

Net Tangible Assets Report

July 2019



Market Commentary

July saw a continuation of strong bond and share markets across the globe as central banks reaffirmed their commitment to keep interest rates low. In such an environment, investors were attracted by the superior yields available from capital markets, and this appears likely to continue for some time – perhaps until economic data suggests a severe slowdown is imminent, or corporate results disappoint expectations.

ASX at record high

At month end, Australian stocks were trading at or close to record highs, finally eclipsing the level reached just before the onset of the GFC in November 2007. Amongst the main markets, China, France and Italy are amongst the few countries yet to breach the pre-GFC record, whereas the US and UK markets surpassed their peaks back in 2013. Indeed, the main US index, the S&P 500, is now trading around 90% higher than its previous peak in October 2007.

What held the ASX back for so long?

Gains in the ASX had been limited by a relatively high aggregate payout ratio, tight monetary policy, the strong Australian dollar and weak commodity prices between 2014 and 2017. So far this calendar year, the ASX has climbed about 20%, supported by two interest rate cuts, the return to government for the Liberal National Coalition, a bottoming in the residential property market, and surging commodity prices (particularly iron ore).

The ASX has heavy representation from financial stocks and resource companies: a strong rally in big banks, and powerful performances from the major diversified miners (BHP and RIO), has fired up the index. High dividends (the ASX/S&P 200 index yields on average around 4.5%) have also attracted investors, who are struggling for yield in an ultra-low interest rate environment.

Wall Street at record high

Wall Street's main indices closed at or near record highs at month end following the Federal Reserve bolstering expectations of interest rate cuts during August. The markets expect the Fed will reduce its policy rate by 0.25% in what has been dubbed "an insurance cut". The promise of new stimulus measures has boosted prices of Treasuries and shares, with investors betting US borrowing costs will stay lower for longer than they thought just months ago.

The US economy is enjoying its longest uninterrupted stretch of expansion since the 1850s, despite the eurozone crisis, slowdown in China, and trade wars. Recessions are typically defined as two consecutive quarters of shrinking gross domestic product. The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) – the semi-official arbiter of US booms and busts – reckons the current expansion started in June 2009. That means that last month the US expansion hit its 121st month, making it more than twice as long as the average post-WWII expansion.

This year, the US economy expanded at an annualised rate of 3.2% in the first quarter but has since slowed to a rate of 2.1% in the second quarter. Some commentators worry that the expansion will probably end soon. As uncertainty around

trade policy remains unresolved, manufacturing data around the world drops markedly, and inverted yield curves signal disturbing trends, concern about the outlook is becoming more pronounced. Business confidence and corporate investments have slowed to multiyear lows.

Major institutions like the World Bank and the IMF highlight trade tensions

According to the World Bank's economists, "Global growth has continued to weaken and momentum remains fragile. Downside risks to growth predominate, including rising trade barriers, a build-up of government debt, and deeper-than-expected slowdowns in several major economies." The post GFC recovery has been weaker than most other economic recoveries since the Second World War. US GDP is now about 20% bigger than its pre-GFC peak. In contrast, the 1990s boom increased the size of the US economy by about 40%.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has cut its growth forecasts for the global economy for this year and next. It says there is an urgent need to reduce trade and technology tensions. It predicts growth of 3.2% in 2019, down from its April forecast of 3.3%.

The IMF listed the principal risk factor to the global economy as being "further US-China tariffs, US auto tariffs, or a no-deal Brexit – all of which could sap confidence, weaken investment, dislocate global supply chains, and severely slow global growth below the baseline".

Global manufacturing recession

A major economic concern is the global manufacturing slowdown. Manufacturing indicators are showing worsening conditions across the globe, especially in the US, China, Japan and Europe. Pressures in the auto sector and concerns over tariffs have played a big role. The global manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), a survey of manufacturer sentiment, suggests a global manufacturing recession.

So far, the downturn has been concentrated in manufacturing, while the much larger services sector has shown resilience. Services tend to be less cyclical than manufacturing, and the expansion of services output and employment is one reason why the economic cycle has been so elongated.

High levels of employment and rising household incomes, characteristic of the late stages of the business cycle, have combined to sustain services sector growth over the last nine months. But it is unclear if the services sector can continue to keep the economy out of recession if manufacturing continues to contract.

The global economy is soft, even as markets rise

Share market valuations are not at extreme levels, but they are above historical averages. High valuations are also why equity markets would be vulnerable to earnings disappointments.

Market Commentary

Extreme valuations are not in themselves usually the cause of collapse in share markets. Typically, bear markets in Australian shares (a fall of more than 20%) follow declines in US markets. Over the last six decades, the ASX All Ordinaries Index has suffered 8 bear markets, where stocks fell on average by 37%, and lasted on average for 16 months. Bear markets have typically occurred every 7 or 8 years.

US bear markets usually coincide with American economic recessions. Past experience shows correlations between recession, rising bond prices (falling yields) and declining share prices. If the US economy experiences a recession, and corporate earnings collapse, it seems likely that stock prices in the US (and probably also in Australia) will fall as well.

