

Product Review

iShares Global Bond Index Fund

Key information

FUND MANAGER	BLACKROCK INVESTMENT MANAG	EMENT (AUSTRALIA) LIMITED
RESPONSIBLE ENTITY		MENT MANAGEMENT AUSTRALIA) LIMITED
APIR CODE		BGL0008AU
ASSET CLASS		FIXED INTEREST
SECTOR		GLOBAL BONDS
SUB SECTOR		BETA - PASSIVE
INVESTMENT TYPE		MANAGED FUND
PDS OBJECTIVE	THE FUND AIMS TO PROVIDE I PERFORMANCE (BEFORE FEES, HEDGING) OF THE BLOOMBERG	TAX, AND CURRENCY
INDEX PROVIDER		BLOOMBERG
UNDERLYING INDE	X BLOOMBERG GLOBAL AGG	REGATE INDEX (AUD HEDGED)
DERIVATIVE USE N	MAY BE USED TO MANAGE RISK AN BE USED TO LI	ND RETURN (CANNOT EVERAGE THE FUND)
SECURITIES LENDI	ING	NONE
FUND INCEPTION		OCTOBER 1997
DISTRIBUTION FRE	QUENCY	QUARTERLY

Fees & costs (% per annum)

FUND SIZE

MANAGEMENT FEES AND COSTS	0.2
PERFORMANCE FEE COSTS	0
NET TRANSACTION COSTS	0.15
NET OF BUY SPREAD / SELL SPREAD	0.1 / 0.1
ANNUAL FEES AND COSTS (PDS)	0.35

WHERE MANAGEMENT FEES & COSTS IS NULL "-" NO DATA HAS BEEN PROVIDED AND THE ANNUAL FEES & COSTS (PDS) CANNOT BE CALCULATED. REFER TO THE PDS FOR THE FEE INFORMATION.

What this Rating means

The 'Recommended Index' rating indicates that Lonsec has strong conviction the financial product can generate risk adjusted returns in line with relevant objectives. The financial product is considered an appropriate entry point to this asset class or strategy.

Strengths

- BlackRock is a leading global manager of passive strategies, allowing investors to enjoy the benefits of their scale, experience, and resources.
- The Fund is of sufficient scale to offer broad global bond market diversification achieved by indexing a widely used global bond market index.
- The Fund has maintained all distribution payments over the past 24 months.

Weaknesses

\$4.3BN (DEC 23)

- The Underlying Index methodology and constituent details are property of Bloomberg and are not readily available to non-subscribers.
- The Manager does not regularly disclose the Fund's underlying portfolio, somewhat reducing the overall transparency compared to competitive peers.
- The Fund has the highest fee in its peer group.

Fund Risk Characteristics

	LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY RISK	•		
CAPITAL VOLATILITY		•	
SECURITY CONCENTRATION RISK	•		
SECURITY LIQUIDITY RISK		•	
CREDIT RISK	•		
INTEREST RATE RISK		•	
FOREIGN CURRENCY RISK		•	

Risk categories are based on Lonsec's qualitative opinion of the risks inherent in the financial product's asset class and the risks relative to other financial products in the relevant Lonsec sector universe.

BIOmetrics

Aggregated risks

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
STD RISK MEASURE			•				

A Standard Risk Measure score of 3 equates to a Risk Label of 'Low to Medium' and an estimated number of negative annual returns over any 20 year period of 1 to less than 2. This is a measure of expected frequency (not magnitude) of capital losses, calculated in accordance with ASFA/FSC guidelines.

	LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
RISK TO INCOME		•)

Features and benefits

LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
	•	
	•	
LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
•		
	•	
	•	
		•

Fee BIOmetrics are a function of expected total fee as a percentage of expected total return.

What is this Fund?

