

K2 Australian Small Cap Fund (Hedge Fund)

31 July 2024



The K2 Australian Small Cap Fund is an Absolute Return equities fund. The fund is index-unaware, aiming to produce positive absolute returns over the long term with a capital preservation mindset. The Fund's mandate allows it to actively manage its net market exposure – utilising both cash and shorts to help protect clients' capital.

	1 Month	Unit Price	Inception (%pa)
Performance (Net of Fees)	4.56%	2.35	4.99%

Refer below detailed performance data matrix

Top 5 Stock Holdings	Current	Monthly Move
Seven Group Holdings Ltd	7.4%	-0.1%
Summerset Group Holdings Ltd	5.3%	+0.5%
NIB Holdings Ltd	5.2%	-0.2%
National Storage REIT	4.2%	+0.1%
Region Re Ltd	4.1%	+0.1%

Market Capitalisation Coverage	Current	Monthly Move
Large Caps >= AUD\$7.5b	14.8%	+2.0%
Mid Caps >= AUD\$2b < AUD\$7.5b	39.4%	+1.7%
Small Caps < AUD\$2b	36.1%	+7.1%

Month End Exposures	Current	Monthly Move
Consumer	9.8%	+6.5%
Energy	2.1%	-1.6%
Financials/Real Estate	39.3%	+0.7%
Health Care	6.9%	+0.1%
Industrials	21.5%	+1.9%
Information Technology	3.4%	+1.5%
Materials	7.6%	+1.7%
SHORTS	-1.4%	-1.4%
Number of Positions	35	+6
Gross Equity Exposure	92.1%	+12.2%
Cash Weighting	10.8%	-9.3%
Net Equity Exposure	89.2%	+9.3%

Fund Characteristics	
Portfolio Managers	Campbell Neal, David Poppenbeek and Bill Laister
Strategy	Australian and New Zealand Small Cap Equities
Objectives	To deliver consistent returns over the investment cycle with a focus on capital protection during periods of market declines
Return Target	+10% pa over the long term
Number of Stocks	25 to 50
Cash	Up to 100% of portfolio
Distributions	Annually
Management Fee	1.31%
Buy/Sell	Bought and Sold on the ASX market (ASX: KSM)
Performance Fee	15.38% pa of the amount by which the NAV per unit exceeds the High Water Mark once the fund achieves its hurdle
Investment Horizon	5 Years
Style Bias	Growth At a Reasonable Price
Market Capitalisation Bias	>\$1billion

Commentary

The K2 Australian Small Cap Fund returned 4.56% for the month.

Since the start of 2022, central bankers in developed economies have conducted a synchronised interest rate hiking cycle. On average, official cash rates rose by more than 400 basis points in just two years. One of the side-effects of this significant monetary tightening phase was that economically sensitive entities bore most of the pain. In response, indebted households curtailed discretionary spending, first-time home buyers delayed purchases, and commercial property developers postponed new construction projects. In aggregate these actions drained the confidence of the consumer. The reading of Australian consumer sentiment over the past two years is on par with what was evident during the recession of the early 1990's and during the dark days of the GFC. Through the eyes of the consumer, the glass is certainly half empty.

It is worth noting that there are more than fifty consumer discretionary and real-estate companies within the Small Ordinaries Index. As a result, we shouldn't be shocked that the price of the Small Ordinaries Index has declined by 13% since the start of 2022. Interestingly, over the same time period, the S&P/ASX 100 has risen by 11% and partly reflects the fact that it contains only sixteen consumer discretionary and real-estate companies. This level of underperformance by Small Cap companies has only occurred on three occasions; post the tech bubble in 2000, during the GFC and briefly in 2013. To regain the lost relative performance, we need to believe that the earnings per share (EPS) from Small Caps can sustain a double-digit annual growth rate for several years. The last time this occurred was back during the years between 2003 and 2008. During this six year stretch the Small Ordinaries Index delivered a total return of over 200% and outperformed the S&P/ASX 100 by 50%. We believe that this level of outperformance can be repeated particularly given that a handful of central banks have already started offering some monetary policy relief.

