HD **MARKET MAY CLOSE A TOUCH LOWER**

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The S&P/ASX200 is likely to close a touch lower today.

Europe fell, the UK was flat, the US markets closed slightly lower.

On the NYSE where 3237 issues traded there were 1,285 issues higher, 1,827 down and 125 unchanged. On Nasdaq where 2812 issues traded there were 864 issues higher, 1,838 down and 110 unchanged.

Metals were higher except for **copper**, **iron ore** fell, crude was down, **gold** was steady, **uranium** rose sharply. The $A is at 92.76 US c, up about 20 points from last evening.

"Resistance at 5547, support at 5510 followed by 5500 .. down 5 points'

Ben Faulkner, a senior adviser with Morgans said, "**Copper** had a bit of a sell off last night, holding just above critical support at $3.15/lb. A break of $3.15 will more than likely see it head back to $3 which would be quite bearish for the short term uptrend it has been in since March.

"Crude is just above the key support level of $97 a barrel. A break of $97 more than likely will see it head back down to $92/93 a barrel - the IEA commented that despite the tensions there has not been any disruptions to supply.

"The Shanghai market ran into a bit of profit taking yesterday. It was sold down during the session but closed back up near its support. There is a lot of buying momentum there. Resistance remains at 2227. It certainly looks like a break to the upside is more than likely. Downside support is at 2105. It is a very bullish picture on the **Chinese** market against other global indices.

"The German index has been grossly over sold over the last couple of weeks. I expect a bounce to 9600. The key level of support remains 9000. It needs to hold for the week. The picture remains bearish there.

"The S&P 500 was strong on the opening and then faded. There seems to be continued selling pressure there. Momentum is still on the downside. Technically it is threatening to continue its downtrend. The key level of support will remain at the 100 day moving average of 1917. A break of that will see it back down to 1850.

"I was expecting a bit more of a bounce from German and US markets this week. It is certainly interesting at this point on whether they resume their downtrend.

"For our market, it was an extremely strong day yesterday. The next level for the bulls is the 20 day moving average which is sitting at 5547. The bulls will want to see our market close above that for this week.

"The short term picture looks a lot better than the DAX and S&P. Support is at 5500. If we break that then we will test 5450, the lows of earlier this week.

"Our SPI was up against the rest of the markets - there seems to be more buying support in our market at present. There is better value in the resources and some selected industrials. I have been reducing exposure to the big four and lifting exposure to some diversified resources especially BHP. I expect resources to outperform for the rest of this week if metal prices hold.

"For today resistance is at 5547. Support is at 5510 followed by 5500.

"I can't call us up again after yesterday's rise. I will call us down 5 points'.

The S&P/ASX200 rose 73.3 points to close at 5530.3 last evening.

August 13. Good morning.

*The Ukraine government has so far blocked the Russian aid convoy from entering, said to be fearing it is an invasion in disguise.

*In Iraq, a helicopter delivering aid in the Mount Sinjar area is said to have crashed, FastMarkets reported.

***China** is benefiting from the Russian ban on importing food from various countries (as well as Brazil and other South American countries).

Aussie stocks

All dollars in this section are Aussie dollars - the rises and falls are against the previous close.

Aussie stocks in ADR form were mixed. AWC fell 1c on 65,000 shares, Amcor rose 1c on 26,000 shares, RIO rose 5p on 2.1m shares, BHP fell 5c on 1.5m shares, News fell 15c on 678,000 shares, Westpac fell 4c on 66,000 shares, Telstra rose 1c on 156,000 shares, Resmed fell 1c on 6.2m shares.

PSivida fell 4c on 256,000 shares. Prana fell 0.5c on 5.6m shares.

In London Anglo American fell 16.5p to 1,586p on 2.9m shares, Aquarius rose 0.25p to 23.75p on 948,756 shares, BskyB was steady at 849p on 1.7m shares, BHP fell 9.5p to 2,034.5p on 3.3m shares, Henderson fell 0.3p to 225.10; on 3m shares. RIO rose 13p to 3,515p on 4m shares.

Trading points:

Reporting today:

*AMM: Amcom reports for the year.

