

## Economic and Market Commentary June 2012

Financial markets continue to be engulfed in uncertainty as the Euro zone leaders prepare to digest the Greek election result and bailout plus the request from Spain to assist in recapitalising the Spanish banking sector. Uncertainty has quickly replaced the positive reaction to the LTRO program which stabilized markets during the first quarter. Germany is becoming alone voice in pushing for spending constraints in the region while other Euro zone countries push for more stimulus. The recent G20 meeting has signalled a watering down of the austerity measures originally proposed. It appears that the probability of Greece remaining in the Euro has increased at least until 2013. Risk assets remain volatile in the short term.

The next concern within the Euro zone is how Spain and Italy deal with their economies. It may well evolve that the Spanish government has to nationalise the banks to protect them from a run on the banks deposits. It is also becoming more likely that the ECB may well implement a US style rescue with banks being provided with billions of Euros of preference capital in order to stabilise the region. Of significant concern is whether the politicians and bureaucrats can maintain the discipline to deliver an orderly restructure across the euro zone. To date this has been a weakness. European Union leaders have a significant challenge as the region moves into lower growth and recession and the general public (voters) start voting out governments. Social unrest is also likely to be a significant issue as 2012 unfolds with confidence remaining uncertain. The Euro currency is likely to remain under pressure as the market forces impact. Spanish and Italian bond rates remain volatile while sentiment is uncertain.

The US is now well into the election process with the republicans selecting Mitt Romney to run against Obama. The election process appears to be deflecting major issues around the US economy and should see a focus on job creation to lower the unemployment rate which is holding around 8.2%. The underlying US economy continues to produce positive growth although at low levels (in the region of 2%) and a more upbeat corporate sector. US consumer confidence is improving from a low base while US corporates are the bright spot for the economy, delivering solid earnings. They are generally well cashed up and have access to funding at very low rates (1-2%) and a weak US\$. The US housing market is beginning to show positive signs of bottoming and that the worst may be over but the road to recovery is likely to be slow and long. Inflation in the US is not an issue at this stage [although with inflation in the region of 2.3% and 10 year bonds around 1.6% producing a negative real return which cannot be maintained] The US Fed has extended the TWIST quantitative easing program which has had minimal affect on confidence of markets. Bond markets appear to be signalling a move to protracted low world economic growth environment.

The emerging world is in better shape and is likely to account for most of the global growth in the year ahead. China remains key to world growth and is presently undergoing a slowing in growth. Exports are showing clear signs of being impacted by the slowdown in Europe. The slowing is also a result of the Chinese leadership policies to restrain lending and reduce inflationary pressures in both goods and services, and property. The Chinese Yuan has slowly been allowed to appreciate against the US\$ and this should assist in controlling the inflation level. There appears strong consensus that the new Chinese leadership which will take control towards the end of the year are focussed on delivering in the region of 6 - 8% GDP which should underpin world growth.

The Australian financial markets are also currently dealing with the uncertainty created by Greece and Euro zone as well as the two speed economy. Political uncertainty is making business decisions more difficult and the implementation of the carbon tax and mining tax which commences 1st July is a further impediment.

The positive for Australia is that it is now linked more and more into China and the greater Asian economies. This should provide opportunities in our financial markets over the medium to long term. China is not immune from the problems of the western world and is also being impacted by the slow-down which is having flow on implications for Australia in the short term, especially for commodity prices which are likely to fall further in the short term. China is likely to be confronted with more and more imbalances as the surge of urbanisation continues. There is now over 50% of the Chinese population urbanised and this is likely to create greater pressures for the leadership as the wealth of the population increases.

Some of the likely headwinds for the Australian market include the slowing in China as well as the strong A\$ making it difficult for manufacturers, exporters, retailers and tourism. There is also pressure building on

business as the steel, automotive, aluminium and banking sectors all deal with job losses and union demands.

Resource related companies within the Australian economy are likely to provide the lead for the coming year. Substantial investment is being made into the gas and energy sector which should underpin the growth rate. Although the resource sector is undergoing a commodity price readjustment from the high levels of a year ago. Other sectors of the economy have also slowed with retail and industrial being particularly weak largely as a result of the high A\$. The recent drop in inflation has prompted the RBA to resume its interest rate easing policy with a further 25 basis point reduction in June and more factored in by the markets before the end of 2012. The Cash rate is currently 3.50%. The cut in short term interest rates is likely to reduce the attractiveness of term deposits and stimulate flows into high yielding equities with sustainable or growing dividends. The banks are currently offering 7% yields before franking. With the strong rally in Australian bonds valuations for equities are becoming increasingly attractive.

Managers with good stock picking skills should outperform in this environment. The focus on quality stocks along with dividends and high yield should ultimately reward equities investors over the medium term.

Commercial and retail property valuations are starting to offer better value and long term investors are likely to slowly re-enter the market over the coming year as the next cycle emerges. Access to funding is still the key restraint for the commercial and retail property markets.

- **International shares: [Overweight]** A strong Aust\$ v US\$ provides opportunities for international shares and an overweight position is appropriate for the sector. Asia and emerging markets remain long term growth regions. Stock and country selection is going to be much more important over the coming year as volatility remains high. Europe is likely to remain subdued, while the US offers opportunities.
- **Australian shares: [Neutral]** **Australian Small Caps: [Neutral]** Valuations are becoming more compelling. The focus should be on quality companies with strong income streams in this environment. Consider a benchmark weighting appropriate on a three-year outlook.
- **Australian Listed Property: [Underweight]** **Global Listed Property: [Underweight]** Property securities are likely to underperform equities on a three year outlook and suggest under weighting the sector. Quality direct property valuations are starting to show signs of recovery although likely to be slow as access to funding remains difficult. The listed property sector provides limited opportunities.
- **Fixed Interest: [Underweight]** With interest rates at low levels globally and in Australia, opportunities for fixed interest are likely to be limited over the coming year. The market has already factored in lower rates in Australia. An underweight for the sector is appropriate. A cautious approach to sovereign debt is required with opportunities for corporate bonds preferred.
- **Cash: [Overweight]** The risk return profile of Cash and Term Deposits is becoming less attractive. Use for defensive purposes in this volatile environment.

## Risks

- The risk of sovereign debt defaults remains high with the large deficits being run by many countries. They now need to manage carefully the wind back. Investors need to be selective.
- The European Union faces major challenges in managing member countries, especially Greece in near collapse, also Spain, Portugal, Italy and Ireland with large debt issues and the lack of discipline to control the predicament.
- Growing tensions in the Middle East, especially Syria, Iran and Egypt may lead to an escalation in hostilities in the region.
- With large US debt levels, strong political will is required to enact the necessary measures to reduce the debt levels. This is likely to be difficult as the US fiscal stimulus winds down at the end of the year with the bush tax cuts ending.
- China's policies, (especially in relation to currency management) and actions in doing business with the US and other major trade partners is likely to be a major influence on world markets.
- Increased social unrest within China maybe an issue with the large urbanisation of the country.
- Increased regulation of the financial system (banks) by governments is likely to add to the uncertainty of markets over the coming year.
- Poor implementation and execution of the carbon tax and mining tax could create a risk to the Australian economy and markets, especially if our international competitiveness is eroded.
- Poor policy decisions around the Federal budget target of a surplus in the coming financial year may be detrimental to growth in the economy.

## Global

- The Asian region including India continues to generate satisfactory GDP growth, although slowing and should continue to be a major driver of world growth. Asia should continue to create opportunities for Australian investors although with periods of volatility like we have been experiencing.
- A key factor for continued Asian growth is the increasing demand by China's consumers as they develop greater wealth and require ever increasing volumes of commodities and agricultural products, which should underpin the Australian resources and agricultural sectors over the longer term.
- With global uncertainty gold is playing a more dominant role.

## Australia

- Resources and energy remain key to the strength of the economy and should continue to play a leading role in the market direction during 2012. Significant capital expenditure is being committed to the energy (gas) and resources sector over the coming years.
- Opportunities should continue as China and India evolve into stronger economies over the coming decade and demand for quality Australian resource companies exporting to China and India should be underpinned over the longer term.

## Fixed Interest and Property

- Opportunities for higher returns from traditional fixed interest have been reduced with interest rates at low levels. The market has already factored in lower rates. Limited opportunities prevail in the lower grade credit markets.
- The listed property trust sector is now in better shape to participate in a stronger property cycle.

