

Australia: Reserve Bank surprises with 25bp hike

Despite falling inflation, Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) Governor Philip Lowe justified the latest hike by saying it would take time to bring inflation down and hinted that more hikes might be necessary



Reserve Bank of Australia Governor Philip Lowe

Source: Shutterstock

3.85%

Cash rate

Hiked by 25bp

Higher than expected

The 'pause to assess' seems to have ignored the improvement in inflation

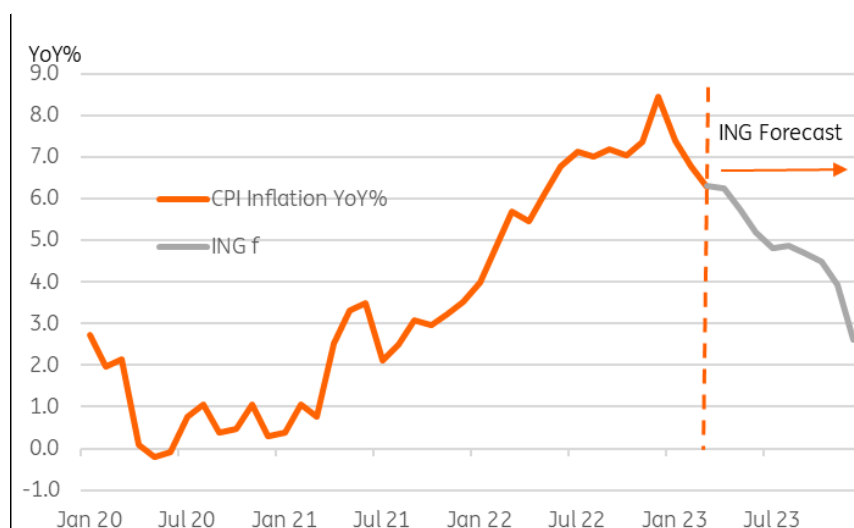
At its previous meeting in April, the RBA left rates unchanged "...to provide additional time to assess the impact of the increase in interest rates to date and the economic outlook..." In our view, the most relevant data since then was the March inflation print, which showed annual inflation

dropping to 6.3% year-on-year, well below the 8.4% December peak. We anticipate further quite rapid declines in inflation over the coming months, as high base effects from last year drop out, and as the boost to inflation from rents subsides as it has already started doing. That said, the April inflation data might drift sideways before the next leg down recommences.

Meanwhile, the rate of wage-price increases remains very benign at 3.3%YoY, and the latest statement's reference to "...unit labour costs are also rising briskly, with productivity growth remaining subdued" seems to be confusing the cyclical slowdown in growth and its negative impact on productivity (which is simply a residual of growth and labour inputs) with something that is structurally inflationary, which we don't believe is the case.

Governor Lowe has a very different perspective to us, and also it appears to the majority of other forecasters who were also looking for no change in rates at this meeting. The accompanying statement that came alongside the RBA's decision says of its forecasts that "...it takes a couple of years before inflation returns to the top of the target range; inflation is expected to be 4.5% in 2023 and 3% in mid-2025". We would be very surprised if it took anything like this long. History will show whether we or Lowe are right, and in our view, sooner than the RBA might imagine.

Australian CPI inflation and ING forecasts



Source: CEIC, ING

Forward guidance lacks consistency

Not only did today's hike take markets by surprise, but the comment that "...some further tightening of monetary policy may be required to ensure that inflation returns to target in a reasonable timeframe", also seems to be at odds with the decision to change to that wording at the March meeting, downgrading the previous wording from "...further increases in interest rates will be needed over the months ahead". At the time, this change was widely understood to mean that from multiple anticipated hikes, only one more hike was then expected. Now we have had that one, but it still sounds as if the RBA is looking to deliver more, despite progress on inflation. It certainly feels as if whatever message the RBA is trying to convey, it isn't getting it across very effectively.

Markets had to do quite a lot of adjusting to take on board the RBA's shock decision. The Australian

dollar (AUD) shot back up over 67 cents and 2Y Australian government bond yields rose more than 26bp with a smaller 13.7bp rise in 10Y government bonds.

What to do with our forecasts?

We had been on the verge of reducing our previous cash rate forecast peak rate from 3.85% to 3.6%. But following today's decision, we will no longer need to do so. The question remains, should we push this higher to 4.1% or above?