Analysts expectations: $23.02 mln.

On July 25 a leading broker retained an "add" on Amcom Telecom and a target price of $2.25. The broker said it returns to an Add on the stock given it has fallen below fair value following its $40 **million** raising in new **equity** in June. "We consider it is one of the more reliable earners in the small cap telco sector and as a carrier with its own fibre asset, one relatively immune to the fluctuating fortunes of policy and regulation.

*CBA: Commonwealth Bank of Australia reports for the year.

Analysts expectations: $8.651.4 mln, div 217c, $8.745 bn cash earnings, div 220c/$8691.4 bln/$8.682 mln/consensus $8.639 bln, div 214c.

*On August 5 a leading broker said it expects another strong result, and expects ongoing improvement in asset quality, 2nd hand BDD charge is expected at 14 bp. The broker added "The upcoming release of the FSI (due in November) is the biggest issue facing the banks, in our view".

On August 1 a leading broker with a 'sell" on CBA and a price target of $81.58 said it believes CBA has the most margin upside among majors from wholesale funding spread improvement and term deposit spread normalisation. In particular, the broker expects CBA to benefit from a number of government guaranteed facilities reaching maturity through full year 2014.

On the other hand, the broker's product pricing data suggests that CBA has been among the most aggressive of the major banks on mortgage competition. It forecasts 1bp of margin contraction half on half in 2nd half 2014 for CBA vs 2 bp contraction on average for majors ex CBA.

*On August 1 the Financial Times reported as of Aug 01, 2014, the consensus forecast amongst 35 polled investment analysts covering Commonwealth Bank of Australia advises investors to hold their position in the **company**. This has been the consensus forecast since the sentiment of investment analysts improved on Feb 28, 2013. The previous consensus forecast advised that the company would underperform Commonwealth Bank of Australia. There were 2 buys, 4 outperforms, 12 holds, 7 underperforms and 3 sells.

*On July 24 Nomura had a "neutral" on Commonwealth Bank with a price target of $78.

*CPU: Computershare reports for the year.

Analysts expectations: $US330 mln/$US332.3, div 15c/$US336mln, div 16c/$US331.

*On August 8 a leading broker had a "neutral" on Computershare with a price target of $13.70. The broker said the company has guided for $US $ management eps to be up 5/10% on pcp. However most estimates re at the upper end of this range. The broker expects 2nd half 2014 margin income to come in at around $US93 million, down from $US106 million in first half 2014 and expects the company to guide for 5/10% growth since the company tends to take a fairly cautious view.

The broker forecast US eps growth of 12% with consensus growth expectations roughly 11%.

*On August 6 a leading broker retained an "underweight" on Computershare while raising the price target from $11 to $11.30.

The broker said ahead of the results, it raises five key points' a subdued outlook for the core registry maintenance business that is about 40% of revenue, business services revenues expected to be broadly flat year on year, its global service model should continue to provide savings, leverage to rising short end rates is attractive given CPU's $US6 billion float, but there is risk interest rates do not rise fast enough to meet consensus expectations next year. The broker forecast expanding EBITDA margins to 27.7%, delivering eps growth of 8.2% vs guidance of 5/10%.

*On July 24 Nomura retained a "neutral" on Computershare with a $12.50 price target. The broker said within the diversified financial sector, "Our preference is for CPU (Neutral) given its exposure to the improving US economy.

Company guidance: On July 1 Computershare Ltd announced it expects to make net writedowns of approximately $US40 million after tax as at end June 2014. The writedowns comes as the company nears the end of its review of non core and non strategic assets. Outgoing CEO Stuart Crosby saId no further writedowns are expected and more detail will be provided at the 2014 full year results release on August 13.

Incoming CEO Stuart Irving reaffirmed that CPU's management eps for 2014 are expected to be up 5/10% on the 2013 results.

*CRZ: Carsales reports for the year.

Analysts expectations: $93.8 mln, div 17.2c/$94.2 mln, div 17.3c/$96.2 mln.

