



Introduction to Investment Products

ASX Investment Products

ASX's product range extends far beyond shares. Every product enables you to express an investment view in line with your objectives while helping you to create a diversified portfolio.

Helping investors achieve diversification

Most investment products are pooled investment vehicles. Your money is pooled together with other investors and a professional investment manager then buys and sells securities in underlying assets, such as shares or bonds.

Generally, when you buy an investment product, you don't own the underlying investments – you own 'units' or 'shares' in the pooled vehicle. The value of the units or shares will rise and fall with the value of the underlying assets. Income may also be paid out on a periodic basis in the form of dividends or distributions.

Investors typically use investment products to help them achieve diversification and meet their investment goals. Diversification is usually achieved by using a blend of investment products across the following asset classes:

Investment product approach

 <h3>Cash</h3> <p>Invests in very low-risk, short-term investments. These can include short-term money market deposits, short-term government bonds and bank bills.</p>	 <h3>Fixed interest and bonds</h3> <p>Generally invest in low-risk investments. These can include government bonds, bank bills, or mortgage-backed securities. Some funds invest in corporate bonds and can be higher risk.</p>	 <h3>Property</h3> <p>Invests in residential property, commercial property or property developments. Some property funds are high risk. You're not guaranteed a fixed rate of interest or return.</p>	 <h3>Shares</h3> <p>Invests in listed companies in Australia, overseas or both. These funds offer the potential for higher returns but also have higher risk.</p>	 <h3>Alternatives</h3> <p>These include hedge funds and funds that invest in private equity, private debt, derivatives and commodities. They can be high risk.</p>
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Key considerations for choosing between different products

 <h3>Investment Objective</h3> <p>Does the fund's objectives align with the outcome you are seeking to achieve?</p>	 <h3>Disclosure</h3> <p>What information does the fund manager provide about the number of holdings, concentration in particular sectors, companies or geographies, how does this compare to the benchmark?</p>	 <h3>Risk</h3> <p>Does the fund match your risk tolerance – investment strategy, liquidity, pricing risk, currency risk, regulatory changes?</p>	 <h3>Access</h3> <p>Flexibility entering and exiting, any minimum investments.</p>	 <h3>Cost</h3> <p>Cost to access, management costs and performance fees.</p>	 <h3>Track Record</h3> <p>What has been the fund's performance track record over the short, medium and long term?</p>	 <h3>Investment Style</h3> <p>Does the fund take a 'passive' index-tracking approach to investing, or is it a more active, stock-picking fund?</p>
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Exchange Traded Products

Exchange Traded Products (ETPs) offer access to a sizeable market, providing variety and choice across more than 200 funds.

Exchange Traded Products (ETPs), which include Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs), offer investors a convenient and cost-effective way to get exposure to a range of asset classes and investment strategies. In a single trade, an investor can buy an ETF that holds the top 200 companies listed on ASX, access key asset classes such as international equities and fixed income, add specific sectors to their portfolio such as property and technology stocks, or gain exposure to commodities such as gold and oil.

Features of an ETP

- ✓ Portfolio of assets in one trade
- ✓ Exposure to markets that are difficult to access
- ✓ Can be cost-effective
- ✓ Range of different investment styles

Why choose ETPs?

Diversification

ETPs can help you diversify your portfolio across asset classes, sectors and geographies that otherwise could be difficult to access.

By diversifying your portfolio, it can help decrease your overall level of risk per dollar invested.

ETPs can give you access to a range of domestic and international markets and assets in one transaction.

Income and growth

ETPs may offer returns as:

- Income, paid quarterly or half yearly, and
- Capital growth.

An ETP's pricing is typically in line with its net asset value (NAV), which means investors are generally able to buy and sell around this underlying value of the ETP's assets. Investors should be wary that although ETPs have formal market making arrangements, the price that they trade may still be impacted by the ordinary forces of supply and demand.

Lower cost

Traditional ETPs, such as Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs), usually track an index, which means they aren't trying to outperform the market.

This means ETFs are typically able to achieve lower operating costs and offer lower management fees (as measured by Management Expense Ratios or MERs) than other forms of professionally managed investments.

In addition, you pay one brokerage fee for a transaction.

What are the risks?

Market and liquidity risk

If the value of the underlying index falls or rises, so too will the value of your ETP.

At times the return of an ETP may deviate from the return of the index or benchmark attempting to be tracked.

Market conditions (for example, a lack of liquidity in volatile markets) may make it difficult to buy or sell ETPs in certain circumstances.

Foreign investment risk

Certain countries or regions may be subject to additional degrees of market volatility, economic and political instability. This may reduce or preclude the ability to trade securities or negatively impact a security's value.