Our inclination right now is not to do so. This latest hike didn't look necessary to us in order to bring inflation down, and the forward guidance contained in the latest statement is also not particularly convincing. Like the RBA, we will watch the data before making any further decisions. And the April inflation print might not be too helpful to our case – we expect it may go sideways in year-on-year terms before moving lower again thereafter.

But beyond the very short-term, our base expectation remains that the rate hikes that have already been implemented will be enough to continue to deliver progress on inflation. And if we get more, then it reduces the chances of achieving a soft landing, and we may begin to see that reflected in lower longer tenor bond yields if the RBA follows through on its latest hawkish guidance.

Author

Amrita Naik Nimbalkar

Junior Economist, Global Macro
amrita.naik.nimbalkar@ing.com

Alissa Lefebre

Economist
alissa.lefebvre@ing.com

Deepali Bhargava

Regional Head of Research, Asia-Pacific
Deepali.Bhargava@ing.com

Ruben Dewitte

Economist
+32495364780
ruben.dewitte@ing.com

Kinga Havasi

Economic research trainee
kinga.havasi@ing.com

Marten van Garderen

Consumer Economist, Netherlands
marten.van.garderen@ing.com

David Havrlant

Chief Economist, Czech Republic
420 770 321 486
david.havrlant@ing.com

Sander Burgers
Senior Economist, Dutch Housing
sander.burgers@ing.com

Lynn Song
Chief Economist, Greater China
lynn.song@asia.ing.com

Michiel Tukker
Senior European Rates Strategist
michiel.tukker@ing.com

Michal Rubaszek
Senior Economist, Poland
michal.rubaszek@ing.pl

This is a test author

Stefan Posea
Economist, Romania
tiberiu-stefan.posea@ing.com

Marine Leleux
Sector Strategist, Financials
marine.leleux2@ing.com

Jesse Norcross
Senior Sector Strategist, Real Estate
jesse.norcross@ing.com

Teise Stellema
Research Assistant, Energy Transition
teise.stellema@ing.com

Diederik Stadig
Sector Economist, TMT & Healthcare
diederik.stadig@ing.com

Diogo Gouveia
Sector Economist
diogo.duarte.vieira.de.gouveia@ing.com

Marine Leleux

Sector Strategist, Financials
marine.leleux2@ing.com

Ewa Manthey
Commodities Strategist
ewa.manthey@ing.com

ING Analysts

James Wilson
EM Sovereign Strategist
James.wilson@ing.com

Sophie Smith
Digital Editor
sophie.smith@ing.com

Frantisek Taborsky
EMEA FX & FI Strategist
frantisek.taborsky@ing.com

Adam Antoniak
Senior Economist, Poland
adam.antoniak@ing.pl

Min Joo Kang
Senior Economist, South Korea and Japan
min.joo.kang@asia.ing.com

Coco Zhang
ESG Research
coco.zhang@ing.com

Jan Frederik Slijkerman
Senior Sector Strategist, TMT
jan.frederik.slijkerman@ing.com

Katinka Jongkind
Senior Economist, Services and Leisure
Katinka.Jongkind@ing.com

Marina Le Blanc
Sector Strategist, Financials
Marina.Le.Blanc@ing.com

Samuel Abettan
Junior Economist

samuel.abettan@ing.com

Franziska Biehl

Senior Economist, Germany
Franziska.Marie.Biehl@ing.de

Rebecca Byrne

Senior Editor and Supervisory Analyst
rebecca.byrne@ing.com

Mirjam Bani

Sector Economist, Commercial Real Estate & Public Sector (Netherlands)
mirjam.bani@ing.com

