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Forecast updates

Recent ANZ NZ Forecast Updates can be found here.

- NZ Property Focus: Making headway (for now)
- ANZ NZ Data Wrap A stronger outlook for employment
- ANZ NZ Data Wrap CPI: Petrol and housing pump up prices
- ANZ NZ Quarterly Economic Outlook: The journey back

Our other recent publications are on page 2.

What's the view?

- GDP moves broadly sideways over 2021
- · Unemployment has peaked
- Inflation picks up
- · OCR on hold

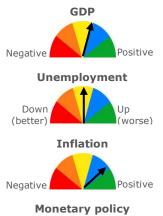
Less

needed

Our forecasts are on page 3.

Balance of risks

Risks skewed to higher inflation

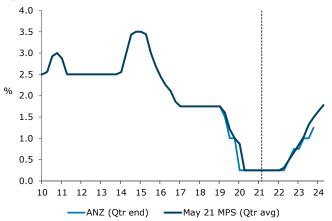


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The return of the OCR track

The RBNZ left monetary policy settings unchanged this week, with the OCR at 0.25%, and the LSAP and FLP programmes untouched. That was universally expected. The big news was the reinstatement of the OCR track. We had been hoping to see this, especially since the RBNZ's previous forward guidance had expired. And the RBNZ well and truly delivered, publishing an OCR track very similar to ours (figure 1). The forecast implies the first OCR hike will be in Q3 2022 (as we also expect), followed by steady hikes out to Q2 2024, with the OCR back to 1.78% – around where it was before the cuts made in 2019.

Figure 1. OCR forecasts



Source: RBNZ, ANZ Research

Of course, forecasting an OCR tightening cycle is one thing; following through is another. The Monetary Policy Committee was careful to highlight that their forecasts for the OCR are highly conditional on the economy improving in line with their expectations. The economic recovery is well on its way, but with only a very small share of the population vaccinated, there's always the risk of returning to some form of lockdown, which could stall the recovery. This means that higher interest rates aren't locked in just yet, but if everything goes according to the RBNZ's plan, we'll be looking at an end to super-low interest rates in the second half of 2022.

As expected, the RBNZ's forecasts have been upgraded to reflect the improved economic outlook since the February MPS. The labour market is much closer to full employment than they were expecting, and like us, the RBNZ thinks that unemployment has already peaked. That said, the RBNZ is forecasting a slower decline in the unemployment rate than we are – we think that unemployment will be around 4% by the end of 2023, versus the RBNZ's forecast of 4.3% by mid-2024. The RBNZ also thinks there's still slack in the labour market, though with pockets of tightness. Measures of labour utilisation do show room for improvement – in Q1 underutilisation ticked up 0.4ppts to 12.2%, and average hours worked dropped (figure 2). The RBNZ wants to see further improvement before they'll be happy that we're approaching full employment. Overall there's probably upside risk to their labour market outlook, and this tilts the risks to a slightly earlier date for the first OCR hike.

The RBNZ's inflation forecasts were also revised upwards, with a higher non-tradables forecast reflecting the RBNZ's judgement that there's less spare capacity in the economy than thought (due more to signs of hampered supply than any big upward revision to the demand picture). The direction of the upgrade to the inflation outlook makes sense – we're seeing upside risks to our own CPI forecast, which is similar to the RBNZ's February projection.



Looking ahead



Recent Publications

ANZ produces a range of in-depth insights.

- NZ Property Focus: Making headway (for now)
- NZ Property Focus: Policy plethora
- NZ Agri Focus: Slow boat to China
- ANZ NZ Insight: Where to now for the LSAP?
- ANZ NZ Insight: Bubbling over with excitement
- ANZ NZ Insight: The road to full employment
- NZ Housing Policy Changes: Recalibrating the demand pulse
- NZ Insight: Climate change and the path ahead
- ANZ NZ Insight: The path to normal

Click here for more.