## Monthly Share Market Performance over the last Thirteen Months

Market Indices	May-11	Jun-11	Jul-11	Aug-11	Sep-11	Oct-11	Nov-11	Dec-11	Jan-12	Feb-12	Mar-12	Apr-12	May-12
Intl-MSCI ex A A\$	0.70	-2.07	-4.29	-4.77	0.95	0.85	0.93	0.21	1.17	3.24	5.80	-1.73	-1.76
Aust - All Ords	-1.89	-2.39	-3.40	-2.00	-6.27	7.17	-3.43	-1.57	5.23	2.41	1.15	1.10	-6.90
Aust - Small Coy	-1.89	-5.09	1.40	-2.69	-10.61	7.87	-3.71	-4.30	7.75	6.51	0.19	-0.92	-10.22
Aust Property ASX	-0.02	-0.77	-6.45	2.89	-4.58	3.78	2.65	-2.55	5.40	2.25	-0.59	5.42	-1.24
Global Property	1.90	-2.12	0.35	-5.72	-10.41	10.22	-3.90	2.77	6.17	1.11	4.63	2.45	-4.22

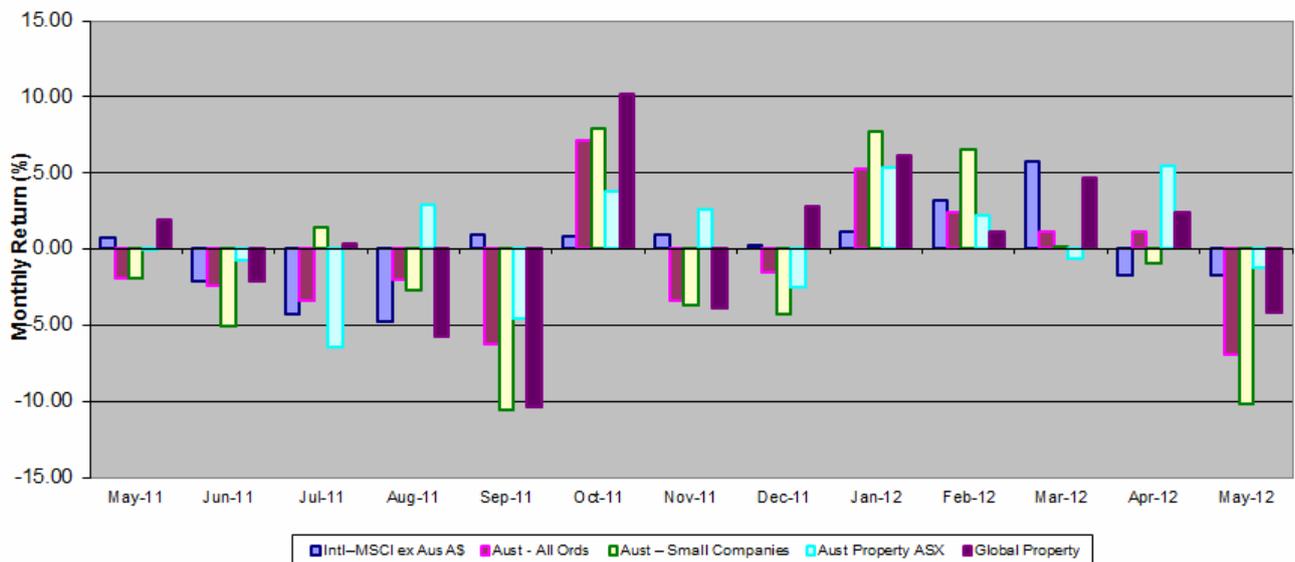
## Annual Share Market Performance

Markets Index	1 Year to 31 Mar 10 %	1 Year to 30 Jun 10 %	1 Year to 30 Sep 10 %	1 Year to 31 Dec 10 %	1 Year to 31 Mar 11 %	1 Year to 30 Jun 11 %	1 Year to 30 Sep 11 %	1 Year to 31 Dec 11 %	1 Year to 31 Mar 12 %	1 Year to 31 May 12 %
Intl-MSCI ex A A\$	14.47	5.22	-2.79	-2.40	0.64	2.66	-4.52	-5.34	0.69	-1.95
Aust - All Ords	44.01	13.78	1.73	3.31	4.80	12.17	-8.43	-11.43	-6.27	-9.49
Aust - Small Coy	58.06	11.18	6.63	13.05	13.49	16.41	-12.11	-21.43	-8.57	-14.88
Aust Prop - ASX	40.55	20.34	-4.52	-0.68	4.74	5.87	-6.29	-1.56	1.67	5.55
Global Property	88.44	43.86	24.88	26.15	24.78	36.60	1.06	1.94	8.40	-0.46

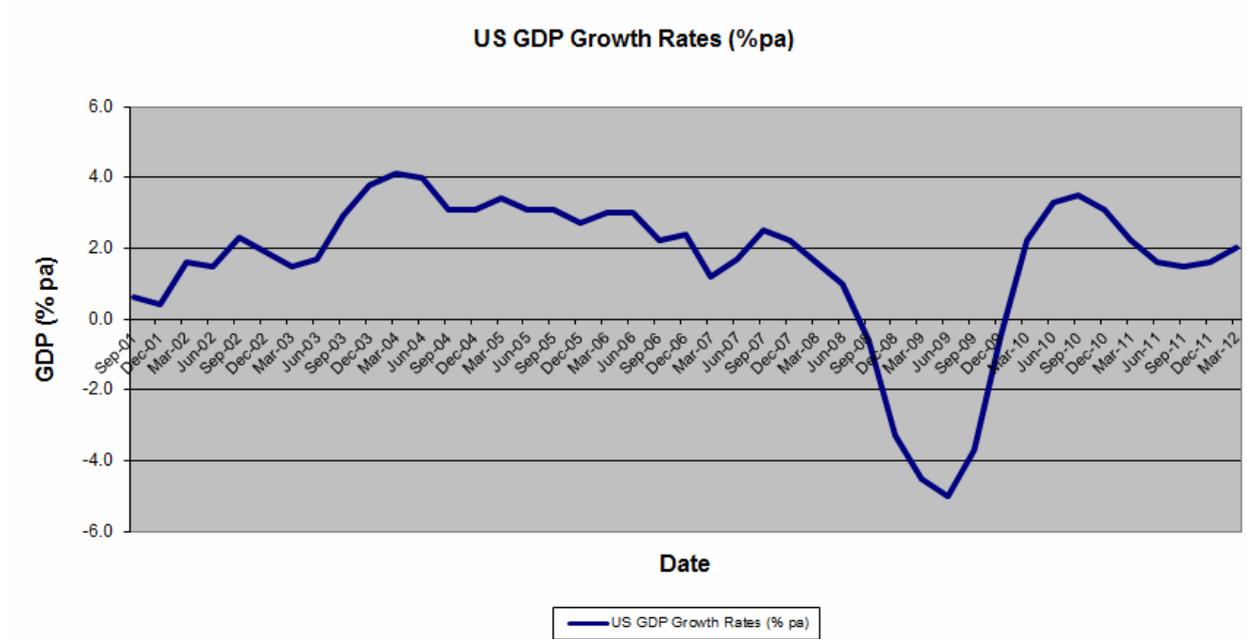
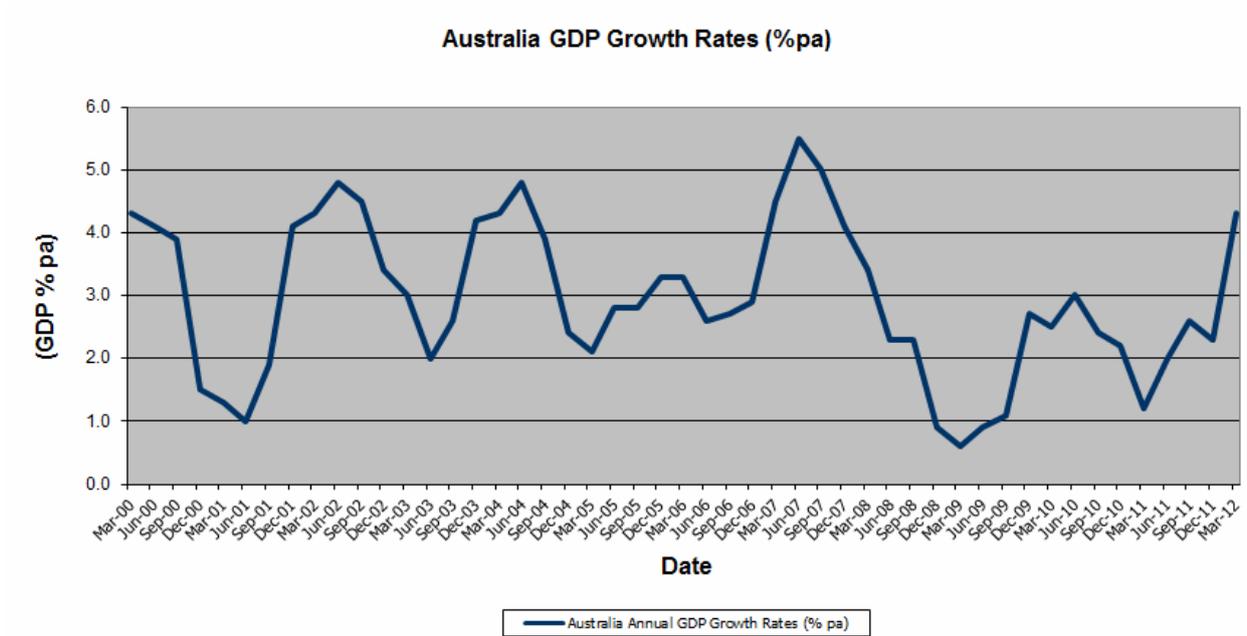
## Best Performing Asset Sectors for twelve months ended 31 May 2012

