

ORDINARY COUNCIL

Thursday 21 March 2024

Ordinary Council Meeting

Thursday, 21 March 2024

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1 Leadership and Governance

What we are trying to achieve

A community that works together in decision making that is defined as ethically, socially and environmentally responsible.

What the result will be

We will have:

- A community that has the opportunity to be involved in decision making
- Open, easy, meaningful, regular and diverse communication between the community and decision makers
- Partnerships and collaborative projects, that meet the community's expectations, needs and challenges
- Knowledgeable, skilled and connected community leaders
- Strong corporate management that is transparent

How we will get there

- 1.1 Inform and engage with the community about what Council does using varied communication channels
- 1.2 Maintain strong partnerships between all stakeholders - local, state and federal — so that they are affective advocates for the community
- 1.3 Demonstrate leadership
- 1.4 Use innovative, efficient and sustainable practices
- 1.5 Ensure strong corporate and financial management that is transparent and accountable

MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LOCAL COUNCILS IN NSW

A GUIDE TO COMPLETING RETURNS OF INTEREST

Introduction

Under the *Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW* (the Model Code of Conduct), certain council officials are required to disclose their personal interests in publicly available returns of interests.

These operate as a key transparency mechanism for promoting community confidence in council decision making, whether by councillors or by staff or others under delegation.

You must complete and lodge your return of interests in accordance with the requirements in the Model Code of Conduct.

You must not lodge a return that you know or ought to know is false or misleading in a material particular.

Complaints about breaches of these requirements are to be referred to the Office of Local Government (OLG) and may result in disciplinary action by the council, the Departmental Chief Executive, or the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Important information

Who must submit a return of interests?

You must complete and lodge a return of interests if you are a councillor or designated person.

Designated persons include:

- the general manager
- senior staff, and
- staff, delegates of councils or members of committees who the council identify as

exercising functions that could give rise to a conflict of interest.

When must I submit a written return of interests?

You must submit a return of interests within three months of being elected or becoming a designated person and submit a new return annually (within three months of the start of each financial year).

You do not need to submit a return of interests if you have already submitted a return in the three months preceding 30 June, or if you ceased to be a councillor or designated person in the three months preceding 30 June.

If, at any time, you become aware of any new interests that need to be disclosed, you must submit a new return within three months of becoming aware of the interests.

Who must I lodge my return of interests with?

All returns of interests are to be lodged with the council's general manager.

A return lodged within 3 months of 30 June must be tabled at the first council meeting after the last day the return was required to be lodged.

A return lodged at any other time must be tabled at the first council meeting after the return was lodged.

Must my return of interests be made publicly available?

Yes. Councils must make all returns of interests publicly available in accordance with the requirements of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*, the *Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2009* and any guidelines issued by the NSW Information Commissioner.

The Information Commissioner has issued Information Access Guideline 1 in relation to the publication of information contained in returns of interests. Guideline 1 states that councillors' and designated persons' returns of interests must be made publicly available free of charge on councils' websites, unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of the information contained in them or to do so would impose unreasonable additional costs on the council.

It is open to councils to redact information from returns of interests (eg a person's signature and residential address) when publishing returns on their websites where there is an overriding public interest against the disclosure that information.

For more information, see Guideline 1 which is available [here](#) and OLG's guidance on the implementation of Guideline 1 which is available [here](#).

Is there a standard form for submitting a return of interests?

Yes. Written returns of interests are to be in the form set out in Schedule 2 of the Model Code of Conduct.

A copy is attached to this Guide.

How do I complete a return of interests?

For those who are lodging their first return

If you are lodging a return for the first time, you do not need to complete Parts C, D and I of the return.

All other parts should be completed with information based on your circumstances at the date when you became a councillor or designated person.

Note:

- **If you are lodging your first return:**
- **the 'return date' is the date you became a councillor or designated person, and**
 - **leave the return 'period' at the top of the form blank**

If you have acquired any new interests that need to be disclosed in the return in the period between the return date and the date on which you are completing a return for the first time, you should also disclose these in the return to avoid the need to complete a further return disclosing the new interests.

For those who are lodging their annual return

Complete all parts of the return if you are lodging a new return for the new financial year.

The return should be completed with information based on your circumstances for the 12-month period beginning on 30 June of the previous year to 30 June of this year.

Note:

- **If you are lodging your annual return:**
- **the 'return date' is 30 June of the calendar year in which the return is made, and**
 - **the return 'period' is from 30 June of the previous year to 30 June of the current year.**

For those who are disclosing new interests

Complete all parts of the return if you are disclosing a new interest that was not disclosed in the last return you lodged with the general manager.

The form should be completed with information based on your circumstances from either 30 June of the previous financial year **or** the date you became a councillor or designated person (**whichever is later**), to the date you became aware of the new interest you are disclosing.

Note:

- **If you are disclosing new interests:**
- the 'return date' is the date you became aware of the interest(s), and
 - the return 'period' is from 30 June of the previous financial year, or the date on which you became a councillor or designated person (whichever is later) to the date you became aware of the interest(s).

What interests do I need to disclose?

You must not lodge a return that you know or ought to know is false or misleading in a material particular.

In completing your return, you must disclose all relevant interests whether or not they are acquired or held in NSW or Australia.

In the case of interests in real property, you must disclose all interests in real property you hold in Australia.

Part A – Real property

In this section, you must disclose the:

- street address of each parcel of real property you had an interest in:
 - on the return date, and
 - since 30 June of the previous financial year, and
- nature of the interest (eg freehold, lease, option to purchase etc).

You do not need to disclose an interest in a parcel of real property if you ceased to have the interest prior to becoming a councillor or designated person.

You also do not need to disclose an interest in a parcel of real property if your interest was:

- as executor of a will, or administrator of an estate, of a deceased person, **and** you were not a beneficiary under the will or intestacy, or
- as a trustee, if the interest was acquired in the course of an occupation that was not related to your duties as a councillor or designated person.

Note:

- **'Address' is defined in clause 1 of schedule 1 of the Model Code of Conduct**
- **'Real property' refers to any real property in Australia.**

Part B – Sources of income

In this section you must disclose each source of income you:

- reasonably expect to receive from the first day after the return date to 30 June, and
- received in the period since 30 June of the previous financial year.

In disclosing sources of income from your occupation, you must disclose:

- a description of your occupation, and
- if you are employed or the holder of an office, the name and address of your employer, or a description of the office, and
- if you have entered into a partnership with other persons, the name (if any) of the partnership.

In disclosing sources of income from a trust, you must disclose the name and address of the settlor and trustee.

In disclosing the sources of any other income, you must provide a description that identifies the person you received or reasonably expect to receive the income from, or the circumstances in which you received or reasonably expect to receive the income.

You do not need to disclose a source of income if:

- it did not exceed, or you do not reasonably expect it to exceed, \$500
- you ceased to receive income from that source prior to becoming a councillor or designated person, or
- it is your fee as a councillor.

Part C – Gifts

In this section, you must disclose all gifts you have received since 30 June of the previous financial year.

Gifts include any item, property or money you have been given without consideration or with inadequate consideration, unless it was received under a will.

You must provide a description of the gift and the name and address of the person/organisation that gave you the gift.

