



# Bourse bucks US trend to end lower

## Equities

AUSTRALIAN stocks bucked a higher lead from the US to end the week slightly lower, led downwards by energy and banking stocks.

The benchmark S&P/ASX 200 index closed down four points at 4949.2, while the All Ordinaries declined 4.2 points to 4918.

But on the Sydney Futures Exchange, the September share price index contract was 13 points higher at 4917 on a volume of 9770 contracts.

Fat Prophets chief executive Angus Geddes said it had been a slow day on the Australian bourse.

"We had oil prices off a couple of bucks, which is a negative," explained Mr Geddes, adding that there had been some profit-taking in the resources sector.

"Rio Tinto has been basking in the glow this week of a solid, strong result, but BHP is yet to report and the market is probably getting concerned about the mine strike at Escondida."

BHP Billiton will report its full-year results on August 23.

Mr Geddes also said that industrials had seen "mixed action" with an equal number of rises and falls.

US stocks rose as a big drop in the oil price offset market jitters after police thwarted a terrorist plan to bomb planes in Britain.

The Dow Jones industrial aver-

age rose 48.19 points to 11,124.37. The Standard & Poor's 500 Index fell 5.86 points to 1271.81.

The Nasdaq Composite Index jumped 11.46 points to 2071.74.

Crude oil prices slumped overnight on fears air traffic could suffer in the wake of the terrorist scare, which targeted flights from Britain to the US, leading energy stocks lower to the end of trading.

**Woodside Petroleum** slumped 53c to \$41.70, while rival oil and gas producer **Santos** dropped 2c to \$11.42.

**BHP Billiton** retreated 12c to \$26.95.

**Rio Tinto** also tracked the market lower by 63c to \$72.65.

Australian airline **Qantas** shed 3c to finish at \$3.02, while **QRSciences**, a producer of substance detection solutions used in anti-terrorism activities, soared by 8.5c to 54.5c.

Gold miners managed to stave off losses despite a weaker gold price, **Newcrest** rising 43c to \$20.13, **Newmont** up 2c to \$6.92 and **Lihir** ended the day unchanged at \$2.92.

The spot price of gold in Sydney was \$US640.65 per fine ounce, down \$US12.80 on Thursday's close.

Losses were felt across the banking sector, **Commonwealth Bank** ending down by 4c at \$45.75 after losses earlier in the week on the back of its full-year

results.

**ANZ** shed 2c to \$26.38, **National Australia Bank** cut 18c to end at \$36.20 and **Westpac** also declined by 13c to \$22.54.

But retailers were mostly higher, with **Coles Myer** gaining 28c to finish at \$11.10, along with **David Jones**, which ticked 9c higher to \$3.22, but **Woolworths** succumbed to market pressure to fall 6c to \$18.92.

Beleaguered telco **Telstra** finished 4c lower at \$3.76, after reporting its worst annual profit result in eight years yesterday, as shareholder disapproval gathered

steam over an \$8.7 million payout to its chief executive Sol Trujillo.

Telstra was the top-traded stock by volume yesterday with 45.5 million shares worth \$171.45 million changing hands.

**SingTel**, owner of rival Optus, also fell 2c to \$2.01.

**News Corp** gave back 17c to close at \$25.56, its non-voting stock declining 15 cents to \$24.52, but rival newspaper publisher **Fairfax** rose 3c to \$3.98.

Nine Network owner **PBL** fell 12c to \$16.68, **Seven Network** fell 4c to \$8.90, and **Ten Network** also weakened 4c to \$2.66.

Market turnover was 999.67 million shares worth \$3.65 billion, with 478 stocks rising, 532 falling and 322 unchanged.

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