*On August 7 a leading broker reiterated its July 23 downgrade of Carsales to "Neutral" with a price target of $10.95. The broker said it expects CRZ to provide an update on the auto manufacturers that had withdrawn new car inventory as well as some advertising support late last year.. It forecast 13% growth in dealer revenue driven by price rises in dealer enquiry fees ($5 per enquiry from Feb 1 2013), moderate volume growth in leads reflecting some sensitivity to the subdued macro conditions and strong non auto revenue gains.

Among other points, the broker also expects further detail on recent acquisitions - a 50.1% stake in Stratton Finance and a 49.9% stake in SK Encar.

*On July 1 a leading broker had an "add" on Carsales with a $11.91 target price, up from $11.34. The broker said Carsales.com has moved into a new part of the automotive value chain - vehicle finance - through the purchase of a controlling 50.1% stake in Stratton Finance, the country's largest independent vehicle finance broker. The deal will be immediately earnings accretive.. Carsales continues to use its under geared balance sheet to add new earnings growth options. Vehicle finance now joins Brazil, South Korea and South East Asia as potential new earnings drivers, the broker said in the report.

*CSL: CSL reports for the year.

Analysts expectations: $US1.27 bln/$US1.299 bln/$US1.354 bln/$US1.357 bln, div 54.7c/$US1.354.7 bln/$US1.297 bln.

*On August 11 a leading broker with an "equal weight" on CSL had a price target of $60.35. The broker said CSL's IG growth is facing tough competition as the mix-shift to higher priced product is nearly complete, its lapping Octapharma-related share gains and the high growth in the pcp will be hard to meet. The broker expects the same for 2014. CSL's specialty products are expected to continue robust double digit growth, however the coagulation franchise is expected to show weakness even ahead of competitors product launches. Full year 2015 growth could be more challenged, the broker added.

*On August 6 a leading broker retained a "buy" on CSL with a price target of $82.

The broker said IG revenue growth will be a major forecast. It expects investors to focus on the outlook for CSL's subcutaneous IVIG product, Hizentra, given the recent favorable FDA committee vote for Baxter's rival HyQvia product. It is also focused on global supply/demand dynamics for Ig, including recent new entrants to the US market.

The broker forecast 11.6% EBIT growth for CSL Behring, limited medium term growth for CSL's FVIII franchise and expects CSL will announce a buyback.

A leading broker on August 4 ahead of CSL's profit report on August 21 retains a "buy" on CSL with a share price target of $80. The broker said despite a trifecta of events in the past 48 hours, it rates the net impact as more negative for sentiment than forecasts. The broker expects CSL to meet or beat if 2014 guidance of 10% ccNPAT growth pre adjusted for legal settlement, with the capacity to guide to a further 1-/5 growth in 2015 plus a new buyback program.

The trifecta of events includes the FDA Blood Products Advisory Committee voting in favor of Baxter's HyQvia product, supporting risk communication strategies but not restricted to labelling. Bayer 2nd quarter 2014 results highlight 17% Kogenate sales decline due to manufacturing restraints and Grifols Bioscience division reported first half 2014 3.3% gain in CC, down 1% on the previous period, noting an increase in sales of IVIG and albumin but moderate fall in intermediaries and pdf VIII sales with tender delays.

*A leading broker on the same date had an "accumulate" on CSL with a share price target of $74.48. The broker said the underlying momentum of the **company**'s plasma derived portfolio continues to be supported by a range of factors. There is further upside potential in the specialty care portfolio and a non-valent Gardasil release.

Decreased debt costs, the ongoing buyback, improving payout ratio, the announcement of a partnership agreement and an insight into the treatment of Alzheimer's are all potential upside risks.

*The Financial Times reported as of Aug 01, 2014, the consensus forecast amongst 20 polled investment analysts covering CSL Limited advises that the **company** will outperform the market. This has been the consensus forecast since the sentiment of investment analysts improved on Oct 01, 2013. The previous consensus forecast advised investors to hold their position in CSL Limited. There were 4 buys, 6 outperforms, 6 holds and 2 sells.

*EGP: Echo Entertainment reports for the year.

Analysts expectations: $151.8mn norm/$151.9 mln, div 4c/$151.8 MLN/consensus $152 mn, div 2c ff.

*On August 11 a leading broker had a "lighten" on Carsales with a price target of $2.64.

