



Parkside Newsletter May 2021

May is here and in cooler regions the colours of autumn are all around. In Canberra, Treasurer Josh Frydenberg is putting the finishing touches to the May 11 Federal Budget which will no doubt dominate the national conversation in coming weeks.

Australia's economic recovery gathered steam in April, despite a spike in coronavirus cases overseas and vaccine delays. Australia's trade surplus stood at a healthy \$8.5 billion in March, underpinned by strong export prices for our commodities. Iron ore prices rose 16% in April and 21% over the year to date, due largely to renewed demand from China. China's economic growth rebounded an extraordinary 18.3% in the year to March. Prices for our oil, copper, coal and beef have also recorded strong gains.

Higher commodity prices pushed the Aussie dollar up 2.4% in April to US77.72c, although record low interest rates are keeping stronger gains in check.

Australian consumers are gaining confidence in the recovery, despite the winding back of government stimulus payments. The Westpac-Melbourne Institute Index of Consumer Sentiment rose 6.2% in April to its highest level since 2010. One reason could be booming house prices, up 2.8% in March and 6.2% over the year, according to CoreLogic. Not so welcome are rising petrol prices which hit a 13-month high in April. While higher prices lifted inflation by 0.6% in the March quarter, it is still running at a low annual rate of 1.1%.

Rising employment is also a cause for optimism. The jobless rate fell from 5.8% to 5.6% in April and the Federal Government has announced it is targeting a rate beginning with a 4, supported by big spending initiatives in its upcoming Budget.

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Here's to a happy, healthy, long life!



One of the things that we all have in common as living beings is our finite lifespan and our awareness of this also contributes to motivating us to make each and every moment count.

Yet while many of us don't want to reflect much on our mortality, we all want to live happier, healthier and longer lives. In fact, it's a very human trait to be fascinated by the potential of extending our lifespans.

While one 105-year-old woman, who has survived COVID and the 1918 Spanish flu outbreak, recently credited her longevity to eating gin-soaked raisins on a daily basis, there are those who go to much greater lengths.ⁱ

Living long

Over the past 100 years, life expectancy in Australia has increased from around 50 years to well over 80 years, with a boy born today expected to live around 80.9 years and a girl 85.0 years.ⁱⁱ Most researchers looking at trends in mortality believe life expectancy will continue to increase in coming decades.

That's not enough for a small cohort of people termed 'Biohackers' who 'hack' their bodies to make them function better and in many cases, live significantly longer.

One high profile biohacker, Dave Asprey, is vocal in his aim to reach the grand old age of 180. Dedicating millions of dollars to the cause, Dave gets regular stem cell injections, bathes in infrared light, uses a hyperbaric chamber and takes over 100 supplements a day.ⁱⁱⁱ

How to live longer and better

We're not all Silicone Valley millionaires, able to access expensive biohacking

treatments, nor do we all want to. But there are some common-sense ways to not only live longer, but live better.

Eat well

While the 'perfect' diet is often contested, what the experts generally agree on is that we should incorporate plenty of plant foods, limit red meat, avoid processed foods and eat healthy fats and complex carbs.^{iv} Often the Okinawa Diet is referenced when it comes to living longer, as the residents of this Japanese island can live to 100 – Okinawa has the most centenarians per 100,000 population. The Okinawans eat a lot of plant foods, with some seafood and meat.

Move it

Being physically active is also important. Again, this can look different for different people, but regular exercise has been proven to improve heart health, control blood sugar levels, maintain or provide weight loss, and also possibly decrease our risk of developing cancer.^v

Stay sharp

Staying mentally active can also improve our lifespans. As we age, our mental abilities decline, but that doesn't mean that there's nothing you can do about it. And it's not all bad news either, in fact, an older brain can create new connections between neurones. As some neurones die, their roles are taken up by others to help you adapt.^{vi} Prioritising your social life, being open to new experiences and

taking up new hobbies will keep you mentally active, as will that puzzle book or game of Trivial Pursuit.

