Agenda - 2026 Researcher Forum

Tuesday, December 1

8:00am - 10:00am **Coach transfer from Sydney Domestic Airport or Central Station to Hydro Majestic**

9:45am - 10:30am **Registration**

10:30am - 10:40am **Welcome remarks**


CHAIR

Aleks Vickovich
Co-chief executive,
Conexus Financial

10:40am - 11:25am **In conversation: Growth through disruption and perennial market change**

The opening session will share lessons from a career at the cutting edge of investment portfolios and product, reflecting on leadership, resilience and success amid an ever-changing investment landscape. It will opine on the outlook for exchange-traded funds, public and private markets, superannuation and managed accounts, while outlining the headwinds and tailwinds for financial advice and its trusted service providers. It will also provide a behind-the-scenes account of BetaShares' momentous acquisitions of both InvestSense and Bendigo Bank Super.

Alex Vynokur
Founder and chief executive,
Betashares


CHAIR

Aleks Vickovich
Co-chief executive,
Conexus Financial

11:25am - 12:20pm **Panel: Big picture in investment advice, research and**

managed accounts

This opening panel will survey the major commercial forces reshaping the advice and investment research ecosystem. Licensees are consolidating and expanding their influence over investment governance, the balance of power across the value chain is shifting, and the gatekeeper model is under greater scrutiny than at any point in the past decade. Meanwhile, access to private markets and the AI tech revolution continues to present sharp opportunities and perils. The panel will take a leadership position on the key trends shaping and reshaping wealth management.

Includes table discussion

John Carnevale
Executive general manager research and investment services, Entireti

Alex Donald
Chief executive - investment solutions, Ironbark Asset Management

Matt Heine
Chief executive, Netwealth

Louise Watson
Chief executive, Evidentia Group

CHAIR

Aleks Vickovich
Co-chief executive, Conexus Financial

12:20pm - 1:20pm	**Lunch | Wintergarden Restaurant**

1:20pm - 2:10pm — **Panel: Active, passive, systematic and the alpha question**

Bottom-up fundamental equity management has structurally underperformed across developed markets, and advisers are questioning the fee rationale. Information edge has decayed, market concentration penalises unconstrained stock-picking, and systematic strategies are gaining ground as a cost-efficient middle ground at a fraction of traditional active fees. This panel will debate whether the alpha drought is cyclical or structural, examine the case for systematic approaches, and interrogate what the shift means for portfolio construction and manager due diligence.

Scott Haslem
Chief investment officer and head of

Dominic

Tim Murphy
Co-chief executive/head of

investment, product and services, LGT Wealth Management

McCormick
Consultant, DPM Financial Services

research, Genium Investment Partners

Subash Pillai
Senior vice president, head of APAC solutions, Franklin Templeton

CHAIR

Lachlan Maddock
Editor, Investment Magazine

2:10pm - 3:00pm **Panel: Private credit and the risk, reward equation**

As private credit assets proliferate in advice portfolios, the established frameworks for manager due diligence may not be fit for purposes, particularly as global regulators ramp up scrutiny of retail and wholesale exposures. This panel will examine how advisers, asset consultants and research houses can help ensure investors are educated about emerging asset classes and the risks that can be associated with the coveted illiquidity premium.

Jacqueline Fernley
Founding partner, arcpoint OCIO

Paul Saliba
Senior portfolio manager, AZ Sestante

Michael Watson
Director – wealth solutions, La Trobe Financial

CHAIR

Simon Hoyle
Acting editor, Professional Planner

3:00pm - 3:30pm **Afternoon tea**

3:30pm - 4:10pm **Ted Talk: Factors, forecasts and fat tails**

The global economy and equity markets are being reshaped by a frenzied AI infrastructure build-out, concentrated capital spending and winner-takes-all dynamics. This session makes the case for a paradigm shift given index returns are being increasingly driven by a shrinking number of companies. It will explore the tension between chasing momentum and staying disciplined, why fundamentals still matter and how concentration risk presents a major test for the passive investment orthodoxy in wealth management.

CHAIR

Aleks Vickovich
Co-chief executive, Conexus Financial

4:10pm - 5:10pm

Panel: AI, US exceptionalism and the volatile new normal

The AI trade is more complex than the Magnificent Seven. Private equity is exposed through software company holdings, private credit through AI-adjacent borrowers, and infrastructure debt through data centre energy demand — and that exposure is growing rapidly across advice portfolios whether managers know it or not. This panel will map the full stack of AI-driven investment opportunity across public and private asset classes, examine the intersection with the energy transition, and ask whether Australian advisers are equipped to position their clients for the structural shift underway in US and global markets.