Sector	Market Index	Return
Australian Fixed Interest	UBS Warburg Composite 0 + Years	13.21
International Fixed Interest Hedged	JP Morgan Gov Bond Accum Index Hedged \$A	12.43
Aust Listed Property	S&P/ASX Property Trusts Accum Index	5.55
Cash	Australian 90 Day Bank Accepted Bill	4.83
Global Listed Property	UBS Global Real Estate Inv Ex Aust Idx Hedge \$A	-0.46
International Equities Unhedged	MSCI World Ex Aust Accum Index A\$	-1.95
International Equities Hedged	MSCI World Accum Index Hedged A\$	-7.43
Australian Shares	S&P/ASX All Ords Accum Index	-9.49
Australian Smaller Companies	S&P/ASX Small Ordinaries Accum Index	-14.88

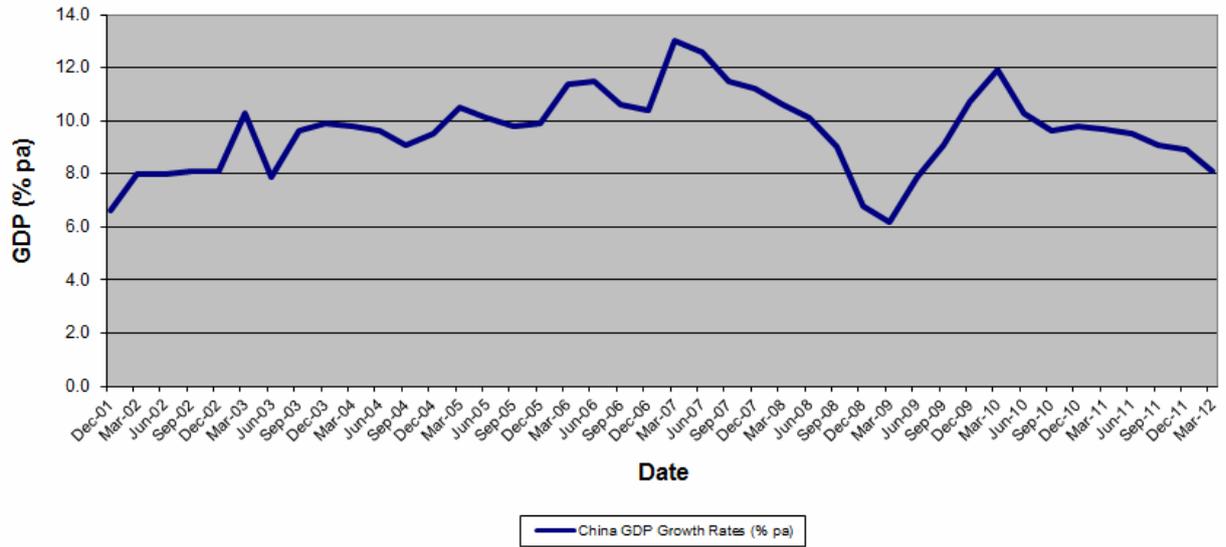
### Market Indices - Monthly Returns (%)



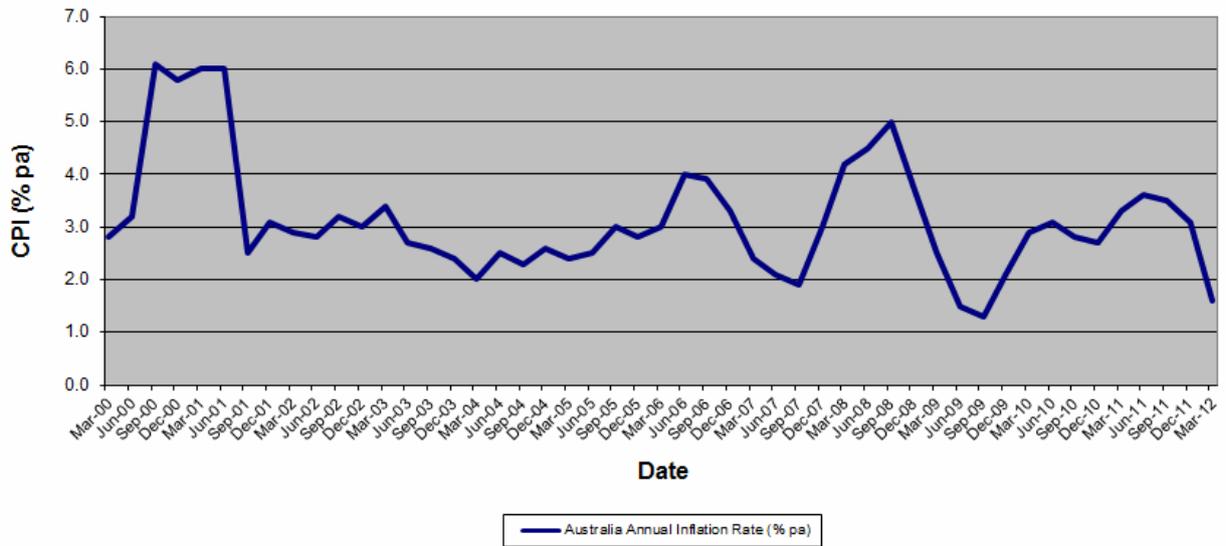
### Major Economic Indicators

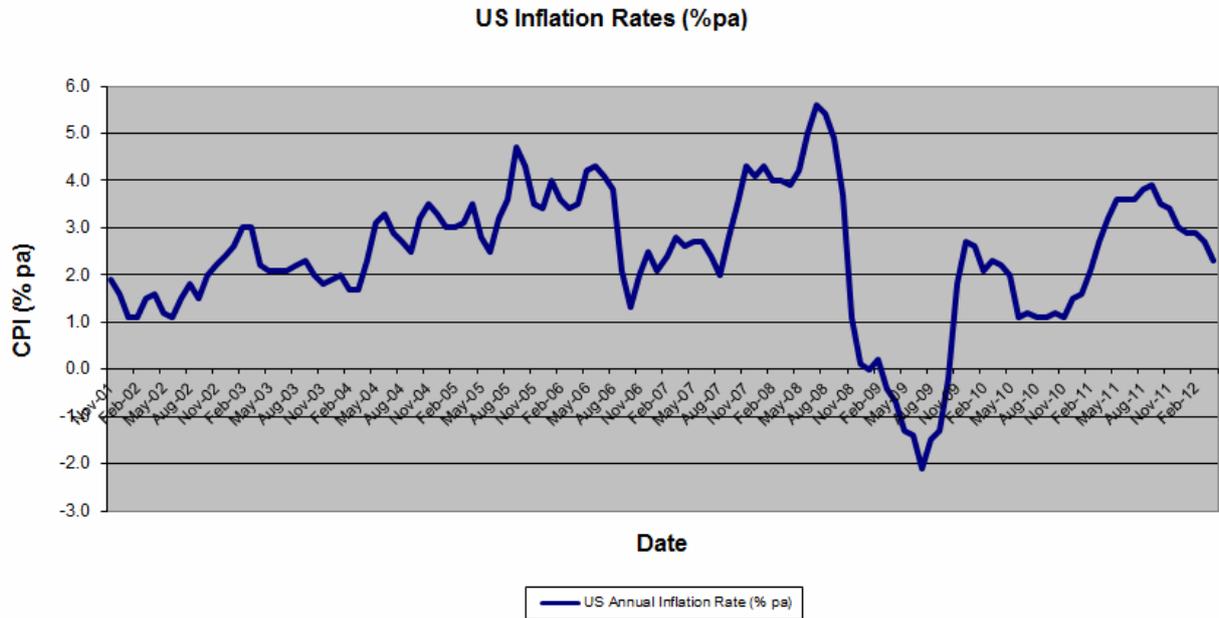


China GDP Growth Rates (%pa)