You do not need to disclose gifts if:

- they did not exceed \$500 in value, unless it was among gifts totalling more than \$500 from the same person/organisation within the last 12 months
- it was given to you by a relative (see below for a definition of "relative")
- it was a political donation that has been disclosed or is required to be disclosed under the *Electoral Funding Act 2018*, or
- it was received prior to you becoming a councillor or designated person (unless you have received a subsequent gift from the same person/organisation since becoming a councillor/designated person and within a 12-month period and the gifts total more than \$500).

Note:

→ **The amount of a gift (other than money) is equal to the monetary value of the gift**

→ **'Relative' is defined in clause 1 of schedule 1 of the Model Code of Conduct. Relatives include your:**

- spouse or de facto partner
- parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, lineal descendants or adopted children and any of those persons' spouses or de facto partners, and
- spouse's or de facto partner's parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles,

aunts, nephews, nieces, lineal descendants or adopted children and any of those persons' spouses or de facto partners.

Part D – Contributions to travel

In this section you must disclose the:

- name and address of any person who has made a financial or other contribution to the expenses of any travel you have undertaken since 30 June of the previous financial year
- dates on which you undertook the travel, and
- names of the states and territories and of the overseas countries where the travel was undertaken.

You do not need to disclose a contribution to travel if:

- it was made from public funds
- it was made by a relative (see above for a definition of "relative")
- it was made in the ordinary course of your occupation that was not related to your functions as a councillor or designated person
- it was under \$250, unless it was among gifts totalling more than \$250 from the same person/organisation within the last 12 months
- it was a political donation that has been disclosed or is required to be disclosed under the *Electoral Funding Act 2018*
- it was made by a political party you are a member of and you undertook the travel for the purpose of political activity of the party in NSW, or to represent the party within Australia, or
- you received the contribution prior to becoming a councillor or designated person (unless you have received a subsequent gift or contribution from the same person/organisation since becoming a councillor/designated person and within a 12 month period and the gifts/contributions total more than \$250).

Note:

→ **The amount of a contribution (other than money) is equal to the monetary value of the contribution.**

Part E – Interests and positions in corporations

In this section, you must disclose:

- the name and address of each corporation in which you held an interest or position (whether remunerated or not) on the return date and since 30 June of the previous financial year
- the nature of the interests or positions held in each corporation, and
- a description of the principal objects (if any) of each corporation, except if it is a listed company.

You do not need to disclose an interest or position in a corporation if the corporation:

- is formed for the purpose of providing recreation or amusement, or for promoting commerce, industry, art, science, religion or charity, or for any other community purpose, **and**
- it is required to apply its profits or other income for the purpose of promoting its objects, **and**
- it is prohibited from paying any dividend to its members.

You also do not need to disclose an interest in a corporation if it is a beneficial interest in shares in the corporation that does not exceed 10 per cent of the voting rights in the corporation.

You also do not need to disclose an interest or position in a corporation if you ceased to hold the interest or position prior to becoming a councillor or designated person.

Part F – Are you a property developer or close associate of a property developer?

In this section, you must disclose if you are a 'property developer' or a close associate of an individual or corporation that is a 'property developer' for the purposes of the *Electoral Funding Act 2018*.

A person or a corporation is a 'property developer' if they carry out a business mainly concerned with the residential or commercial development of land, with the ultimate purpose of the sale or lease of the land for profit, **and** in the course of that business:

- one 'relevant planning application' has been made by or on behalf of the individual or corporation and is pending, or
- three or more 'relevant planning applications' made by or on behalf of the individual or corporation have been determined within the preceding seven years.

You will be a close associate of a person who is a property developer if:

- you are the spouse of the person, or
- where the person has made a 'relevant planning application' that is pending, you are in a joint venture or partnership with the person in connection with the 'relevant planning application' and you are likely to obtain a financial gain if it is approved or carried out.

You will be a close associate of a corporation that is a property developer if:

- you or your spouse are a director or officer of the corporation
- you or your spouse have voting power in the corporation or a related body corporate of the corporation that is greater than 20%
- where the corporation is a trustee, manager or responsible entity in relation to a trust, you hold more than 20% of the units in the trust (in the case of a unit trust) or you are a beneficiary of the trust (in the case of a discretionary trust), or
- where the corporation has made a 'relevant planning application' that is pending, you are in a joint venture or partnership with the corporation in connection with the 'relevant planning application' and you are likely to obtain a financial gain if it is approved or carried out.

Note:

→ **'Relevant planning application' is defined in section 10.4 (Disclosure of political donations and gifts) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.**

Part G – Positions in trade unions and professional or business associations

In this section, you must disclose:

- the name of each trade union and of each professional or business association in which you held any position (whether remunerated

or not) on the return date and since 30 June of the previous financial year, and

- a description of the position.

You do not need to disclose a position in a trade union or a professional or business association if you ceased to hold that position prior to becoming a councillor or designated person.

Part H – Debts

In this section, you must disclose the name and address of each person you are/were liable to pay a debt to on the return date, and at any time since 30 June of the previous financial year.

You must disclose a liability to pay a debt whether or not the amount, or any part of the amount, to be paid was due and payable on the return date or at any time in the period since 30 June of the previous financial year.

You do not need to disclose a liability to pay a debt if:

- the debt arose from a loan you have with a deposit taking institution (eg a bank) or other authorised deposit taking institution which lends money, and the loan was part of the institution's ordinary course of business
- the amount to be paid did not exceed \$500, **unless** the debt was one of two or more debts owed to the same person, and the combined value of the debts exceed \$500.
- the debt was owed to a relative (see above for a definition of "relative")
- in the case of a debt for the supply of goods or services:
 - the goods or services were supplied to you within the 12 months before the return date, or at any time since 30 June of the previous financial year, or
 - the goods or services were supplied to you in the ordinary course your occupation that is not related to your duties as a councillor or designated person, or
- the debt was discharged prior to you becoming a councillor or designated person, unless the debt was one of two or more debts you owe to the same person, and the value of the combine debts exceeds \$500.

Part I – Dispositions of real property

In this section you must disclose details of each disposition of real property by you (including the street address of the property) since 30 June of the previous financial year if you wholly or partly retained the use and benefit of the property, or the right to re-acquire it.

You must also disclose details of each disposition of real property to another person under an arrangement with you (including the street address of the property), since 30 June of the previous financial year under which you obtained wholly or partly the use of the property.

You do not need to disclose a disposition of real property if it was made prior to you becoming a councillor or designated person.

Part J – Discretionary disclosures

In this section, you may voluntarily disclose any other interests, benefits, advantages or liabilities you may have, whether or not they are pecuniary, which you have not been required to disclose elsewhere in the return.

DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS FORM

REQUIRED TO BE LODGED UNDER CLAUSE 4.21
OF THE MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR
LOCAL COUNCILS IN NSW



Disclosure of pecuniary interests and other matters by *[full name of councillor or designated person]*
as at *[return date]* in respect to the period from *[date]* to *[date]*.

