K2 Australian Small Cap Fund (Hedge Fund)
31 December 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)	-3.14%	2.31	4.66%

Refer below detailed performance data matrix

Top 5 Stock Holdings	Current	Monthly Move
SGH Ltd	8.6%	-0.4%
Summerset Group Holdings Ltd	6.0%	+0.3%
Judo Capital Holdings Ltd	4.8%	-0.3%
Kina Securities Ltd	4.6%	+1.4%
Bendigo And Adelaide Bank	4.5%	+0.0%

Market Capitalisation Coverage	Current	Monthly Move
Large Caps>=AUD$7.5b	11.5%	-1.9%
Mid Caps>=AUD$2b<AUD$7.5b	36.3%	+6.8%
Small Caps<AUD$2b	44.6%	-2.9%

Month End Exposures	Current	Monthly Move
Communication Services	2.3%	+0.1%
Consumer	8.3%	+5.1%
Energy	2.3%	-0.4%
Financials/Real Estate	40.8%	+4.6%
Health Care	6.0%	+0.3%
Industrials	21.4%	-6.8%
Information Technology	5.7%	-2.9%
Materials	5.9%	+2.1%
SHORTS	-2.3%	+0.6%
Number of Positions	**33**	**0**
Gross Equity Exposure	**95.0%**	**+1.4%**
Cash Weighting	**9.6%**	**-2.5%**
Net Equity Exposure	**90.4%**	**+2.5%**

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

K2 Small Cap Fund returned -3.14% for the month.

During the month, companies that were consumer facing or were sensitive to higher interest rates underperformed. Long bond yields rose, expected reductions in official cash rates tapered and the Australian dollar weakened. Why? Mainly because the US will have a new President in a few weeks. The expectation is that the impact of additional tariffs, and a renewed trend towards onshoring more business activities, will cause the US inflation pulse to quicken. As a result, the US Federal Reserve is expected to recalibrate its dovish tone. However, this does not immediately guarantee that the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) stays hawkish. The RBA has maintained a restrictive stance on monetary policy for all of 2024. The RBA believes that there is excess demand in the Australian economy and accordingly the underlying inflation rate is too high. However, it is clear from the erosion in productivity measures, that a great deal of the demand push has been driven by the public sector. Fortunately, the cost-of-living imperative for award wage escalations seem destined to fade and this should improve the scope for meaningful interest rate relief in 2025. This would provide a favourable tail wind for owners and managers of financial assets. MA Financial Group (MAF) is a case in point.

MAF is an alternative asset manager that was founded in 2009 and listed on the ASX in 2017. The MAF team has extensive expertise across private credit, real estate and hospitality sectors and sees itself as a builder of valuable businesses in large addressable markets. The group has invested heavily over the past few years and currently has almost $10 billion in assets under management, $128 billion in managed loans, and a $1.7 billion loan book. Over the next two years these investments should deliver considerable growth; assets under management have the potential to grow by 50%, the loan book could more than double in size, and $200 billion in managed loans is not out of the question. Importantly, the capital to support this growth has been committed so we would expect to see a meaningful improvement in MAF's return on equity over the coming years.

MAF also has a Corporate Advisory arm that is leveraged to the mergers and acquisition (M&A) cycle. In December, Northern Star Resources (NST) agreed to acquire De Grey Mining (DEG) and Insignia (IFL) received a bid from Bain Capital. We anticipate that interest rate volatility dissipates, business leader confidence improves, investor's appetite for risk broadens, and the cost of capital for M&A transactions stabilises. Hence, the M&A cycle should accelerate throughout 2025. There should also be an acknowledgement that the global universe of listed companies has been shrinking which may, in time, contribute to a scarcity factor in valuation metrics. All up, this backdrop should also be supportive for an improved pipeline of IPO candidates which in turn would provide another tailwind for MAF.

Looking out to 2026, MAF is trading on a PE ratio that is 40% lower than the average of Macquarie Group (MQG), HMC Capital (HMC) and Blackstone (BX US). MAF's key management personnel collectively own 40% of the company and are also co-invested in many of the groups managed funds. We believe that this alignment with clients and shareholders has the potential to translate into a strong dividend stream over the years ahead.

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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	*26.94%*	*-1.30%*
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	*6.13%*	*-0.24%*
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	*8.30%*	*-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	*7.70%*	*-0.21%*
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	-2.59	3.53	0.39	0.43	-3.14							**2.98**	5.46	*9.10%*	*-1.74%*
												Incept.	**65.63**	99.16		
												Incept.	**4.66%pa**	6.41%pa	***18.72%***	***-0.86%***

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