During the month the Fund added to its Corporate Travel (CTD) position. CTD's share price has declined by 35% since it announced its first half profit in February 2024. At the time, CTD indicated that its prior guidance range for FY2024 EBITDA needed to be revised down by around 15%. Issues surrounding immigration challenges in the UK and generally subdued global trading conditions were the main contributors. However, CTD also confidently outlined a strategy to double profits over the coming five years. Revenue is expected to grow twice as fast as costs and hence, margins should expand by around 25% by FY2029. CTD has also committed to maximising shareholder returns through four initiatives; dividend payments, growth projects with return prospects of 25%+, future acquisitions, and share buy-backs. CTD has already implemented one of these return initiatives; since February, CTD has bought-back 1.47 million shares at an average price of \$15.75. A lower share count will complement the profit ambitions and help drive EPS growth. CTD's return on equity should rise and a higher valuation multiple typically follows. Pleasingly, the Fund acquired its additional stake in CTD significantly below the buy-back price.

The best performing holdings for the Fund this month were Summerset Group (SUM) and IRESS Ltd (IRE). SUM's share price rallied after peer aged-care provider Avida Group received a takeover bid. IRE's performance reflected its upgraded earning guidance during the month. Lifestyle Communities (LIC) and West African Resources (WAF) were performance detractors.

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K2 Australian Small Cap Fund Net Monthly Returns in AUD

Year	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Fin YTD	Fin YTD Index (1)	Average Cash	Average Short	
2013/14						2.86	3.19	3.06	4.44	0.36	1.15	-1.26	14.52	1.12	41.95%	0.00%	
2014/15	3.64	2.57	-0.68	0.50	-1.04	-0.37	2.60	4.48	1.37	-0.22	2.23	-2.11	13.51	0.44	22.50%	0.00%	
2015/16	5.71	-2.77	3.61	1.57	1.31	1.20	-3.95	-5.76	4.80	3.33	1.21	-0.40	9.58	14.40	12.48%	-0.20%	
2016/17	4.80	3.05	0.00	-1.48	-3.76	-0.39	1.57	-1.54	3.14	-2.28	0.78	2.80	6.50	7.01	15.90%	-0.54%	
2017/18	2.08	3.58	0.05	2.86	-0.23	5.91	-0.28	-3.36	0.04	-2.06	1.65	-1.87	8.29	24.25	21.35%	-2.04%	
2018/19	1.82	-0.96	2.06	-6.33	-4.24	-3.25	-0.36	1.48	-1.08	1.04	0.31	-0.08	-9.53	1.92	44.79%	-3.92%	
2019/20	5.21	-3.19	3.27	-0.11	2.71	1.01	2.56	-8.00	-28.03	11.37	6.81	-0.18	-12.11	-5.67	26.59%	-1.28%	
2020/21	4.81	11.25	1.40	3.21	12.13	1.58	0.80	-1.11	2.75	6.18	1.08	3.57	58.25	33.23	5.99%	-0.23%	
2021/22	-1.03	4.78	0.19	0.75	-2.02	2.31	-8.61	-1.08	2.50	-0.86	-9.08	-13.71	-24.36	-19.52	8.02%	-0.01%	
2022/23	9.20	1.14	-9.78	2.28	3.94	-4.45	8.43	-2.17	-4.84	2.21	-3.10	-3.33	-2.16	8.45	7.44%	-0.20%	
2023/24	5.12	-2.13	-1.49	-4.25	3.80	5.92	1.15	0.18	3.34	-3.49	-0.63	-1.88	5.13	9.35	7.51%	-0.11%	
2024/25	4.56												4.56	3.49	14.68%	-0.68%	
													Incept.	68.16	95.45		
													Incept.	4.99%pa	6.48%pa	19.10%	-0.77%

(1) S&P/ASX Small Ordinaries Accumulation Index

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