

TAKEOVER WHITE PAPER

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TAMM Asset Management

EQUITY | PROPERTY | CREDIT



www.tamim.com.au 1300 750 007

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, driving performance in our Australian equity portfolios has hinged on astute investments in companies possessing not only intrinsic value but also an imminent catalyst for re-evaluating their stock prices. One pivotal catalyst we've honed our skills in identifying is the potential takeover target. Recognising companies with strategic appeal that can yield greater value under new ownership is a potent weapon in the investor's arsenal. This strategy has consistently proven lucrative as takeovers often entail substantial premium prices. Over the past year, the ASX has witnessed a flurry of M&A transactions,

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with several featured in TAMIM's Australian equity portfolios. In this update, we delve deeper into our methodology and elucidate the key criteria we consider when identifying potential takeover targets. Additionally, we explore three Australian stocks that, in our estimation, are ripe for acquisition.





IDENTIFYING A POTENTIAL TARGET

The following is a compendium of pivotal indicators we scrutinise when assessing a potential takeover target. While this list isn't exhaustive, it offers valuable insights. Potential takeover candidates may not necessarily exhibit all these traits, but astute observers will often detect some of these signals.

NOTEWORTHY STAKEHOLDERS

Our quest for potential takeover targets commences by scrutinising the top twenty shareholders. A substantial holder, defined as owning more than 5% of a company's float, is legally obligated to disclose their stake to the market, including increments of 1% thereafter. If a shareholder, particularly one from the same industry or poised to gain from the acquisition, is accumulating shares, it's a conspicuous signal. Accumulation by significant shareholders may herald an impending takeover attempt. Monitoring entities that amass a substantial chunk of the company (e.g., exceeding 30%) is also imperative. Such stakeholders face hurdles when exiting their positions through traditional market sales, making a takeover their primary exit route. Additionally, observing fund managers and other groups accumulating shares, especially those with a history of involvement in M&A activity, is pivotal.

STRATEGIC VALUE

In the niche of takeovers, "synergies" is a frequently invoked term. Synergies encapsulate the benefits that a merged entity stands to gain post-transaction completion. Common synergies include cross-selling opportunities and cost reductions resulting from redundant operations.

These synergies are the driving force behind the strategic value a company holds as an acquisition target. A prime illustration of this is the remarkable takeover of Silk Laser Australia (ASX:SLA). As a prominent player in the Australian skincare and aesthetics industry, Silk Laser possessed a wealth of assets, including an extensive network of clinics, a loyal customer base, and a comprehensive range of services encompassing laser hair removal, cosmetic injectables, skin treatments, body contouring, and skincare products.

The company's strategic allure lay in its potential to provide the acquiring entity with substantial synergistic advantages. These synergies materialised in various forms, notably through cross-selling opportunities and operational cost reductions. By integrating Silk



Laser's offerings into its existing portfolio, the acquirer gained access to an expanded customer base and diversified revenue streams. Additionally, the elimination of overlapping operations led to operational efficiencies, making the acquisition a financially sound decision.

M&A-EXPERIENCED DIRECTORS

M&A transactions are intricate and often beset with obstacles, necessitating the presence of experienced individuals. We pay attention to recent director or board appointments with M&A expertise, as such appointments are frequently made in anticipation of transactions. Notably, Paragon Care (PGC.ASX) appointed a non-executive director with significant M&A experience shortly before entering a merger agreement with Quantum Health Group (QTM.ASX) in September 2021. This example underscores the accessibility of information that may hint at potential takeovers, emphasising the need for vigilant research.

The significance of having seasoned professionals with a track record in mergers and acquisitions cannot be overstated. These individuals possess the acumen and insights necessary to navigate the complexities of M&A transactions, ensuring their successful execution. A pertinent example within our own portfolio is the case of Healthia (ASX:HLA). The company's board comprised directors with extensive experience in orchestrating mergers, acquisitions, eventual exits to private equity. Their collective expertise was instrumental in Healthia's remarkable journey from a publicly traded entity to a private equity acquisition.