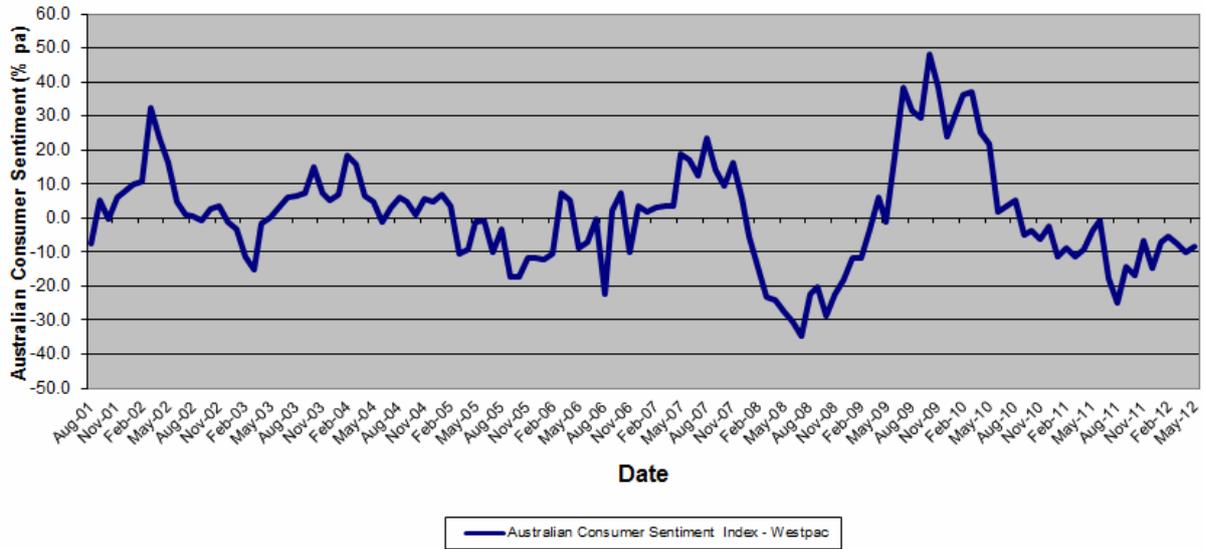


Australia Inflation Rates (%pa)

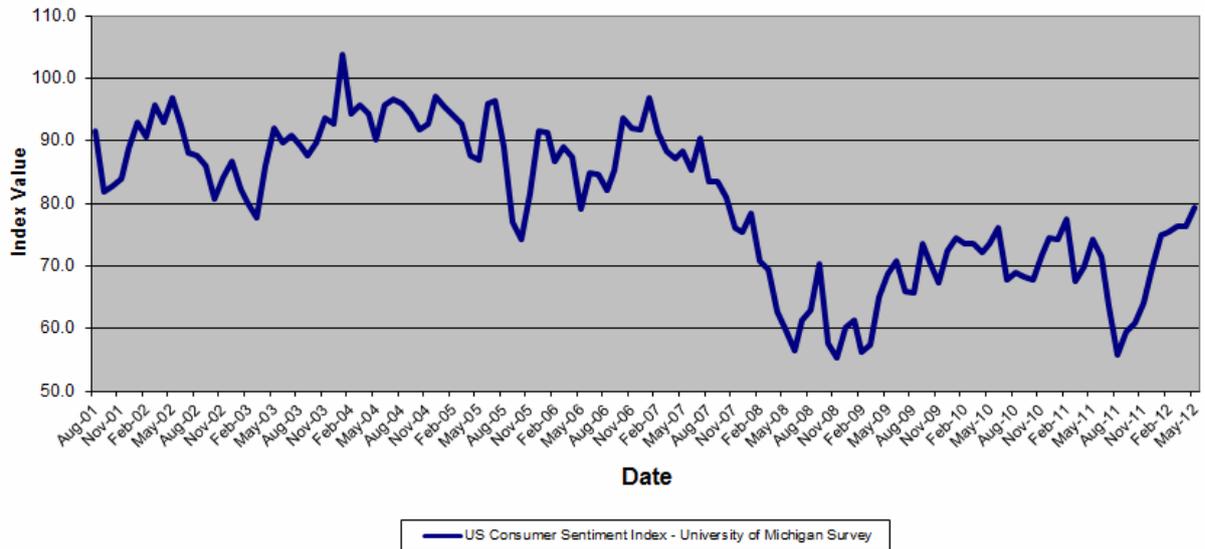




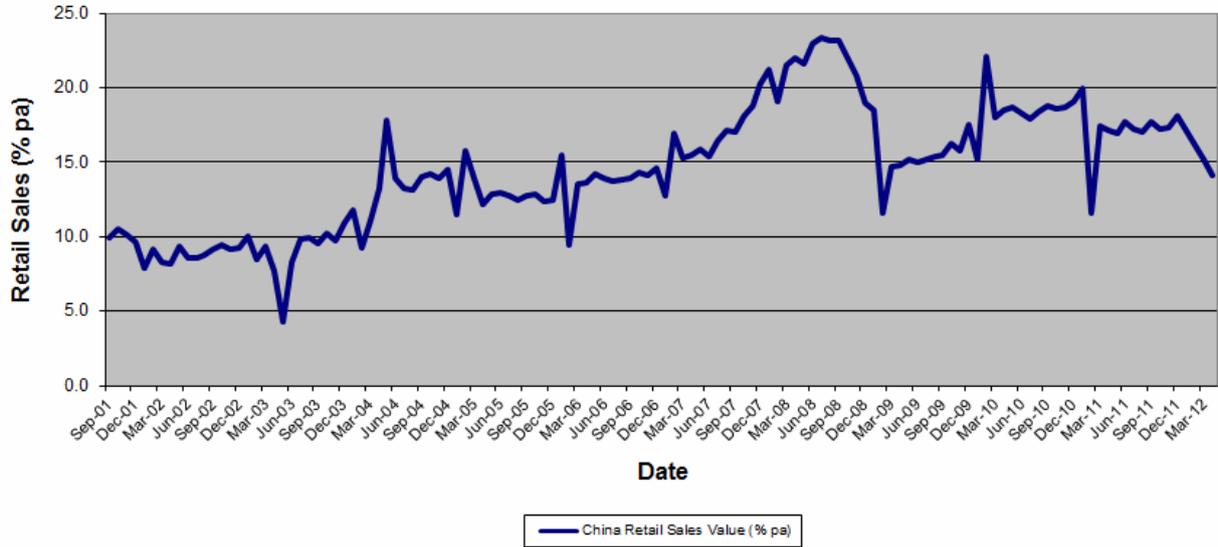
Australian Consumer Sentiment Index - Westpac



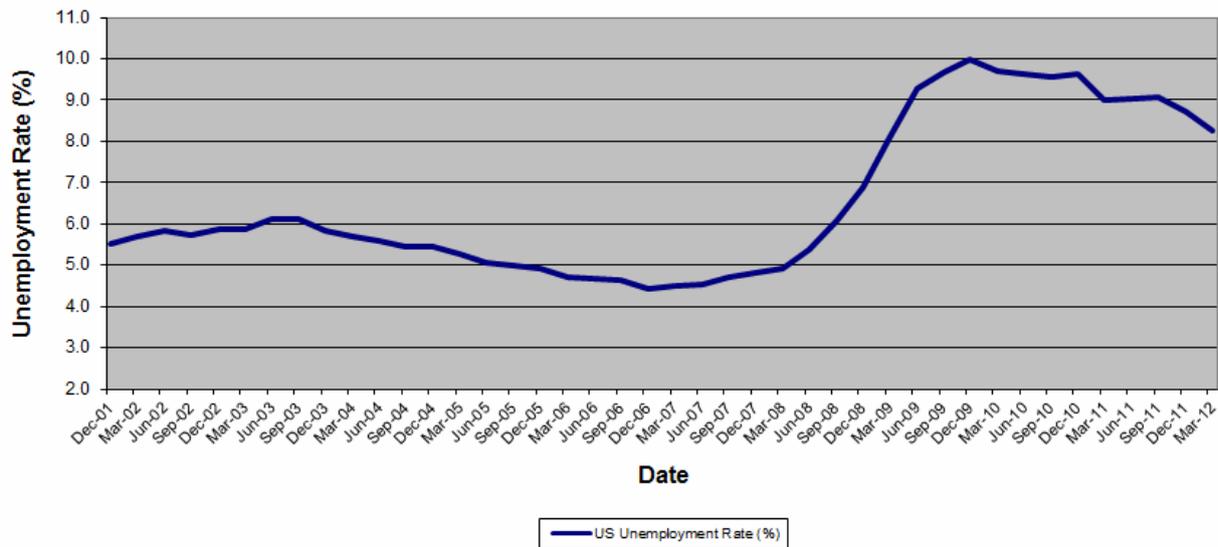
US Consumer Sentiment Index - University of Michigan Survey



