

# Perennial Australian Fixed Interest Trust

Monthly Report as at 31 December 2011

	Month %	Quarter %	FYTD %	1 Year %	2 Years % p.a.	3 Years % p.a.	5 Years % p.a.
Perennial Australian Fixed Interest Trust*	0.69	1.41	4.64	9.75	8.63	7.80	8.13
UBS Composite Bond Index (0+years)	0.78	1.94	6.66	11.37	8.67	6.31	7.40
Value Added (Detracted)	-0.09	-0.53	-2.02	-1.62	-0.04	1.49	0.73
Net Performance	0.65	1.32	4.45	9.36	8.26	7.43	7.75

\* Gross Performance. Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance.

- The Australian bond market recorded moderate returns.
- Despite recent monetary easing, consumer sentiment fell sharply.
- In our view, Australian bond yields remain well below fair value levels.

## Performance

The Australian bond market recorded moderate returns. Longer term bond yields fell, as a result of continuing sovereign issues in Europe. The UBS Composite Index 0+years (the Index) finished up 0.78%. Government bonds were again the best performing sector by far.

The Perennial Australian Fixed Trust (the Trust) finished up 0.69%, slightly underperforming the Index return.

Active interest rate strategies had a broadly neutral impact on performance, as much of the Trust's underweight duration positioning was in the shorter end of the yield curve where bond yields rose fractionally. As such, the Trust's yield curve 'flattening' bias benefitted the Trust by offsetting the detraction from our duration positioning.

Sector allocation detracted some value, as an overweight allocation to spread sectors underperformed risk free government bonds. This was mainly due to a widening of the bond swap spread. However, security selection, including some allocation to Australian dollar (AUD) denominated supra-nationals, which are explicitly guaranteed by the German government, performed particularly well over the month and made a positive contribution to performance. The Trust remains heavily underweight broader AUD denominated, European supra-nationals overall.

## Perennial Australian Fixed Interest Trust:

The Trust aims to provide a total return (after fees) greater than cash and inflation, and that exceeds the UBS Composite Bond Index (0 + years), measured on a rolling three-year basis.

<b>Portfolio Manager:</b> Glenn Feben	<b>Risk Profile:</b> Moderate
<b>Trust FUM (as at 31/12/11):</b> AUD691 million	<b>Income Distribution Frequency:</b> Quarterly
<b>Team FUM (as at 31/12/11):</b> AUD5.0 billion	<b>Minimum Initial Investment:</b> \$100,000
<b>Trust Inception date:</b> August 2002	<b>APIR code:</b> IOF0113AU

## Market Review

The Australian bond market recorded moderate returns over December, with yields flat to lower. At the shorter end of the curve, three year government bonds rallied over the first two thirds of the month, helped along by a cut in the official cash rate from 4.5% to 4.25% on 6 December and a number of weaker domestic economic readings. These included softer than expected building approval, labour force and housing finance approval data. Despite recent monetary easing, consumer sentiment fell sharply with consumers particularly bearish on the outlook for economic conditions one year ahead. After getting down to as low as 2.99%, the three year government bond yield rose again towards the end of the month, on stronger US economic data, finishing the month at 3.13%. This was largely unchanged from November's close of 3.12%.

Not all domestic data releases were softer than expected. GDP rose 1% over the September quarter, lifting the yearly growth rate from 1.9% to 2.5%.

Expectations for the future path of the cash rate varied over the month, with periods of heightened uncertainty about prospects for European sovereign debt coinciding with markets pricing in a very aggressive easing cycle. The yield on the August 2012 30 day interbank futures contract got down to 2.81% on 19 December, before ending the month at 3.07%.

At the longer end of the government curve, ten year bond yields continued to benefit from flight to quality flows. Yields fell progressively and ended the month at 3.67%, a fall of 26 basis points. As a result of these moves, the spread between 10 year and 3 year government bond yields narrowed by 27 basis points to 54 basis points.

Credit markets recovered some of the margin widening that occurred in the prior month, with the Australian Itraxx 5 year series narrowing by 14 basis points to close the month at 181. However, there were a few subsectors that underperformed, including offshore financials. This was mainly on the back of Standard and Poor's (S&P) sector wide credit ratings downgrades of the banking system. The primary reason was some sweeping changes to the way S&P rate financial institutions. The new methodology, released by S&P in November 2011, changed ratings depending on an entity's 'systemic' importance, potential level of government support, country ratings (BICRA), notching of subordinated debt and strength of parental support for subsidiaries (in particular foreign), among others.