Under their stewardship, Healthia underwent a process that eventually led to a buyout by a private equity firm at a staggering 85% premium to its prevailing share price. This extraordinary outcome underscored the pivotal role of a board enriched with individuals well-versed in the intricacies of M&A.





ENHANCING SALEABILITY, I.E. SPINNING OFF DIVISIONS, RETIRING DEBT ETC.

Companies looking to make themselves more attractive to potential acquirers may engage in actions like divesting divisions or reducing debt. Firms with robust balance sheets, devoid of debt and boasting a net cash position, are more appealing takeover targets. In the evolving landscape of sustainable investing and ESG measures, companies may opt to spin off contentious divisions, enhancing their image. Woolworths' demerger of its alcohol and hospitality subsidiary, Endeavour (EDV.ASX), exemplifies this trend. While not a takeover target, this strategic move demonstrates the appeal of divesting ethically questionable business segments.

STRATEGIC REVIEW ANNOUNCEMENTS



Companies announcing strategic reviews often indicate an intent to maximise shareholder value. While not a guarantee, such reviews can stem from unsolicited approaches or efforts to divest core assets. Typically, firms appoint advisors to guide these decisions. The announcement of a strategic review can signal an imminent takeover or other corporate actions and merits closer scrutiny. In the upcoming case studies, we'll delve into two companies that have strategically repositioned their operations to extract enhanced value for their shareholders. These examples underscore the dynamic nature of corporate strategies and the potential for significant shareholder gains when companies undertake these strategic reviews.

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS



A compelling theme emerging recently involves super funds targeting infrastructure assets. Overwhelmed by the sheer volume of assets under management, super funds seek higher returns by investing in infrastructure assets. Notably, Telstra (ASX:TLS) sold half of its mobile towers for 28x EBITDA, while Sydney Airport (ASX:SYD) received a bid from QSuper in November 2021, reflecting the allure of stable, income-generating infrastructure assets. This trend extends to infrastructure businesses with secure earnings, including fibre, airports, utility infrastructure, and government-contracted entities.



POST-TAKEOVER OFFER CONSIDERATIONS

After a takeover offer is extended, companies and investors alike must carefully evaluate the offer's composition, which may encompass various elements beyond just cash. Takeover offers can take different forms, such as a straightforward cash consideration or a combination of cash and company shares, commonly referred to as a cash + scrip deal. In rarer instances, other securities, like warrants or convertible bonds, might also be issued as part of the offer. Occasionally, a company's core assets are acquired, while the remaining entity undergoes liquidation, with the possibility of retaining valuable assets like franking credits for investors.

Once a takeover offer is on the table, it typically exerts a gravitational pull on the share price, drawing it closer to the offer price. At this juncture, several critical factors warrant consideration. One pivotal aspect is assessing the financial capacity of the offering company to fulfil the deal's terms. Recent instances have seen deals falter due to inadequate financing, highlighting the significance of this evaluation.

"Identifying the potential for a competitive bidding scenario can present lucrative opportunities for investors."

The market's sentiment regarding the likelihood of shareholder acceptance and the acquirer's commitment to the deal also plays a crucial role. If the market perceives a high probability of the deal proceeding, the spread between the trading price and the offer price tends to be narrow. Conversely, scepticism about the deal's success can widen this spread.

In cases where the offer represents a lower valuation than market expectations, the share price may even trade at a premium, driven by anticipation of a superior offer or the potential for a bidding war. Recognising the intrinsic value of these businesses from the perspective of potential acquirers is pivotal. Identifying the potential for a competitive bidding scenario, akin to the recent case of Sydney Airport, can present lucrative opportunities for investors. These dynamics illustrate the intricate considerations that come into play once a takeover offer is on the horizon.





THE TAMIM TAKEAWAY

Identifying potential takeover targets on the ASX is both an art and a science. It requires a keen eye for key indicators, a deep understanding of market dynamics, and the ability to decipher corporate actions. By mastering these skills, investors can uncover opportunities that have the potential to yield significant rewards.

Knowledge is your most potent asset in the world of investing. Keep learning, keep exploring, and keep growing your wealth. Continue reading to uncover three TAMIM case studies and enhance your understanding of this intriguing investment strategy.