Currency risk is a consideration when investing globally. A weak Australian dollar will increase the value of investments held in non-Australian dollars. On the other hand, if the Australian dollar rises, the value of investments held in non-Australian dollars will fall (all other factors being equal).

Fund specific risks

Some ETPs may also carry additional risks, depending on the strategy they use or the assets they invest in. For example, some ETPs may use borrowing, which may increase risk. To understand fund-specific risks, read the ETP's product disclosure statement and seek independent advice from a professional adviser before investing.

What is Net Asset Value (NAV)?

The NAV (net asset value) is the value of assets less liabilities, often expressed as the value per unit or per share. For example, the net asset value per unit of an ETF would be calculated by subtracting the fund's liabilities from its assets, then dividing the result by the number of units on offer.

Available from your broker's website, the NAV is an important reference point to consider before you buy or sell units in an ETF.



Types of ETPs

ETPs include a wide variety of product types, each with its own potential benefits and risks. The most common ETPs typically track the performance of domestic and international indices.

Investment product approach

Exchange Traded Funds (ETF)	Exchange Traded Managed Funds (ETMF)	Single Asset Exchange Traded Products	Structured Products
			
<p>Exchange Traded Funds typically seek to track the performance of an index, a currency or a commodity, such as gold. They allow you to invest in domestic or overseas share markets as a whole – and your returns depend on the broad market performance, rather than the performance of individually selected stocks. For example, in one trade you can get diversified exposure to the entire Australian share market (S&P ASX200 and/or S&P ASX300).</p>	<p>Unlike ETFs, ETMFs are generally actively managed by a fund manager to try to outperform an underlying index, such as the S&P/ASX 200 or the S&P 500 ('seeking alpha'). They operate like a managed fund but are traded in the same way as shares – meaning units in the fund can be bought and sold on the market during the trading day.</p>	<p>Single asset Exchange Traded Products track the performance of a specific security.</p>	<p>Investors in structured products typically don't receive an interest in a portfolio of assets held by the structured product, instead relying on rights against the issuer of the structured product under the terms of issue. These are often called synthetic products and have different risks to other ETPs that investors should be aware of before investing.</p>

How to trade

Like shares, you buy and sell ETPs through a licensed intermediary, be it an online broker or platform, full service stockbroker or wealth adviser. Settlement of the trade takes place two business days after the date the order traded on the market – this is known as T + 2.

Listed Investment Companies and Trusts

Listed Investment Companies (LICs) and Trusts (LITs) provide exposure to a basket of underlying securities in a single transaction.

LICs and LITs invest across all key asset classes such as Australian and international shares, property, infrastructure and fixed income. Due to their nature, LICs and LITs can also provide access to alternative or hard-to-access investment strategies, such as private equity and private debt.

LICs and LITs have fixed periods in which they can raise new capital, such as through an initial public offering (IPO) or a subsequent capital raising, such as a placement or entitlement offer. They are 'closed' investments which means they don't issue or cancel new shares as investors come and go (like ETFs and unlisted managed funds) – instead, the number of securities in this type of investment structure are fixed.

Listed Investment Companies (LICs)

What are they?

LICs are investments that are incorporated as public companies. Any profit that comes from the investing activities of the LIC is taxed at the company rate before dividends are paid to investors. Directors choose the level of dividend and may pay out more than the underlying income levels. They can also pay franked dividends.

Listed Investment Trusts (LITs)

What are they?

LITs are investments that are incorporated as a trust. Any surplus income from the investing activity of the manager is paid to investors as trust distributions, according to the underlying investments. Franking levels may vary depending on the income distributed from the underlying assets.

Why choose LICs and LITs?

Diversification

They help you diversify your portfolio across asset classes, sectors and geographies that otherwise could be difficult or expensive to access.

For example, there are LICs and LITs that cover international shares, emerging markets, specific sectors, corporate bonds and alternatives.

Active management

LICs and LITs are actively managed by the portfolio manager, typically aiming to outperform a stated benchmark or index – such as the S&P/ASX 200 Index. This gives investors the chance to achieve returns in excess of the particular benchmark of the fund.

This may be beneficial where it is difficult for individual investors to gain research insights, such as with small caps, alternative assets, fixed income and emerging markets.

Long-term

A benefit of a closed-ended structure is that it allows the fund manager to focus on long-term investment objectives, rather than manage the liquidity requirements of open-ended vehicles as investors seek to enter and exit the fund.

What are the risks?

Performance risk

There is always the risk that the fund may underperform or decline in value, affecting your return.

Liquidity risk

LICs and LITs are closed-ended vehicles that trade on the ASX. This means the on-market liquidity is subject to the number of investors buying and selling shares/units during the trading day.