- iShares by BlackRock ('the Manager') has adopted a passive investment strategy in managing the iShares Global Bond Index Fund ('BGL0008AU' or 'the Fund'). The Fund tracks the performance of the Bloomberg Global Aggregate AUD Hedged Index ('the Underlying Index'), a broad-based market capitalisation weighted index that includes investment grade debt securities issued by governments, government-related entities, and corporates, predominately in global developed markets with a minor allocation to emerging markets. The Underlying Index has been developed by Bloomberg ('the Index Provider').
- The Manager has adopted a sampling approach to track the Underlying Index. Under this approach, the Fund will hold a representative basket of securities to closely match the Underlying Index's risk profile. As at November 2023, the Fund's portfolio characteristics closely matched that of the Underlying Index, with a modified duration of 6.52 years and a 42.08% allocation towards AA-rated securities.
- The Fund is currency hedged which substantially reduces, but does not eliminate, the risk associated with movements in foreign currencies. To replicate the currency hedging component of the Underlying Index, BlackRock on behalf of the Fund will enter into foreign currency forward contracts designed to offset the Fund's currency exposure.
- The Fund has not made a hedging election under the Taxation of Financial Arrangements ('TOFA') rules. As such, the timing of gains and losses on the hedging financial arrangements are not matched with the timing of gains or losses on the hedged item. Instead, gains and losses on hedging arrangements are allocated to income years according to an internal rate of return. This means foreign exchange rate movements will likely impact the Fund's annual distribution to unitholders to a higher degree than if the Fund made a hedging election under the TOFA rules.
- The Fund's PDS, dated 25 October 2023, disclosed Annual Fees and Costs ('AFC') totalling 0.35% p.a. This value comprises (1) management fee and costs of 0.20% p.a., and; (2) net transaction cost estimate of 0.15% p.a. In line with RG97, some fees and costs have been estimated by the issuer on a reasonable basis. Actual fees and costs may vary to these estimates, particularly with respect to net transaction costs.

Using this Fund

This is General Advice only and should be read in conjunction with the Disclaimer, Disclosure and Warning on the final page.

- Lonsec notes that the Manager has produced a Target Market Determination ('TMD') which forms part of the Responsible Entity's Design and Distribution Obligations for the Fund. Lonsec has collected the TMD that has been provided by the Manager and notes that this should be referred to for further details on the Target Market Summary, Description of the Target Market, and Review Triggers.
- The Fund is a 'long only', fixed income product and as such, will generally sit within the defensive component of a balanced portfolio.
- Fixed income funds are useful for investors seeking yields greater than cash or cash equivalents and those prepared to accept a low to moderate level of asset price volatility.
- Global and Australian fixed income funds typically perform better during periods of declining or stable interest rates and contracting or stable credit spreads.

Suggested Lonsec risk profile suitability

SECURE DEFENSIVE CONSERVATIVE BALANCED GROWTH HIGH GROWTH



BALANCED GROWTH HIGH GROV

For guidance on appropriate asset allocations and risk profiles, refer to the latest Lonsec Strategic Asset Allocation Review and Risk Profile Definitions on our website.

Changes Since Previous Lonsec Review

- In October 2023, the Net Transaction Costs for the Fund increased from 0.0% p.a. to 0.15% p.a. The Fund's management fee and cost has remained unchanged. As such, the Fund's AFC now is 0.35% p.a.
- Lonsec notes there have been no other significant changes to the investment process, or risk management process since the last review.

Lonsec Opinion of this Fund

People and resources

- BlackRock is a global leader in ETFs with over 1,100 iShares ETFs listed globally. Further, BlackRock also had US\$5.95 trillion of FUM invested across its suite of ETF and Index strategies as at September 2023. These funds are managed and brought to market by BlackRock, the largest asset management firm globally. BlackRock has significant scale and resources for effectively managing and structuring ETFs both in Australia and abroad and has a proven track record of successfully running index strategies.
- The Fund is managed by BlackRock's EMEA Core
 Portfolio Management Team which is based in
 the UK. The team is led by John Hutson with the
 day-to-day management of this Fund being the
 responsibility of portfolio managers Tristan Hockin,
 and Liz Nicol. Lonsec believes the team to be well
 resourced with sound knowledge of the modelbased process. As the Fund aims to closely match
 its Underlying Index's performance, considerable
 emphasis is placed on process and automation,

- which requires less investment staff than an actively managed process.
- The Portfolio Manager has discretion on the inclusion of securities either at the issue date or the end of the month. These temporary 'off benchmark' investments represent a modest reliance on manager experience and skill rather than a pure quantitative process.
- The Manager utilises BlackRock's Risk and Quantitative Analysis ('RQA') team for ongoing risk monitoring and reporting for the Fund. RQA is a separate unit with its own reporting lines. Lonsec considers RQA to have access to sophisticated risk monitoring tools which aid in providing the Fund with an effective risk management framework. The team also regularly meets with members of the RQA, with this interaction playing more of a risk reporting than a compliance role. RQA members do not have the power to veto investment decisions for the Fund.
- These teams are further supported by the wider operational staff across BlackRock as well as inhouse credit research analysts and traders. The team continues to collaborate globally and utilise BlackRock's global presence. Lonsec believes this adds to both efficiency and scalability.
- The Underlying Index provider, Bloomberg, is a globally significant and deeply experienced index provider. Bloomberg has an extensive history of compiling data across global financial markets.

