

Liquid Insight

Hawks face household headwinds: buy AUD 5y5y swaps on a cross-market basis

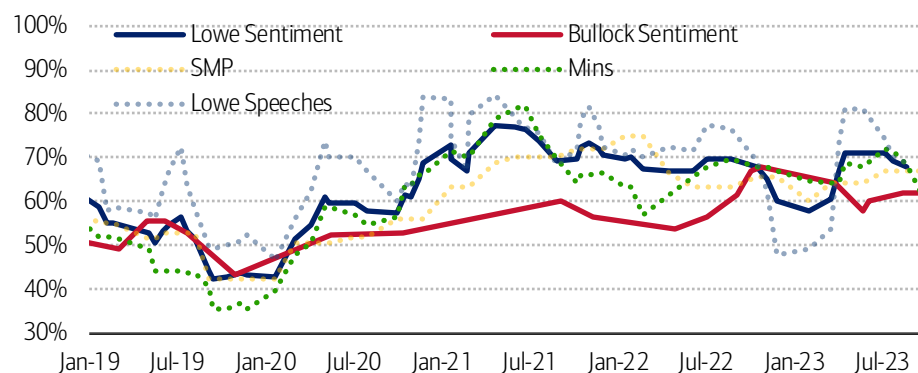
Key takeaways

- We recommend buying 5y5y AUD swaps cross-market vs USD as the RBA minutes signaled a hawkish hold.
- Weakness in the consumer sector is likely to prevent the RBA from hiking despite upward pressure on CPI from oil prices.
- AUD duration should trade rich vs USD given the RBA's hawkish bias and the divergent supply outlook for ACGBs vs USTs.

By Oliver Levingston and Micaela Fuchila

Exhibit 1: Bullock retains neutral stance in first meeting

RBA to remain on hold through 2024



Source: BofA Global Research, RBA

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RBA likely to maintain hawkish hold

We recommend positioning for tighter 5y5y cross-market spreads after the minutes of the RBA's October meeting signaled a hawkish bias. We see the new RBA Governor Michele Bullock's first Board minutes as neutral but the RBA's focus on CPI and labour market prints ahead of November's meeting suggest the Board will continue to emphasise upside risks for cash rates.

Over the next few months, we see the RBA as unable to move in either direction as upward pressure from higher oil prices on headline inflation supports a hawkish bias but weakness in the consumer sector prevents the RBA from hiking.

The risk to this view is that CPI surprises to the upside because of more than oil prices but this backdrop favours carry trades and richer duration, which is trading too steep on a cross-market basis given the divergent outlook for supply. **We recommend receiving 5y5y AUD swaps vs USD 5y5y swaps at 94bps with a target of 40bps and a stop of 120bps.**

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Source: BofA Global Research

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Hawks face household headwinds: long pause likely

Households are showing sign of strain but headline inflation is reaccelerating, justifying an extended pause. Traction from higher rates is now evident in the consumer sector and the minutes of the RBA's October meeting signaled the RBA noted that the labour market has reached a "turning point" although a recovery in the housing sector could place a floor under demand.

Our BofA AU Household consumption tracker moved into negative territory for the first time since the pandemic (Exhibit 2). We saw spending decelerate in the first half of 2023 as consumers navigate high rates, high cost of living and an unfavourable global backdrop (see [BofA Australia Household Consumption Tracker, 12 October 2023](#)).

