Weekly Commentary

28 November 2016

Stronger for longer

Our latest Quarterly Economic Overview, out on 22 November 2016, showed that we expect the New Zealand economy to stay stronger for longer.¹ Our growth forecasts for 2016 and 2017 are a little higher, and we don't expect the dip in GDP growth in 2018 to be as dramatic as previously estimated.

Business confidence and hiring are on the rise, and the pipeline of construction work is particularly strong. Migration, as a major driver of population and GDP growth, is also remaining remarkably strong. While some components of migration are weakening, such as international student numbers from India, the change in the number of New Zealanders returning, or not heading offshore (typically to Australia) has been a big part of the story. While New Zealand's economic fortunes remain strong relative to Australia's, and in the wake of Brexit, we don't expect an exodus of New Zealanders from this country, while the number returning remains solid.

The good news for New Zealand about the fact that half this migration growth is a reduction in New Zealanders leaving is that it drives demand for all sorts of goods and services across New Zealand's regions – food, clothing, cars, fridges, internet services, and everything in between. People no longer choosing to leave means they keep their children in the local school and get their car repaired locally. This underpins the health of many retail and service businesses from Cape Reinga to Bluff.

As we explore in our latest Regional Roundup², the outlook for the country overall is also a lot more positive on the back of a happier dairy sector. Our current forecast has been revised to \$5.80 per kilogram of milksolids for the current season, and if anything, there is risk to the upside, with the latest dairy auction providing further upward impetus.

As a result, confidence is returning in places like Southland, Taranaki, Manawatu-Whanganui and the West Coast. Other commodities, like horticulture, wine and forestry, are recording strong export growth. Forestry in particular continues to outperform expectations, with prices growing strongly as exports to China hold up despite the structural changes in that country. Strength in these primary industries is benefitting areas like the east coast of the North Island, and the top of the South Island – Nelson, Tasman and Marlborough. These three regions are now among those with the most positive outlook, weather permitting.

In recent months, some of the largest improvements in outlook have been in Wellington. We have been saying for some time that the subdued level of economic activity and confidence there does not sit with the facts – the region has the highest incomes in the country, a fairly low unemployment rate, and job stability (since talk of government job cuts ceased). At last these facts are being reflected in house price growth, more spending on passenger and commercial vehicles, and higher confidence in the regional outlook.

But we go to press just two weeks after the 7.8 earthquake struck North Canterbury, with its numerous aftershocks continuing to jolt that region. This will certainly affect

¹ See http://www.westpac.co.nz/assets/Business/Economic-Updates/2016/Bulletins-2016/Westpac-QEO-November-2016_Email.pdf ² See http://www.westpac.co.nz/assets/Business/Economic-Updates/2016/Bulletins-2016/Regional-Roundup-November-2016.pdf

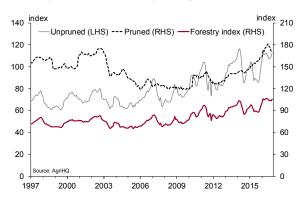
Stronger for longer continued

tourism to North Canterbury in the short-term at least. But it is too early to tell if the structural damage to a number of buildings in Wellington, and the uncertainty that always comes in the wake of large earthquakes, will derail any of the newfound positivity in the capital as well. Business interruption costs in the city will certainly be rising as several buildings are evacuated and further structural engineering evaluations are done to determine if they are safe to occupy.

Auckland and the Bay of Plenty, two regions that are booming, still have a strong outlook, although their indicators were more mixed this quarter as activity stabilises at a high level. As of mid-November, large swathes of the new Auckland Unitary Plan are operative, despite several outstanding appeals on some aspects of the plan. Hopefully, this means the wall of building the city desperately needs will begin to eventuate and building consents will go through the roof.

But in Canterbury, the rebuild is past the peak and on the way down. Industry sources have confirmed rising vacancy rates in commercial buildings, and slowing construction work, weakening the outlook for the region. We forecast a weaker outlook for the region's commercial property sector in June, and this reality is rapidly materialising, with vacancy rates set to soar by early 2018.³

Forestry remains remarkably strong



Yet the region with possibly the strongest outlook is the Waikato. Although it has the biggest dairy herd in the country, it was remarkably resilient to the dairy downturn. The recent improvement in that sector is simply a bonus to a region already seeing strong population growth, construction and resultant retail demand.