Signed: *[councillor's or designated person's signature]*

Date: *[date]*

A. Real Property

Street address of each parcel of real property in which I had an interest at the return date/at any time since 30 June	Nature of interest
<i>[address]</i>	<i>[details]</i>

B. Sources of income

1. Sources of income I:

- reasonably expect to receive from an occupation in the period commencing on the first day after the return date and ending on the following 30 June, and
- received from an occupation at any time since 30 June:

Description of occupation	Name and address of employer or description of office held (if applicable)	Name under which partnership conducted (if applicable)
<i>[description]</i>	<i>[name and address]</i>	<i>[name]</i>

2. Sources of income I:

- reasonably expect to receive from a trust in the period commencing on the first day after the return date and ending on the following 30 June, and
- received from a trust since 30 June:

Name and address of settlor	Name and address of trustee
<i>[name and address]</i>	<i>[name and address]</i>

3. Sources of other income I:

- reasonably expect to receive in the period commencing on the first day after the return date and ending on the following 30 June, and
- received at any time since 30 June:

Sources of other income
<i>[Include description sufficient to identify the person from whom, or the circumstances in which, that income was received]</i>

C. Gifts

Description of each gift I received at any time since 30 June	Name and address of donor
<i>[details]</i>	<i>[name and address]</i>

D. Contributions to travel

Name and address of each person who made any financial or other contribution to any travel undertaken by me at any time since 30 June	Dates on which travel was undertaken	Names of States, Territories of the Commonwealth and overseas countries in which travel was undertaken
<i>[name and address]</i>	<i>[dates]</i>	<i>[names]</i>

E. Interests and positions in corporations

Name and address of each corporation in which I had an interest or held a position at the return date/at any time since 30 June	Nature of interest (if any)	Description of position (if any)	Description of principal objects (if any) of corporation (except in case of listed company)
<i>[name and address]</i>	<i>[details]</i>	<i>[details]</i>	<i>[details]</i>

F. Property development

Were you a property developer or a close associate of a property developer on the return date?

[Yes/No]

G. Positions in trade unions and professional or business associations

Name of each trade union and each professional or business association in which I held any position (whether remunerated or not) at the return date/at any time since 30 June	Description of position
<i>[name]</i>	<i>[details]</i>

H. Debts

Name and address of each person to whom I was liable to pay any debts at the return date/at any time since 30 June
<i>[name]</i>

I. Disposition of property

1. Particulars of each disposition of real property by me (including the street address of the affected property) at any time since 30 June as a result of which I retained, either wholly or in part, the use and benefit of the property or the right to re-acquire the property at a later time
<i>[details]</i>

2. Particulars of each disposition of property to a person by any other person under arrangements made by me (including the street address of the affected property), being dispositions made at any time since 30 June, as a result of which I obtained, either wholly or in part, the use and benefit of the property
<i>[details]</i>

J. Discretionary disclosures

[details]



Monthly Investment Review



As at February 2024

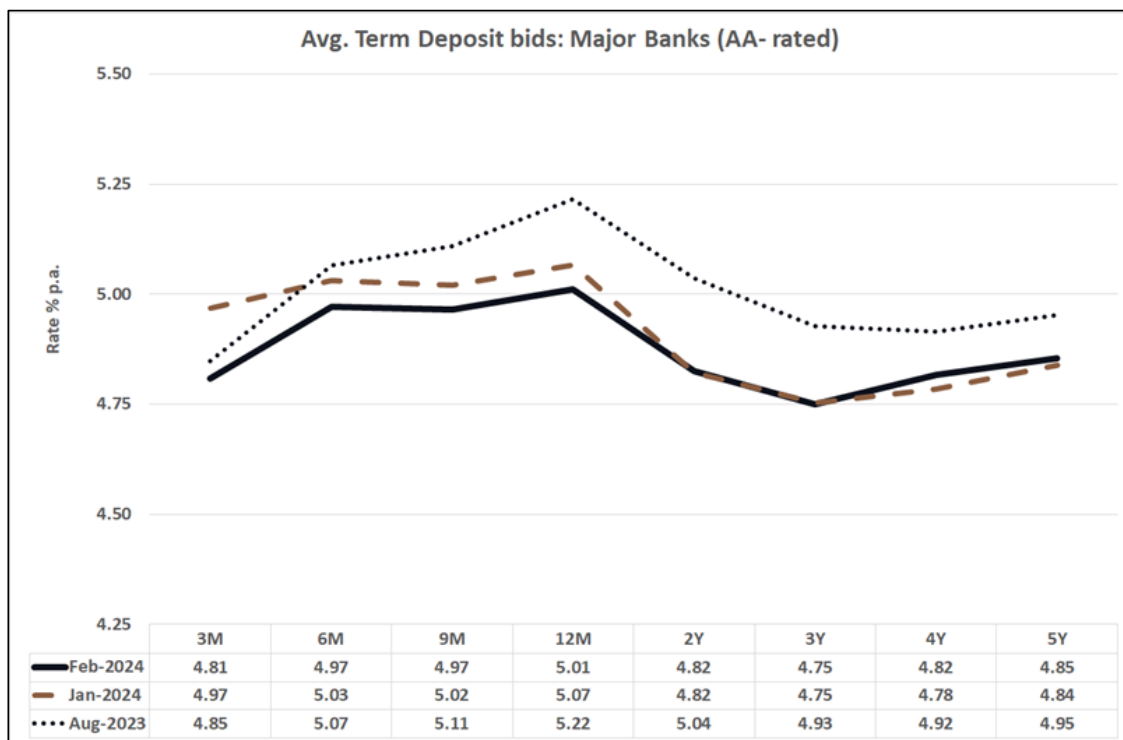
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Market Update Summary

Financial markets continued their rally in February largely reflective of the overall continued easing in inflation globally. Focus remains on when central banks will begin their interest rate cuts this year.

Over February 2024, movements for major bank term deposit rates were mixed compared to the previous month (January 2024). Major bank deposit rates dropped by as much as 16bp across the shorter-tenors (3-12 months), whilst flat across the medium term (2-3 years), and was slightly up by around 2-3bp across the longer-tenors (4-5 years). Interestingly, major bank deposit rates are approximately 10-22bp lower than what they were 6 months ago (August 2023), clearly pricing in the future rate cuts expected later this year.



Source: Imperium Markets

With a global economic downturn and multiple interest rate cuts being priced in coming years, investors should consider taking an 'insurance policy' against a potentially lower rate environment by investing across 2-5 year fixed deposits, targeting rates above or close to 4%-5% p.a. (small allocation only).



Port Macquarie–Hasting Council’s Portfolio Summary

Compliance

Compliance Measure	Within Policy Limits (Y/N)	Reason if Not Compliant
Term to Maturity	Yes – Compliant	n/a
Counterparty	Yes – Compliant	n/a
Credit Quality	Yes – Compliant	n/a

Performance

As at 29/02/2024	1m (actual)	1m (% p.a.)	FYTD (actual)	FYTD (% p.a.)
AusBond Bank Bill Index	0.34%	4.43%	2.88%	4.34%
Council’s Portfolio[^]	0.25%	3.19%	1.96%	2.95%
Relative Performance	-0.11%	-1.24%	-0.92%	-1.39%

[^]Total portfolio performance excludes Council’s cash account holdings.

Council’s Portfolio & Compliance

Asset Allocation

The portfolio is predominately directed to fixed term deposits (89.27%). The remainder of the portfolio is directed to fixed bonds with the Northern Territory Treasury Corporation (4.72%) and the overnight cash account with Westpac (6.01%).

Senior FRNs remain relatively attractive as spreads have generally widened over the past ~2 years – new issuances should now be considered again on a case by case scenario. In the interim, staggering a mix of fixed deposits between 9–12 months to 3 years remains a more optimal strategy to maximise returns over a longer–term cycle.