Timothy Rahill

Credit Strategist
timothy.rahill@ing.com

Leszek Kasek

Senior Economist, Poland
leszek.kasek@ing.pl

Oleksiy Soroka, CFA

Senior High Yield Credit Strategist
oleksiy.soroka@ing.com

Antoine Bouvet

Head of European Rates Strategy
antoine.bouvet@ing.com

Jeroen van den Broek

Global Head of Sector Research
jeroen.van.den.broek@ing.com

Edse Dantuma

Senior Sector Economist, Industry and Healthcare
edse.dantuma@ing.com

Francesco Pesole

FX Strategist
francesco.pesole@ing.com

Rico Luman

Senior Sector Economist, Transport and Logistics
Rico.Luman@ing.com

Jurjen Witteveen

Sector Economist

jurjen.witteveen@ing.com

Dmitry Dolgin

Chief Economist, CIS

dmitry.dolgin@ing.de

Nicholas Mapa

Senior Economist, Philippines

nicholas.antonio.mapa@asia.ing.com

Egor Fedorov

Senior Credit Analyst

egor.fedorov@ing.com

Sebastian Franke

Consumer Economist

sebastian.franke@ing.de

Gerben Hieminga

Senior Sector Economist, Energy

gerben.hieminga@ing.com

Nadège Tillier

Head of Corporates Sector Strategy

nadege.tillier@ing.com

Charlotte de Montpellier

Senior Economist, France and Switzerland

charlotte.de.montpellier@ing.com

Laura Straeter

Behavioural Scientist

+31(0)611172684

laura.Straeter@ing.com

Valentin Tataru

Chief Economist, Romania

valentin.tataru@ing.com

James Smith

Developed Markets Economist, UK

james.smith@ing.com

Suvi Platerink Kosonen

Senior Sector Strategist, Financials

suvi.platerink-kosonen@ing.com

Thijs Geijer

Senior Sector Economist, Food & Agri
thijs.geijer@ing.com

Maurice van Sante
Senior Economist Construction & Team Lead Sectors
maurice.van.sante@ing.com

Marcel Klok
Senior Economist, Netherlands
marcel.klok@ing.com

Piotr Poplawski
Senior Economist, Poland
piotr.poplawski@ing.pl

Paolo Pizzoli
Senior Economist, Italy, Greece
paolo.pizzoli@ing.com

Marieke Blom
Chief Economist and Global Head of Research
marieke.blom@ing.com

Raoul Leering
Senior Macro Economist
raoul.leering@ing.com

Maarten Leen
Head of Global IFRS9 ME Scenarios
maarten.leen@ing.com

Maureen Schuller
Head of Financials Sector Strategy
Maureen.Schuller@ing.com

Warren Patterson
Head of Commodities Strategy
Warren.Patterson@asia.ing.com

Rafal Benecki
Chief Economist, Poland
rafal.benecki@ing.pl

Philippe Ledent
Senior Economist, Belgium, Luxembourg
philippe.ledent@ing.com

Peter Virovacz

Senior Economist, Hungary
peter.virovacz@ing.com

Inga Fechner
Senior Economist, Germany, Global Trade
inga.fechner@ing.de

Dimitry Fleming
Senior Data Analyst, Netherlands
Dimitry.Fleming@ing.com

Ciprian Dascalu
Chief Economist, Romania
+40 31 406 8990
ciprian.dascalu@ing.com

Muhammet Mercan
Chief Economist, Turkey
muhammet.mercan@ingbank.com.tr

Iris Pang
Chief Economist, Greater China
iris.pang@asia.ing.com

Sophie Freeman
Writer, Group Research
+44 20 7767 6209
Sophie.Freeman@uk.ing.com

Padhraic Garvey, CFA
Regional Head of Research, Americas
padhraic.garvey@ing.com

James Knightley
Chief International Economist, US
james.knightley@ing.com

Tim Condon
Asia Chief Economist
+65 6232-6020

Martin van Vliet
Senior Interest Rate Strategist
+31 20 563 8801
martin.van.vliet@ing.com

Karol Pogorzelski
Senior Economist, Poland

Karol.Pogorzelski@ing.pl

Carsten Brzeski

Global Head of Macro

carsten.brzeski@ing.de

Viraj Patel

Foreign Exchange Strategist

+44 20 7767 6405

viraj.patel@ing.com

Owen Thomas

Global Head of Editorial Content

+44 (0) 207 767 5331

owen.thomas@ing.com

Bert Colijn

Chief Economist, Netherlands

bert.colijn@ing.com

Peter Vanden Houte

Chief Economist, Belgium, Luxembourg, Eurozone

peter.vandenhoute@ing.com

Benjamin Schroeder

Senior Rates Strategist

benjamin.schroeder@ing.com

Chris Turner

Global Head of Markets and Regional Head of Research for UK & CEE

chris.turner@ing.com

Gustavo Rangel

Chief Economist, LATAM

+1 646 424 6464

gustavo.rangel@ing.com

Carlo Cocuzzo

Economist, Digital Finance

+44 20 7767 5306

carlo.cocuzzo@ing.com