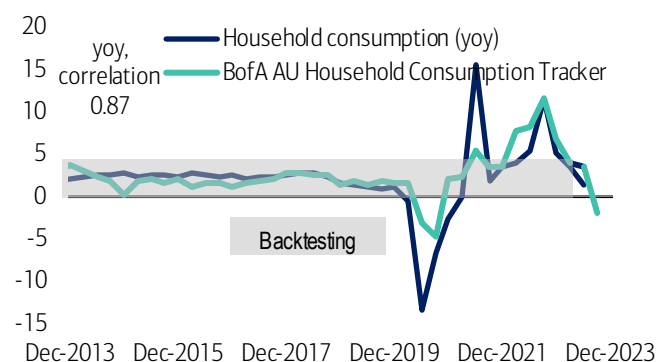
Yet inflation data for August reflected a rise in energy prices, pushing annual inflation higher (from 4.9% to 5.3%). These moves will likely dominate next week's Q3 CPI print which will include data for July, August and September (Exhibit 3). August's strong unemployment is likely to be repeated this week – the unemployment rate will remain unchanged at 3.7%, in our view. Wages data is also due before the November Board meeting and should reflect a rise in public sector wages. Bullock is due to deliver her first public remarks as Governor tomorrow and we see further hawkish rhetoric as likely given the hawkish bias of the RBA's October minutes

In the RBA's October minutes, the Board concluded "there had not been sufficient new information over the preceding month from economic data or financial markets to necessitate an adjustment in the stance of monetary policy. **Members observed that, prior to the November meeting, they would receive additional data on economic activity, inflation and the labour market, as well as a set of revised staff forecasts.**"

The Bank's current assumption for CPI in 3Q is around 0.9%qqq. This means there are upside risks on the back of petrol, but traction from policy could see a faster decline in other components as it has been the case in New Zealand. See: [New Zealand Economic Watch: CPI review: A good downside surprise 17 October 2023](#).

Exhibit 2: Household spending is set to weaken further in 3Q

Based on the signal from our Tracker

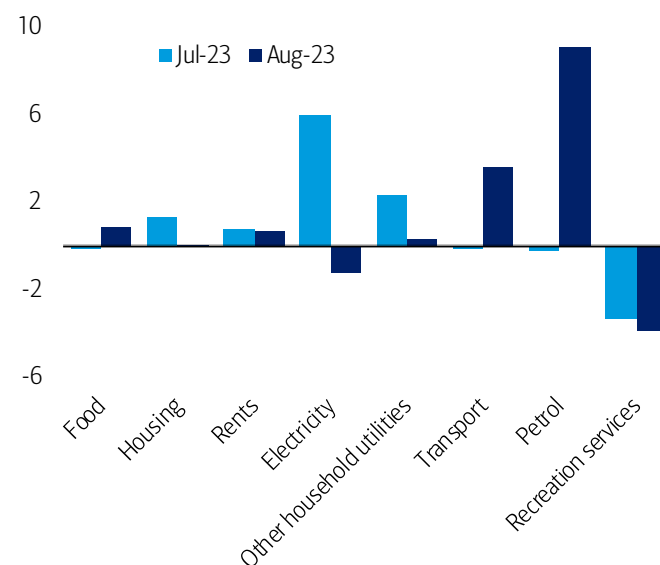


Source: BofA Global Research, Macrobond, CoreLogic, ABS. This performance is back-tested and does not represent the actual performance of any account or fund. Back-tested performance depicts the theoretical (not actual) performance of a particular strategy over the time period indicated. No representation is being made that any actual portfolio is likely to have achieved returns similar to those shown herein. The Tracker is intended to be an indicative metric only and may not be used for reference purposes or as a measure of performance for any financial instrument or contract, or otherwise relied upon by third parties for any other purpose, without the prior written consent of BofA Global Research. This Tracker was not created to act as a benchmark

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Exhibit 3: Energy to drive higher Q3 – but core decelerating fast

Households under pressure



Source: BofA Global Research, ABS, Macrobond

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Buy 5y5y swaps cross-market

Against the backdrop of a hawkish hold, we like to receive 5y5y swaps and pay USD 5y5y swaps (i.e. position for tighter 5y5y IRS spreads on a cross-market basis). The position has more attractive carry than most flatteners and offers a way of expressing a view on three rates products: 5s10s curve, 10y swap spreads and AUD vs USD duration.