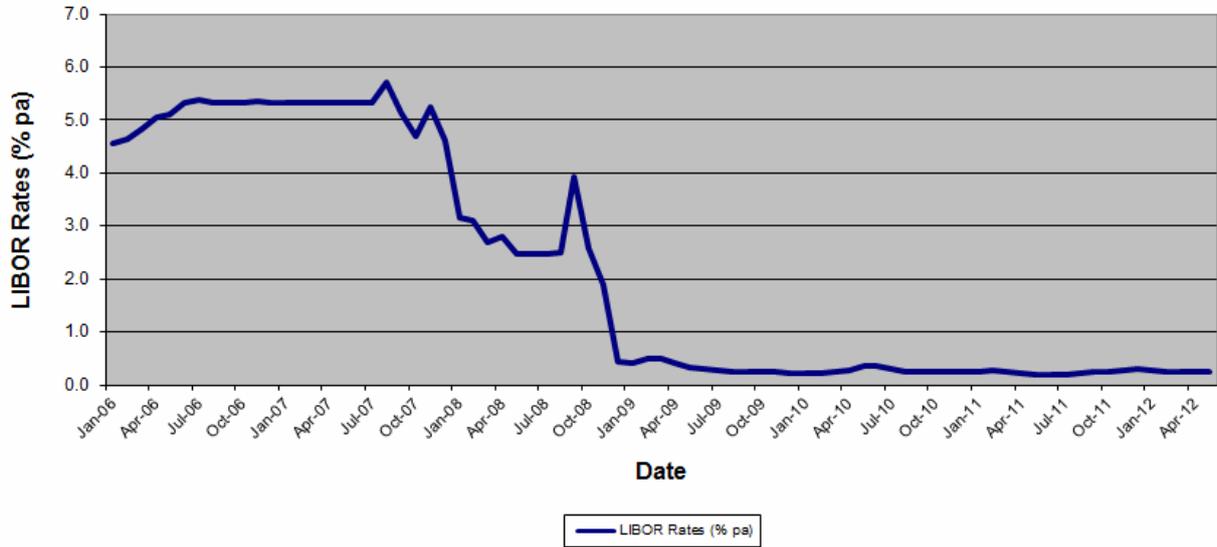
China Retail Sales Value (%pa)



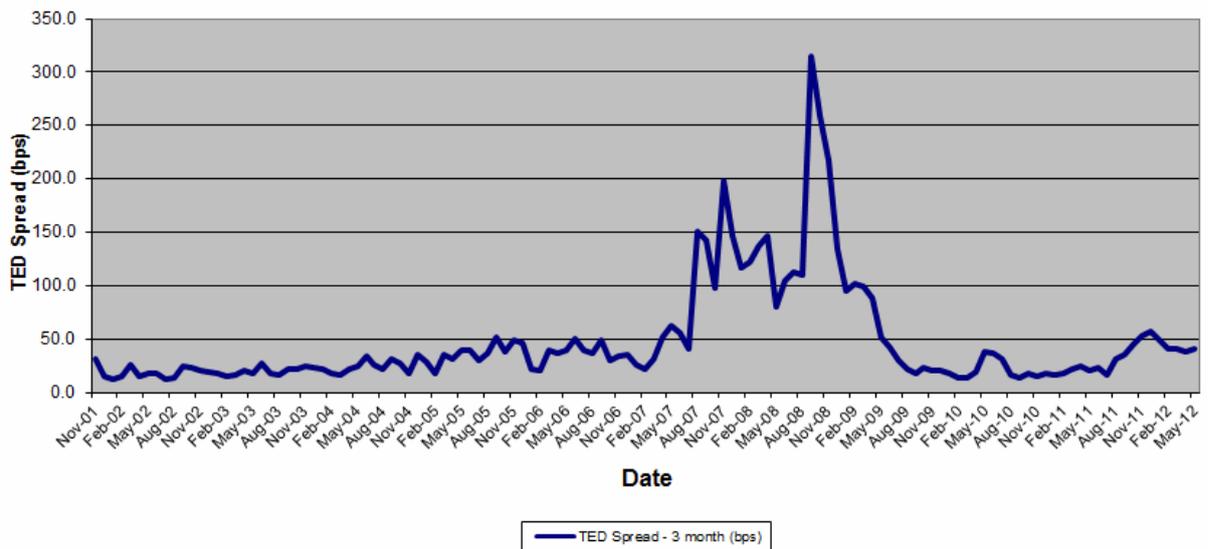
US Unemployment Rate (%)



