

Performance as at 31st March 2019

	1m	FYTD	1yr	2yr p.a.	Inception p.a.#
Fund ^	0.4%	1.9%	7.1%	12.2%	10.9%
<i>Benchmark*</i>	-0.1%	-1.8%	5.8%	10.3%	8.3%
Value added	0.5%	3.7%	1.3%	1.9%	2.5%

^ Spheria Australian Smaller Companies Fund. Returns of the Fund are net of applicable fees, costs and taxes.

* Benchmark is the S&P/ASX Small Ordinaries Accumulation Index.

Inception date of the current investment strategy is 11th July 2016. The Fund was established in June 2005. Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance.

Commentary

The Spheria Australian Smaller Companies Fund returned 0.4% in March outperforming the Benchmark which declined 0.1%. The fund increased 7.1% and outperformed its benchmark by 1.3% for the year ending 31st March 2019.

After the strong bounce in January and February the market had a relatively muted month in March. A lot of the key trends which had emerged over the past 18 months re-asserted themselves over the first few months of the year. These being the continued performance of momentum, the relative underperformance of value investing and with M&A continuing to be a key feature of the markets. Whilst we try not to adhere to any particular investment moniker – viewing both growth and value investing as opportunities – we are strong adherents to cash flow investing. That is, we continue to believe longer term valuations derived from reasonably forecastable cashflows are the best way to invest client's money. Whilst this may mean we have some periods of relative underperformance we also believe it enables us to derive the best longer-term investment outcomes for clients with – importantly – lower risk than the overall market.

It is for this reason, not for any philosophical reason per se, that we have no exposure to the so called WAAAX stocks (the acronym for Wisetech, Altium, Appen, Afterpay and Xero). Two of these businesses have yet to generate any cashflow (Afterpay and Xero). The others are, in our view, trading at increasingly lofty multiples which make any further re-rating from here a highly risky proposition. It should be stressed here that we are expressing a view on the share prices and what is being imputed into future earnings and cash flows (if they have any) not a negative view on the businesses themselves. Some of these are solid businesses and the innovation and technology they bring to employment in Australia is a good thing. However, you pay a high price for a cheery consensus and right now the consensus is to 'Lets WAAAX lyrical'. The fixation with a segment of the market is not an isolated event of course.

There have been numerous times in the past when the market has become fixated by various sector themes (viz the tech boom in 99/00, Oil stocks in the 70's and the Nifty Fifty in the 60's and early 70's) to name but a few. In all cases, when momentum takes over and fundamentals are forgotten, the bubble doesn't tend to end too well.

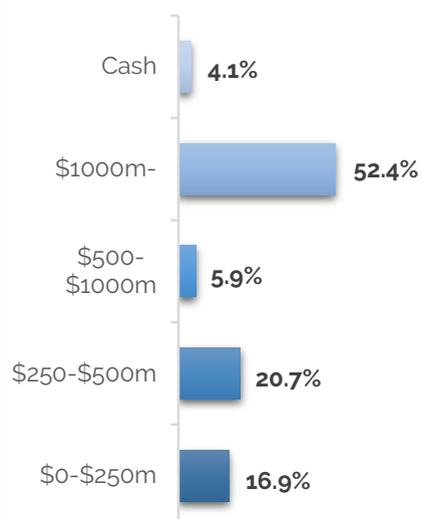
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Top 5 Holdings

Company Name	% Portfolio
Navitas Limited	6.1
Fletcher Building	4.7
Technology One	4.6
Bega Cheese Ltd	4.5
Class Limited	4.5
Top 5	24.5

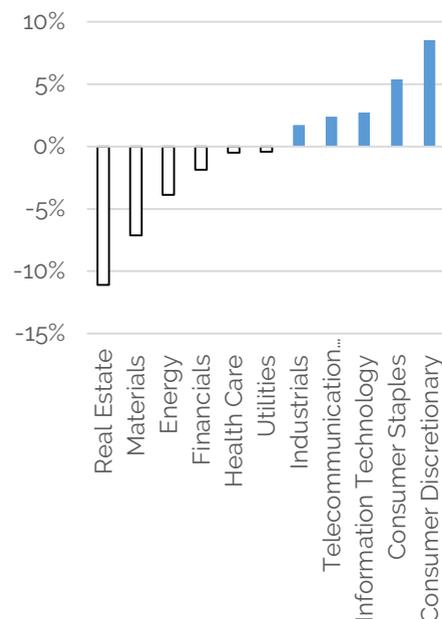
Source: Spheria Asset Management

Market Cap Bands



Source: Spheria Asset Management

Active Sector Exposure



Source: Spheria Asset Management

Areas of the market that have instead caught our attention have been the more cyclical parts of the market which have seen their share prices retrace recently. We are finding sectors which are exposed to the housing market (retailers, building materials), the auto sector (auto retail and specialty auto suppliers) and other cyclical areas (discretionary retail and media) are potentially interesting. These sectors have been around for many years and, in contrast to some of the WAAAX stocks, it is relatively easy to see the extent of previous cyclical downturns and calibrate likely mid-cycle earnings. Armed with these facts and the track record of cash flow generation we believe we can selectively invest in the 'unwaaaxed' parts of the market and produce better overall returns from these levels.

During March the Fund benefitted from the performance of Mt Gibson (MGX.ASX, up 14%), Class Ltd (CL1.ASX, up 13%) and Mortgage Choice (MOC.ASX, up 15%). Negative contributors were Platinum Asset Management (PTM.ASX, down 17%), HT&E (HT1.ASX, down 8%) and Wisetech Global (not owned) (WTC.ASX, up 20%). Over the past 12 months despite not owning the WAAAX stocks the fund has outperformed its benchmark. Part of this has been due to the performance attained from a number of stocks which have been the beneficiary of M&A activity (Trade Me (TME.ASX), Navitas (NVT.ASX) and Greencross (GXL.ASX)). In all cases the valuations and cash generating nature of these stocks that piqued our interest also put them in the sweetspot of Private Equity funds or corporate suitors. We continue to find ideas which meet our bottom up investment criteria and sense that M&A is likely to remain a force for the foreseeable future.

	Spheria Australian Smaller Companies Fund	Platform availability
Benchmark (universe)	S&P/ASX Small Ordinaries Accumulation Index	ASGARD
Investment objective	The Fund aims to outperform the S&P/ASX Small Ordinaries Accumulation Index over the medium to long term.	BT Panorama
Investing universe	Primarily listed companies outside the top 100 ASX listed companies by market capitalisation and companies listed on the New Zealand Stock Exchange with an equivalent market capitalisation	BT Wrap
Distributions	Half yearly	First Wrap
Fees	1.10% p.a. management fee & 20% performance fee of the Fund's excess return versus its benchmark, net of the management fee.	HUB24
Cash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 20% cash Typically 5% - 10% 	IOOF Portfolio Service
Expected turnover	30-40%	Macquarie Wrap
Style	Long only	mFund
APIR	WHT0008AU	MLC Wrap / Navigator
Minimum Investment	\$25,000	Netwealth
		One Vue
		uXchange

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