BIGTINCAN (ASX:BTH)



THE BUSINESS

Founded in 2010 and headquartered in Sydney, Bigtincan is a small software company specialising in sales enablement. This is a somewhat niche and emerging industry that provides organisations with the information, content, software tools and processes to make their sales teams more effective. Improving the productivity of a sales team can be extremely valuable to a variety of businesses.

Bigtincan services companies across a range of industries (life sciences, financial services, retail, technology, manufacturing, telecommunications and energy), as well as governments, and across the world-operating in more than 50 countries and 22 languages. Clients include industry leaders such as telecommunications provider BT OpenReach in the U.K., beverage manufacturer Anheuser-Busch, and clothing retailer GUESS.

The company's original platform is the Bigtincan Hub, but it has added a number of extra functionalities and capabilities by working with its broad range of clients and through a number of small acquisitions. A critical part of Bigtincan's solutions is that they integrate with other software: leading Customer Relationship Management (CRM) providers including Salesforce and Microsoft Dynamics, cloud providers such as Amazon S3, Apple iCloud, DropBox, Google Drive and Microsoft OneDrive, and a variety of content management solutions including Microsoft SharePoint and IBM FileNet.



RECENT RESULTS

Bigtincan released its full-year FY23 financial results on August 29. They showed total revenue increased 13% on the prior year to \$123 million, driven by organic growth and a partial contribution from the acquisition of SalesDirector.ai that was previously announced in December 2022. Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) was a record, improving more than 100% year-on-year (YoY) to \$8.3 million.

Total revenue increased 13% on the prior year to \$123 million

Bigtincan significantly expanded its capabilities in FY23, delivering over 185 new features and enhancements—including the modernisation of Brainshark, the introduction of next-gen analytics and the release of Digital Sales rooms for enhanced buyer-seller interaction. It also added over 150 new logo customers during the financial year and expanded annual recurring revenue (ARR) with 500 customers worldwide. It also completed its intelligent Enablement Platform (IEP), accelerating customers' ability to purchase multiple Hubs with a unified platform approach. As at 30 June, 2023, ARR from Multi-Hub represented 27% of total ARR, with Multi-Hub customers growing 15% faster than the prior year. In fact, Multi-Hub customers spent 92% more than Single-Hub customers in FY23.

Looking forward, Bigtincan expects the completion of IEP technologies to have an ongoing impact in FY24 and beyond. Management's key aspirations include progressing its Multi-Hub development to comprise more than 30% of its ARR base and GenerativeAl technology to begin contributing to revenue. The company hopes to build on the achievements of FY23 and will provide further guidance at its annual general meeting (AGM). Bigtincan also progressed the Modus Engagement Inc (Modus) acquisition, which it expects to close in early FY24.





TAKEOVER POTENTIAL

Bigtincan is one of the leading global sales enablement software providers, having won numerous awards and distinctions and boasting a portfolio of top-tier clients. It also has a history of strong revenue growth and is expected to be free cash flow positive this year—which is relatively rare for companies this small that are mainly focused on growth.

However, this business and financial strength does not appear to be reflected in the company's current valuation, which is currently just 2 times Bigtincan's average recurring revenue (ARR is a common valuation metric for software companies and refers to the amount of revenue that is expected to be recurring each year, from subscriptions for example).



It would also be a tiny (almost bite-sized) acquisition for most software companies listed on the share market, or even a private equity company specialising in software given the market capitalisation of approximately \$200 million.

In fact, back in May Bigtincan responded to "media speculation" and informed the ASX that it had received a takeover offer from Siris Capital Group, LLC–a New York-based private equity group that specialises in acquiring and developing software companies.

Interestingly, Bigtincan's independent board committee (IBC) did not consider it to be in the best interests of shareholders to progress with the bid. This is despite the takeover proposal valuing the company at \$0.80 per share—a substantial premium to the \$0.41 that Bigtincan shares had traded at prior to any speculation about a deal. Clearly, the IBC believes that the management team can create more value than the Siris bid, or that other merger offers will be at significantly higher values.