The industry wide changes adversely affected the ratings of a number of US and European financials, and included downgrades of Australia's 'big four' banks. While there was no credit deterioration in the underlying balance sheets, the downgrade of the Australian banks was country specific as a result of the respective BICRA rating. Conversely, oversold European supra-nationals, in particular those explicitly guaranteed by Germany, performed particularly well during December.

## Market Outlook

The global outlook progressively deteriorated over the latter part of 2011, with the likelihood of a European recession in early 2012 increasing. The Chinese economy is also slowing more quickly than expected, with an engineered slow down compounded by developments in Europe. Chinese policy makers have already begun to respond but stimulus measures will take several quarters to grip. Growth in the US appears to be lifting but remains vulnerable to developments in Europe. The global economy appears most vulnerable over the first half of 2012 and, it is against this backdrop, that we look for the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) to ease in February with a further and final easing in May looking increasingly likely. A burst of front end loaded easing should provide a buffer against negative offshore developments and local fiscal tightening, as well as provide a fillip to the interest rate sensitive sectors of the economy. Once we move into 2013, the worst of the drag from fiscal policy should move behind us and pressure may mount on the RBA to shift monetary conditions from accommodative to neutral levels.

Markets continue to discount a more aggressive easing profile, implicitly factoring in a more dire outcome for Europe despite recent progress. While this remains a possibility, we do not believe it is the most likely outcome given the political capital invested in the Euro vision. In our view, bond yields remain well below fair value levels and we continue to maintain a defensive interest rate bias.

## Investment Strategy

The following is a summary of the key strategies in the Trust:

### Interest rates

At the end of the month, the duration position of the Trust was as follows:

Modified Duration	Years
Trust	2.74
Index	3.80
Active Position	-1.06

**Interest rates: underweight duration**

We maintain a meaningful underweight duration position on the view that government bond yields are very expensive relative to our expectations for the cash rate and the outlook for the economy. Markets continue to price in substantial monetary easing in the near term which we feel may not eventuate to the degree priced in. In the event that they do eventuate, given what is already in the price, the risks of running a short duration position will be limited in time.

**Overweight corporate debt**

Solid corporate fundamentals, good levels of profitability and adequate risk premiums for investors make

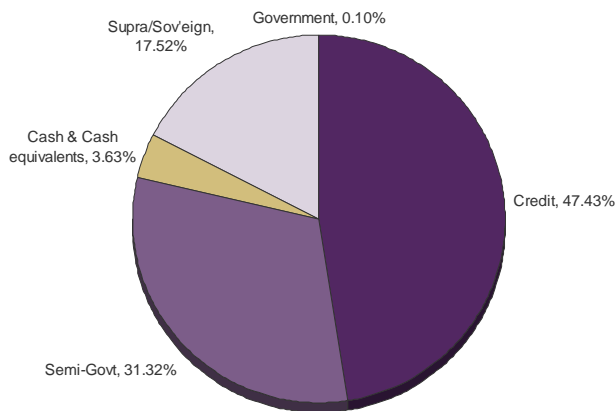
corporate debt an attractive investment option. We remain overweight this sector and expect that it will outperform risk free assets over the medium term. We view the recent widening in spreads as presenting an opportunity to increase exposure.

**Overweight bank guaranteed and semi governments**

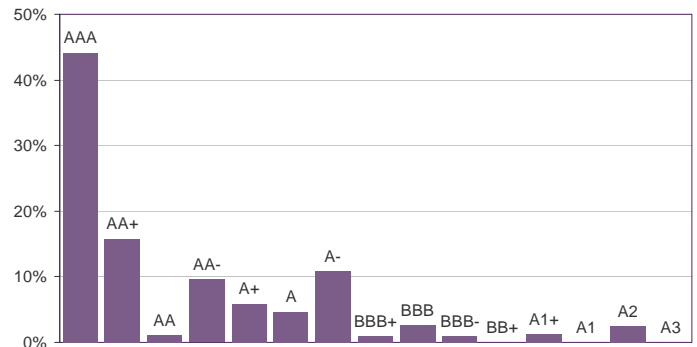
Our government exposure is concentrated in semi-governments and guaranteed bank securities, on the basis of the attractive yield advantage they offer relative to government bonds.

**Trust Snapshot**

**Sector Allocation**



**Credit Rating Distribution**



Rounding accounts for small +/- from 100%.