

Investors Mutual Equity Income Fund

Quarterly Report March 2021

Fund status: OPEN

- ▶ Global sharemarkets enjoyed a strong start to CY21, led once again by the US as investor confidence remained buoyant
- ▶ The Australian sharemarket returned +4.2% over the quarter following a solid reporting season
- ▶ We continue to use volatility to top up in good quality companies we believe can do well over the next 3-5 years

	1 month	3 months	1 Year	3 years [^]	5 Years [^]	Since inception [^]
Income	+1.5%	+1.5%	+9.2%	+7.6%	+7.9%	+8.6%
Growth	+4.0%	+5.7%	+20.3%	-6.1%	-3.7%	-1.0%
Total Return*	+5.5%	+7.2%	+29.5%	+1.5%	+4.2%	+7.6%
Benchmark**	+2.3%	+4.2%	+38.3%	+9.7%	+10.3%	+8.0%

[^]% Performance per annum. *Fund returns are calculated net of management fees, and assuming all distributions are re-invested. Investors should be aware that past performance is not indicative of future performance. Returns can be volatile, reflecting rises and falls in the value of underlying investments. **The benchmark for this Fund is the S&P/ASX 300 Accumulation Index. The Fund has twin objectives of delivering (i) income greater than the S&P/ASX 300 Index yield +2% and (ii) returns with less standard deviation than S&P/ASX300.

Sharemarket Commentary

Global equity markets enjoyed a strong first quarter of calendar 2021, returning +5.9% thanks to continued investor optimism as the global economy recovers from the turmoil caused by COVID-19 and as vaccines are rolled out around the world. These gains were made despite the headwinds of a substantial selloff in bond markets. The benchmark US 10-year bond rose 0.5% to a 12-month high of 1.7% by the end of March on inflationary fears as a combination of continued strong fiscal stimulus, strong commodity prices and continued record low overnight interest rates stoked investor concerns. Over the quarter President Biden's US\$1.9 trillion stimulus package was approved, with the new President now looking to get a proposed US\$2 trillion infrastructure plan approved by Congress, while in Australia the Federal Government unveiled a \$1.2 billion tourism support package.

The US S&P500 Index recorded fresh record highs in March, pushing through the 4,000 level for the first time. The S&P500's return of +6.1% for the first quarter marked the index's best 12-month rolling return since 1936 and a staggering +80% return since the March 2020 lows. Across the Atlantic, Europe's Stoxx50 jumped +10.7% for the quarter, while Japan's Nikkei Index returned +6.9%. Encouragingly, we saw the value style of investing as the main driver of quarterly returns, with the frothier end of the market coming under pressure.

In Australia, the selloff in US bonds and inflationary concerns saw the Australian 10-year bond yield spike +0.7% to 1.9%, its highest level in nearly two years. The result saw the Reserve Bank of Australia ratchet up its quantitative easing programme in February by targeting longer-dated bonds in a bold move as the RBA looked to flatten the yield curve. The continued strong rise in house prices has also led to expectations of the RBA re-imposing some sort of macroprudential controls in future, although the RBA appears reluctant to intervene at this stage. Commodities endured another strong quarter, although prices came off their highs in March, with the iron ore price down -5% while the Oil and the Base Metals index shed -4% and -3% respectively.

The Australian sharemarket as measured by the S&P/ASX300 Index enjoyed a solid quarter, returning +4.2%. At the sector level, performance was mixed, reflecting the rotation from the more speculative and momentum-driven end of the market into good quality companies trading on attractive valuations. The IT sector fell -10% over the quarter, with the likes of Afterpay, Xero, Appen, Altium, Megaport and Wisetech falling considerably as many investors reduced their holdings in light of rising bond yields which significantly affect valuations. Similarly, many of the speculative 'med-tech' names within the Healthcare sector, such as PolyNovo and Nanosonics, as well as e-commerce stocks such as Kogan, Temple & Webster and Redbubble, all came under increasing pressure. The Resources sector finished the quarter flattish, coming under increasing pressure through March with many of the miners falling as the prices of iron ore and base metals came off their highs. The REITs and Utilities sectors also came under pressure, falling -0.5% and -1.8% as bond yields rose.

On the positive side of the ledger, the Consumer Discretionary sector enjoyed a strong quarter, gaining +9%. Crown Resorts gained +22% over the quarter after receiving a takeover offer from US private equity giant Blackstone (which already owns a 10% stake) at a 19% premium to its pre-bid share price. Tabcorp gained +22% following confirmation of unsolicited bids for its wagering business of \$3 billion from Entain plc and other private equity players.

The Communication Services sector gained +9.0% courtesy of Telstra's +16% return over the quarter. Telstra's interim result showed the company continuing to win mobile customers from Optus and Vodafone thanks to the company's 5G rollout. In other highlights, Nine Entertainment gained +21% following a strong result which showed strong growth across all its key divisions including TV advertising, Stan subscriptions and its 60% holding in Domain. Nine will also benefit from an agreed deal with Google and Facebook, following pressure and subsequent legislation from the Federal Government to pay content fees to Australian media players.

Fund information	
APIR	IML0005AU
Inception	1 Jan 2011
Size	\$552 M
Application (Ex)	\$0.8678
Redemption (Ex)	\$0.8634
Management fee	0.993% p.a.
Investment horizon	4-5 years
Distributions	Quarterly
Managers	Anton Tagliaferro Michael O'Neill Tuan Luu
Level of Franking (%)*	
FY16	37.1%
FY17	53.4%
FY18	27.5%
FY19	39.6%
FY20	36.2%
*As per FSC Standard	
Security Category	Effective Exposure
Ordinary Shares	91.5%
Call Options	-8.3%
Put Options	1.7%
Cash	15.1%

Performance & Strategy

The **Investors Mutual Equity Income Fund** enjoyed a very strong quarter, returning +7.2%, considerably better than the benchmark's return of +4.2%. The Fund paid a quarterly distribution of 1.25 cents per unit.