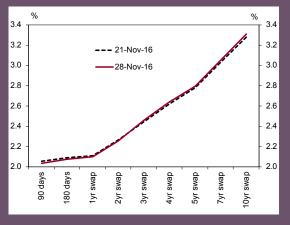
³ http://www.westpac.co.nz/assets/Business/Economic-Updates/2016/Bulletins-2016/Industry-Insights-Commercial-Property-June-2016.pdf

Fixed vs Floating for mortgages

For borrowers with a deposit of 20% or more, the best value lies in the two-year rate or shorter terms. Threeto five-year rates seem high relative to where we think short-term rates are going to go over that time. That said, these rates are most likely to be pressured higher by global market trends, so borrowers who prefer the security of a longer term should lock it in now.

Floating mortgage rates usually work out to be more expensive for borrowers than short-term fixed rates such as the six-month rate. However, floating may still be the preferred option for those who require flexibility in their repayments.

NZ interest rates



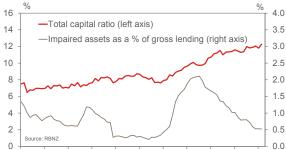
The week ahead

NZ RBNZ Financial Stability Report

Nov 30

- The Financial Stability Report is the Reserve Bank's six-monthly update on the state of the financial system. In general, New Zealand banks have remained in a strong position, with rising capital ratios and low impaired loans, although the stress on dairying loans will persist for a while even as dairy prices recover.
- The assessment of housing market risks is likely to be cautious, given that the recent tightening of loan-to-value restrictions is still playing out. The RBNZ has signalled its intention to add debt-toincome limits to its macroprudential toolkit. However, negotiations with the Minister of Finance have been drawn out, and it's not certain that there will be any progress to announce in the FSR.

NZ registered bank ratios



1996 1998 2000 2002 2004 2006 2008 2010 2012 2014 2016

NZ Nov business confidence

Nov 30, Last: 24.5

- Businesses paused for breath in October, with general confidence and firms' expectations of their own activity edging lower. But following a strong run higher in recent months, these metrics remain around the highest levels since mid-2015, and point to solid momentum in growth as we head into the new year.
- Firms in the construction sector remain the most upbeat, although a broadening of growth and rising dairy prices have seen the positive vibes broaden across sectors.
- Inflation expectations have been stable at low levels in recent months. But with growth running at a solid clip, firms will face increasing pressure on capacity, and it seems only a matter of time before inflation begins to push higher.

NZ business confidence and inflation expectations



1996 1998 2000 2002 2004 2006 2008 2010 2012 2014 2016

NZ Oct building consents

Nov 30 (subject to quake-related delay), Last: 0.2%, Westpac f/c: 3.0%

- After strong growth in June, residential consents have been weak for three months, with two consecutive declines and near-zero growth in September.
- We expect to see growth return this month, with stronger readings for both Auckland and Canterbury after they both fell strongly in September.
- Large swathes of the Auckland Unitary Plan became operative mid-November, so looking further out, we would expect to see stronger growth in Auckland residential consents.



NZ housing activity

NZ Q3 terms of trade

Dec 1, Last: -2.1%, WBC f/c -1.0%, Mkt f/c: 0.0%

- The terms of trade are estimated to have fallen 1% in the September quarter, following a 2.1% decline in June. This would see the terms of trade around 9% below 2014's multi-decade high.
- Import prices are estimated to have fallen 1.2% in the quarter, as softness in import prices stemming from low global inflation and the strengthening NZ dollar are partly offset by a rise in fuel import prices.
- Meanwhile, export prices are estimated to have fallen 2.2%, weighed down by the strengthening NZ dollar, while global prices remained broadly flat. Export prices and the terms of trade are set to improve over the next six months, as the surge in global dairy prices since July translates into export receipts.

NZ Terms of Trade

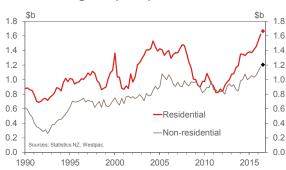


The week ahead

NZ Q3 building work put in place

Dec 2, Last: 5.5%, Westpac f/c: 2.4%

- New Zealand has enjoyed two consecutive quarters of very strong growth in building work put in place – up 5.7% and 5.5% for March and June respectively.
- Building consents continued to tick up through the June quarter, and we expect this will translate into additional solid growth in building work put in place in the September quarter.
- We expect to see growth of around 2.5% in residential building work put in place, and 2.1% in non-residential work. There is some upside risk to the residential component, but our assumption is a slower rate of delivery of new building due to rising capacity constraints in centres where construction demand is growing fastest.