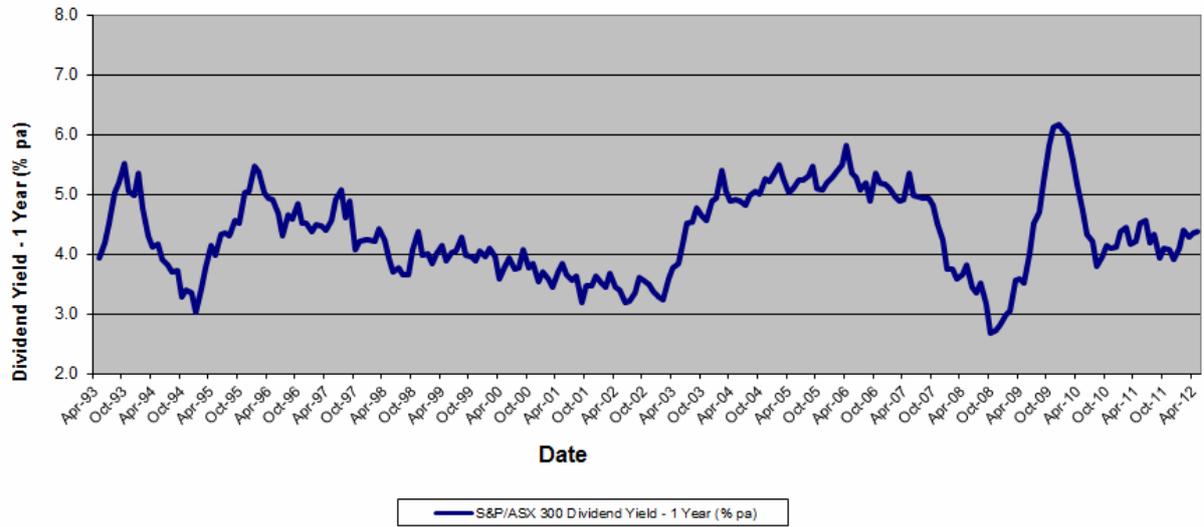
LIBOR Rates (%) - 1 Month



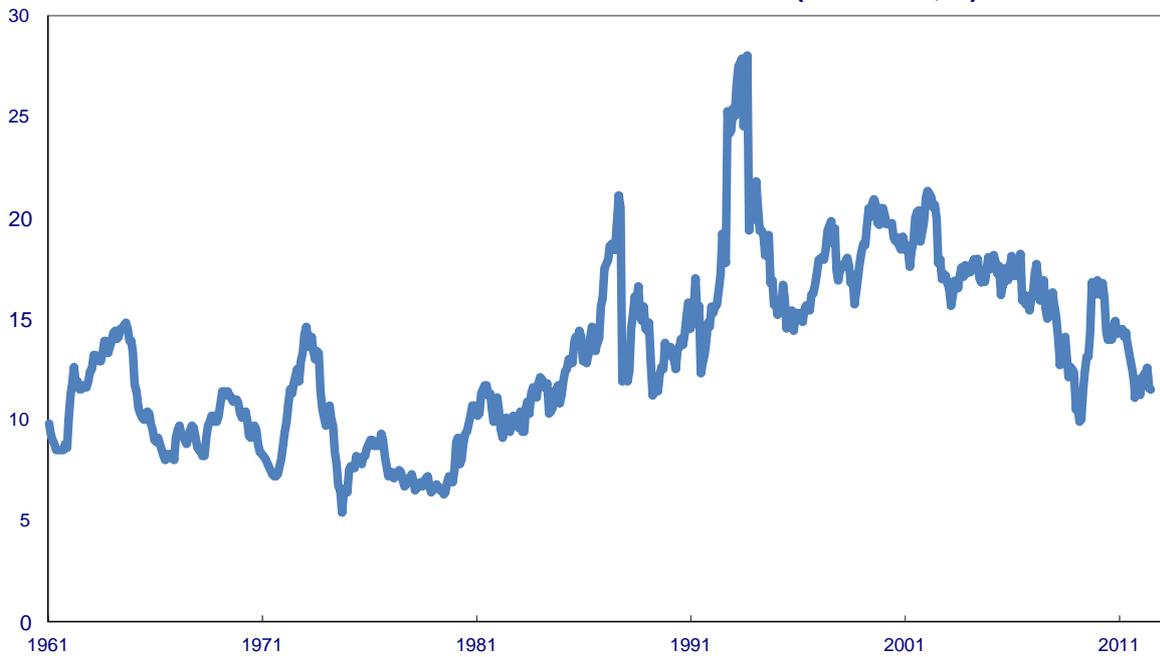
TED Spread - 3 Month



**S&P/ASX 300 Dividend Yield - 1 Year (% pa)**

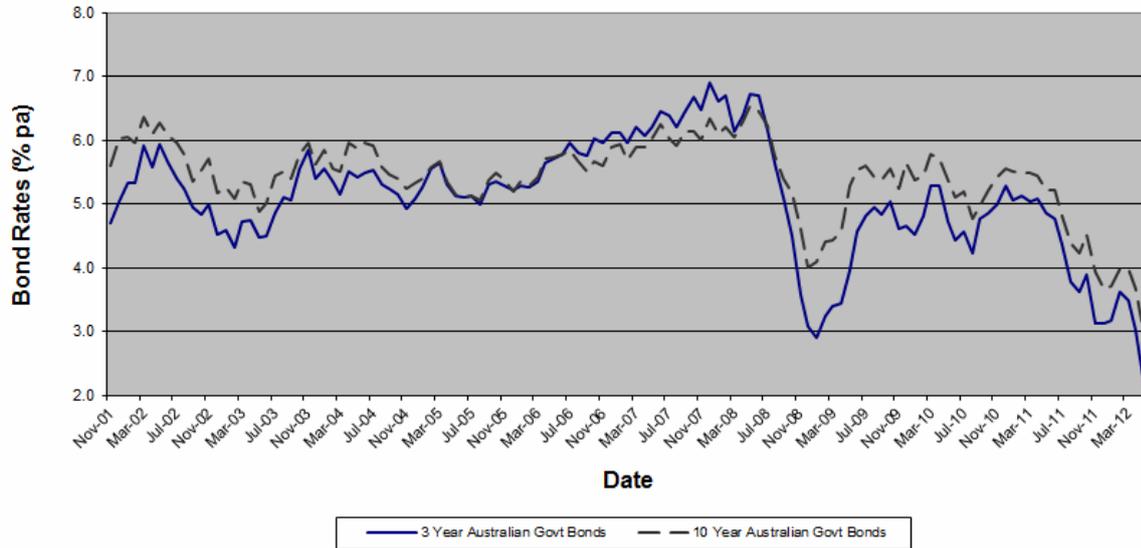


**Market Valuations: Australia (P/E Ratio, X)**

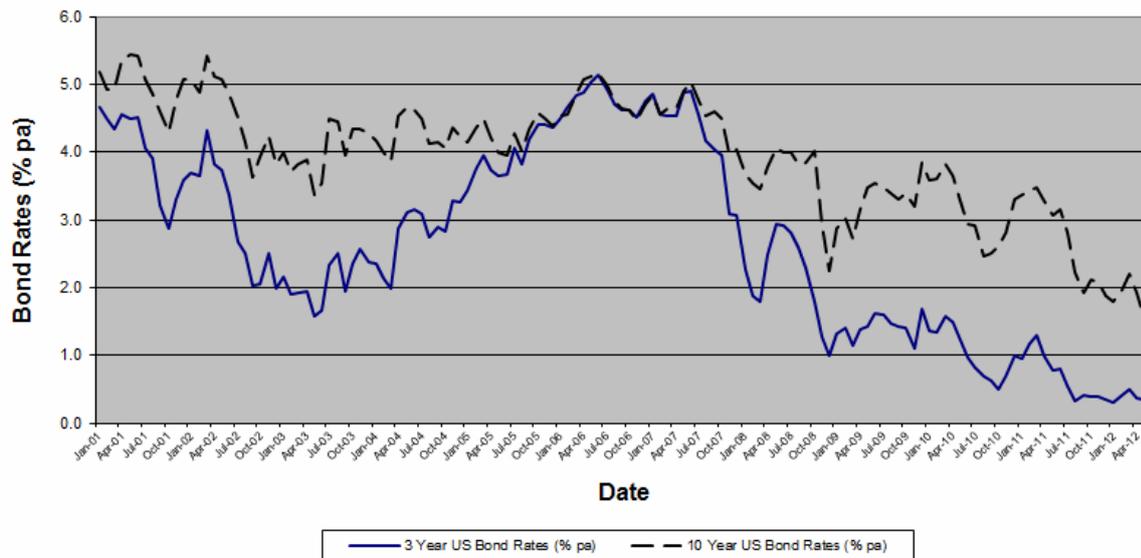


Source: Reserve Bank of Australia, UBS Australia Limited and Citigroup as at 5 May 2012.

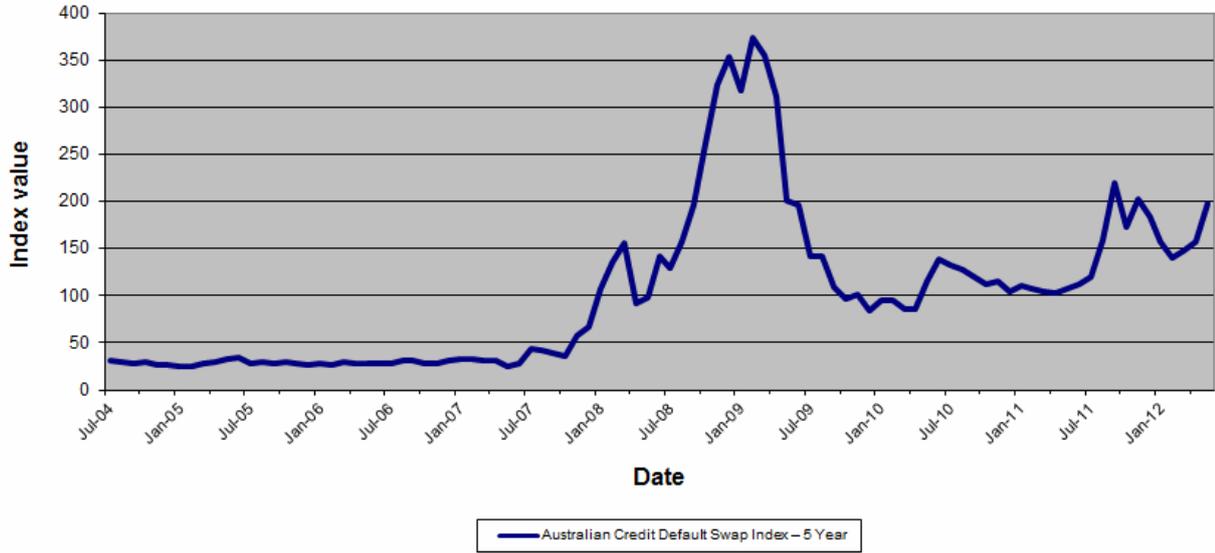
**3y and 10y Australian Bond Rates (%)**