Data calendar

| Date | Data/event |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Mon 31 May | ANZ Business |
| (1:00pm) | Outlook – May F |
| Mon 31 May | RBNZ Sectoral |
| (3:00pm) | Lending – Apr |
| Tue 1 Jun | Building Permits – |
| (10:45am) | April |
| Wed 2 Jun | GlobalDairyTrade |
| (early am) | auction |
| Wed 2 Jun | Terms of Trade – |
| (10:45am) | Q1 |
| Thu 3 Jun | ANZ Commodity |
| (1:00pm) | Price Index – May |
| Fri 4 Jun | Building Work Put |
| (10:45am) | in Place – Q1 |
| Wed 9 Jun | ANZ Truckometer – |
| (10:00am) | May |
| Wed 9 Jun | Economic Survey |
| (10:45am) | of Manuf. – Q1 |
| Wed 9 Jun | ANZ Business |
| (1:00pm) | Outlook – Jun P |
| Thu 10 Jun | Electronic Card |
| (10:45am) | Transactions – May |
| Fri 11 Jun | BusinessNZ Manuf |
| (10:30am) | PMI – May |
| Mon 14 Jun | Performance |
| (10:30am) Mon 14 Jun | Services Idx – May |
| (10:45am) | Net Migration – Apr |
| Tue 15 Jun | Food Price Index – |
| (10:45am) | May |
| (10.730111) | riuy |

Figure 2. Underutilisation rate and average hours worked



Source: Stats NZ, Macrobond, ANZ Research

The RBNZ is still expecting a technical recession, forecasting GDP to fall 0.6% q/q in Q1 (off -1.0% in Q4 2020). Our current expectation is that GDP was flat in Q1, and the surprise 2.5% rise in Q1 retail sales volumes increases our confidence that New Zealand will avoid a double-dip recession.

Finally, the RBNZ downgraded their medium-term house price outlook. Again, that's a sensible move. In this month's Property Focus, we did the same. The fundamentals of the housing market simply do not support the crazy price rises we saw over the second half of 2020, and OCR hikes from 2022 would certainly help to further dampen house price inflation.

Key data summary

Retail Trade Survey – Q1. Retail trade volumes increased 2.5% q/q. The data make us more confident NZ will avoid a technical recession.

Overseas Merchandise Trade – April. The merchandise trade balance increased to NZD388m in April.

RBNZ Monetary Policy Statement – May. Policy settings were unchanged, but the RBNZ OCR projection showed hikes – see our Review.

ANZ Roy Morgan Consumer Confidence – May. Consumer confidence ticked down 1 point to 114

The week ahead

ANZ Business Outlook - May (Monday 31 May, 1:00pm).

RBNZ sectoral lending data – April (Monday 31 May, 3:00pm). Housing lending may be impacted by housing policy changes.

Building Permits – April (Tuesday 1 June, 10:45am). Could show some softening after the housing policy announcement, but it's early days.

GlobalDairyTrade auction (Wednesday 2 June, early am). Dairy commodity prices expected to stabilise at the current elevated levels.

Overseas Trade Indices – Q1 (Wednesday 2 June, 10:45am). A solid rise in import prices is expected to push the terms of trade 1.0% q/q lower.

ANZ Commodity Price Index - May (Thursday 3 June, 1:00pm).

Work Put in Place – Q1 (Friday 4 June, 10:45am). We've pencilled in a 3.5% q/q lift.



Markets and forecasts

Markets outlook

Domestic financial market volatility picked up significantly this week as the NZD and local interest rates reacted to what was perceived to be a "hawkish" RBNZ Monetary Policy Statement. Local markets have been driven by global themes for much of the year, but with the RBNZ signalling earlier hikes than other central banks, the focus is now much more local. The big surprise for markets was the end-point of the RBNZ's OCR projections (1.78% in Q2 2024), which essentially implies 150bp of hikes over the next 3 years. That stands out in comparison to the Fed (whose "dot plot" has the Fed Funds rate at 0.25% at the end of 2023) and the RBA, who still maintain that rate hikes are unlikely before 2024. Such a contrast fully justifies NZD outperformance, especially on crosses like NZD/AUD and NZD/EUR. There is some risk of convergence as other central banks either catch up with the RBNZ or the RBNZ tempers its view in the face of excessive NZD strength (which would tame inflation and buy them time). However, given how well placed the NZ economy is, we expect ongoing NZD strength. Interest rates remain under upward pressure and we see limited scope for a pullback. Technically, there is enough priced in, with some rates up around a quarter of a percent since Wednesday. 2 and 3-year swap rates are also above levels implied by where the RBNZ's OCR track averages over the next 2 to 3 years, and the 10-year swap is above 2%. But markets remain fearful that the RBNZ's tilt towards contemplating hikes has the potential to herald a flood of corporate and mortgage hedging flow, that has the potential to drive interest rates higher still. In short, we expect continued volatility, with the NZD and local interest rates to stay elevated, and the risk of further upside.