On this note, the press release stated that Bigtincan had received other confidential approaches since the original bid (a common occurrence when it becomes clear that a company is up for sale) and has engaged Morgan Stanley to evaluate these and any further advances. Given Bigtincan's leading market position, attractive valuation and small market capitalisation, we expect a deal to be struck in the near future.



CLEARVIEW WEALTH

(ASX:CVW)



THE BUSINESS

ClearView Wealth is a financial services company headquartered in Sydney that was founded back in 1976. The business is split into two clearly separate product segments: life insurance and wealth management.

Life insurance is ClearView's most important segment and accounted for approximately 94% of the company's total revenue in the first half of 2023. Depending on the product, it provides policyholders with either one off or recurring payments in the event of an eligible claim. ClearView's product suite includes LifeSolutions (traditional term life, disability, trauma, critical illness, child cover, accident, income production, and business expense cover); ClearView ClearChoice (a type of income protection insurance offered both directly and through the HUB24 Super Fund); and the company's Non-Advice Life Protection Portfolio (which closed to new clients in May 2017 and is no longer available for sale).

Clearview's Wealth Management business is broken down into Traditional Products (typical savings, superannuation and allocated pension products); WealthSolutions (superannuation and retirement income wrap that offers a range of investment funds, ASX-listed shares and term deposits); WealthSolutions 2 (a white-label product offering ClearView model portfolios and platform funds on the HUB24 platform); WealthFoundations (a mid-market wealth management product suite of superannuation and allocated pension products administered in-house on the Acurity platform).

RECENT RESULTS

ClearView provided its FY23 financial results on August 23, and results were strong across the board. Gross premiums increased 9% on the prior year to \$325 million and underlying net profit after tax (NPAT) for the Group rose 41% to \$36.5 million, with strong growth across all major financial metrics and improving life insurance market conditions. In particular, higher interest rates are providing a strong tailwind, increasing investment returns on cash and fixed income securities—one of the few businesses on the ASX that sees this benefit.

The impact of ClearView's streamlined focus on its core product is continuing to bear fruit, with greater market share and improved financial results. The company captured 11% new business in Q4 FY23 and for the FY23 full-year, captured 3.2% in-force premium market share while delivering a Life Insurance underlying NPAT margin of 12.4%.



Commenting on the result, ClearView Managing Director Nadine Gooderick noted:

"Our decision to re-set and transform the business in early 2020 by simplifying and investing in our systems, processes and technology, as well as expanding our people capability, is starting to deliver benefits and growth through efficiencies, productivity gains and scale benefits."

There was further good news for shareholders, with ClearView declaring a final (fully franked) cash dividend of 3 cents per share, a 50% increase on the prior year. This reflects a payout ratio of 54%, at the midpoint of the company's target range of 40% to 60% of underlying NPAT–leaving plenty of room for investment. It represents a very attractive yield, equating to 6.2% based on the share price of \$0.49 per share (30 June).

Looking ahead, management (led by new CEO Nadine Gooderick) has set ambitious goals to be achieved by FY26. This includes market share of between 12% and 14%, \$400 million in gross premiums, approximately 4% In-force Premium market share, and between 11% and 13% Life Insurance Underlying NPAT margin. The company will also continue targeting a dividend payout ratio of between 40% and 60% of underlying NPAT.

TAKEOVER POTENTIAL

ClearView is currently in the process of divesting its wealth management segment. This involves an agreement to sell CFML to Human Financial, a private investment management company based in Sydney. As part of the deal, ClearView is set to receive \$17.3 million in proceeds, comprising \$1.3 million in cash alongside a 40% equity interest in Human Financial valued at \$16 million. This would result in a \$3.4 million profit on the sale for ClearView and add a further \$15 million to its capital base. The deal is expected to be completed in the first half of FY24, pending relevant approvals.

The transaction has multiple benefits for ClearView. It simplifies the company's operations and allows management to focus on the life insurance segment, which has the necessary scale and accounts for the vast majority of ClearView's revenues—without the regulatory challenges and risks that accompany the wealth management environment.

It also increases the likelihood of a merger proposal for the remainder of ClearView. Holding companies that operate multiple different segments rarely attract takeover bids. Instead, private equity and other large entities looking for a bolt-on acquisition both prefer to purchase a single "pure-play" company that they can streamline or integrate into their existing operations, respectively. Divestment of the wealth management business appears to be another large step in the direction of an eventual sale of the company.