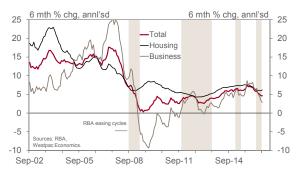


NZ real building work put in place

Aus Oct private sector credit Nov 30, Last: 0.4%, WBC f/c: 0.4% Mkt f/c: 0.4%, Range: 0.3% to 0.6%

- Credit to the private sector lost momentum over the past year. A
 0.6% average pace in Q3 2015 gave way to a 0.5% rate in Q4 2015
 and Q1 2016, slowing to 0.4% in Q2 and Q3 2016. Key to this slower
 pace were: tighter lending conditions in the housing market during
 the second half of 2015; and businesses delaying borrowing plans
 ahead of the July Federal election.
- In September, credit grew by 0.4%, with housing a 0.5% and business credit of only 0.2%. For October, we expect credit to expand by 0.4%. RBA rate cuts in May and August will provide a boost to housing. That said, the impact may be relatively modest by historical standards. On business, we anticipate a small rise, noting that commercial finance staged a partial rebound in July and was broadly flat in August and September, following sharp falls mid-year.

Credit: a loss of momentum



Aus Oct dwelling approvals Nov 30 Last: -8.7%, WBC f/c: -2.0%

Mkt f/c: 1.5%, Range: -4.5% to 5.0%

- Dwelling approvals recorded a larger than expected 8.7% fall in Sep driven by a 20%+ drop in high rise unit approvals which were retracing from a high starting point following a big surge in July. Moves across other segments were mixed but mostly hinted at an underlying trend softening.
- Although tricky to pick month to month, we expect a further decline in high rise approvals to come through in coming quarters with upstream indicators such as site purchases suggesting activity in the segment could pull back by about a quarter over the next year. Activity in other segments is likely to remain fairly well supported though, particularly given recent rate cuts. Overall we expect Oct to show a 2% decline with risks centering on the volatile high rise segment.





Aus Q3 private business capex Dec 1, Last: -5.4%, WBC f/c: -5.0% Mkt f/c: -3.0%, Range: -5.8% to 0.0%

and 1/c. -3.0%, hange. -5.8% to 0.0%

- Private business capex is falling, led lower by mining.
 In Q3, capex fell by 5.4%, with building & structures -10.6% and equipment +2.8%. By industry, mining -16% and services +0.8%.
- For Q3, we expect –5%, in line with recent outcomes.
- Building & structures, looks set for another sharp fall, down a forecast 9%. Weakness will be in mining, as well as commercial building (which is largely services), which has turned down.
- Equipment spending prospects are more difficult to gauge. We anticipate a small gain, of only 0.5%, with a potential rise in the service sectors offsetting weakness in mining. There are downside risks, with businesses potentially delaying spending due to Federal election uncertainty.

CAPEX: by industry by asset



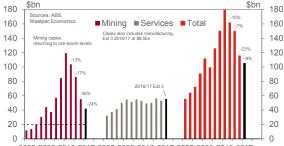
The week ahead

Aus private capex expectations, AUDbn

Dec 1, Last: 2016/17, Est 3: 105, -9.1%

- Business capex plans for 2016/17 are understandably weak as mining investment deflates following the boom and with the service sectors yet to commit to a sustained lift in spending.
- To recap: Est 3 for 2016/17 was \$105bn, -9.1% vs Est 3 a year ago, down \$10.5bn. Avg realisation ratios (RRs) imply -13%.
- Est 3 for mining is -24%, down \$13bn, or -29% on avg RRs, more than fully accounting for weakness in aggregate capex plans.
 For services, Est 3 on Est 3 is +4%, but -1% on avg RRs ~ notably commercial building activity has turned down. The results implied by avg RRs are consistent with our forecasts.
- This survey, conducted in October and November, will include Estimate 4. We anticipate an Est 4 of around \$110bn. This would be 12% below Est 4 a year ago and would (depending on the industry split) still imply -13% based on avg RRs.

Capex plans, by industry: Estimate 3

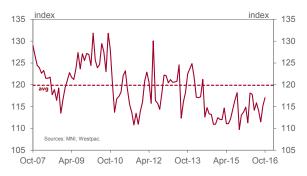


2005 2009 2013 2017 2005 2009 2013 2017 2005 2009 2013 2017

Chn Nov Westpac-MNI Consumer Sentiment Nov 30, Last: 117.1

- The Westpac MNI China Consumer Sentiment Indicator rose 1.7% to 117.1 in October, extending the bounce from August's weather-affected low and putting the indicator back near the highs seen earlier in the year. That said, the measure remains well below its long run average of 120.
- The November survey was in the field over the first half of the month. The economic data flow has again been a touch better over the last month, albeit just, extending the gradual improving trend seen in previous months rather than showing a further acceleration. It will be particularly interesting to see if the US presidential election result and subsequent sharp moves in the yuan impact sentiment.