Investment approach

- Lonsec views the Bloomberg Global Aggregate
 Index as the most widely accepted measure of
 broad-based global bond market performance and
 an effective way to gain exposure to fixed income
 securities issued predominately in developed markets
 and some exposure in emerging markets. Lonsec
 believes the screening process and methodology
 used to derive the Underlying Index is logical, with
 implementation provided by an experienced thirdparty index provider in Bloomberg.
- Lonsec notes that each key characteristic closely matched that of the Underlying Index as at November 2023. Moreover, a 'sampling approach' is commonly adopted for similar passive fixed income funds. While Lonsec considers that the 'full replication' approach could better match the risk and return characteristics of the Underlying Index at the margins, Lonsec concedes that such an approach is not optimal from a cost-benefit perspective for most fixed income indices due to a lack of liquidity in some securities. Given this, Lonsec considers a sampling approach to be the most effective means of hedging a Fund's exposure to the risk profile of the Underlying Index while also minimising trading costs.
- Lonsec considers BlackRock's Aladdin risk management system to be impressive and notes that it allows stress testing for funds to be conducted in addition to the daily monitoring of the standard risk metrics for the Fund.
- The Manager seeks to 'fully' hedge the Fund using a static hedging methodology referencing the net asset values (NAV) of the Fund's underlying holdings. The currency hedges are implemented using one-month forwards and are rolled on the last day of the month.

Almost all currencies are directly hedged, where not applicable, proxy currencies are employed.

ESG Integration

- Lonsec's ESG integration assessment considers the rigour and structure of the ESG process for the Fund and how well it integrates into the investment process and the Manager's overall policy and reporting framework. The assessment is not intended to assess the underlying holdings of the Fund's portfolio or the Manager's adherence to any form of impact, green/sustainable, or ethical standards.
- ESG integration for index tracking portfolios is largely limited to stewardship and engagement activities unless ESG considerations are clearly incorporated within the index. As such, for non-ESG driven indices, the ESG score provided by Lonsec is primarily an assessment of the overall ESG adoption, commitment, and policy framework implemented at the Manager level. Further, Lonsec notes that simple sector exclusions do not constitute the incorporation of ESG.
- At the corporate level Lonsec views the Manager's overall ESG policy framework and disclosure as ahead of peers. The Manager has an articulated commitment to the integration of ESG within their investment process with clear public positioning and evidence of a strong policy framework. The updated ESG policy and stewardship principles are freely available on the firm's website. The proxy voting policy and reporting on voting outcomes is stronger than peers with particular credit paid to the disclosure of voting rationale for controversial votes. The level of disclosure with respect to the Manager's engagement policies and outcomes is considered ahead of peers, particularly the firm's stewardship policies. Reporting on engagement outcomes is publicly available and the Manager is transparent about the engagement priorities, which focus on disclosure and climate change related issues.
- The Underlying Index used for this Fund has no basic filters applied and there is no integration of ESG factors in its construction.

Overall

- Lonsec has maintained the Fund's 'Recommended Index' rating. BlackRock is considered by Lonsec to be well resourced in terms of both personnel and systems and to be a leader in the passive investing space. Lonsec views the offering as an efficient vehicle for investors to gain broad exposure to developed global fixed income markets. Further, the Fund has a strong track record of closely replicating the Index.
- However, Lonsec notes the Fund is the highest fee product in its peer group. Additionally, Lonsec considers the transparency of the Fund to be lower than some competitors among the broader passive fixed income universe, noting that the Fund's underlying holdings are not publicly available.

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People and Resources

BlackRock Inc. is a global asset management business with products that span active, enhanced, and index strategies across markets and asset classes. As at September 2023, BlackRock Inc. managed approximately US\$9.1 trillion. Products are offered in a variety of structures including separate accounts, mutual funds, other pooled investment vehicles, and iShares ETFs. BlackRock Inc is publicly listed on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) and the company has a majority of independent directors. BlackRock Investment Management (Australia) Limited ('BlackRock') is a wholly owned subsidiary of BlackRock Inc. BlackRock is the Investment Manager and Responsible Entity of the Funds. As at 30 September 2023, BlackRock Australia had FUM of \$207.48 billion.

