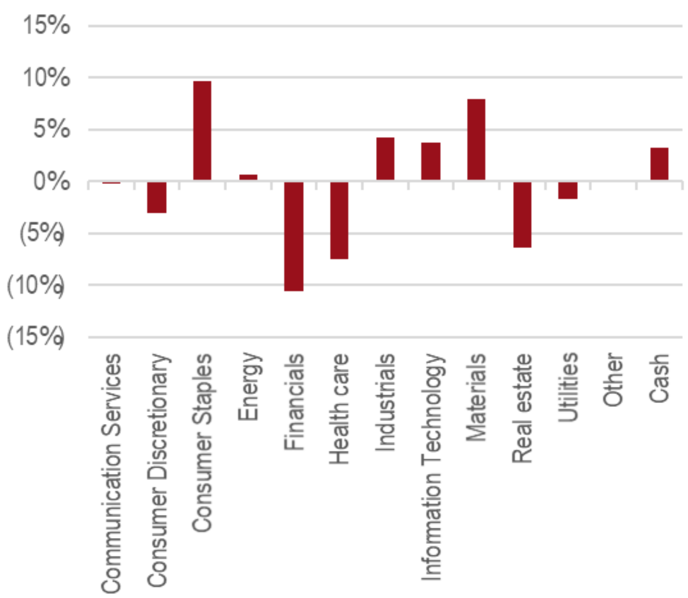
PORTFOLIO FEATURES

Size comparison Chart vs ASX 200^



^Size Comparison Data as at 25 September 2020
Source: Bloomberg, Ellerston Capital Limited

Active Sector Exposures*



TOP 10 HOLDINGS**
DOWNER EDI LIMITED
GRAINCORP
NEXTDC
NORTHERN STAR RESOURCES
NUFARM
ORICA
QBE INSURANCE
SOUTH32
UNIED MALT GROUP
WESTPAC BANKING CORP

Source: Ellerston Capital Limited

* Active sector exposures are determined by subtracting fund sector weights from benchmark weights. Positive percentages represent over-weight sector exposures relative to benchmark and negative percentages represent under-weight sector exposures relative to the benchmark.
** Top 10 Holdings are listed in alphabetical order.

ELLERSTON CAPITAL

ABOUT THE ELLERSTON AUSTRALIAN SHARE FUND

The Fund aims to achieve its performance objectives by adopting a fundamental "bottom-up" investment approach to stock selection which is focused on identifying and then constructing a portfolio of the highest conviction ideas.

Investment opportunities for the Fund are identified by analysing and understanding the factors affecting (amongst other things): business model, industry structure, management team and overall valuation. Ellerston Capital typically favours businesses that can sustain high returns or improve their return on capital and looks to invest in businesses with a market value below the value we attribute to them.

Benchmark weightings do not drive our stock decisions, our approach is totally benchmark independent.

Due to the high conviction nature of the portfolio and the resulting deviation in portfolio composition relative to benchmark weighting, it is expected that the returns from the Fund will differ significantly from the broader market indices.

FUND FACTS

STRATEGY FUNDS UNDER MANAGEMENT	$1.5 Billion
FUNDS UNDER MANAGEMENT – ASF UNIT TRUST	$25.83 Million
APPLICATION PRICE	$0.8380
REDEMPTION PRICE	$0.8338
NUMBER OF STOCKS	21
INCEPTION DATE	1 APRIL 2009

Source: Ellerston Capital Limited

All holding enquiries should be directed to our registrar, Link Market Services on 1800 992 149 or ellerston@linkmarketservices.com.au

Should investors have any questions or queries regarding the Fund,

please contact our Investor Relations team on 02 9021 7701 or info@ellerstoncapital.com

or visit us at https://ellerstoncapital.com/

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