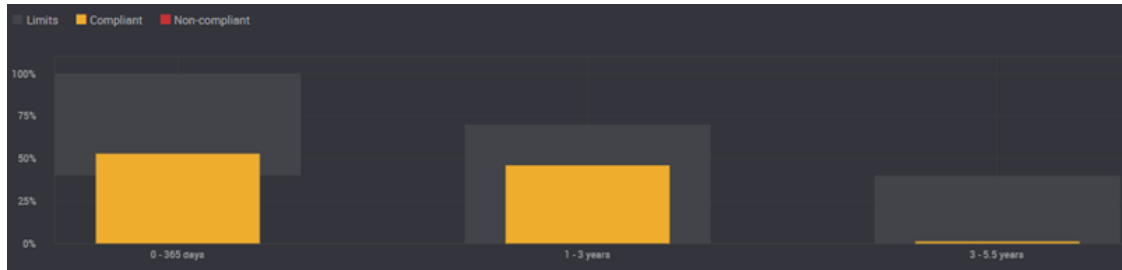
With interest rate cuts and a global economic downturn being priced in coming years, investors can choose to allocate a small proportion of longer–term funds and undertake an insurance policy against any potential future rate cuts by investing across 2–5 year fixed deposits, locking in and targeting yields close to or above 5% p.a.





Term to Maturity

All maturity limits (minimum and maximum) comply with the Investment Policy. Short-Medium Term (1-3 years) assets account for around 46% of the total investment portfolio, with capacity of around \$102m remaining. Future investments should be directed to the 1-3 year horizon as this is where we currently see the best value to maximise returns over a longer-term cycle.



Where there is (counterparty) capacity to invest in attractive 1-3 year investments, we recommend this be allocated to new any remaining attractive fixed term deposits or potentially newly issued senior FRNs (refer to respective sections below).

Compliant	Horizon	Invested (\$)	Invested (%)	Min. Limit (%)	Max. Limit (%)	Available (\$)
✓	0 – 1 year	\$224,060,765	52.84%	40%	100%	\$200,000,000
✓	1 - 3 years	\$195,000,000	45.98%	0%	70%	\$101,842,536
✓	3 – 5½ years	\$5,000,000	1.18%	0%	40%	\$164,624,306
✓	5½ - 10 years	\$0	0.00%	0%	10%	\$42,406,077
		\$424,060,765	100.00%			



Counterparty

As at the end of February 2024, Council did not have an overweight position to any single ADI. Overall, the portfolio is diversified across the investment grade credit spectrum (rated BBB- or higher).

Compliant	Issuer	Rating	Invested (\$)	Invested (%)	Max. Limit (%)	Available (\$)
✓	NAB	AA-	\$81,000,000	19.10%	30.00%	\$46,218,230
✓	North. Territory	AA-	\$20,000,000	4.72%	30.00%	\$107,218,230
✓	Westpac	AA-	\$69,060,765	16.29%	30.00%	\$58,157,464
✓	ICBC Sydney	A	\$67,000,000	15.80%	20.00%	\$17,812,153
✓	ING Bank	A	\$56,000,000	13.21%	20.00%	\$28,812,153
✓	Aust. Military	BBB+	\$7,000,000	1.65%	10.00%	\$35,406,077
✓	Australian Unity	BBB+	\$10,000,000	2.36%	10.00%	\$32,406,077
✓	BankVIC	BBB+	\$10,000,000	2.36%	10.00%	\$32,406,077
✓	BOQ	BBB+	\$17,000,000	4.01%	10.00%	\$25,406,077
✓	Bendigo-Adelaide	BBB+	\$20,000,000	4.72%	10.00%	\$22,406,077
✓	Hume Bank	BBB+	\$7,000,000	1.65%	10.00%	\$35,406,077
✓	AMP Bank	BBB	\$3,000,000	0.71%	10.00%	\$39,406,077
✓	Auswide Bank	BBB	\$13,000,000	3.07%	10.00%	\$29,406,077
✓	MyState Bank	BBB	\$5,000,000	1.18%	10.00%	\$37,406,077
✓	P&N Bank	BBB	\$39,000,000	9.20%	10.00%	\$3,406,077
			\$424,060,765	100.00%		

We welcomed Council's recent decision to re-establish a new deposit account with Bendigo-Adelaide Bank (BBB+), not only to diversify its banking counterparties and increase the overall returns of the portfolio, but also reduce the exposure to the Fossil Fuel industry.



Fossil Fuel Investments

What is Council's current exposure to institutions that fund fossil fuels?

Using the following link <http://www.marketforces.org.au/banks/compare>, based on the Council's investment portfolio balance as at 29/02/2024 (\$424.06m), we can roughly estimate that ~70% of the investments have some form of exposure.

Council's exposure is summarised as follows:

Counterparty	Credit Rating	Funding Fossil Fuel
NAB	AA-	Yes
NTTC	AA-	Yes
WBC	AA-	Yes
ICBC, Sydney	A	Yes
ING Bank Australia	A	Yes
Australian Military	BBB+	No
Australian Unity	BBB+	No
BankVIC	BBB+	No
BoQ	BBB+	No
Bendigo-Adelaide	BBB+	No
Hume Bank	BBB+	No
AMP Bank	BBB	Yes
Auswide	BBB	No
MyState Bank	BBB	No
P&N Bank	BBB	No

Source: <https://www.marketforces.org.au/info/compare-bank-table/>

Funding Fossil Fuel	Amount	Invested %	Wgt. Avg. Yield % p.a.
Yes	\$296,060,765	70%	2.79%
No	\$128,000,000	30%	4.20%
Total / Wgt. Avg.	\$424,060,765	100%	3.22%

Transition to investments without major exposure to fossil fuels

Council has not made a decision to divest from the current portfolio of investments which have exposure to fossil fuels. To do so would have unfavourable implications to the credit quality, rating and interest income forecasts.

However, where possible, and within the ministerial and policy guidelines, Council will continue to favour newly issued fossil fuel free investment products, providing it does not compromise the risk and return profile.

In time it is Councils intention to move to a more balanced portfolio which has less exposure to fossil fuels, providing it is prudent to do so.

**What would be implications on our portfolio credit rating?**

By adopting a free fossil fuel policy or an active divestment strategy, this would eliminate the major banks rated "AA-" as well as some other "A" rated banks (e.g. Macquarie and ING). Council would be left with a smaller sub-sector of banks to choose to invest with.

What would be risks and implications on Council's portfolio performance?

Some implications include:

- High concentration risk – limiting Council to a selected number of banks;
- Increased credit/counterparty risk;
- May lead to a reduction in performance (e.g. most of the senior FRN issuances are with the higher rated ADIs);
- Underperformance compared to other Councils which could result in a significant loss of income generated – could be in excess of hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars per annum.

It may actually be contrary to Council's primary objective to preserve capital as the investment portfolio's risk would increase (all things being equal). Council may not be maximising its returns – this is one of the primary objectives written in the Investment Policy.



Credit Quality

The portfolio remains diversified from a credit ratings perspective. The portfolio is mainly directed to the investment grade ADIs (BBB- or higher). There is high capacity to invest in the higher rated ADIs (A or higher).

There is some capacity to invest with the "BBB" rated ADIs (~\$17m remaining as at the reporting date). From a ratings perspective, the "BBB" rated banks now generally dominate the number of ADIs issuing deposits within the investment grade space. There has been some signs of appetite growing in the wholesale deposit market as additional lower rated ("BBB" and unrated) ADIs have come to market to raise 'new' money.