| | | Actual | Forecast (end month) | | | | | | |
|----------------|--------|--------|----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| FX rates | Mar-21 | Apr-21 | Today | Jun-21 | Sep-21 | Dec-21 | Mar-22 | Jun-22 | Sep-22 |
| NZD/USD | 0.700 | 0.716 | 0.729 | 0.75 | 0.76 | 0.77 | 0.77 | 0.77 | 0.77 |
| NZD/AUD | 0.919 | 0.928 | 0.942 | 0.95 | 0.95 | 0.94 | 0.94 | 0.94 | 0.94 |
| NZD/EUR | 0.596 | 0.596 | 0.598 | 0.61 | 0.62 | 0.62 | 0.62 | 0.61 | 0.61 |
| NZD/JPY | 77.4 | 78.3 | 80.1 | 82.5 | 84.4 | 86.2 | 86.2 | 86.2 | 86.2 |
| NZD/GBP | 0.508 | 0.518 | 0.513 | 0.54 | 0.54 | 0.53 | 0.52 | 0.51 | 0.51 |
| NZ\$ TWI | 74.0 | 75.3 | 75.7 | 77.8 | 78.2 | 78.4 | 78.1 | 77.8 | 77.5 |
| Interest rates | Mar-21 | Apr-21 | Today | Jun-21 | Sep-21 | Dec-21 | Mar-22 | Jun-22 | Sep-22 |
| NZ OCR | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.50 |
| NZ 90 day bill | 0.35 | 0.36 | 0.33 | 0.37 | 0.40 | 0.40 | 0.40 | 0.57 | 0.82 |
| NZ 10-yr bond | 1.81 | 1.65 | 1.88 | 2.05 | 2.15 | 2.40 | 2.50 | 2.75 | 2.85 |

Economic forecasts

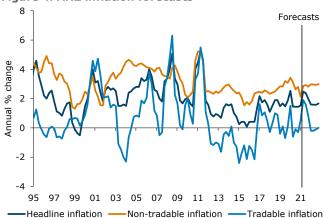
| | Dec-20 | Mar-21 | Jun-21 | Sep-21 | Dec-21 | Mar-22 | Jun-22 | Sep-22 | Dec-22 |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| GDP (% qoq) | -1.0 | 0.0 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.8 | 1.5 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.8 |
| GDP (% yoy) | -0.9 | 0.3 | 13.3 | 0.0 | 1.8 | 3.3 | 3.6 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| CPI (% qoq) | 0.5 | 0.8 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.1 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.6 | 0.2 |
| CPI (% yoy) | 1.4 | 1.5 | 2.5 | 2.4 | 2.0 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 1.7 |
| Employment (% qoq) | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.3 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.5 | 0.6 | 0.8 | 0.7 |
| Employment (% yoy) | 0.8 | 0.3 | 0.8 | 1.7 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 1.5 | 2.1 | 2.6 |
| Unemployment Rate (% sa) | 4.9 | 4.7 | 4.7 | 4.7 | 4.7 | 4.6 | 4.4 | 4.2 | 4.0 |

Figures in bold are forecasts. mom: Month-on-Month; qoq: Quarter-on-Quarter; yoy: Year-on-Year

Figure 3. GDP levels (Q4 2019= 100) 110 105 100 95 Index 90 85 80 1un-19 Dec-19 Mar-20 Dec-20 Mar-21 Sep-19 1un-20 Sep-20 Australia US lanan Euro area China Canada New Zealand

Source: Macrobond, Statistics NZ, ANZ Research

Figure 4. ANZ inflation forecasts



Source: Statistics NZ, ANZ Research



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