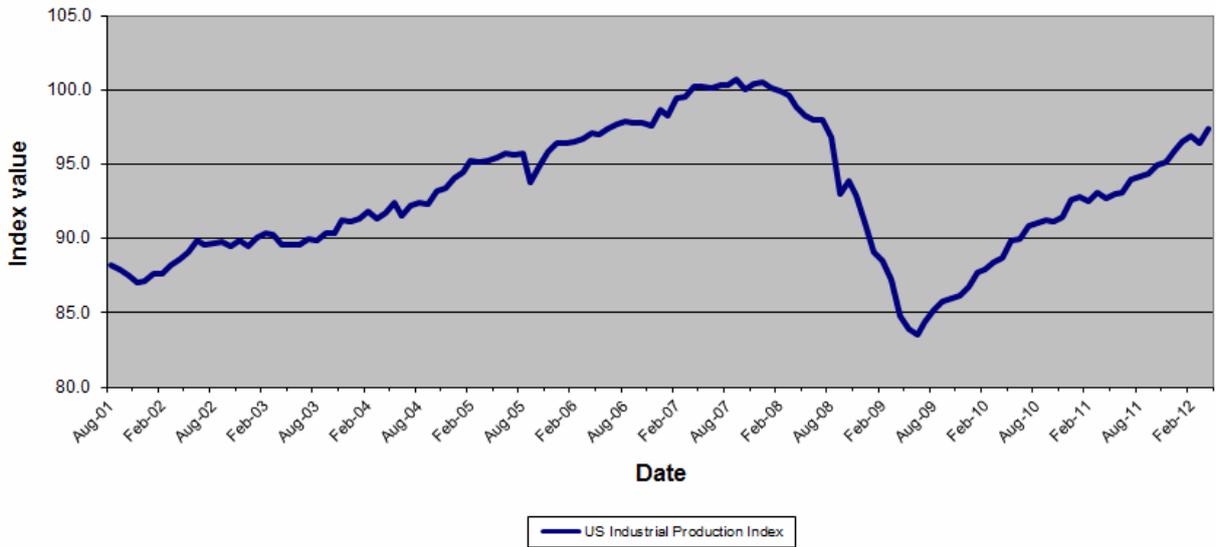
**3y and 10y US Bond Rates (%)**



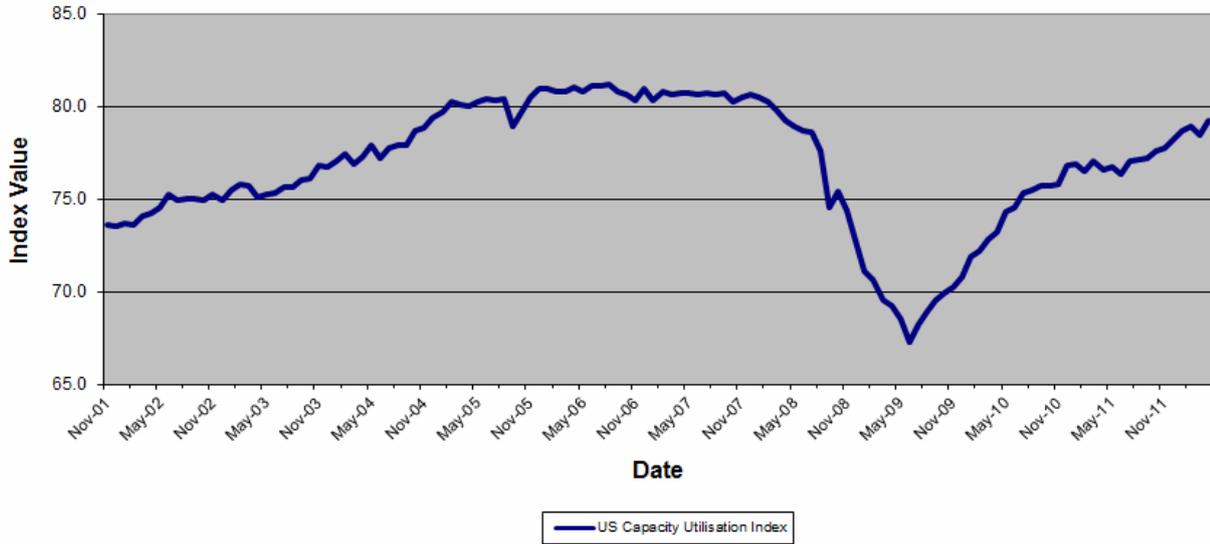
Australian Credit Default Swap Index – 5 Year



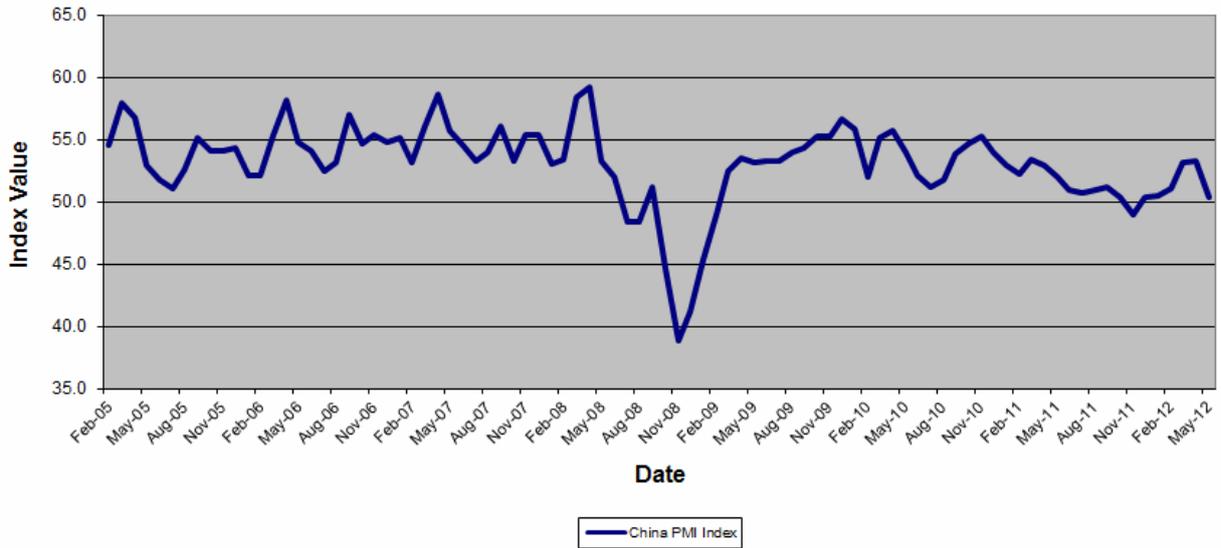
US Industrial Production Index



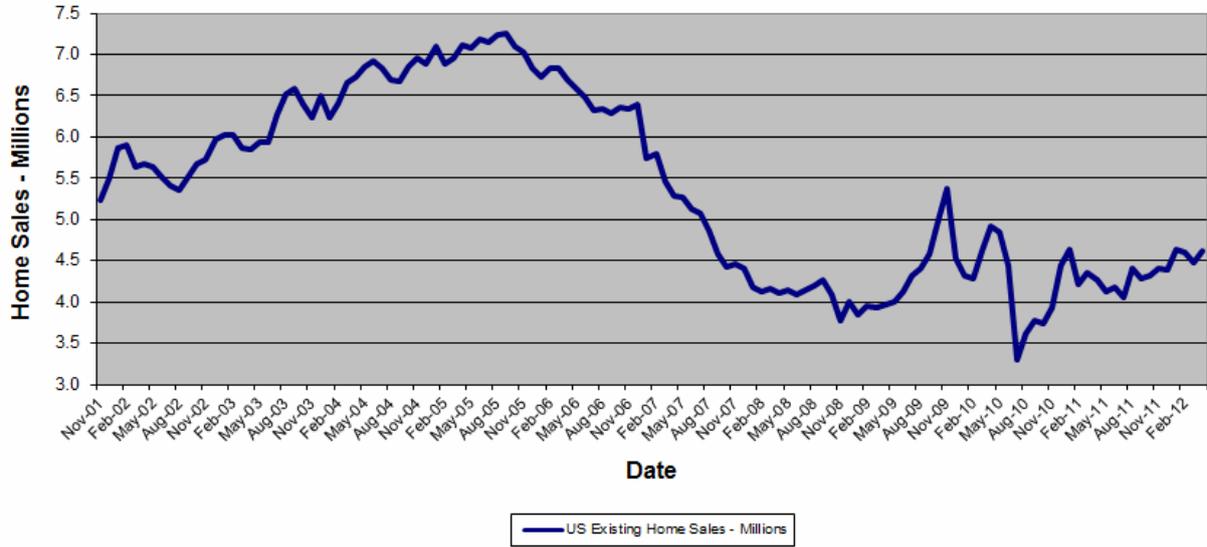
US Capacity Utilisation Index



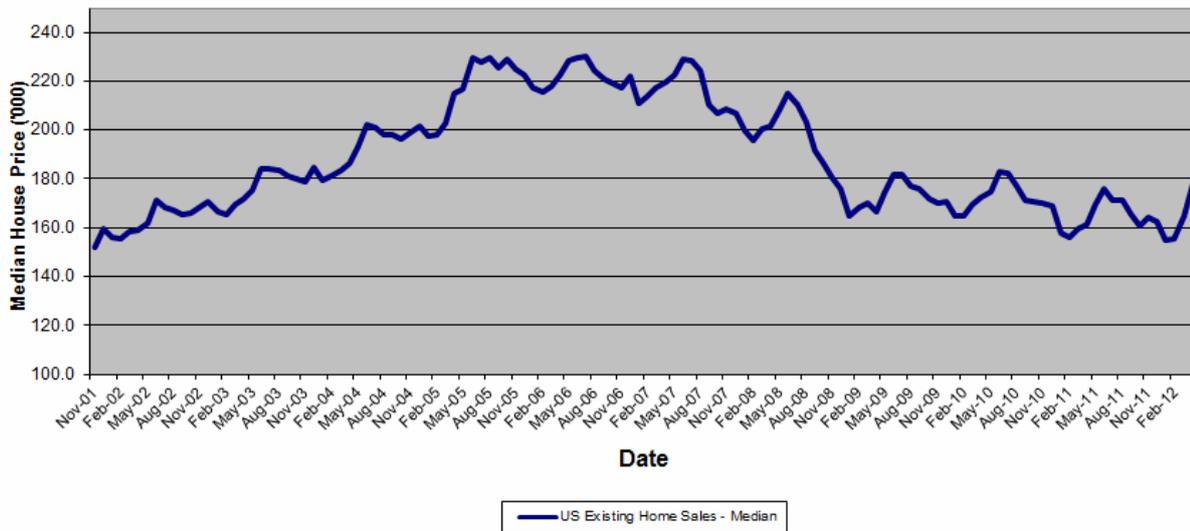
China Purchasing Managers Index (PMI)