Over coming years, we may start to see a more 'normalised' environment where the lower rated banks start to offer higher rates compared to the higher rated banks as the competition for deposits grow. As more of these banks become more competitive for funds, Council may look to allocate additional funds amongst this sector, particularly with those ADIs that are not lending to the Fossil Fuel industry i.e. the more 'ethical' banks.

If there are any attractive deposits being offered in the "BBB" rated sector, we will inform Council to take advantage and invest accordingly, but we note this is now approaching the upper threshold of 35% of the Policy limits. This may be revised upwards in the next policy review to give Council further options to reduce its overall exposure to the 'unethical' ADIs in the long-run.

All ratings categories are within the current Policy limits:

Compliant	Credit Rating	Invested (\$)	Invested (%)	Max. Limit (%)	Available (\$)
✓	AA Category	\$170,060,765	40.10%	100%	\$254,000,000
✓	A Category	\$123,000,000	29.01%	60%	\$131,436,459
✓	BBB Category	\$131,000,000	30.89%	35%	\$17,421,268
✓	Unrated ADIs	\$0	0.00%	5%	\$21,203,038
		\$424,060,765	100.00%		



Performance

Council's performance for the period ending February 2024 is summarised as follows:

Performance (Actual)	1 month	3 months	6 months	FYTD	1 year	2 years	3 years
Official Cash Rate	0.34%	1.07%	2.10%	2.80%	4.09%	2.94%	1.99%
AusBond Bank Bill Index	0.34%	1.09%	2.12%	2.88%	4.10%	2.92%	1.95%
Council's T/D Portfolio	0.26%	0.79%	1.54%	2.02%	2.86%	2.33%	2.12%
Council's Bond Portfolio	0.10%	0.30%	0.60%	0.80%	1.20%	1.20%	-
Council's Portfolio [^]	0.25%	0.76%	1.50%	1.96%	2.79%	2.28%	2.08%
Rel. Performance	-0.09%	-0.32%	-0.63%	-0.92%	-1.32%	-0.64%	0.13%

[^]Total portfolio performance excludes Council's cash account holdings.

Performance (% p.a.)	1 month	3 months	6 months	FYTD	1 year	2 years	3 years
Official Cash Rate	4.35%	4.35%	4.27%	4.22%	4.09%	2.94%	1.99%
AusBond Bank Bill Index	4.43%	4.43%	4.31%	4.34%	4.10%	2.92%	1.95%
Council's T/D Portfolio	3.29%	3.19%	3.12%	3.04%	2.86%	2.33%	2.12%
Council's Bond Portfolio	1.24%	1.21%	1.21%	1.20%	1.20%	1.20%	-
Council's Portfolio [^]	3.19%	3.10%	3.02%	2.95%	2.79%	2.28%	2.08%
Rel. Performance	-1.24%	-1.34%	-1.28%	-1.39%	-1.32%	-0.64%	0.13%

[^]Total portfolio performance excludes Council's cash account holdings.

As at February 2024, the total portfolio (excluding cash) provided a solid return of +0.25% (actual) or +3.19% p.a. (annualised), underperforming the benchmark AusBond Bank Bill Index return of +0.34% (actual) or +4.43% p.a. (annualised). The relative 'underperformance' over the past few years has been due to the unexpected aggressive rate hikes undertaken by the RBA since May 2022. Whilst this 'underperformance' may continue in the short-term, we do anticipate this to be fairly temporary with hopes that the RBA is approaching the peak of its rate hike cycle. Council should also remind itself it has consistently 'outperformed' over longer-term time periods as demonstrated by the longer-term returns of the overall investment portfolio (+3yr tenors).

We are pleased that PMHC remains amongst the best performing Councils in the state of NSW where deposits are concerned over longer-term periods. We have been pro-active in our advice about protecting interest income by strategically maintaining a slightly longer duration position. Council has reaped the benefits during the pandemic period (and historically). The portfolio should outperform by undertaking a similar strategy in the long-run.



Recommendations for Council

Term Deposits

As at February 2024, Council's **deposit** portfolio was yielding 3.23% p.a. (up 5bp from the end of the previous month), with a weighted average duration of ~1.13 years. Where possible, we recommend Council maintains this weighted average duration.

Please refer to the section below for further details on the Term Deposit market.

Securities

Primary (new) Senior **FRNs** (with maturities between 3-5 years) continue to be appealing (particularly for those investors with portfolios skewed towards fixed assets) and should be considered on a case by case scenario. Please refer to the section below for further details on the FRN market.

Council's Senior Fixed Bonds

During September 2021, Council placed parcels in NTTC (AA-) fixed bonds as follows:

Investment Date	Maturity Date	Principal	Rate % p.a. [^]	Remaining Term (Yrs)	Interest Paid
7/09/2021	15/12/2024	\$5,000,000	0.90%	0.79	Annually
14/09/2021	15/12/2025	\$5,000,000	1.10%	1.79	Annually
2/09/2021	15/12/2026	\$5,000,000	1.40%	2.79	Annually
7/09/2021	15/12/2026	\$5,000,000	1.40%	2.79	Annually
Totals / Wgt. Avg.		\$20,000,000	1.20%	2.04	

[^]Council received the full rebated commission of 0.25% (plus GST) on the face value of investment on all these parcels (currently totalling \$55,000).

We believe these investments were prudent at the time of investment, especially after the rate cut delivered in early November 2020 and the RBA's forward guidance on official interest rates (no rate rises 'until at least 2024').

The NTTC bonds are a 'retail' offering and not 'wholesale' issuances. Given the lack of liquidity and high penalty costs if they were to be sold/redeemed prior to the maturity date, they are considered to be a hold-to-maturity investment and will be marked at par value (\$100.00) throughout the term of investment.



Term Deposit Market Review

Current Term Deposits Rates

As at the end of February, we see value in the following:

Index	LT Credit Rating	Term	Rate % p.a.
ING	A	5 years	5.04%
BoQ	BBB+	5 years	5.00%
ING	A	2 years	4.95%
BoQ	BBB+	4 years	4.95%
ING	A	4 years	4.92%
Australian Unity	BBB+	2 years	4.90%
ING	A	3 years	4.87%
Suncorp	A+	2 years	4.85%
BoQ	BBB+	2 years	4.85%
Westpac	AA-	5 years	4.82%
Westpac	AA-	2 years	4.82%
NAB	AA-	2 years	4.75%

The above deposits are suitable for investors looking to maintain diversification and lock-in a slight premium compared to purely investing short-term.

For terms under 12 months, we believe the strongest value is currently being offered by the following ADIs (*we stress that rates are indicative, dependent on daily funding requirements and different for industry segments*):



Index	LT Credit Rating	Term	Rate % p.a.
NAB	AA-	5-8 months	5.10%
ING	A	12 months	5.08%
Suncorp	A+	6 months	5.08%
NAB	AA-	12 months	5.05%
Westpac	AA-	12 months	5.05%
Suncorp	A+	9 months	5.05%
BoQ	BBB+	9 months	5.05%
Hume Bank	BBB+	12 months	5.04%
Bendigo	BBB+	9 months	5.03%
BoQ	BBB+	6 months	5.00%

If Council does not require high levels of liquidity and can stagger a proportion of its investments across the longer term horizons (1-5 years), it will be rewarded over a longer-term cycle. Investing a spread of 12 months to 3 year horizons is likely to yield, on average, up to $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ % p.a. higher compared to those investors that entirely invest in short-dated deposits (under 6-9 months).

