

Investors Mutual Equity Income Fund

Quarterly Report June 2021

Fund status: OPEN

- ▶ Global sharemarkets enjoyed one of their strongest 12-month periods on record as economies around the world reopened
- ▶ The Australian sharemarket returned +28.5% for FY21, allowing the local sharemarket to post fresh record highs
- ▶ 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	+1.2%	+1.3%	+7.2%	+7.1%	+7.5%	+8.6%
Growth	-0.3%	+2.1%	+12.5%	-5.5%	-3.6%	-0.8%
Total Return*	+0.9%	+3.4%	+19.7%	+1.6%	+3.9%	+7.8%
Benchmark**	+2.3%	+8.5%	+28.5%	+9.8%	+11.3%	+8.6%

[^]% 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 sharemarkets enjoyed one of the strongest 12-month periods on record, with the MSCI World Index returning +37%, bouncing back strongly from the COVID-19-fuelled large selloff in the March quarter of 2021. The global benchmark rose in 10 out of the past 12 months and by so doing set new record highs through the year to June. The US led the way for sharemarket gains, with the S&P500 Index returning +40%, while the tech-heavy NASDAQ Index gained +45%, with both indices posting fresh record highs throughout the year. Across the Atlantic the mood was a little less ebullient and slow to kick off with the continent continually beset by lockdown measures as COVID-19 cases continued to flare up. However, Europe's Stoxx50 Index managed to recover to return +28% in the year to June. Similarly, Japan's Nikkei Index returned +31% for the same period.

Global sharemarkets have been riding a wave of optimism over the past 12 months, as both central banks and governments around the world unleashed record levels of spending and unconventional policies to drive the economic recovery. Joe Biden's victory over Donald Trump eased much of the political uncertainty in the US and cleared the path for significant fiscal expansion by way of a US\$2 trillion infrastructure bill, as well as US\$1,400 stimulus cheques to most households. In Australia, the Federal Government introduced the JobKeeper and JobSeeker subsidies, which were extended until March 2021, accompanied by the Reserve Bank of Australia's own asset purchasing program while cutting interest rates to near zero. Additionally, the unexpectedly fast development and subsequent rollout of vaccinations from November onwards allowed some economies to reopen, with the prospect of more to come accelerating a recovery in many cyclical sectors. With monetary and fiscal policy settings maintained at emergency levels while economies recover, inflationary concerns have begun to reappear, reflected in the global core inflation data, which reached quarter of a century high levels over the six months to June.

Commodity prices enjoyed a very strong year with record price appreciation across iron ore and many base metals. The iron ore price rose +110% to push above US\$230/tonne, supported by supply constraints out of South America due to COVID-induced mine closures and record Chinese steel production, a direct beneficiary of China's fiscal stimulus. Base metals and rare earth prices enjoyed one of their strongest years on record as investors chased anything associated with the electrification of the economy. The oil price also recovered strongly, gaining +80% over FY21, buoyed by a combination of OPEC-driven production cuts and economies reemerging from lockdowns. Conversely, the gold price had a lacklustre year, finishing slightly lower and reflecting investors' diminished risk aversion.

Domestically, the Australian sharemarket as measured by the S&P/ASX300 Index enjoyed its best financial year in over three decades, returning +28.5%, allowing the market to set fresh record highs in May. Australia's four major banks and the three major iron ore producers led the rally. Sector performance was generally positive, with the Financials sector returning +41%, driven primarily by the major banks, which all returned approximately +50% for FY21 as they benefitted from the confluence of loan-loss provision releases, strong credit growth, and an exuberant property market. The Resources sector gained +31%, with sector heavyweights BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto both returning +40%. In addition, companies exposed to the electrification thematic enjoyed substantial returns, such as the copper and lithium producers. The Consumer Discretionary sector similarly had a strong year, returning +49%, with corporate activity providing a significant boost to high-quality and cash-generative companies such as Tabcorp and Crown Resorts. In addition, Wesfarmers was a strong beneficiary of the COVID-induced redirection of household budgets into home improvement and working from home, with both Bunnings and Officeworks enjoying record sales.

The sharemarket returned +8.5% in the June quarter, with sector performance generally strong across the board. The Resources sector, courtesy of the miners, returned +7.8%, benefitting from record iron ore, base metals, and rare earths prices. Within the Industrials space, the Communication Services sector returned +11%, with strong performances from both Nine Entertainment and Telstra. Nine Entertainment continues to benefit from a strong rebound in TV advertising, streaming television and record subscriber growth for Stan. Telstra gained +27%, the company continuing to benefit from more rational pricing in the mobile industry, as well as the well-received news of Telstra's 49% stake sale in its mobile towers business for A\$5.9 billion, well above market expectations. Telstra also announced that it will be returning A\$1.4 billion to shareholders.

The local Technology sector also rallied strongly over the quarter, returning +12%, following the significant correction in the wake of the re-emergence of inflationary concerns and the resultant spike in bond yields earlier in 2021. On the negative side of the ledger, the Utilities sector fell -5%, primarily the result of AGL Energy's -15% slide after failing to provide comfort to its investors on the viability of its demerger plans.