Size and experience

NAME	POSITION	EXPERIENCE INDUSTRY / FIRM
JOHN HUTSON	HEAD OF INDEXED FIXED INCOME, PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT	23 / 12
TRISTAN HOCKIN	SENIOR PORTFOLIO MANAGER	23 / 12
LIZ NICOL	PORTFOLIO MANAGER	6 / 6

The investment team responsible for managing the Fund is the London-based EMEA Fixed Income Core Portfolio Management Team, with both Hockin and Nicol responsible for managing the Fund. However, portfolio management resources are structured along asset class lines rather than a more traditional active/ passive distinction, meaning several more portfolio managers are abreast of the portfolio characteristics. The Fund also benefits from other members of BlackRock's research team who are primarily dedicated to ongoing quantitative research, focusing on the index methodology, the projection of index changes, and value-added trading strategies. There is considerable emphasis placed on process and automation, requiring fewer staff to maintain the portfolio than a typical actively managed fund.

Investment Approach

Overview

BlackRock employs a passive investment strategy designed to closely track the performance of the Underlying Index, before fees and expenses. The Manager uses 'stratified sampling' to achieve the risk/return characteristics of the Underlying Index. Stratified sampling is an indexing strategy that involves investing in a representative sample of securities that collectively have an investment profile similar to that of the Underlying Index. The securities selected are expected to have aggregate investment characteristics such as duration, maturity, credit ratings, yield, and liquidity similar to those of the Underlying Index. Lonsec believes that stratified sampling is the most appropriate investment strategy to track the performance of the Underlying Index as it factors in liquidity, transaction cost impact, and overall risk. Stratified sampling involves choosing a subset of index

eligible securities to create a portfolio that behaves like

an index. In many cases, holding every security in an index is not cost-effective as illiquid or thinly traded securities incur higher transaction costs and wider bid / ask spreads. Investing in a subset of securities that combine to match the overall risk profile of an index as it saves a fund from incurring unnecessary trading costs which can detract from total returns. A stratified sampling approach is usually accomplished by dividing the index into strata or "cells" along some of the more common fixed income security attributes such as maturity, sector, and credit quality. Securities are then chosen that have similar risk and return characteristics that replicate each of the cells and in units consistent with index exposures.

Underlying index

The Bloomberg Global Aggregate Index (AUD Hedged) is the hedged variant of a widely referenced measure of global investment grade debt. The multi-currency benchmark includes fixed-rate treasury, government-related, corporate, and securitised bond securities.

The Index Provider selects debt securities that form the Underlying Index based on the following eligibility criteria:

- Have a minimum credit rating of investment grade (BBB- or above);
- Must be denominated in an eligible currency and meet the minimum issue size requirements (as defined by the Index Provider);
- Each security must have at least one year until maturity, regardless of optionality; and
- Debt securities that offer fixed-rate coupons (including zero coupons).

The Index Provider has also deemed that specific debt securities are not suitable and will be permanently excluded from the Underlying Index, such as, but not limited to:

 Convertible notes, inflation-linked / floating-rate issues, private placements, collateralised bond obligations, synthetic securitisations, hybrid capital securities, and perpetual securities.

Credit quality ratings on securities are received from S&P, Moody's, and Fitch and converted to the equivalent S&P major rating category. This breakdown is provided by BlackRock and takes the median rating of the three agencies. When all three agencies rate a security, the lower two ratings are adopted whereas if only two agencies rate a security, then the lowest single rating is adopted.

The securities are weighted based on their gross market capitalisation and these proportions are rebalanced monthly.

INDEX METRIC		DATA
INDEX PROVIDER		BLOOMBERG
RESPONSIBILITY FOR IN	DEX CALCUI	_ATION BLOOMBERG
MINIMUM ISSUE SIZE	VARIES BY	MARKET/CURRENCY (E.G. US\$300M)
MATURITY	AT LEAS	ST ONE YEAR UNTIL FINAL MATURITY
COUPON		FIXED-RATE COUPON
MINIMUM COUNTERPAR RATING	TY CREDIT	INVESTMENT GRADE ONLY (>=BBB-)
CURRENCY		MULTI-CURRENCY HEDGED TO AUD

Transparency

The rules dictating the constitution of the Underlying Index and its constituents are the property of Bloomberg and are not publicly available without a subscription. Additionally, the Manager does not disclose the holdings of the Fund, reducing the overall transparency of the Fund relative to many other passive products. Lonsec notes that bond indices tend to be both less transparent and accessible to end-investors when compared with equity market indices, as are unlisted funds relative to their ETF counterparts.

Liquidity

The Fund is invested in via application/redemption, which is a simple online and paper process. Relative to the same ETF class offerings this is a slight disadvantage as applications and redemptions can take more time compared to buying/selling listed ETFs. Redemptions are normally processed within three business days of receipt of the redemption request, in line with peers, compared to T+2 for ASX ETFs.