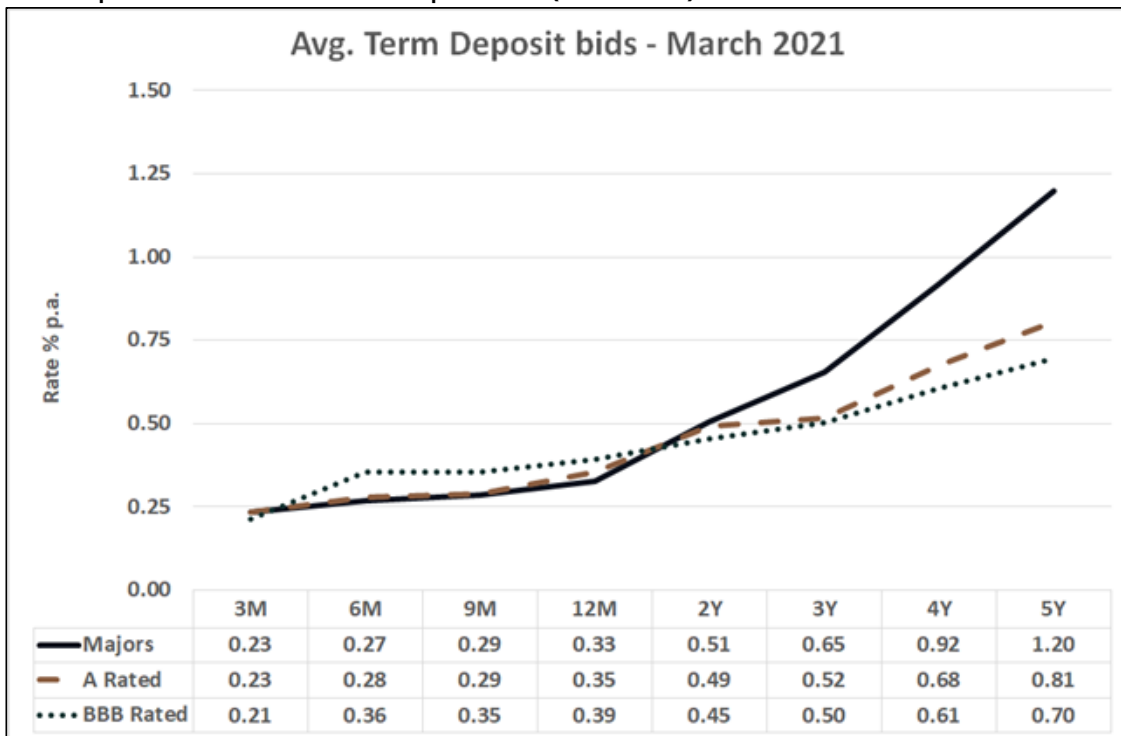
With a global economic slowdown and rate cuts being priced in coming years, investors should strongly consider and allocate some longer term surplus funds to undertake an insurance policy by investing across 2-5 year fixed deposits and locking in rates close to or above 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ -5% p.a. This will provide some income protection with central banks now likely to cut rates at some stage later this year.



Term Deposits Analysis

Pre-pandemic (March 2020), a 'normal' marketplace meant the lower rated ADIs (i.e. BBB category) were offering higher rates on term deposits compared to the higher rated ADIs (i.e. A or AA rated). But due to the cheap funding available provided by the RBA via their Term Funding Facility (TFF) during mid-2020, allowing the ADIs to borrow as low as 0.10% p.a. fixed for 3 years, those lower rated ADIs (BBB rated) did not require deposit funding from the wholesale deposit. Given the higher rated banks had more capacity to lend (as they have a greater pool of mortgage borrowers), they subsequently were offering higher deposit rates. In fact, some of the lower rated banks were not even offering deposit rates at all. As a result, most investors placed a higher proportion of their deposit investments with the higher rated (A or AA) ADIs over the past three years.

Term Deposit Rates – 12 months after pandemic (March 2021)



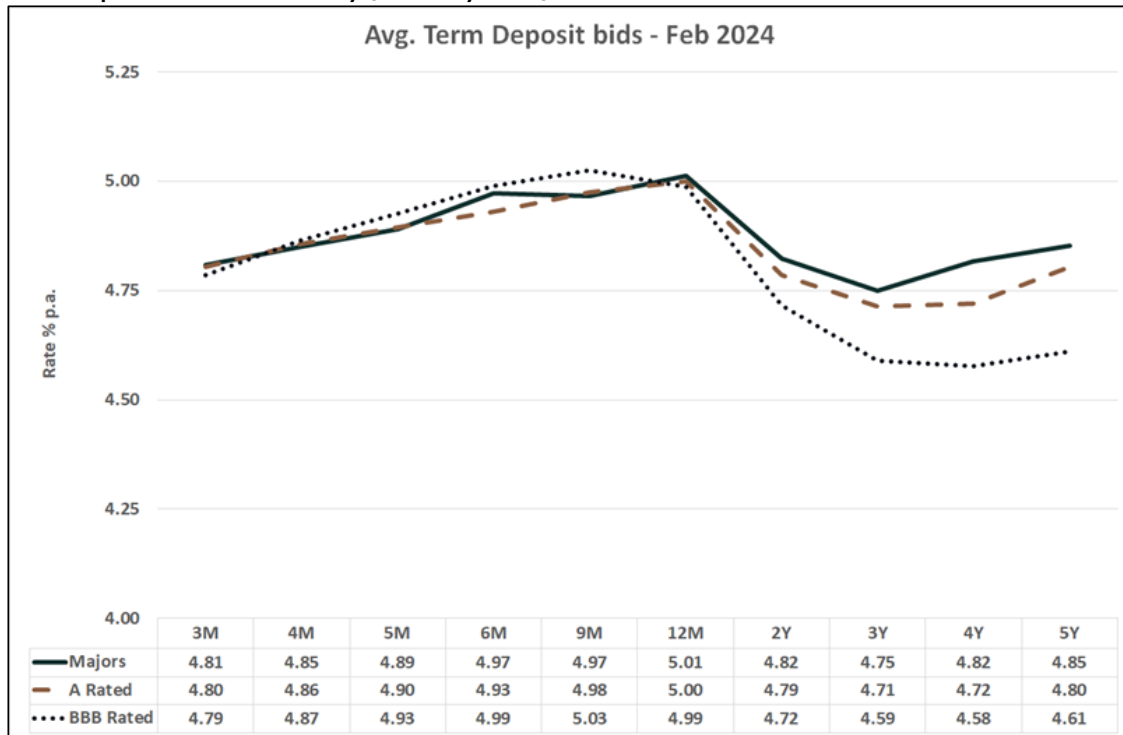
Source: Imperium Markets

The abnormal marketplace experienced during the pandemic is starting to reverse as the competition for deposits slowly increases. In recent months, we have started to periodically see some of the lower rated ADIs (“A” and “BBB” rated) offering slightly higher rates compared to the domestic major banks (“AA” rated) on different parts of the curve (i.e. pre-pandemic environment). Some of this has been attributed to lags in adjusting their deposit rates as some banks (mainly the lower rated ADIs) simply set their rates for the week.