Connection

Maintaining a healthy social life won't just help your brain, research has also shown there are many physical benefits to staying connected. Lower blood pressure, a stronger immune system and possibly reduced inflammation can be the result of being happy around other people.^{vii}

Purpose

It's also important to be happy within yourself. Feeling fulfilled has been linked to longevity. A research scientist called Robert Butler found that those who could express their sense of purpose or life meaning lived about 8 years longer than those who were rudderless.^{viii}

Ultimately, it's not just the years in your life, but the life in your years that's important. What's the point of living to 100, or 180, if you don't feel content and well? Living a full and satisfying life is the main goal we should strive for, and by taking care of ourselves, we hopefully will have years in our life and life in our years.

ⁱ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/brucelee/2021/02/27/105-year-old-recovered-from-covid-19-her-tip-eating-gin-soaked-raisins/?sh=1b702a2ee551>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/life-expectancy-continues-increase-australia>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.menshealth.com.au/how-to-live-to-180-years-old-bulletproof-founder-dave-asprey>

^{iv} <https://www.nbcnews.com/better/lifestyle/what-science-says-about-best-way-eat-what-we-re-ncaa1104911>

^v <https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/5-ways-exercise-helps-men-live-longer-and-better>

^{vi} <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/HealthyLiving/healthy-ageing-stay-mentally-active>

^{vii} <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyLiving/Strong-relationships-strong-health>

^{viii} <https://www.bluezones.com/2019/05/news-huge-study-confirms-purpose-and-meaning-add-years-to-life/>



Time for an annual tune-up?

Checking in on your goals, finances and health

We don't think twice about taking our car in for a regular tune up. Why? Because we know it's going to mean our car runs at its best and saves unexpected problems down the track. It follows then that we should take the same approach to other areas of our lives. From our goals, to our finances, to our health, there's so much to be gained in checking in regularly to make sure everything's tracking well.

Kick your goals into gear

A good place to start is with your goals. If you set some at the beginning of the year, take some time to reflect on how you're tracking. If you didn't, there is no time like the present to stop and think about what you want for your future.

The next step is to make a plan. This will involve writing down your goals then looking at what resources you'll need to help you achieve them. You want to make sure you have allocated enough hours and dollars towards making them a reality. This will also dictate your overall timeframe. Set regular, realistic deadlines with measurable sub-goals and make sure you have someone in your corner to hold you accountable.

Remember too, that your goals don't need to be bigger than Ben-Hur. They might just be to see more of your friends or put a bit extra aside each month for a holiday. Reflect on the little things in life that bring you joy, and what you can do to pursue them.

Fueling up your finances

Once you've got a handle on your goals, it's a good idea to review your finances. The new financial year presents the perfect opportunity.

Start by reviewing your budget. If it's not currently working for you, what changes can you make to start taking meaningful steps towards your goals? Maybe there's an online subscription you aren't using or you're having one too many meals out. Shopping around for a better deal on your utility bills, as well as the interest rate on your mortgage and credit cards, is another worthwhile consideration.

It's also wise to take a proper look over your investments. Review your asset allocation and risk tolerance to make sure that your approach is still in line with your present situation as well as future goals.

For many of you, your biggest and most tax-effective investment will be your superannuation. It makes sense then to ensure you're comfortable with what your fund is returning as well as your current risk profile.

Your super may also include some level of insurance cover. If your circumstances have changed, it might be time to review. We can assist you in assessing whether you are adequately protected, looking at options both within and outside of super.

Get a handle on your health

Even if you're feeling fit as a fiddle, a regular health check-up can be a worthwhile investment of both time and money that could help you to live a long, happy and healthy life. If you have reached a milestone birthday it's worth speaking to your GP about any recommended tests.

Likewise, your physical health doesn't start and end with a doctor or dentist visit. Getting into some exercise habits now and changing your eating habits could bear dividends for your long-term health and well-being.

