

AE Altius Short Duration Bond Fund (Ordinary)

Altius Asset Management employs a diversified strategy to fixed interest funds management that aims to take advantage of the mispricing of bonds in all market conditions. The AE Altius Short Duration Bond Fund is an Australian fixed interest fund that invests in companies which conduct their business and apply capital responsibly, giving consideration to a range of environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues.

Performance as of May 2026

	1 mth %	3 mths %	1 yr %	3 yrs % p.a.	5 yrs % p.a.	7 yrs % p.a.	Since inception % p.a.
Gross total return	1.19	0.70	3.87	4.77	2.70	2.36	2.88
Net total return	1.15	0.58	3.36	4.26	4.26	2.19	1.79
Benchmark	0.99	0.62	2.56	3.54	1.66	1.51	2.19
Excess to benchmark	0.16	-0.05	0.81	0.73	0.53	0.29	0.07

Net total returns are calculated after fees and expenses and assume the reinvestment of distributions. Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance. Gross total returns are calculated before fees and expenses and assume the reinvestment of distributions. Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance.

Effective 1 July 2016, Benchmark is 50% Reserve Bank of Australia Cash Rate and 50% Bloomberg AusBond Composite 0+Yr Index and applied retrospectively for all periods. Excess to benchmark is calculated on Net total return.

Inception date for performance calculations is 21 November 2014.

Portfolio Performance and Activity

May opened on an optimistic note for markets, with oil prices falling sharply on reports that the US and Iran were close to reaching a preliminary agreement to end the conflict. Brent crude declined from US\$114.44/bbl on 4 May to US\$100.06/bbl by 7 May, reflecting growing hopes that disruptions to the Strait of Hormuz would soon be resolved.

However, sentiment reversed mid-month after President Trump publicly rejected Iran's proposal, describing it as "TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE" and raising the prospect of renewed military escalation. Oil prices subsequently recovered and, together with a stronger-than-expected US core CPI print on 12 May, reignited inflation concerns. This backdrop pushed several global bond yields to multi-decade highs. By 19 May, the US 30-year Treasury yield had closed at a post-2007 high of 5.18%, Germany's 10-year Bund reached a post-2011 high of 3.19%, and Japan's 10-year government bond yield climbed to a post-1997 high of 2.78%. UK gilts also came under pressure, with the 10-year gilt briefly reaching a post-2008 high of

5.17% on 15 May, exacerbated by domestic political uncertainty surrounding the Labour government.

Market sentiment shifted materially in the final week of May. Reports of an unofficial interim peace draft and confirmation of a 60-day memorandum of understanding between the US and Iran drove oil prices lower once again, with Brent ending the month at US\$92.05/bbl. Bond markets rallied in tandem, with the US 10-year Treasury yield declining for seven consecutive sessions — its longest streak in more than a year — finishing the month at 4.45% after reaching an intra-month high of 4.69%. In Australia, yields also moved lower, with three-year and 10-year government bond yields ending the month at 4.49% and 4.86%, down 20bps and 18bps respectively.

The RBA increased the cash rate by 25bps to 4.35% on 5 May, effectively reversing all of the easing delivered in 2025. During the post-meeting press conference, the Governor noted that the three consecutive rate hikes had given the RBA "space" to assess how both the conflict and the domestic economy evolve. This was the closest the Bank has

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come to providing forward guidance and suggests it is likely to pause at the June meeting.

Australia's April labour market data strengthened the case for a pause. The unemployment rate rose to 4.5% from 4.3%, its highest level since November 2021, while full-time employment declined by 10.7k. April CPI data, released on 27 May, showed headline inflation easing to 4.2% year-on-year, below the market expectation of 4.4%. The trimmed mean, the RBA's preferred measure of inflation, was unchanged at 3.4% year-on-year. While inflation remains elevated, the moderation in headline CPI was well below the RBA's May 2026 Statement on Monetary Policy forecast of 4.8%. Combined with softer economic data, weaker employment outcomes and the fallout from the poorly received Federal Budget, markets reassessed the outlook for policy, with only 17bps of further tightening priced by December 2026.

The US-Iran conflict remained the dominant driver of credit markets throughout May. Optimism surrounding a potential peace agreement, a strong US corporate earnings season and continued momentum in AI-related investment themes supported risk sentiment and pushed US equities higher. Over the month, the S&P 500 and Nasdaq gained 5.3% and 8.4% respectively, providing a favourable backdrop for tighter global credit spreads, with US investment grade spreads approaching multi-decade lows. Australian credit markets benefited from these moves, with financial and industrial spreads tightening by 3bps and 2bps respectively, ending the month at 77bps and 96bps.

Primary markets remained very active both globally and domestically during May. US investment grade issuance totalled US\$164 billion for the month, while Australian issuance reached \$3.92 billion. Notable transactions included Qantas' \$500 million 10-year deal at +180bps, which had previously been delayed by the conflict. ETSA completed a \$300 million five-year green bond transaction at +95bps, in which the funds participated, while Transurban Queensland issued \$720 million across 7.25-year and 10-year maturities at +140bps and +160bps respectively to refinance upcoming EUR and USD maturities.