That ClearView is up for sale is not a secret. The company previously announced that it was under a "strategic review", which is share market speak for evaluating all options—including a possible sale of the company. Majority shareholder Crescent Capital Partners has made it abundantly clear that it is looking to exit the position it established back in 2012, and the private equity player appears to be a motivated seller. The retirement of long-serving Managing Director Simon Swanson should only make this process easier, as the transition to a new CEO often facilitates a change of ownership.

As the last remaining independent life insurer in Australia, ClearView's life of autonomy appears limited. The divestment of wealth management, change in CEO and motivated controlling shareholder are all pointing in the same direction, and given ClearView's current valuation (a discount of 30% to net tangible assets and currently sporting a 6% dividend yield), it looks like a matter of time.





EML PAYMENTS

(ASX:EML)



THE BUSINESS

EML Payments is a payment processing company that operates across Australia, the United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States. Founded in 2003 and based in Brisbane, it originally focused on prepaid cards, which the company separates into General Purpose Reloadable and Gift and Incentives. General Purpose Reloadable cards are used for various purposes (including government, salary packaging, gaming, and digital banking), while the Gift and Incentives segment includes the more traditional single-use gift cards that consumers use for shopping or might receive as an incentive (such as when participating in market research).

EML expanded its business significantly with the acquisition of Prepaid Financial Services in 2019, which spread the company's reach to a further 22 countries across North America and Europe and made it one of the largest prepaid and digital banking fintech businesses in the world. Over time, EML further continued its diversification into more financial services. These included the rapidly-expanding buy-now pay-later market, electronic bill payment, foreign exchange, and finally digital banking accounts that mostly operated in Ireland, France and the United Kingdom (including on the U.K.'s "open banking" network)-predominantly through the acquisition of Sentenial in April 2021.

RECENT RESULTS

EML Payments released its FY23 financial results on August 29, and the share price soared a staggering 45% in the following two trading sessions. Gross Debit Volumes (GDV) grew 61% from the prior year to \$129.6 billion, driven by a full year contribution from the Sentenial Group acquisition and modest organic growth across all business segments. Operating revenue for the year was a record and came in ahead of guidance, growing 9% over the year to \$254 million. This was driven by growth in all three business segments (GPR, Gifting and Digital Payments), as well as interest revenue across the company's float holdings–predominantly Gifting and GPR up \$29.2 million (float refers to the prepaid amounts on these cards that EML is able to invest until they are spent by the consumer).

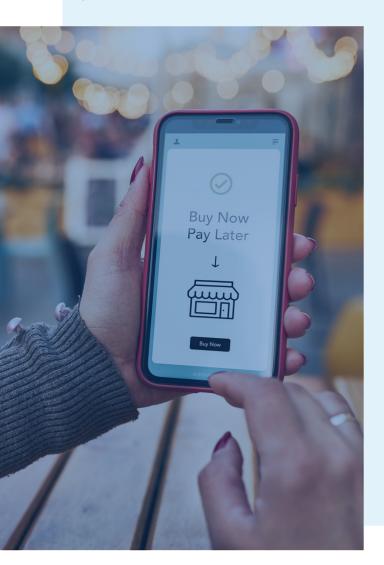
Underlying EBITDA also came in ahead of guidance, although it was down 28% to \$37.1 million. This decline was the result of higher overhead expenses, which rose 27% on the prior year (exceeding the increase in revenue). There were also significant impairments on the prior PFS and Sentenial acquisitions, which led to a statutory (reported) loss after tax of \$284 million.



TAKEOVER POTENTIAL

EML's new leadership team is heavily focused on simplifying the company's diverse operations that evolved from a series of acquisitions. Since April 2023, they have pursued four operational priorities; resolving the remediation issues with the Central Bank of Ireland, cost optimisation (reducing FY24 expenses by \$10 million), growth in core business and talent retention.

