

March 13, 2026

Investor Signposts: Week beginning March 16, 2026

Upcoming economic and financial market events

Australia

Tuesday March 17	◆ RBA interest rate decision	<i>25bp hike to 4.10% expected</i>
Wednesday March 18	◆ Westpac Leading Index (February)	<i>Forecast of 0.2% vs. prior -0.05%</i>
Thursday March 19	◆ Employment figures (February)	<i>January gain of 17.8k jobs</i>

Overseas

Monday March 16	◆ US Empire State manufacturing survey (March)	<i>7.1 tipped</i>
Monday March 16	◆ US industrial production (February)	<i>+0.2% MoM expected</i>
Monday March 16	◆ China retail sales/production/investment (February)	<i>Retail sales could rise 1.1% YoY</i>
Tuesday March 17	◆ US Conference Board Leading Index (February)	<i>Prior read of -0.2% MoM</i>
Wednesday March 18	◆ US producer prices (February)	<i>+0.2% MoM forecast</i>
Wednesday March 18	◆ US factory orders (January)	<i>Prior month was -0.7% MoM</i>
Wednesday March 18	◆ US durable goods orders (January)	<i>Previous month was -1.4% MoM</i>
Wednesday March 18	◆ US Federal Reserve interest rate decision	<i>Forecast to hold at 3.50-3.75%</i>
Thursday March 19	◆ US initial jobless claims (weekly)	<i>215k tipped</i>
Thursday March 19	◆ ECB interest rate decision	<i>Expected to hold at 2.15%</i>
Thursday March 19	◆ Bank of Japan (BOJ) interest rate decision	<i>Tipped to stay at 0.75%</i>
Friday March 20	◆ China loan prime rates (LPRs)	<i>Current policy rate at 3%</i>

Investors watch Middle East flashpoint ahead of key Australian and US interest rate decisions

- **In Australia**, it is a big week of economic news with the RBA scheduled to hand down its interest rate decision on Tuesday. CBA economists now expect the RBA to hike in March, which would bring the cash rate to 4.10% from 3.85%. They say the March Board meeting is being set in a very different context to what was expected just two weeks ago, with the conflict in the Middle East setting an uncertain backdrop. They anticipate inflation will lift further away from target going forward, as energy and other linked goods prices rise, but the impact on growth remains highly uncertain. They believe inflation is already too high, the economy is already breaching its capacity limit, and the labour market is tight. As a result, the economists now expect the RBA to hike in both March and May, taking the cash rate back to 4.35%.
- Other economic data set for release include the Westpac-Melbourne Institute Leading Index, which aims to signal economic activity 3-9 months ahead, and employment figures on Thursday.
- There are also a host of ASX companies going ex-dividend this week, including Chorus, Data3, HUB24, Plato Income Maximiser, WAM Income Maximiser (**Monday**); SEEK, Reece (**Tuesday**); Auckland Airport (**Wednesday**); Spark New Zealand, a2 Milk, Yancoal, Cochlear (**Thursday**); and Latitude (**Friday**). Dividend payments also start to ramp up over the course of this week.
- **In the US**, it is also a full week of important economic data. The Federal Reserve will make its decision on interest rates on Wednesday, US time (early Thursday, Australian time). Consensus expectations are for rates to remain on hold. The decision comes after last week's consumer price data showing prices moved higher by 0.3% for the month of February, but prior to the start of the Middle East conflict, which is expected to put upward pressure on inflation.
- There are also interest rate decisions from other central banks, in Canada (**Wednesday**), Japan, Europe, England and Switzerland (**Thursday**) and China (**Friday**). *James Gruber, CommSec Equity Market Strategist*

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