Westpac MNI China CSI

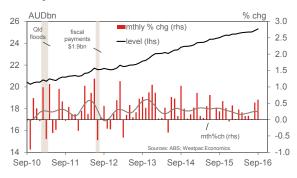


Aus Oct retail trade

Dec 2, Last: 0.6%, WBC f/c: 0.3% Mkt f/c: 0.3%, Range: 0.1% to 0.6%

- Retail sales posted a 0.6% gain in Sep, a welcome result building on a 0.5% rise in Aug that followed a six month run of disappointingly weak gains. That said, the wash-up for Q3 as a whole highlighted that gains have been driven by firmer prices rather than a pick-up in volumes.
- The October update should shed more light on whether demand is firming – although as always results may say more about specific challenges facing the retail sector rather than wider consumer demand conditions. Consumer sentiment nudged into slight positive territory in Oct. However labour market conditions and incomes still look to have been under pressure. On balance we expect a 0.3% gain with risks, we suspect, to the downside, particularly if price discounting intensifies again.

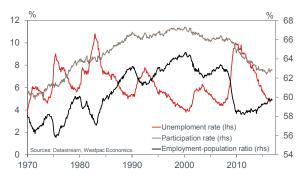
Monthly retail sales



US Nov payrolls Dec 2, Last: 161k, WBC 170k

- Nonfarm payrolls came in a touch below expectations in October at 161k. However, +44k in back revisions to the two prior months were also reported, leaving the 3-month average at 176k and the 2016 average at 181k.
- Employment growth therefore remains strong, well ahead of growth in the population. Had it not been for the uplift in participation since September 2015, the unemployment rate would be nearer 4.5% than its current level of 4.9%.
- Come November, another solid gain for employment is anticipated, circa 170k. That would see the annual growth pace remain robust at 1.6%yr and the unemployment rate unchanged at 4.9%. Changes in the participation rate remain the primary risk to our forecasts. At this juncture, the risk is that participation edges lower and, as a result, the unemployment rate falls to 4.8%.