The four most useful indicators of an imminent recession in the US are: a rapid increase in the unemployment rate; an inverted yield curve; and sharp falls in the ISM manufacturing index and consumer sentiment. Employment remains strong at present, with the unemployment rate at a 50-year low. However, the yield curve is inverted and sending a troubling message, and both the manufacturing and the consumer sentiment measures are flashing yellow.

While central banks maintain their dovish stances, investors will probably continue to embrace risk-taking, even if it means share prices are expensive. But we should pay attention to the various risks, including the slowdown of growth rates (especially manufacturing and more importantly, services), the difficulty of further reducing interest rates from already ultra-low levels, and rising trade and geopolitical tensions. For equity markets, the weaker macro environment has not yet had a material impact on earnings, but this may become evident in the next reporting season.

A recession is far from inevitable - but the capacity for a decisive response (such as occurred in 2008/9) has been reduced. Back then, central banks either cut rates, bought up bonds, extended government backing to the financial sector, or did all of those things. This time around, it may be more difficult.

Thank you for your continued support of CBG.

Portfolio Commentary

The portfolio returned 0.3% in July, net of all fees and pre-tax on unrealised gains/losses, compared to a 2.9% return for the S&P/ASX200 Accumulation Index and a 3.0% return for the S&P/ASX All Ordinaries Accumulation Index.

During the month the board of CBG Capital received an attractive merger proposal from Clime Capital Limited, which has been recommended by the Independent Directors. This will create a larger and more liquid company.

In an effort to further improve the portfolio running yield in an increasingly low interest rate environment, leading utility AusNet Services (AST) and AREIT Growthpoint Properties Australia (GOZ) were added to the portfolio during the month. Both stocks display lower share price volatility, have high quality asset bases and offer attractive and rising yields above 5.5% at current prices.

Key contributors and detractors to the portfolio return for the month were:

- Australian Equity Large Cap Sub-Portfolio: Positive contributors Treasury Wine Estates (TWE), National Australia Bank (NAB), CSL (CSL) and Wesfarmers (WES), detractor Amcor (AMC).
- Australian Equity Mid Cap Sub-Portfolio: Positive contributors Afterpay Touch (APT) and Orora (ORA), detractor GUD Holdings (GUD).
- Australian Equity Small Cap Sub-Portfolio: Positive contributors Collins Foods (CKF) and Lycopodium (LYL), detractors Navigator Global Investments (NGI) and Audinate (AD8).

TWE bounced strongly on news of ongoing strength in premium Chinese wine import trends. NAB strengthened post the appointment of industry veteran Ross McEwan as its new CEO.

APT announced a board and organisational update that was warmly received by the market. GUD, Australia's leading provider of automotive parts to the trade sector, reported its FY19 results in late July. While GUD's FY19 result was solid, with the final dividend up 10.7% to 31c per share, its outlook has softened to reflect the dual near-term headwinds of FX and a soft consumer environment.

LYL found further support after winning another new contract, an EPCM agreement for mine site development for Canadian fertilizer business Itafos. NGI announced a quarterly assets under management (AUM) update that modestly underwhelmed. However, at less than 10x cash earnings and a yield of approximately 7%, we still see value in a business that retains a strong net cash balance sheet.

The portfolio enters reporting season with solid cash reserves, which in turn provides scope to selectively add exposure to high quality companies over the coming months, should sensibly priced opportunity become apparent.

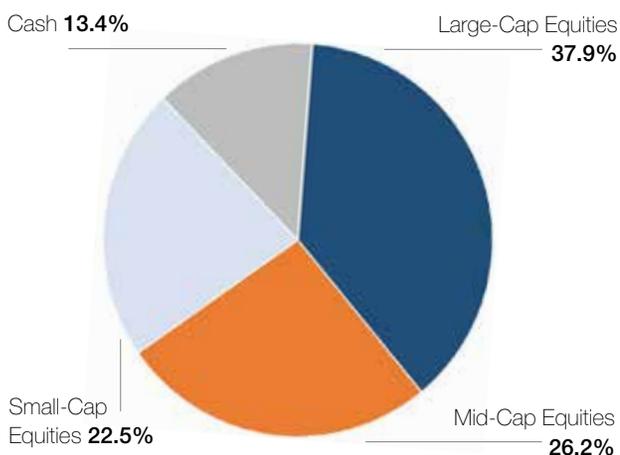
NTA before tax	Total Portfolio Including Cash	Rolling 12 month dividend	Historical Dividend Yield
\$1.08	\$28.0m	3.3cps	3.3%

Net Tangible Assets (NTA)

	July	June
NTA before tax	\$1.08	\$1.08
NTA after tax*	\$1.05	\$1.04
CBC Share Price	\$1.01	\$1.01
Shares on issue (million)	26.2m	26.2m

* Please note that the post-tax figures are theoretical, assuming all holdings in the portfolio are sold and then tax paid on the gains that would arise on this disposal.

Gross Asset Allocation



Company Overview (\$m)

Australian Securities	\$24.3
Net Cash & Equivalents	\$3.7

Top Holdings (% of Gross Assets)

Australian Equities

BHP Limited	6.0%
National Australia Bank Limited	5.6%
Westpac Banking Corporation Ltd	5.3%
Amcor Limited	5.0%
Bravura Solutions Limited	4.0%
Other	60.7%
Cash	13.4%