The Fund benefitted greatly from excellent performances over the quarter from our holdings in good quality industrials such as Crown Resorts, Tabcorp, AusNet, Sonic Healthcare, Telstra and Nine Entertainment. All these companies reported solid interim results and were re-rated as investors sought good quality companies that were trading at a reasonable price.

Over the quarter we took part profits in companies such as Incitec Pivot and Virgin Money UK, and we recycled the proceeds into companies we believe look undervalued, such as Orica.

Volatility rose over the March quarter, driven by rising bond yields, inflationary expectations and the February company reporting period. Over the quarter, we opportunistically used the daily market swings to earn good option premium around our core holdings including Amcor, Orica, Sonic Healthcare, and Woolworths to supplement the underlying dividends and distributions. We tendered our holding in Ampol into the company's off-market buyback offer to maximise the after-tax benefits, while participating in Bank of Queensland's capital raising to fund the acquisition of Members Equity Bank which we saw as a good acquisition given it was done at book value and that there are substantial synergies to be extracted from merging ME Bank into Bank of Queensland's existing operations.

Tabcorp (TAH) performed strongly over the March quarter, with the stock up +22%. There were two key reasons for this performance. The first was a solid interim result where lotteries continued to exceed expectations. The second was confirmation of several unsolicited bids for Tabcorp's wagering business at ~\$3bn. The company subsequently announced a strategic review including a potential demerger of the wagering division to unlock value. We continue to see attractive latent value in Tabcorp and believe a demerger now looks likely which should help to unlock the full value in the lotteries division while retaining the flexibility for the wagering division to be sold at full value.

Telstra (TLS) performed well during the quarter, posting a total return of +16%. The half year results announcement in February showed that the mobile business is gaining market share, growing subscribers by +80,000 in the six months to December while Telstra's key competitors Optus and Vodafone both lost customers. Pricing in the mobile market is also recovering, with Telstra's new customers paying on average \$3/month more than last year. In other news, the earnings headwind from the NBN rollout is coming to an end, and Telstra continues to progress its strategy to separate its valuable infrastructure assets, with a sale of mobile towers likely later this year. The market is recognising these positive trends and the value of Telstra's sustainable 4.6% fully-franked dividend yield.

Outlook

It has been a long wait, but it appears that value is making a strong comeback and we are finally beginning to see this play out for many of the companies in IML's portfolios. With bond yields rising and by extension the equity risk premium, we are seeing the steam come out of many of the speculative leaders of the past 12 months. Further increases in bond yields will likely see these trends accelerate. It looks likely that we are seeing a sustained return to favour for good quality companies previously shunned amid the momentum-driven mania of recent years.

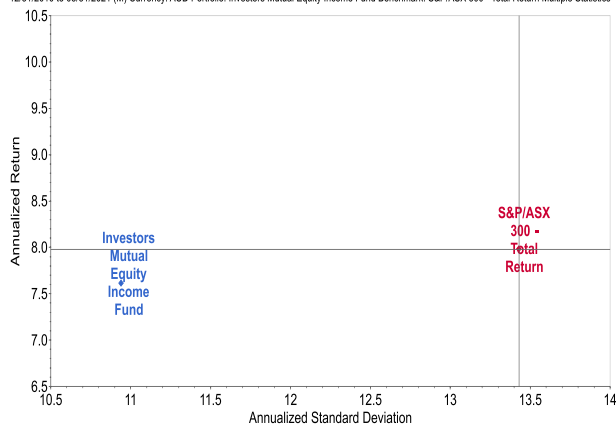
We continue to look for companies that possess the key attributes we look for and that we believe continue to look like reasonable value and which we think can do well in the next 3 to 5 years while prudently using the ASX options market to achieve the Fund's income objectives.

Researcher	Rating
Lonsec	Contact IML for the most recent rating
Zenith	Recommended
Morningstar	Silver

Portfolio top holdings	ASX Code
Telstra	TLS
National Australia Bank	NAB
Crown Resorts	CWN
Suncorp Group	SUN
AusNet Services	AST
Amcor	AMC
Insurance Australia Group	IAG
Aurizon	AZI
Tabcorp	TAH
Orica	ORI

Equity Income Fund Risk Return - Fund vs Benchmark* Since inception: 1 January 2011

Since Inception Risk Return 12/31/2010 to 03/31/2021 (M) Currency: AUD Portfolio: Investors Mutual Equity Income Fund Benchmark: S&P/ASX 300 - Total Return Multiple Statistics



*Benchmark = S&P/ASX 300 Accumulation Index, Source: Factset

The Value and Income Fund was restructured and renamed the Equity Income Fund on 1 January 2011 where the strategy of the Fund was changed to not hold international shares and to focus on its current strategy of generating income for unitholders. If the performance of the two funds are combined the results would be as follows:

	Fund return	Benchmark**
Since Inception^ 1 May 2004	+7.0%	+8.7%

^% Performance per annum *Fund returns are calculated net of management fees, and assuming all distributions are re-invested. Past performance is not indicative of future performance. Fund returns are the Value and Income Fund prior to 31 December 2010 and the Equity Income Fund from 1 January 2011. **The benchmark is the UBS Bank Bill+2% benchmark prior to 31 December 2010 and S&P/ASX 300 Accumulation Index from 1 January 2011.