Premium and discount to NTA

LICs and LITs often trade at a premium or discount to the value of their underlying assets – usually referred to as the fund's net tangible assets (NTA).

While there are many factors that may influence why a fund trades at a discount to NTA, on-market liquidity is one factor, which means that smaller LICs are at greater of risk of trading at a discount to NTA.

How to trade

Like shares and ETFs, you buy and sell LICs and LITs through a licensed intermediary, be it an online broker or platform, full service stockbroker or wealth adviser. Settlement of the trade takes place two business days after the date the order traded on the market – this is known as T+2.

What are Net Tangible Assets (NTA)?

NTA refers to the assets of an entity less any liabilities and intangible assets. NTA per share or unit is calculated by dividing the value of the NTA by the number of issued shares/units. LICs and LITs report their NTA at least monthly on ASX.



A-REITs

Australian Real Estate Investment Trusts are listed managed investments that invest in property assets.

What are they?

A-REITs, or Australian Real Estate Investment Trusts, are listed investment vehicles that provide exposure to property assets such as office towers, shopping malls, industrial buildings, hotels and cinemas. Like managed funds, they are pooled investments overseen by a professional fund manager.

A-REITs are closed-ended vehicles, so have fixed periods in which they can raise new capital, such as through an initial public offering (IPO) or a subsequent capital raising, such as a placement or entitlement offer.

Why choose A-REITs?

Large-scale assets

A-REITs let you join a pool of other investors to access large-scale commercial property assets that are likely to be out of reach for an individual investor.

They offer exposure to traditional property assets such as office towers and shopping malls, through to niche and sector specific offerings such as data centres, agriculture, healthcare facilities and pubs.

Income and growth

A-REITs can provide a sustainable income stream. They generate two kinds of return:

- income, underpinned by regular rental payments, and
- capital growth through the increase in the underlying land value.

Professional management

They are run by specialist property managers who select the investment properties and manage tenants, improvements, maintenance and rent. This can benefit you as an investor but may come with high fees.

What are the risks?

Market and interest rate risk

Real estate can be sensitive to macroeconomic factors and market cycles, impacting your returns when the market environment dips.

Rising interest rates can have a negative effect on A-REIT performance.

Gearing risk

Some A-REITs may use borrowed funds to buy or develop a property portfolio, creating high levels of gearing. While gearing can multiply capital gains when asset values rise, it can also multiply losses when they fall, as well as create higher interest costs.

Concentration risk

While some A-REITs provide access to a diversified portfolio, others concentrate on a few large assets or a single sector, leading to higher risks.

How to trade

A-REITs are listed and traded on the ASX like shares and ETFs. You can buy and sell them through a licensed intermediary, be it an online broker or platform, full service stockbroker or wealth adviser.



mFunds

With over 200 managed funds available on the ASX mFund Settlement Service across a broad range of asset classes and investment strategies, mFunds make diversifying your portfolio fast and efficient.

What are they?

Managed funds are open-ended investments that pool the money of individual investors together to be invested in assets, such as shares or bonds, by a fund manager.

mFunds are managed funds that can be bought and sold via an ASX broker. They give investors a way to diversify without having to deal with lengthy application forms that are typical for managed funds.

Why choose mFunds?

Diversification

mFunds allow you to diversify into a range of asset classes via ASX. This can be particularly beneficial for hard-to-access asset classes such as fixed income and global equity strategies. This can reduce your level of investment risk by minimising the impact of poor performance by a particular asset class or sector.

Active management

Active investment management aims to deliver better performance than a stated benchmark or index, such as the S&P/ASX 200 Index. There are a wide range of investment styles and strategies used by professional managers available as mFunds.

Easy application process

There are no paper-based application forms or platform fees, and all ID checks are performed once by the broker, rather than by each fund manager. However, mFunds do have higher brokerage fees than other options.

What are the risks?

Performance risk

While investing in an mFund provides access to different asset classes and industry sectors, there is always a risk that the managed funds investments may underperform or decline in value. This will affect your return.

Asset class risk

Certain asset classes that managed funds hold may carry their own risks. For example, if a fund invests in international shares, its value may be affected by currency fluctuations.

Specialised market risk

Some managed funds invest in specialised areas in an attempt to exploit potential high-growth opportunities. You may be taking on extra risk if you invest in a fund focused on a narrow section of the market.

How to buy and sell

You buy and sell units through an accredited mFund broker. Once you invest, you are issued a number of units in the fund. These units are held electronically in ASX's CHESS system on the same Holder Identification Number (HIN) used to hold other investments, such as shares and ETFs.

Please refer to www.mfund.com.au for a full list of brokers offering access to mFund.



Further Information

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