

CIF Monthly  
Investment Report  
May 2019



## Market Commentary

During May, the Australian share market strongly outperformed weak global markets. This followed the surprise election victory of the Scott Morrison led Coalition Government on 18 May. The domestic share market was relieved that there would be no changes to negative gearing, franking credits or capital gains tax. This relief was in contrast to falling overseas markets, which were concerned with slowing economies and the worsening of trade tensions between the US and China. While the ASX managed a small rise over the month, most developed country indices fell around 5% or 6%. Meanwhile global bonds rallied strongly, with rising bond prices reflecting the softening global economic outlook.

### *Australia's RBA to cut rates*

Australia's central bank indicated it could cut its key policy rate for the first time in almost three years when it meets on 4 June, amid an economic slowdown and tepid inflation growth. The RBA is intent on supporting employment growth and bringing forward the time when inflation is consistent with its 2% to 3% target.

At the time of writing (end May), the RBA has held its cash rate at a record low of 1.5% since August 2016 but calls for an interest rate cut have been getting louder, and the market now regards it as almost definite.

Australia reported lower than expected growth last year, as the steep housing downturn and lacklustre consumer spending sparked concerns about the outlook. Perhaps the election result will turn that around: newspaper headlines suggest the correction in residential housing is over. We are not as certain.

The RBA has downgraded its growth forecasts for the second time in six months. While the labour market generally has strengthened over the last year, unemployment ticked up to 5.2% in April and recent wage growth has come in under expectations. Inflation remains benign, and below the target band.

### *Australia outperforms during May, as global growth slows*

Despite strong global share markets, major economies are losing momentum. Weakening business and consumer sentiment, geopolitical uncertainties and trade tensions have dampened business investment and are hurting growth prospects. Conventional monetary policy remains constrained in many economies where policy rates are close to or below zero, while further unconventional monetary policies present risks and uncertainty.

The US expansion has moderated as the tax cut stimulus wears off and the rate of growth in employment and retail sales weakens. Waning business and consumer confidence, along with a yield curve that remains flat despite prospects of large US budget deficits, suggest further weakness ahead. Muted wage and inflationary pressures have led the Federal Reserve to pull back from its rate tightening plans, with the debate shifting toward rate cuts and a halt to the unwinding of the Fed's balance sheet.

Growth in Europe is deteriorating with its largest economy, Germany, losing momentum and weaknesses emerging in other parts of the eurozone. Business and consumer sentiment seem to have soured across the eurozone, which could keep growth low. Brexit-related uncertainties are coming to a head in the UK, although the economy has so far held up better than expected.

In China, retail sales, fixed asset investment and industrial output point to slowing expansion. Exports and imports have both fallen relative to a year ago, reflecting subdued global demand and lagging domestic growth. The Chinese government's recent monetary and fiscal stimulus measures, while modest, indicate that policymakers are concerned about the economy's growth trajectory.

Against this rather gloomy macroeconomic backdrop, international trade has taken a hit. The WTO predicts a further slowdown of global trade growth in 2019, while the Baltic Dry Index, a bellwether trade indicator based on shipping rates for dry bulk commodities, is down 40% since August last year.

### *The Trade War*

The US-China trade talks appear to be closing in on a "make it or break it" moment. President Trump renewed his threat of heightening tariffs on Chinese imports on 5 May, and Chinese officials responded by threatening to pull out of the talks.

While the talks meander with claim and counterclaim, it's worthwhile remembering that the costs of a trade war are not prohibitive to either the US or China, and that domestic politics will play a big role in any agreement. The trade grievances at the root of the trade war with China – namely corporate espionage, hacking, forced technology transfer, intellectual property theft, and the restrictions on Chinese telecoms firm Huawei – were always going to be extremely difficult to settle. Markets in both China and the US are feeling the ebbs and flows of the trade talks in their stock prices.

But there is more to this conflict than just trade. Tensions have flared across the entire range of US-China strategic disagreements, including North Korea, Iran, and China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative. In late April, President Xi Jinping called for China to embark on a new "Long March" and "start all over again", in the most dramatic sign to date that Beijing has given up hope of reaching a trade deal in the near term.

Can either country win a trade war? External trade between the two countries is of greater importance to China than it is to the US. Exports of goods and services represent about 20% of China's GDP, whereas they only make up about 12% of US GDP. US exports to Europe are roughly double its exports to China, whereas the US is the largest destination for China's exports. On the other hand, China has a strongly growing internal market.