Includes table discussion

Eva Cook
Director of manager research, Morningstar Australasia

Dinyar Irani
Chairman and co-chief investment officer, Innova Asset Management

Trent Masters
Global portfolio manager, Alphinity Investment Management

CHAIR

Lachlan Maddock
Editor, Investment Magazine

5:10pm - 5:30pm

Closing remarks

CHAIR

Aleks Vickovich
Co-chief executive, Conexus Financial

5:30pm - 5:50pm	**Coach transfer from Hydro Majestic to Lilianfels**
6:00pm - 7:00pm	**Pre-dinner drinks | Lilianfels Lounge**
7:00pm - 10:00pm	**Conference dinner | Darley's Restaurant, Lilianfels**

Wednesday, December 2

8:10am - 8:30am	**Coach transfer from Lilianfels to Hydro Majestic**
8:30am - 8:50am	**Arrival refreshments**

8:50am - 9:00am **Welcome remarks**

CHAIR

Aleks Vickovich
Co-chief executive,
Conexus Financial

9:00am - 9:45am **Keynote: Regulatory priorities in investment research and advice**

This session will examine the regulatory priorities shaping investment research and advice. The Commissioner will provide an update on ASIC’s work on private credit and its ongoing oversight of the managed accounts market, including separately managed accounts. The session will also examine enforcement priorities across the advice and investment chain and discuss how research houses, platforms, licensees, managed account providers and other industry participants can engage constructively with the regulator ahead of potential legislative change.

Alan Kirkland
Commissioner, ASIC

CHAIR

Aleks Vickovich
Co-chief executive,
Conexus Financial

9:45am - 10:45am **Workshop: Designing a performance test for managed accounts**

Amid rumours that government or regulators may introduce a superannuation-style performance test for the managed accounts sector, this session invites delegates to take a self-regulatory leadership position. Following a panel session setting the scene, this interactive session will seek to resolve key questions including: what benchmark is appropriate and investable, how does the test apply across super and non-super portfolios, and what are the implications for platform data disclosure and the SMA market? It will seek to draw out areas of industry consensus and contention.

Includes table discussion

Rebecca Jacques
Head of wealth management investment solutions, Mercer Investments

Brad Matthews
Founding director, Brad Matthews Investment Strategies

Frances Taylor
Executive director, managed accounts, Colonial First State

CHAIR

Simon Hoyle
Acting editor, Professional Planner

10:45am - 11:15am **Morning tea**

12:00pm - 12:45pm **Case studies: Licensees, investment committees and the shifting sands of adviser portfolios**

Amid greater regulatory scrutiny and commercial opportunity set, some licensees and advice firms are taking on greater ownership of approved product lists, managed accounts and investment management, changing the dynamics of strategic partnership with asset consultants and research houses. This session showcases current thinking among a diverse range of leading advice firms and licensees, examining the investment governance and client experience implications of management decisions and examining tensions that may arise between product innovation, professional service and research independence.

Scott Fletcher
Chief investment officer, Woodbury Private

Simon Jeffery-Bilich
Head of investments, Count

CHAIR

Simon Hoyle
Acting editor, Professional Planner

12:45pm - 1:45pm	**Lunch | Wintergarden Restaurant**

1:45pm - 2:35pm **Panel: Investment, product and service innovation for retirement**

Product innovation in solving for longevity risk has largely failed to achieve mass adviser or client adoption, yet the retirement income challenge continues to grow. This session will examine whether traditional portfolio construction can genuinely meet the income needs of retirees, or whether life insurer or other balance sheet underwriting is really needed to ensure standard of living for retirees. It will consider whether a possible extension of the Retirement Income Covenant to the advice channel would change the terms of the debate.

Annika Bradley
Head of advice strategy, research and technical, UniSuper

Matt Olsen
Director of manager research ratings, Morningstar Australasia

CHAIR

Simon Hoyle
Acting editor, Professional Planner

2:35pm - 3:25pm **Panel: Path ahead for the research, managed accounts and advice ecosystem**

This final session will reflect on the key areas of contention and consensus at the forum, and interrogate whether the entire portfolio construction value chain is sufficiently well governed to play their critical gatekeeper role in light of the emerging AI age. It will consider industry self-regulation and advocacy efforts, commercial and portfolio risks and opportunities on the horizon.

Includes table discussion

Louis Christopher
Owner and managing director, SQM Research

Peter Green
Director of research, Lonsec Research and Ratings

Cameron Spittle
Managing partner, Trellia Wealth Partners

CHAIR

Aleks Vickovich
Co-chief executive,
Conexus Financial

3:25pm - 3:30pm	**Closing remarks**

CHAIR

Aleks Vickovich
Co-chief executive,
Conexus Financial

3:30pm - 5:00pm	**Coach transfer from Hydro Majestic to Sydney Domestic Airport or Central Station**