Looking ahead to June, data centre operator CDC Australia announced an inaugural 30nc7.5-year hybrid transaction. Following NextDC's issuance in April, the deal highlights the continued strength of investor demand for AI-related infrastructure opportunities.

Socially Responsible Investments in Focus

In May, the Federal Government delivered the 2026 Federal Budget which pointed to a shift in Australia's ESG policy, away from expansion and towards consolidation and delivery. The Government remains committed to its net-zero and energy transition objectives, but the focus has moved to fiscal discipline, energy security, and implementing existing programs rather than launching new climate initiatives. This is reflected in around \$2.2 billion of savings, largely driven by reallocating uncommitted funding from renewable energy programs.

From an environmental perspective, support for the transition continues, but with a more selective approach to capital. Funding for early-stage technologies has been trimmed, most notably with the Hydrogen Headstart program reducing to around \$1 billion for its second round. Cuts to solar and battery programs also point to a broader move away from widespread subsidies towards more targeted investment.

Regulatory reform is becoming a central policy lever. The Government is progressing significant changes to environmental approvals under the EPBC Act, including the establishment of a federal Environmental Protection Agency from 1 July 2026. These reforms aim to deliver more efficient and transparent project assessments while strengthening environmental standards and enforcement. The intent is to improve approval timelines and reduce bottlenecks across sectors such as renewables, infrastructure and data centres, although outcomes will depend on the implementation of new standards and compliance requirements.

Support for electrification and lower-carbon industry remains in place, including funding for cleaner fuels, EVs and distributed energy, alongside continued investment in biodiversity and carbon market integrity. However, there is limited new funding for climate adaptation and

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resilience, suggesting that longer-term physical risks may remain a gap in policy settings.

On governance, the approach to ESG reporting is becoming more pragmatic. The Government has proposed raising size thresholds for mandatory climate disclosures—effectively removing a portion of smaller companies from the regime—while consulting on simplified requirements, including clearer limits on Scope 3 data requests and more proportionate and practical assurance requirements. The framework remains aligned with global standards, but is increasingly calibrated to reduce compliance costs and implementation complexity.

Separately, the Government has also proposed a domestic gas reservation scheme, requiring LNG exporters to supply volumes equivalent to 20% of exports into the local market from July 2027. The policy is aimed at increasing domestic supply, easing price pressure and reducing exposure to global LNG volatility, while supporting energy security and industrial policy objectives. While the core design has been outlined, key aspects of implementation remain subject to consultation, leaving some uncertainty around how the scheme will ultimately operate in practice.

Stepping back, global developments also reinforce a more complex transition backdrop. The IEA expects fossil fuel investment—particularly in upstream oil and gas—to reach its highest level in around a decade, while clean energy investment continues to grow but is facing moderating momentum in some markets due to higher financing costs, supply chain pressures and policy delays. At the same time, capital is increasingly being directed towards energy security and system reliability. This points to a transition that is becoming less linear, with governments balancing decarbonisation against affordability and supply risks.

Against this backdrop, policy approaches continue to diverge across jurisdictions. In the US, regulators are moving in a different direction on disclosure. The SEC has formally proposed rescinding its 2024 climate disclosure rules in full, which would have mandated standardised reporting of climate risks and emissions in company filings. The rollback underscores increasing regulatory fragmentation across jurisdictions and, if implemented, could influence how other markets balance investor protection, political pressures, and the cost of corporate climate disclosure.

Outlook

Globally, central banks' dual mandates are in tension. The global energy crisis caused by the Middle East conflict has concurrently lifted inflation via energy costs while also creating production disruption and a hit to consumer activity. Adding further complexity is the concentrated but significant capital expenditure expansion in AI technology.

Financial markets have largely factored in a lift in inflation. The persistence of, and damage from, this inflation are determined by the length of the conflict and the time required for downstream effects to work through. Markets are factoring in central bank cash rate rises.

Australia was already experiencing elevated inflation, largely related to the housing sector (which comprises 21% of measured inflation). The additional surge in inflation due to the outbreak of war in the Middle East has fed into direct inflationary measures such as transportation and energy costs.

Downstream price pressures across food, building materials, and aviation fuel are expected to emerge over the following quarter, with Australian inflation expected to peak at around 4.8% over that period.

The RBA has articulated that "nothing can be done about the inflation currently in the system." The nuance is that the RBA's decision is essentially to hike in order to prevent second-order inflation arising from a price–wage spiral.

Until it is clear that inflation has already peaked, the RBA will maintain a tightening bias.

The peak in short-dated bonds may already be in place, irrespective of the RBA's policy stance. We note that the labour market is receiving support from the construction of data centres; however, outside of that sector, conditions are a little softer than earlier, as reflected in an increase in the unemployment rate.