Fund information

APIR	IML0005AU
Inception	1 Jan 2011
Size	\$542 M
Application (Ex)	\$0.8859
Redemption (Ex)	\$0.8815
Management fee	0.993% p.a.
Investment horizon	4-5 years
Distributions	Quarterly
Managers	Anton Tagliaferro Michael O'Neill Tuan Luu

Level of Franking (%)*

FY17	53.4%
FY18	27.5%
FY19	39.6%
FY20	36.2%
FY21	28.8%

*As per FSC Standard

Security Category Effective Exposure

Ordinary Shares	84.1%
Call Options	-7.4%
Put Options	0.8%
Cash	22.5%

Performance & Strategy

The **Investors Mutual Equity Income Fund** posted a positive return of +19.7% over the financial year, although this was behind the market's strong return of +28.5%. The market was very volatile over the past year, and the rallies in the more speculative or cyclical sectors such as Technology and Resources held back our market-relative performance. Our portfolio's positioning in more defensive quality companies weighed on the Equity Income Fund's market-relative return, although we remain very comfortable with the Fund's positioning.

The Fund paid a distribution of 1.0988 cents per unit for the June half, taking the total distribution for the financial year to 5.1488 cents per unit representing a full-year distribution yield of 6.54%.

Over the final quarter of FY20, the Fund returned +3.4%, below the benchmark's strong return of +8.5%. Over the June quarter, the Fund benefited from its holdings in good quality industrials such as Telstra, Suncorp, Tabcorp, and Steadfast Group.

Over the quarter, we trimmed our exposures to stocks such as Brambles, Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Shopping Centres Australasia, and Tabcorp. We used the funds generated from these sales to top up in good quality companies such as Alumina, Aurizon, IAG, Orica, and Origin Energy, which in our opinion all represent compelling valuations, especially given their medium to long-term prospects, which the market is yet to appreciate.

Over the quarter, we also used the strong market conditions to write select call options over some of our key holdings including Amcor, Coles, Tabcorp, and Telstra, to supplement the underlying dividends. Conversely, we opportunistically targeted attractive entry prices in sound companies such as Sydney Airport and Transurban with written put options when the market sold off. The Equity Income Fund also earned good distribution income from positions including Abacus, Charter Hall Retail, Shopping Centres Australasia, and Transurban.

Stock Stories

Metcash (MTS) reported solid financial year 2021 results in the June quarter (the company has an April financial year-end). Food was modestly below our expectations, liquor was in line, while hardware was better than our forecasts, and Total Tools was extremely strong. (Metcash has only owned Total Tools for eight months.) There were earnings upgrades from a wide range of sellside brokers. The company also surprised the market with an off-market buyback, expected to be around A\$175m in the coming months, which should be mid-single-digit earnings per share-accretive, and came despite the company increasing its payout ratio from 60% to 70% earlier in the year.

Steadfast Group (SDF) had a strong quarter, with management updating the market on expectations for underlying earnings per share growth of 15-20% this financial year. SDF's insurance broking and underwriting agency business continues to deliver recurring cashflows and organic growth. The company should continue to gain share organically through its investment in technology ahead of peers, as well as through selective bolt-on acquisitions of brokers in its network.

Suncorp (SUN) performed well during the quarter, with insurance markets hardening and competitors showing signs of being more rational. The outlook for dividends is underpinned by Suncorp's strong capital position and improving insurance margin, with management highlighting both repricing and cost initiatives at the May investor day.

Outlook

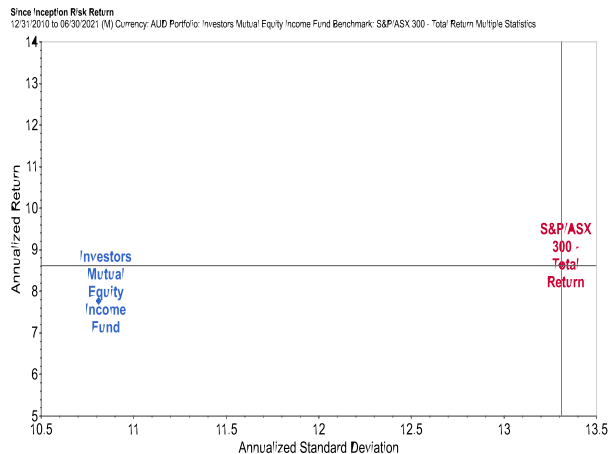
Sharemarkets around the world, including Australia's, remain well-supported as economic growth continues to rebound from COVID-19 lows and central banks continue to hold interest rates at low levels, despite increasing signs of rising inflationary expectations.

The Australian sharemarket is now trading at close to record levels, with seemingly very little on the horizon to halt its ongoing rise. Having said this, we continue to steer away from some of the riskier parts of the sharemarket, and remain focused on good quality companies which are well-managed, where valuations remain justifiable, and which we firmly believe can do well over the next 3-5 years.

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
Amcor	AMC
Insurance Australia Group	IAG
AusNet	AST
Aurizon	AZJ
Spark Infrastructure	SKI
Orica	ORI
Suncorp	SUN

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



*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	+7.1%	+9.1%

^% 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.