Employment g'th should see unemp rate fall



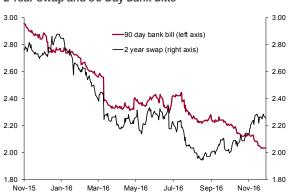
Data calendar

		Last		Westpac forecast	Risk/Comment
Mon 28					
Chn	Oct industrial profits %yr	7.7%	-	-	Aided by commodity prices.
Eur	ECB President Draghi	-	-	-	Speaking on economic developments at European Parliament.
	M3 money supply	-	-	-	Credit data also due.
JK	Nov Nationwide house prices	0.0%	0.2%	-	Housing market has lost momentum. Low supply still supporting prices
US	Nov Dallas Fed manufacturing activity	-1.5	1.5	-	Has been firming in recent months.
Fue 29					
Eur	Oct economic confidence	106.3	-	_	ECB and Trump market reaction supporting confidence.
	Oct consumer confidence (final)	-6.1	-	-	Sentiment at robust level; perceived family finances positive.
	Oct business climate indicator	0.55	-	-	Has been helped by EUR and credit availability.
Ger	Nov CPI %yr (provisional)	0.7%		-	Very weak considering strength of labour market.
JK	Sep net lending secured on dwellings, £b	3.2		-	The housing market has lost some momentum in recent months.
JIC	Sep mortgage approvals	62.9k		_	Approvals have eased off as the housing market has softened.
JS	Q3 GDP (annualised, 2nd estimate)	2.9%			Revisions will be negligible.
13	Sep S&P/C-S house prices %yr				8.8
		5.1%		-	Higher rates to test price growth in early 2017.
	Nov Conference Board consumer conf.	98.6		-	Trump supports gain in confidence.
	Fedspeak	-	-	-	Powell speaking in Indianapolis.
Ned 30					
NZ	RBNZ Nov Financial Stability Report	-	-	-	Watch for developments on further macropudential tools.
	Oct building permits	0.2%	-	3.0%	Tentative date. A lift expected after softness in recent months.
	Nov ANZ business confidence survey	24.5	-	-	
Aus	Oct dwelling approvals	-8.7%	+1.5%	-2.0%	High rise to continue pulling back from recent peaks.
	Oct private sector credit	0.4%	0.4%		A loss of momentum in 2016, both business & housing.
Chn	Nov Westpac-MNI China Cons Sentiment	117.1	-	-	Below LR avg. Economic data touch better, potential US election impac
Eur	Nov CPI %yr (provisional)	0.5%		_	Advance estimate; core inflation also remains weak at 0.8%yr.
	ECB President Draghi	_	_	_	Speaking on the future of Europe at university lecture in Madrid.
JK	Nov GfK consumer confidence	-3	_		While down from earlier peaks, confidence has been resilient post–Brexit
JS	Nov ADP employment change	147k		-	Typically a bad predictor of nonfarm payrolls.
12					
	Oct personal income	0.3%			Solid wage gains continue
	Oct personal spending	0.5%			and together with credit are supporting spending.
	Oct PCE deflator	0.2%		0.3%	, , , ,
	Nov Chicago PMI	50.6		-	Has pulled back to modest levels.
	Oct pending home sales	1.5%	0.2%	-	Lead indicator for existing home sales.
	Fed's Beige Book	-	-	-	Comments from the regional Feds on economic conditions.
	Fedspeak	-	-	-	Kaplan speaking in New York.
	Fedspeak	-	-	-	Mester speaking on economic outlook and policy in Pittsburgh.
Can	Q3 GDP (annualised)	-1.6%	3.4%	3.4%	Growth to bounce back following temporary disruptions in Q2.
Thu 1					
NZ	Q3 terms of trade	-2.1%	0.0%	-1.0%	Tentative date. Export and import prices are both expected to decline.
Aus	Q3 private new capital expenditure	-5.4%			Mining & commercial building weakness, equipment +0.5%.
	2016/17 capex plans, Est 4, AUDbn	105.2		-	Est 3 is 9.1% below Est 3 a yr ago, led lower by mining.
	Nov AiG PMI	50.9		-	Manfn'g index has rebounded, supported by housing & lower dollar.
	Nov CoreLogic home value index	0.5%		0.2%	Daily index shows small gain – very uneven by city and month to month
Cha	<u> </u>			0.270	
Chn	Nov manufacturing PMI	51.2			PMI data has carried a more positive tone of late
	Nov non-manufacturing PMI	54.0		-	with services continuing to outperform manufacturing.
	Nov Caixin China PMI	51.2		-	Weaker currency versus USD a positive; but TWI stable.
Eur	Nov Markit manufacturing PMI (final)	53.7	-	-	Flash estimate pointed to a further improvement in conditions.
	Oct unemployment rate	10.0%	-	-	Very slow progress is being made.
Ger	Nov Markit manufacturing PMI (final)	54.4	-	-	EUR and domestic demand both increasingly supportive.
JK	Nov Markit manufacturing PMI (final)	54.3	-	-	The lower sterling has been a boon for manufacturers.
JS	Initial jobless claims	251k	-	-	Claims remain at very low levels.
	Nov Markit manufacturing PMI (final)	53.9	-	-	More positive than ISM at present.
	Nov ISM manufacturing	51.9		-	Modest growth continues.
	Fedspeak	_		_	Kaplan speaking in San Antonio at entrepreneurship forum.
	Fedspeak	_	_	_	Mester giving opening remarks at conference on financial stability.
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Can	Nov RBC Canadian Manufacturing PMI	-	-	-	CAD and oil price impacts offsetting.
Fri 2		E 50.		0.101	Territoria del Decidential de la contra de la contra de
NZ	Q3 building work put in place	5.5%		2.4%	Tentative date. Residential and non-residential activity lifting.
Aus	Oct retail sales	0.6%			Better gains in Aug–Sep albeit driven by prices rather than volumes.
JS	Nov non–farm payrolls	161k		170k	
	Nov ISM New York	49.2	-	-	Has lingered at low levels.