A protracted conflict between the world's two largest economies puts at risk the future of a digitally enabled globalization from which China has profited more than any other country. A full-scale cold war could trigger a new stage of de-globalization, or at least a division of the global economy into two incompatible economic blocs. This is not a comfortable situation for Australia, squeezed between our largest trading partner and our most powerful political ally. In either scenario, trade in goods, services, capital, labor, technology, and data would be severely restricted and long-term growth compromised.

### *Concluding remarks*

We are in a world of low growth, high private and public debt, and geopolitical risk. The populist backlash against globalization, trade, migration, and the power of technology and social media



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platforms may well have a negative impact on future growth and markets. Protracted trade wars are not conducive to strongly rising global sharemarkets.

While investors' present complacency with equity markets may continue for some time, markets will probably remain fickle and volatile. Any number of disappointments could trigger a correction, and it will pay to be alert to the risks, with both eyes focused on high quality assets and strong underlying value.

Thank you for your continued support of Clime.

**Adrian Ezquerro**  
Head of Investments

## Clime International Fund

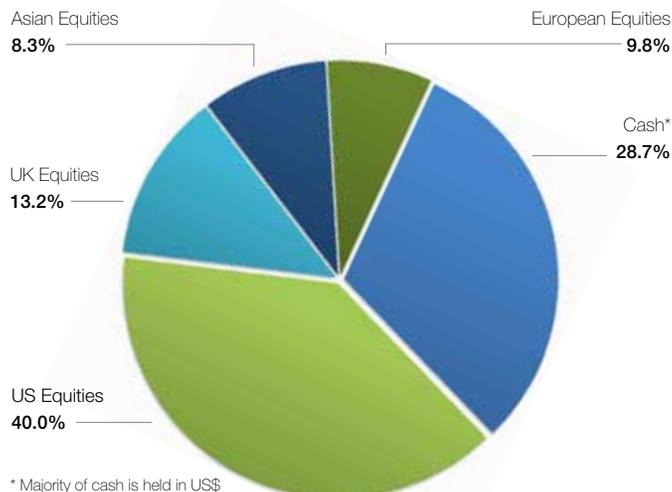
As we find ourselves almost halfway through the year, the volatility we experienced at the end of 2018 is not only a distant memory but could also prove, with time, to have been the shock markets needed to adjust their expectations in line with reality. Leading up to last year's market correction, share prices continued to rise and positivity around company earnings growth was unyielding. But something had to give.

What that volatility did was to calm markets down to more realistic levels, building in a margin of safety for investors and reflecting the underlying economic reality of a slowing global economy. As with many market reactions, the pendulum swung too far in December and the recovery this year has brought share prices back in line with a reduced level of expected company earnings.

There have been signs that global economic growth has been slowing for some months now. Germany is leading weakness in Europe, as industrial production and factory orders are in decline. The US economy is still growing and generating jobs, but growth has weakened from over the past six months.

We believe this trend is set to continue, and any growth we do see will be driven by productivity improvements and population growth rather than investment. Markets seem to be easing into this new mindset. Perhaps last year's shock was enough to remind investors that the good times won't always roll, but that businesses are still making money, and there's no need to panic. If that continues to be the case, then last year's pain was worth it in heading off a larger, more significant market shock.

## Asset Allocation



## Snapshot

Portfolio Return (1 year) Wholesale	Portfolio Return (1 year) Retail	Fund Size (Wholesale)	Fund Size (Retail)
8.7%	8.1%	\$90.5m	\$4.5m

## Performance (31/05/19)

	1 month	3 months	6 months	1 year	2 years*	3 years*	Inception*
Wholesale (AUD Portfolio Return)	-3.3%	1.3%	4.9%	8.7%	7.0%	7.1%	8.5%
Retail (AUD Portfolio Return)	-3.5%	1.2%	4.8%	8.1%	6.6%	6.8%	6.2%
Hurdle	0.8%	2.5%	5.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%

Inception: Wholesale Units: 4 March 2014. Retail Units: 11 March 2015.

\*Performance figures for more than 1 year are annualised, calculated after all applicable fees and taxes. Performance figures compare unit price to unit price for the given period.

## Distributions

Period Ended	Wholesale Units (cents per unit)	Retail Units (cents per unit)
30 June 2018	5.5659	4.5878
30 June 2017	3.9597	3.3798
30 June 2016	9.0831	7.5602

## Top 5 Holdings

Stock	Ticker	Weight
Microsoft Corporation	MSFT US	4.5%
Roche Holding AG-Genusschein	ROG SW	4.0%
Alphabet Inc Class C	GOOG US	4.0%
Booking Holdings Inc	BKNG US	3.9%
Oracle Corp	ORCL US	3.8%

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