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Global oil prices have softened somewhat and, by definition, direct inflation impacts will ease in the measured period ahead, even though indirect impacts of the earlier rise in oil prices are still working through. The earlier reduction in fuel excise has moderated the peak in inflation. The combined effect is to bring forward the inflationary pulse at a lower level.

The introduction of significant changes to negative gearing and capital gains tax within the Australian federal government budget has further weighed on consumer confidence.

We believe this limits the RBA tightening cycle to four rate hikes, with one further from here if wage decisions later this year are higher than expected (4.35% to 4.60%).

Our base assumptions factor in the adaptability of global trade and oil production, but not necessarily a resolution to the conflict.

Historically, yields on three-year bonds have tended to reach their peak at or below the terminal cash rate, and often do so prior to the terminal rate being achieved. In the current environment, this trend is likely to continue given that the Reserve Bank of Australia's decisions are data-dependent, which by nature reflects historical information.

Three-year bonds are projected to trade around 4.45%. Above 4.60%, we believe the implied cash rate would be excessive.

We expect the yield on long-dated Australian government bonds to trade within a range centred around 4.85% for ten-year sovereign bonds.

An increasingly important alternative scenario involves a reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. This is currently not factored into bond markets and remains, in our view, highly likely, though the timing is unclear.

Oil prices could swiftly turn disinflationary. We would expect a significant boost to oil output from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf states, as the OPEC cartel

fragments and budget repair from lost oil revenue becomes an imperative.

This alternative scenario — a reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and oil prices moving back toward USD \$60 per barrel — likely biases three- and ten-year bonds meaningfully lower than projected.

With a lag, a resolution would lead inflation lower by approximately 1.0% to 1.5% in the quarters following, with inflation arriving in the middle of the RBA target band during Q2 next year. This could lead the market to contemplate policy easing in H2 2027.

Sector Profile

Asset Class	Portfolio %	Benchmark %
Agencies	3.22	0.97
Asset Backed	10.59	--
Financials	41.92	2.94
Industrials	15.49	2.24
RBA Cash	--	50.00
Semi Government	20.16	17.44
Sovereigns	2.92	22.68
Supranationals	3.80	3.73
[Cash]	1.90	--

Ratings Exposure

Rating	Portfolio %	Benchmark %
A	28.22	1.53
AA	28.00	14.20
AAA	21.80	32.57
BBB	21.98	1.70
RBA Cash	--	50.00

Maturity Profile

Term	Portfolio %	Benchmark %
0 - 1 Year	7.69	54.62
1 - 3 Years	32.61	10.72
3 - 5 Years	26.64	9.33
5 - 7 Year	16.30	8.99
7 - 10 Year	11.19	10.28
10+ Years	5.57	6.06

Top 20 Issuers

Issuer	Portfolio %	Benchmark %
New South Wales Treasury Corp.	8.12	4.90
Treasury Corporation of Victoria	3.97	4.79

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South Australian Government Financing Authority	3.68	1.02
Commonwealth Bank of Australia	3.16	0.26
Government of Australia	3.14	22.64
Wesfarmers Limited	2.90	0.03
Macquarie Bank Limited	2.82	0.04
Tasmanian Public Finance Corp.	2.45	0.40
Housing Australia	2.42	0.07
APOLLO Series 2023-1 Trust	2.26	--
Stockland Trust Management Ltd.	2.16	0.05
GAIF Bond Issuer Pty Limited	2.08	0.05
Heritage & People's Choice Ltd.	1.95	--
Mirvac Group Finance Ltd.	1.95	0.03
Victoria Power Networks (Finance) Pty Ltd.	1.90	0.04
Western Australian Treasury Corp.	1.86	1.09
BNP Paribas SA	1.86	0.02
KfW	1.74	0.48
Teachers Mutual Bank Limited	1.73	--
Bank Australia Limited	1.73	--

Portfolio Summary Statistics

	Portfolio %	Benchmark %
Yield to maturity (%)	5.11	4.88
Modified duration (years)	2.49	2.40

Fund Snapshot

APIR code	AUS0071AU
Inception Date	21 Nov 2014
Distribution frequency	Quarterly
Minimum initial investment	\$5,000
Fund size (net asset value)	\$m
Management fee*	0.37% p.a
Buy/Sell spread	0.05%/0.05%
Advice fee	Available

*Refer to the Fund's Product Disclosure Statement for more details on the Fund's management costs which also include recoverable expenses and indirect costs. Total management costs may vary.

Ratings / Awards



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The AE Altius Short Duration Bond Fund won the Lonsec Innovation Award 2016, which recognises the major innovators and industry leaders who are shaping the future of Australia's wealth creation sector. The Lonsec Awards go beyond the pure quantitative, looking at the people behind the investment decisions, the rigour of the investment process and philosophy, and the new thought and innovations that create real value for investors.

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The Altius business is now owned by Australian Ethical, however Australian Unity provides transitional support services to Australian Ethical for Altius investors and advisers. For more information on the AE Altius Short Duration Bond Fund, please contact your financial adviser or our Investor Services Team.

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