New Zealand forecasts

Economic Forecasts		March	years		Calendar years			
% change	2015	2016	2017f	2018f	2014	2015	2016f	2017f
GDP (Production) ann avg	3.6	2.5	3.5	3.2	3.8	2.5	3.4	3.2
Employment	3.2	2.0	4.8	2.2	3.6	1.4	5.8	2.0
Unemployment Rate % s.a.	5.4	5.2	5.0	4.3	5.5	5.0	4.8	4.5
CPI	0.3	0.4	1.3	1.2	0.8	0.1	1.2	1.1
Current Account Balance % of GDP	-3.5	-3.1	-2.9	-2.8	-3.2	-3.4	-2.9	-2.8

Financial Forecasts	Dec-16	Mar-17	Jun-17	Sep-17	Dec-17	Mar-18
Cash	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75
90 Day bill	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.10
2 Year Swap	2.30	2.40	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.50
5 Year Swap	2.70	2.80	2.90	3.00	3.00	3.00
10 Year Bond	3.00	3.10	3.20	3.25	3.30	3.25
NZD/USD	0.72	0.72	0.71	0.70	0.68	0.66
NZD/AUD	0.94	0.95	0.96	0.96	0.94	0.94
NZD/JPY	76.3	77.8	78.1	77.0	76.2	75.2
NZD/EUR	0.66	0.67	0.68	0.67	0.67	0.65
NZD/GBP	0.58	0.59	0.58	0.57	0.56	0.55
TWI	77.9	78.6	78.6	78.0	76.7	75.3



2 Year Swap and 90 Day Bank Bills

NZ interest rates as at market open on Monday 28 November 2016

Interest Rates	Current	Two weeks ago	One month ago
Cash	sh 1.75%		2.00%
30 Days	1.92%	1.97%	2.11%
60 Days	1.98%	2.01%	2.12%
90 Days	2.04%	2.09%	2.13%
2 Year Swap	2.26%	2.27%	2.14%
5 Year Swap	2.79%	2.74%	2.42%

NZD/USD and NZD/AUD



NZ foreign currency mid-rates as at Monday 28 November 2016

Exchange Rates	Current	Two weeks ago	One month ago
NZD/USD	0.7041	0.7106	0.7155
NZD/EUR	0.6640	0.6562	0.6510
NZD/GBP	0.5641	0.5644	0.5874
NZD/JPY	79.58	75.94	74.73
NZD/AUD	0.9455	0.9420	0.9431
тwi	77.77	77.42	77.27

International forecasts

Economic Forecasts (Calendar Years)	2013	2014	2015	2016f	2017f	2018f
Australia						
Real GDP % yr	2.0	2.7	2.4	2.9	3.0	2.8
CPI inflation % annual	2.7	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.8	2.5
Unemployment %	5.8	6.2	5.8	5.5	5.5	5.4
Current Account % GDP	-3.4	-3.0	-4.7	-2.9	-2.6	-2.5
United States						
Real GDP %yr	1.5	2.4	2.6	1.5	2.1	2.1
Consumer Prices %yr	1.5	1.6	0.1	1.2	1.7	1.7
Unemployment Rate %	7.4	6.2	5.3	4.9	4.6	4.5
Current Account %GDP	-2.3	-2.3	-2.6	-2.7	-3.0	-3.1
Japan						
Real GDP %yr	1.4	0.0	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7
Euroland						
Real GDP %yr	-0.3	0.9	1.6	1.6	1.2	1.3
United Kingdom						
Real GDP %yr	2.2	2.9	2.2	2.1	1.6	1.4
China						
Real GDP %yr	7.7	7.3	6.9	6.7	6.5	6.0
East Asia ex China						
Real GDP %yr	4.2	4.1	3.7	3.7	3.9	3.8
World						
Real GDP %yr	3.3	3.4	3.1	3.3	3.5	3.4
Forecasts finalised 11 November 2016						

Interest Rate Forecasts	Latest	Dec-16	Mar-17	Jun-17	Sep-17	Dec-17	Mar-18	Jun-18
Australia								
Cash	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50
90 Day Bill	1.76	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80
10 Year Bond	2.81	2.65	2.70	2.75	2.80	2.90	2.95	3.00
International								
Fed Funds	0.375	0.625	0.625	0.875	0.875	1.125	1.125	1.375
US 10 Year Bond	2.40	2.25	2.30	2.35	2.40	2.50	2.55	2.60
ECB Deposit Rate	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40

Exchange Rate Forecasts	Latest	Dec-16	Mar-17	Jun-17	Sep-17	Dec-17	Mar-18	Jun-18
AUD/USD	0.7400	0.77	0.76	0.74	0.73	0.72	0.72	0.70
USD/JPY	113.90	106	108	110	110	112	114	116
EUR/USD	1.0540	1.09	1.07	1.05	1.04	1.02	1.01	1.00
AUD/NZD	1.0590	1.07	1.06	1.07	1.09	1.11	1.09	1.09

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