We see four reasons to receive 5y5y AUD swaps and pay 5y5y USD swaps:

1. The AUD 5s10s IRS curve has steepened to near the highest level in a year and remain near its widest level vs USD 5s10s (Exhibit 5). Our fair value framework suggests fair value for 5s10s is about 11bps flatter (Exhibit 6). We see near-term flattening as likely and room for convergence on a cross-market basis given both countries' policy rate cycles are at or near their conclusion and the Federal Reserve is likely to cut earlier (and further) than the RBA.
2. Receiving 5y5y swaps has one of the most attractive carry/roll profiles in the G10 (Exhibit 4).
3. Unanticipated fiscal surpluses have weighed on AUD bond supply and we see a further downgrade to the Australian Office of Financial Management's borrowing program this year. The supply outlook for Australia is remarkably divergent from the US. AUD 10y swaps should trade richer than USD swaps as Treasury supply ramps up ([Australia Rates Watch, 30 August 2023](#)).
4. 10y swap EFP should continue to tighten, especially if the RBA commences QT in 2024, which we continue to see as likely ([Liquid Insight, 15 August 2023](#)). We maintain our recommendation to receive 10y swap EFP with a target of 20bps ([Australia Rates Viewpoint, 17 May 2023](#)).

The risk to the trade is wider swap spreads if the RBA does not announce bond sales but opts for a rate hike in November or December. In this environment, the trade has some downside protection because 5s10s will likely flatten following a cash-rate increase. **We recommend buying 5y5y AUD swaps vs USD 5y5y swaps at 94bps with a target of 40bps and a stop of 120bps.**

Exhibit 4: Receiving 5y5y has most attractive roll in G10 ex-JPY

Receive AUD 5y5y vs USD 5y5y

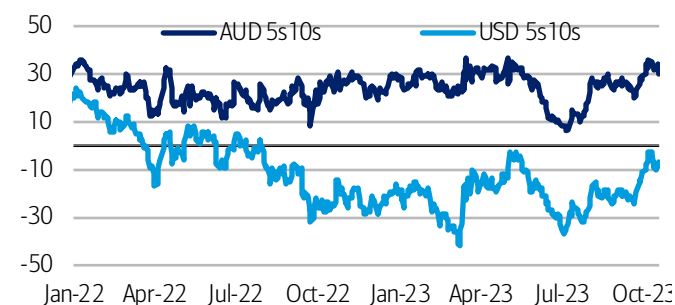
	5y5y	3m roll
USD	4.33	1.3
EUR	3.34	2
GBP	4.09	1.3
CAD	4.25	1.6
CHF	1.87	2
JPY	1.40	3.6
AUD	5.27	3.2
NZD	5.23	2.6
NOK	4.02	1.1
SEK	3.30	1.3

Source: BofA Global Research, Bloomberg

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Exhibit 5: AUD 5s10s about 35bps wide vs USD

Cross-market convergence at end of policy-rate cycle



Source: BofA Global Research, Bloomberg

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Exhibit 6: 5s10s too steep, 10y slightly cheap outright

5s10s should flatten modestly

	Current	Fair value	Spread
5s10s	39bps	28bps	11bps
5y Govt	4.07	4.14	7bps
10y Govt	4.46	4.42	-4bps

Source: BofA Global Research, Bloomberg

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Notable Rates and FX Research

- **Global Rates, FX & EM Year Ahead 2023** – [Year Ahead 2023: Pivot ≠ Peak](#), 20 Nov 2022
- [Central bank hopeful thinking](#) **Global FX Weekly**, 13 Oct 2023
- [Real spooky rates](#) **Global Rates Weekly**, 13 Oct 2023
- [USD consolidation for now: unloved CHF to see support from geopolitics?](#), **Liquid Cross Border Flows**, 09 Oct 2023

Rates, FX & EM trades for 2023

For a complete list of our open trade recommendations, as well as our trade recommendations closed over the past 12 months, see the reports below:

[Global FX Weekly: Central bank hopeful thinking 13 October 2023](#)

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