Someone in the passenger seat

No matter where you're going it's always helpful to have someone in the passenger seat to help you navigate the way. For your goals and your passions, it might be a friend, partner or family member. For your health, it's a doctor. And when it comes to your finances, we can help you protect the lifestyle you have, while mapping out the journey to achieve your ideal future.

If you need help with the financial aspects of your annual tune-up, give us a call. We're always here to help.



How to spot a scam

Con artists make entertaining subjects for Hollywood scriptwriters (think *The Wolf of Wall Street*, *Ocean's Eleven* and *Catch Me If You Can*), but there's nothing enjoyable about being conned and fleeced in real life.

On the latest figures available, Australians lose over \$10 million every month to scammers.ⁱ There are plenty of rackets running at any one time involving pyramid schemes, identity theft, fake lottery wins and non-existent inheritances, but the unholy trinity of cons are:

- 1) Investment scams
- 2) Dating scams
- 3) Fake billing scams

Investment scams

The grift: According to the ACCC, investment scammers mainly target those in the 45-64 age group; people who are likely to have amassed some capital and wanting to set themselves up for retirement.

Investment scams usually involve traditional investment products, such as commodities, stocks and real estate. Nowadays, the investment often has something to do with cryptocurrency or binary options (i.e. betting on events, such as a company's share price rising.)

The fraudster typically cold calls, texts or emails the victim. They pose as a knowledgeable insider (e.g. a stockbroker) who's able to facilitate a low risk, high return investment. Often fraudsters will spend considerable time grooming victims and direct them to a professional-looking website or send them impressive-looking documents.

Red flags: Firstly, being called, texted or emailed out of the blue by someone offering an investment opportunity.

Secondly, being assured the investment opportunity involves no or negligible risk while offering incredible returns. Visit the ASIC's MoneySmart site to review the list of companies it's identified as dodgy and we can provide advice on any investment opportunity you may be considering.

Dating scams

The grift: Almost all online daters are guilty of gilding the lily. But if an online match seems too good to be true and they start requesting financial assistance, you're at high risk of losing your shirt.

Romance scammers' MO is as straightforward as it is heartless. They create a fake profile, 'love bomb' their marks and possibly encourage them to 'sext', so they have embarrassing images to use as blackmail.

Then they start asking for money, gifts or bank account details, claiming a family member needs a medical procedure, or they want to buy a plane ticket to meet in person, or they need to transfer money to another country.

Red flags: It's rarely a good sign if there are puzzling inconsistencies (e.g. someone who claims to be an educated professional making basic spelling mistakes). Equally if the relationship escalates abruptly (e.g. professions of undying love after a few brief exchanges), or if your new paramour is cagey about revealing themselves or their personal details (e.g. they claim they are unable to Skype or won't reveal their address).

Fake billing scams

The grift: Fake invoices are sent to a businessperson for things such as office supplies or a domain-name renewal. A common variant of this swindle is fake notifications from the ATO claiming a tax debt needs to be paid urgently to avoid dire legal consequences.

Red flags: Businesses do have expenses and individuals do need to pay taxes so it can be easy to be taken in by fake bills, especially if you don't examine them carefully.

Two signs a charge is dubious are mistakes (e.g. the domain name you're being asked to renew is misspelled on the bill) or odd conditions (e.g. the ATO saying it will accept gift cards or bitcoin as payment).

If you have any doubts, Google the business or government agency then ring its helpline to confirm your debt is real. (Don't use any of the contact details supplied on the invoice.)

For information on the latest scams and who they are targeting, visit the government's Scamwatch site. The ATO also regularly updates its scam alerts.

Swindlers seek to leverage powerful emotions – greed, love and fear – to encourage their victims to act impulsively. If you receive an approach or a request for money that doesn't seem quite right, hang up or exit the website and do some background checks. If you're unsure we can help you spot the scam and protect your financial future.

And remember... as the saying goes, if it seems too good to be true, it probably is.

ⁱ <https://www.scamwatch.gov.au/about-scamwatch/scam-statistics?scamid=all&date=2019-03>