Going forward, Council should have a larger opportunity to invest a higher proportion of its funds with the lower rated institutions (up to Policy limits), from which the majority are not lending to the Fossil Fuel industry. We are slowly seeing this trend emerge, although the past few months have been an exception, with the major banks repricing more rapidly to the movement in the bond market than their lower rated counterparts. This reversed somewhat over the past few months with the lower rated institutions (mainly "A" rated) lagging the major banks in dropping their rates:

Term Deposit Rates – Currently (February 2024)



Source: Imperium Markets

Regional & Unrated ADI Sector

Ratings agency S&P has commented that "mergers remain compelling for mutual lenders" in providing smaller lenders greater economies of scale and assisting them in being able to price competitively and will see "the banking landscape will settle with a small number of larger mutual players". S&P expects that consolidation to continue over the next two years.

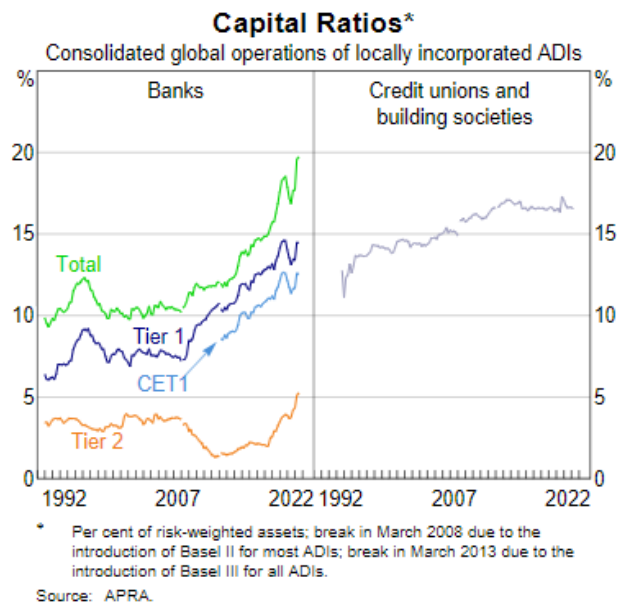
We remain supportive of the regional and unrated ADI sector (and have been even throughout the post-GFC period). They continue to remain solid, incorporate strong balance sheets, while exhibiting high levels of capital – typically, much higher compared to the higher rated ADIs. Some unrated ADIs have up to 25-40% more capital than the domestic major banks, and well above the Basel III requirements.



Overall, the lower rated ADIs (BBB and unrated) are generally now in a better financial position than they have been historically (see the Capital Ratio figure below). The financial regulator, APRA has noted that the Common Equity Tier 1 capital of Australian banks now exceeds a quarter of a trillion dollars. It has increased by \$110 billion, or more than 70%, over the past ten years. Over the same time, banks' assets have grown by 44%. Some of the extra capital is supporting growth in the banking system itself but clearly, there has been a strengthening in overall resilience and leverage in the system is lower.

We believe that deposit investments with the lower rated ADIs should be considered going forward, particularly when they offer 'above market' specials. Not only would it diversify the investment portfolio and reduce credit risk, it would also improve the portfolio's overall returns. The lower rated entities are generally deemed to be the more 'ethical' ADIs compared to the higher rated ADIs.

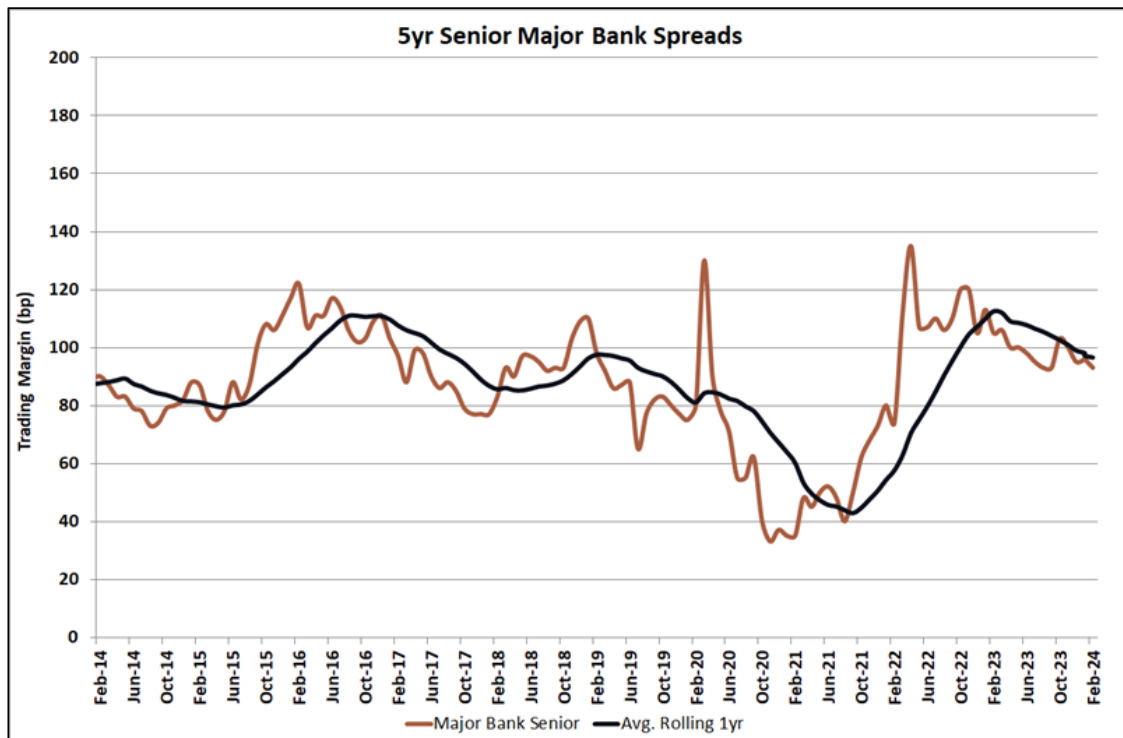
In the current environment of high regulation and scrutiny, all domestic (and international) ADIs continue to carry high levels of capital. There is minimal (if any) probability of any ADI defaulting on their deposits going forward – this was stress tested during the GFC and the pandemic period. APRA's mandate is to "protect depositors" and provide "financial stability".





Senior FRNs Market Review

Over February, amongst the senior major bank FRNs, physical credit securities tightened by around 3–7bp at the long-end of the curve. Major bank senior securities remain at fair value on a historical basis (5yr margins around +93bp level).



Source: IBS Capital

During the month, there were several new (primary) issuances including:

- Heritage (BBB) 3 year senior FRN at +160bp
- Newcastle Greater (BBB) 5 year senior FRN at +185bp
- Bank Australia (BBB) 4 year senior FRN at +170bp
- DBS Bank (AA-) 3 year senior security at +77bp
- Rabobank Australia Branch (A+) 3 & 5 year senior security at +87bp and +103bp respectively
- MUFG Bank Sydney Branch (A) 3 & 5 year senior FRN at +85bp and +99bp respectively
- Members Banking Group (RACQ Bank) (BBB+) 3 year senior FRN at +160bp
- OCBC Sydney Branch (AA-) 3 year senior FRN at +72bp



Amongst the “A” rated sector, the securities tightened by around 12-20bp at the longer-end of the curve, whilst the “BBB” rated sector widened by around 12bp at the 3 year part of the curve. Overall, credit securities are looking much more attractive given the widening of spreads over the past 2 years and as more primary issuances become available. FRNs will continue to play a role in investors’ portfolios mainly on the basis of their liquidity and the ability to roll down the curve and gross up returns over ensuing years (in a relatively stable credit environment).

