

**HD Announcement on Australia's New Treasury Secretary Likely This Week -- Market Talk**
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2304 GMT [Dow Jones] Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott has said he hopes the government will make an announcement on the appointment of the new Treasury Secretary in coming days. The government has dragged its feet on making a decision, even as the integrity of its budget has been eroded by the blocking of key revenue and spending measures in the Senate, and a sharp decline in commodity prices in 2015, including a 50% fall in the price of **iron ore**, the country's biggest export. Outgoing Treasury Secretary Martin Parkinson warned last week that the country's living standard could fall unless hard decisions are made to repair the budget. (james.glynn@wsj.com; Twitter @JamesGlynnWSJ)

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2256 GMT [Dow Jones] Bell Potter upgrades Technology One (TNE.AU) to hold from sell, maintaining the software **company** still has a bright future and that it had only been advising punters to avoid the stock on valuation grounds. Technology One offers software to businesses for purposes such as financing and payroll. Like most companies it's facing a deteriorating economic outlook in Australia as the country's long **mining** boom fades. "While we now see the stock as more fairly valued around the current share price, we do not see any clear catalysts in the short term to move the share price upwards," Bell Potter says, keeping its price target at A\$3.00/share. TNE last at A\$2.99. (Ross.Kelly@wsj.com)

2154 GMT [Dow Jones] The NZD/USD continues to be **sold** on rallies and is maintaining a downward bias, says NZForex Senior FX Dealer Mitch McIntyre. "The kiwi is likely to remain range-bound in week ahead, with a focus on off-shore events for impetus." He adds the decline in commodity prices, economic and monetary divergence favoring the U.S., and the slow-down in **China** remain the dominant themes in the market. "Keep a close eye on **oil** prices, with the decline last week the most severe since the financial crisis of 2008." The pair is at 0.7822. McIntyre adds the pair remains in a relatively tight range of 0.7800 to 0.8000. (lucy.craymer@wsj.com; Twitter: @lucy\_craymer)

2252 GMT [Dow Jones] As many as 10,000 insurance claims could follow in the wake of last week's storm in Brisbane, one of the biggest storms in years, Bell Potter says. Suncorp (SUN.AU) on Friday said it had already received about 2,600 motor and home claims, although the cost would be limited to a maximum A\$250 **million** thanks to reinsurance cover. "The overall picture remains very manageable," Bell Potter says, adding the impact for Insurance Australia **Group** (IAG.AU) and QBE (QBE.AU) will be much lower given their smaller footprint in Queensland state. It has a hold recommendation for SUN and a A\$15/share target. SUN last traded at A\$14.34. (robb.stewart@wsj.com; Twitter: @RobbMStewart)

2248 GMT [Dow Jones] A 4.4% fall in New Zealand's 3Q goods terms of trade was in line with market expectations "with the volume splits suggesting a negative contribution to 3Q GDP," says ANZ Senior Economist Mark Smith. He says a continued weakness in **dairy** commodity export prices suggest further falls are in prospect, although the terms of trade are expected to settle at still elevated levels. "A benign import price environment is expected to contribute to low inflation and keep pending OCR increases parked until the end of next year," adds Smith. (rebecca.howard@wsj.com; Twitter: @FarroHoward)

2232 GMT [Dow Jones] Australia's **equity** market is likely to continue falling Monday as resources stocks remain under pressure. IG forecasts an opening fall for the ASX 200 of 23 points to about 5290, a strong technical support level it suggests could be broken Monday. The spot **iron-ore** price rose 0.1% to US\$69.80/ton, which could offer some respite for **mining** shares, but Friday's 1.7% drop in BHP Billiton's (BHP.AU) U.S. ADR suggests it could fall further Down Under. IG market strategist Evan Lucas says that

with bear markets for **oil** and **iron ore**, it isn't hard to understand the selling in BHP. He adds **energy** stocks such as Santos (STO.AU) and **Oil** Search (OSH.AU) could be hit again after falling sharply Friday. The ASX 200 ended Friday down 1.6% at 5313. (robb.stewart@wsj.com; Twitter: @RobbMStewart)