As at December 2023, the Fund had \$4.3bn in FUM which Lonsec notes is amongst the largest in the global aggregate fixed income fund peer group. The Fund's holdings are predominantly invested in liquid investment grade securities issued by global treasuries, government-related entities, and corporates. During normal market conditions, liquidity for these securities is typically not of concern, however, during periods of heightened volatility and market dislocation, liquidity has the potential to deteriorate.

Fees and Indirect Costs

Lonsec considers the Fund's AFC to be on the lower end of the Manager's global fixed income peer group. However, Lonsec notes that the other funds in this peer group have differentiated strategies.

The Fund had an average bid / ask spread of 0.10/0.10% over the past 12 months to September 2023 which is competitive and amongst the lowest within the overall peer group. The bid / ask spread for an ETF represents the average daily spread over a one-year period but may not reflect the actual spread incurred, while the bid / ask spread on an index fund is fixed.

Fee comparison

		AVERAGE BID/ASK SPREAD (%
FUND NAME	AFC (% P.A.)	P.A.)
ISHARES GLOBAL BOND INDEX FUND (BGL0008AU)	0.35	0.10 / 0.10
VANGUARD INTERNATIONAL CREDIT SECURITIES INDEX FUND (HEDGED) (VAN0106AU)	0.32	0.18 / 0.18
VANGUARD GLOBAL AGGREGATE BOND INDEX FUND (HEDGED) (VAN9309AU)	0.24	0.13 / 0.13
CFS INDEX GLOBAL BOND - CLASS A (ESF7399AII)	0.15	0.10 / 0.10

Source: For unlisted funds, various fund manager PDS documents.

Performance

The Fund was incepted in October 1997 and has established a long-term track record. The Fund delivered an excess return (after fees) of -0.16% p.a. and a tracking error of 0.17% p.a. over the five-year period to October 2023. Furthermore, the Fund delivered excess returns (after fees) of -0.25% and a tracking error of 0.10% over the one-year period to October 2023. This indicates that the Fund has been able to

This indicates that the Fund has been able to consistently minimise deviations from the Underlying Index with most of the underlying difference being attributed to the Fund's fee structure.

On an absolute basis, the Fund delivered a total return (after fees) of -0.18% and -0.52% p.a. over the same one and five-year period that ended October 2023. Lonsec will continue to monitor the Fund's performance at future reviews.

Risks

An investment in the Fund carries a number of standard investment risks associated with investment markets. These include economic, political, legal, tax, and regulatory risks. These and other risks are outlined in the relevant PDS and should be read in full and understood by investors. Lonsec considers the major risks to be:

Tracking error risk

BlackRock seeks to minimise the tracking error against the index the Fund aims to track. There is no guarantee that this objective will be met.

Performance risk

The value of, and returns from, an investment in the Fund will depend upon the performance of the Underlying Index. There is no guarantee the value of an investment in the Fund will increase.

Interest rate risk

Changes in interest rates may have a direct impact (positive or negative) on the Fund's returns.

Currency risk

Investors are exposed to some currency risks as the Fund holds bonds issued in offshore markets issued in their local currencies.

Credit risk

Investors are exposed to the creditworthiness of the institutions the Fund invests in.

Further information

Further information can be obtained by calling BlackRock on 1300 474 273 or visiting: wwwblackrock.com/au

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Lonsec

iShares Global Bond Index Fund

Quantitative Performance Analysis - annualised after-fee % returns (at 31-12-2023)

Performance metrics

	1 YR	3 YR	5 YR	10 YR
TOTAL RETURN (% PA)	5.02	-3.24	0.33	2.44
STANDARD DEVIATION (% PA)	6.04	5.65	4.99	3.99
EXCESS RETURN (% PA)	-0.28	-0.13	-0.16	-0.18
WORST DRAWDOWN (%)	-3.71	-14.75	-14.75	-14.75
TIME TO RECOVERY (MTHS)	2	NR	NR	NR
TRACKING ERROR (% PA)	0.10	0.16	0.17	0.13

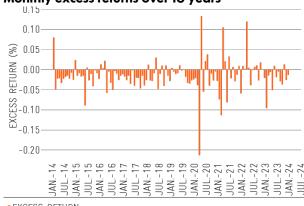
PRODUCT: ISHARES GLOBAL BOND INDEX FUND

PRODUCT BENCHMARK: BLOOMBERG GLOBAL AGGREGATE TR INDEX (AUD HEDGED) TIME TO RECOVERY: NR - NOT RECOVERED, DASH - NO DRAWDOWN DURING PERIOD

Growth of \$10,000 over 10 years







Glossary

Click here for the glossary of terms.

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