US Existing Home Sales - Millions



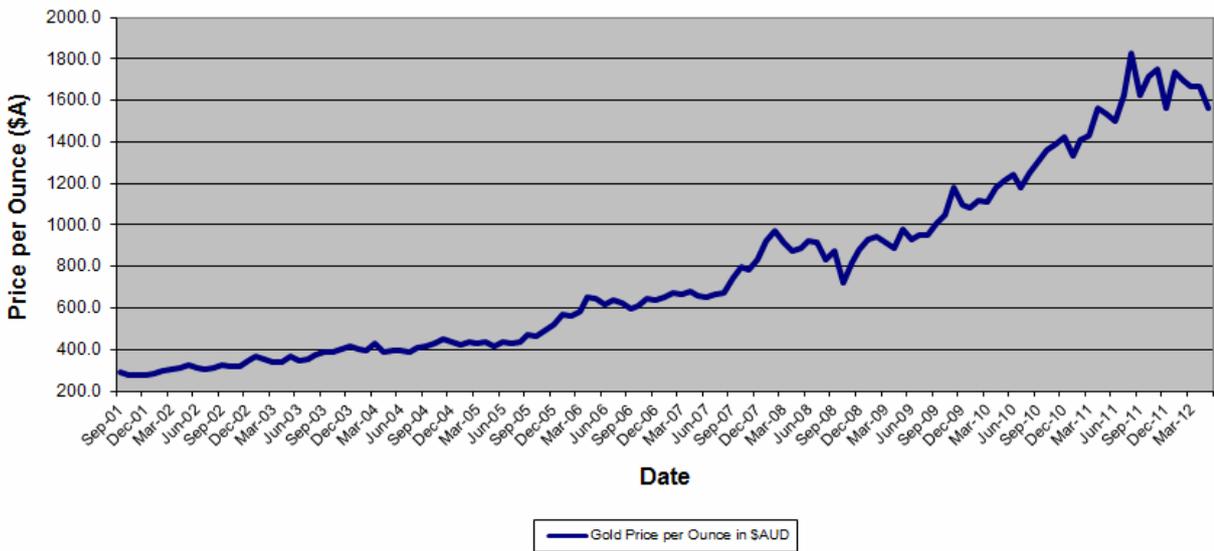
US Existing Home Sales - Median



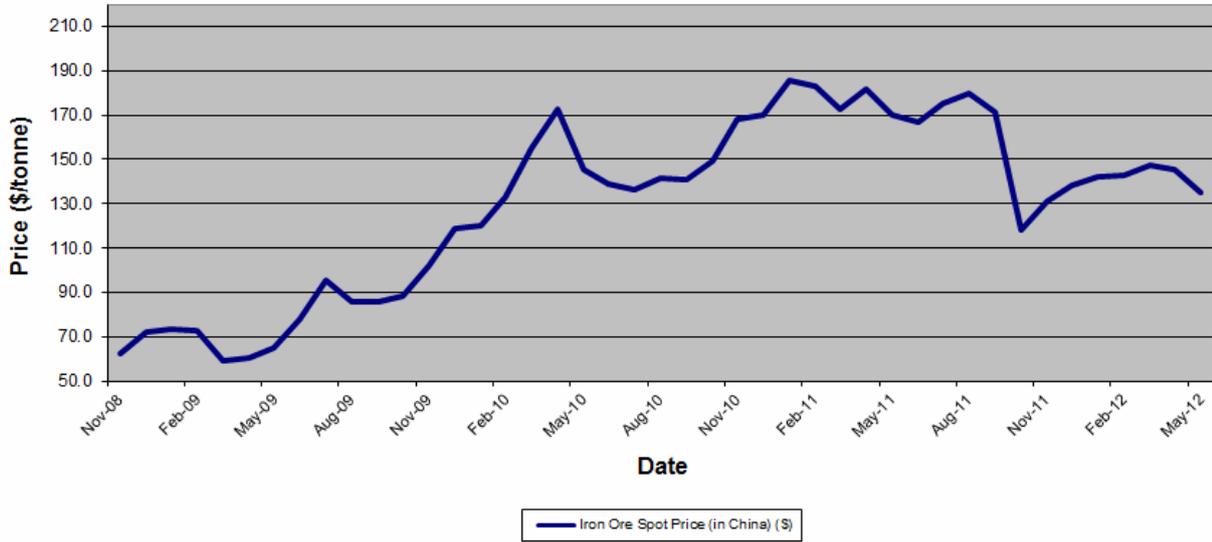
WTI Crude Oil (\$/bbl)



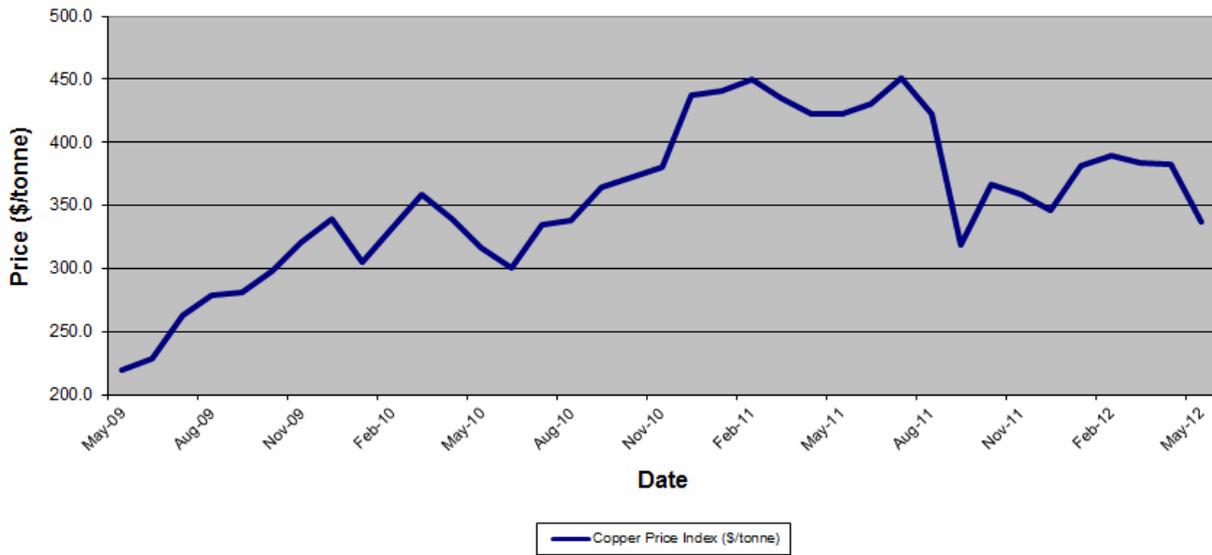
Gold Price per Ounce in \$AUD



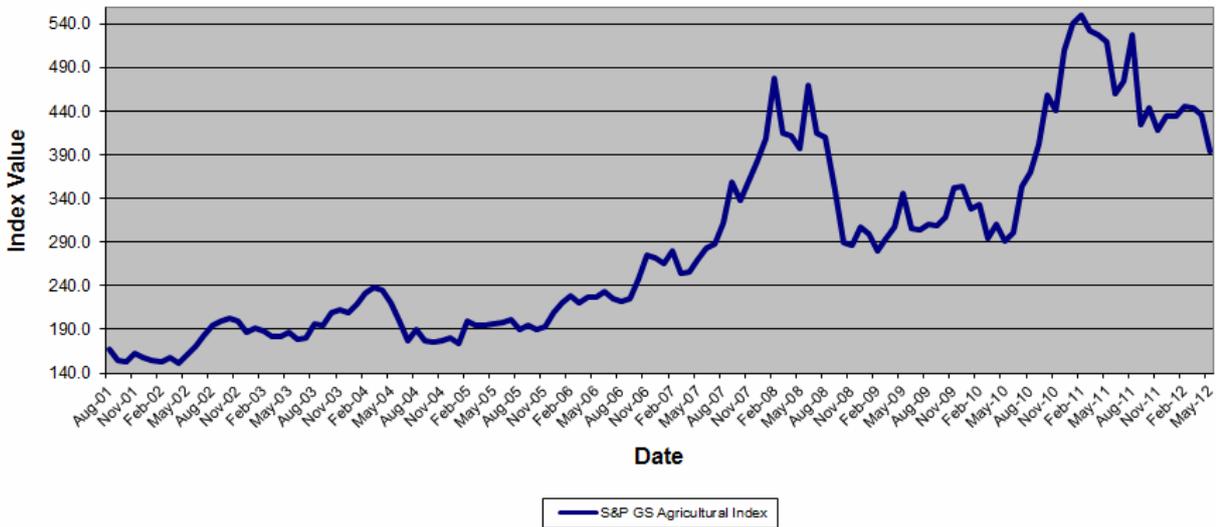
**Iron Ore Spot Price (in China) (\$/tonne)**



**Copper Price Index (\$/tonne)**



**S&P Goldman Sachs Agricultural Index**



**US Dollar Index (\$USDX)**



The DXY is a weighted index of some of the major trading partners of the United States. The components of the DXY Index are (by weighting): Euro (57.6%), Japanese Yen (13.6%), Great Britain- Pounds Sterling (11.9%), Canadian Dollar (9.1%), Swedish Krona (4.2%), and Swiss Franc (3.6%).