Senior FRNs (ADIs)	29/02/2024	31/01/2024
“AA” rated – 5yrs	+93bp	+96bp
“AA” rated – 3yrs	+73bp	+80bp
“A” rated – 5yrs	+105bp	+125bp
“A” rated – 3yrs	+87bp	+99bp
“BBB” rated – 3yrs	+160bp	+148bp

Source: IBS Capital

We now generally recommend switches (‘benchmark’ issues only) into new primary issues, out of the following senior FRNs that are maturing:

- On or before early 2026 for the “AA” rated ADIs (domestic major banks);
- On or before early 2025 for the “A” rated ADIs; and
- Within 6-9 months for the “BBB” rated ADIs (consider case by case).

Investors holding onto the above senior FRNs (‘benchmark’ issues only) in their last few years are now generally holding sub optimal investments and are not maximising returns by foregoing realised capital gains. In the current challenging economic environment, any boost in overall returns should be locked in when it is advantageous to do so, particularly as switch opportunities become available.



Senior Fixed Bonds – ADIs (Secondary Market)

With global inflation still high by historical standards, this has seen a significant lift in longer-term bond yields over the past 2 years (valuations have fallen) as markets have reacted sharply.

This has resulted in some opportunities in the secondary market. We currently see value in the following fixed bond lines, with the majority now being marked at a significant discount to par (please note supply in the secondary market may be limited on any day):

ISIN	Issuer	Rating	Capital Structure	Maturity Date	~Remain. Term (yrs)	Fixed Coupon	Indicative Yield
AU3CB0278174	UBS	A+	Senior	26/02/2026	1.99	1.10%	5.01%
AU3CB0280030	BoQ	BBB+	Senior	06/05/2026	2.18	1.40%	5.16%
AU3CB0299337	Bendigo	BBB+	Senior	15/05/2026	2.21	4.70%	5.08%
AU3CB0296168	BoQ	BBB+	Senior	27/01/2027	2.91	4.70%	5.13%



Economic Commentary

International Market

Financial markets continued their rally in February largely reflective of the overall continued easing in inflation globally. Focus remains on when central banks will begin their interest rate cuts this year.

Across equity markets, the S&P 500 Index gained +5.17% over the month, whilst the NASDAQ surged +6.12%. Europe's main indices also experienced material gains, led by Italy's FTSE MIB (+7.34%), Germany's DAX (+4.58%), and France's CAC (+3.54%). UK's FTSE (-0.01%) was the exception, which was largely flat against the rally in global equity markets.

In the US, January CPI was +0.3% m/m vs +0.2% expected, with the core reading at +0.4% m/m (+2.8% y/y) vs +0.3% expected.

In Europe, the CPI was +2.8% y/y in January, down from +2.9% y/y recorded in December. Additionally, wage growth declined to +4.5% y/y in January (from +4.7% the previous month).

UK CPI data for January also came in lower than expected, where the headline rate held at +4.0% (expected +4.1%), as did core at +5.1% (versus +5.2% expected). UK Q4 GDP fell -0.3% in Q4 following the -0.1% contraction in Q3, resulting in a technical recession. The UK labour market data was stronger than expected, with the unemployment rate 0.2% lower than expected at 3.8% and wages inflation not falling as fast as expected.

Canadian CPI was +2.9% in January from a year ago, which was much lower than the expected +3.3%. Additionally, unemployment in Canada fell to 5.7% vs. 5.9% expected and employment was +37.5k vs. +15.0k expected.

Whilst in Japan, core CPI eased to +2.0%y/y in January compared with +2.3%y/y in December.

In China, the People's Bank of China lowered the five-year loan prime rate by 25bp to 3.95%. This surprise cut is aimed to revive China's property sector as it could improve affordability for buyers by lowering mortgage rates.

The MSCI World ex-Aus Index rose +4.22% for the month of February:

Index	1m	3m	1yr	3yr	5yr	10yr
S&P 500 Index	+5.17%	+11.57%	+28.36%	+10.17%	+12.85%	+10.61%
MSCI World ex-AUS	+4.22%	+10.43%	+23.37%	+7.12%	+10.01%	+7.31%
S&P ASX 200 Accum. Index	+0.79%	+9.39%	+10.64%	+9.32%	+8.61%	+7.95%

Source: S&P, MSCI

2 Your Community Life

What we are trying to achieve

A healthy, inclusive and vibrant community.

What the result will be

We will have:

- Community hubs that provide access to services and social connections
- A safe, caring and connected community
- A healthy and active community that is supported by recreational infrastructure
- A strong community that is able to identify and address social issues
- Community participation in events, programs, festivals and activities

How we will get there

- 2.1 Create a community that feels safe
- 2.2 Advocate for social inclusion and fairness
- 2.3 Provide quality programs, community facilities and public spaces, for example, community halls, parks and vibrant town centres
- 2.4 Empower the community through encouraging active involvement in projects, volunteering and events
- 2.5 Promote a creative and culturally rich community

3 Your Business and Industry

What we are trying to achieve

A region that is a successful place that has vibrant, diversified and resilient regional economy that provides opportunities for people to live, learn, work, play and invest.

What the result will be

We will have:

- A strong economy that fosters a culture supportive of business and ensures economic development of the region
- Townships, villages and business precincts that are vibrant commercial, cultural, tourism, recreational and/or community hubs
- A region that attracts investment to create jobs
- Partnerships that maximise economic return and create an efficient and effective business environment

How we will get there

- 3.1 Embrace business and a stronger economy
- 3.2 Create vibrant and desirable places
- 3.3 Embrace opportunity and attract investment to support the wealth and growth of the community
- 3.4 Partner for success with key stakeholders in business, industry, government, education and the community

4 Your Natural and Built Environment

What we are trying to achieve

A connected, sustainable, accessible community and environment that is protected now and into the future.

What the result will be

We will have:

- Effective management and maintenance of essential water, waste and sewer infrastructure
- A community that is prepared for natural events and climate change
- Sustainable and environmentally sensitive development outcomes that consider the impact on the natural environment
- Accessible transport network for our communities
- Infrastructure provision and maintenance that meets community expectations and needs
- Well planned communities that are linked to encourage and manage growth
- Accessible and protected waterways, foreshores, beaches and bushlands
- An environment that is protected and conserved for future generations
- Renewable energy options that are understood and accessible by the community

How we will get there

- 4.1 Provide (appropriate) infrastructure and services including water cycle management, waste management, and sewer management
- 4.2 Aim to minimise the impact of natural events and climate change, for example, floods, bushfires and coastal erosion
- 4.3 Facilitate development that is compatible with the natural and built environment
- 4.4 Plan for integrated transport systems that help people get around and link our communities
- 4.5 Plan for integrated and connected communities across the Port Macquarie-Hastings area
- 4.6 Restore and protect natural areas
- 4.7 Provide leadership in the development of renewable energy opportunities
- 4.8 Increase awareness of issues affecting our environment, including the preservation of flora and fauna