Additionally, EML is currently undertaking a strategic review with the consultation of investment bank Barrenjoey. To date, the review has recommended separating the UK-based PFSL business from the Irish-domiciled PCSIL European business. The PFSL business serves high-quality government and private clients and is both low-risk and profitable on a standalone basis. The PCSIL business, on the other hand, is both unprofitable and faces challenges from a high level of client concentration and a heavy reliance on retail consumer-loaded cards—which exposes it to market fluctuations. Management expects that separating the two businesses will unlock value and expects to provide further details at the Annual General Meeting in November.



The strategic review also involves assessing any potential strategic (or takeover) interest in Similar to the investment thesis EML. described for ClearView Wealth, we believe that EML would likely attract bidders for each of the company's individual parts. These businesses would likely suit a range of financial technology (FinTech) companies or payment processors, where M&A has been an theme for the past decade. Management indicated in a recent presentation that they have already received some interest, and we expect more bidders to emerge following the sale of any individual businesses.

While it is difficult to assess the value of the European and U.K.-based Prepaid Financial Services businesses, we believe that the total sum-of-the-parts significantly exceeds EML's current market capitalisation. EML shareholders have had a rollercoaster ride over the last five or so years, but the recent share price action following the half-year results suggests that any good news will be well-received by the market.

Disclaimer: BTH, CVW, EML currently held in TAMIM Portfolios.



TAMIM RECENT TAKEOVERS

SILK LASER AUSTRALIA

(ASX:SLA)



Silk Laser Australia (ASX:SLA), a prominent player in the non-surgical aesthetic clinic network, recently made headlines with a buyout bid from Wesfarmers Ltd (ASX:WES). This skincare clinic network offers a diverse range of non-surgical aesthetic products and services, from laser hair removal to cosmetic injectables and skincare treatments. We were thrilled to learn of the potential takeover bid for Silk Laser, offering substantial growth opportunities that were perhaps underestimated in its pre-bid market valuation. Going forward, we anticipate a shift towards transitioning corporate-owned stores into joint ventures, fostering long-term relationships with clinic principals. With a projected cash EBITDA of \$28 million and cash NPAT of \$12 million for FY23, Silk Laser's undervalued status at the time of our investment (around \$1.70) made it a compelling opportunity with a PE of 8.5x and EV/EBITDA of 4x.

HEALTHIA

(ASX:HLA)



Healthia (ASX:HLA), a prominent allied health company specialising in podiatry, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and optometry, has seen significant growth, boasting over 300 clinics across Australia. The recent takeover bid, valuing Healthia at approximately \$260 million or \$1.80 per share, represents an impressive 85% premium to its previous day's share price and an 87.1% premium to the 1-month average.



TAMIM RECENT TAKEOVERS



CIRRUS NETWORKS HOLDINGS LIMITED

(ASX:CNW)

Cirrus Networks Holdings Limited (ASX:CNW), an innovative Managed Services and IT Solutions provider, received an offer from Atturra Limited (ASX:ATA) to acquire all its shares through a Scheme of Arrangement. This offer values Cirrus at approximately \$49 million, offering shareholders a total consideration of 5.3 cents per share, consisting of 75% cash and 25% Atturra shares. This represents a significant 29.3% premium above the previous closing price and a notable 25.5% premium over the 30-day volume-weighted average price.

SYMBIO

(ASX:SYM)



Symbio (ASX:SYM), an ASX small-cap standout with a flourishing and profitable business, a robust balance sheet boasting \$30 million in cash against a market capitalisation of \$150 million, a track record of consistent revenue, and high insider ownership on its Board of Directors, garnered attention due to its attractive valuation, trading at less than times EV/EBITDA. Superloop, а Brisbane-based telecommunications and internet service provider, recognised this opportunity, launching a \$243 million bid for Symbio on August 1, 2023. The offer included \$1.425 in cash and 2.14 Superloop shares, valuing Symbio at \$2.85 per share with a potential dividend of up to \$0.35 per share, presenting a 26% premium to the prior closing price. The acquisition holds promise for cost synergies and sustainable growth, with Symbio being one of Superloop's significant wholesale clients. Both companies reported encouraging financial performance, enhancing the deal's prospects.

Disclaimer: SLA, HLA, CNW, SYM currently held in TAMIM Portfolios.



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