2230 GMT [Dow Jones] Australia's manufacturing sector is finally feeling lucky as the falling Australian dollar, tumbling **energy** costs and low interest rates have underpinned a small expansion in the sector in November. The Australian Industry **Group** Australian Performance of Manufacturing Index rose by 0.7 points to 50.1 in November from October. The reading above 50 points indicates expansion, albeit small. The reading compares with a 48.1 points average over the last dismal 12 months for the sector. "While the improvement in manufacturing activity in November is slight, it and the lift in new orders are welcome signs of the resilience of the sector in the face of still-testing conditions," said AIGroup Chief Executive, Innes Willox. (james.glynn@wsj.com; Twitter @JamesGlynnWSJ)

2220 GMT [Dow Jones] The Australian dollar has gapped lower in early Asia trading Monday after a Swiss national referendum to compel the country's central bank to hold at least 20% of its assets in **gold** failed. **Gold** has opened lower, dragging the Aussie, a commodity currency, down with it, said David deGaris, senior economist at NAB. After closing Friday just above US\$0.8500, the Aussie has initially tested US\$0.8450 before recovering 10-20 pips. **Copper** prices were also down 3.2% on the LME. Australian dollar now US\$0.8478. (james.glynn@wsj.com; Twitter @JamesGlynnWSJ)

2211 GMT [Dow Jones] Warren Buffett had reason to give thanks over the holiday weekend. The day after Thanksgiving, the Alberta Utilities Commission approved the \$2.9 **billion sale** of transmission **company** AltaLink LP to Berkshire Hathaway Inc.'s (BRKA, BRKB) **energy** unit. After the deal was announced in May, the Commission reviewed public concerns about higher power prices and the **sale** to a foreign investor. However, the Canadian body determined that the deal would cause no harm to customers -- a decision that will allow Berkshire to close the transaction soon. (anupreet.das@wsj.com)

2204 GMT [Dow Jones] New Zealand's terms of trade, a gauge of the country's purchasing power, fell in the third quarter, weighed by **dairy** and forestry product prices. Stats NZ Monday says the 3Q terms of trade fell 4.4% but without **dairy** it would have only been down 0.9%. Overall, export prices fell 4.5% while import prices fell 0.1%. The decline in the terms of trade means New Zealand can **buy** fewer imports for the same amount of exports and once again underscores the significant dependence on **dairy**. It is the first fall in the terms of trade since the December 2012 quarter. (rebecca.howard@wsj.com)

2146 GMT [Dow Jones] J.P. Morgan raises Challenger (CGF.AU) to neutral from underweight following a sharp fall in its share price on news its care annuities will no longer receive favorable tax treatment in Australia. The brokerage sees offsetting positives from CGF's move into retail and industry fund platforms as well as a potential lift from changes introduced in the wake of the government-backed financial system inquiry, which is due to release its findings and recommendations this month. J.P. Morgan's target price for CGF falls to A\$6.20/share from A\$6.51. CGF last traded at A\$6.35. (robb.stewart@wsj.com; Twitter: @RobbMStewart)

2137 GMT [Dow Jones] Lower **oil** prices are likely to be key driver in **equity** markets across Asia this week with movements "causing some fluctuation in the market," says Forsyth Barr investment advisor Adrian Vance. He adds that **oil** price movements were impacting the NZ market with Air New Zealand (AIR.NZ) trading near multi-year highs, while NZ **Oil** and Gas (NZO.NZ) is under pressure. He says Pacific Edge (PEB.NZ) remains in focus after result Friday, which Forsyth Barr continues to have a outperform rating on it. "It's a big opportunity but it's high risk." (lucy.craymer@wsj.com; Twitter: @Lucy\_craymer)

(END) Dow Jones Newswires

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