The broker said it expects Echo to report a 17% increase in management's normalised EBITDA to $432.2 **million**, a 5% increase in management's normalised net profit to $152.2 **million** and a 2c per share fully franked final dividend.

The broker said Echo is currently outperforming in VIP relative to domestic and some international casinos which are showing flat to negative growth and on the main floor, relative to pubs and clubs in NSW and QLD.

"At the moment, we believe that Echo is benefitting from increased participation in the loyalty program, greater non commission spend by customers along with a strong tailwind of slot spend in NSW and QLD.

The broker believes EGP is facing accelerating loss of market share in slots. There is also a worrying negative mix associated with the decline in electronic gaming vs other lower margin products.

*On August 1 a leading broker retained a "neutral" on EGP with a price target of $3. The broker said with EGP having provided a trading update and guidance for 2014 it is expecting few surprises in the headline result. The broker added the big item for Echo is the development of its proposal for the Queen's Wharf precinct in Brisbane with proposals due by the end of the year. However given the confidential nature of the bidding process not much new news is expected.

*On July 24 one leading broker had a "buy" on Echo Entertainment with a $4.25 price target after the announcement of the binding MOU with rival bidders Chow Tai Fook Enterprises and Far East Consortium Pty Ltd to form a "Destination Brisbane Consortium" for an integrated casino resort proposal in Brisbane.

The broker said with signs of EGP earnings finally beginning to show some of the benefits from numerous operational improvements and capex, the stock continues to trade at a discount to market.

*Another leading broker retained a $3.90 target price and said the announcement is not entirely unexpected since the size and scope of the development would stretch echo's ability to finance the project alone. The broker expects the final decision by the Queensland government in early full year 2015.

Company guidance: On June 16 Echo Entertainment Group Ltd advised in an update on trading and guidance said based on the revenue momentum of the second half of the year to date, Echo expects to report normalised 2014 EBITDA within the range of $430/435 million and normalised 2014 NPAT within the range of $150/153 million. The expected result is above current median analyst forecasts and reported Bloomberg consensus normalised EBITDA of $411 million on a like for like basis.

Actual EBITDA will be impacted by the win rate and turnover experienced in the VIP Rebate business for the remainder of the financial year and therefore is subject to potential volatility.

A revenue update for the March quarter was provided on April 1. The underlying normalised revenue trends experienced across the business in the March quarter continue to prevail.

Across the group normalised gross revenue grew 10.2% on the prior comparable period, of up 12.1% on an actual basis.

For the domestic business excluding the VIP Rebate business revenue grew 9.3% on the prior comparable period.

Echo now expects to deliver operating expenditure around $870 million for 2014.

*GFF: Goodman Fielder reports for the year.

Analysts expectations: $59.8 mln, 1c unfr final div/$59 mln.

*On August 8 a leading broker had a 'sell" on Goodman Fielder with a 68c price target.

The broker said the result is largely irrelevant as the market focuses on the deal timeline "given the lengthy process of recent deals, there is a high probability that MOFCOM approval takes significantly longer than expected, reducing the PV of the deal to well below the 67.5c Scheme price" the broker said in the report.

*On August 8 a leading broker retained a "neutral" on Goodman Fielder with a 63c price target.

The broker said GFF has entered into a Scheme Implementation Deed with Wilmar International Ltd and First Pacific Company to acquire all of the shares in GFF for 67.5c cash per share. The scheme allows GFF to pay a final dividend of 1c per share for 2014. GFF expects to hold the Scheme meeting on November 3.

Company report: On July 2 Goodman Fielder Ltd announced following completion of due diligence by Wilmar and First Pacific and negotiations on the proposed scheme, GFF has entered into a Scheme Implementation Deed with Wilmar and First Pacific whereby Wilmar and First Pacific will require all of the remaining issued equity in GFF they do not already own for 67.5Ac cash per share (down from 70c offered earlier) subject to all conditions being satisfied. The scheme also allows GFF to pay a final 1c per share dividend for 2014.

As previously announced, GFF expects to record a non cash impairment charge for 2014 in the range of $A300/400 million.

GFF chairman Steve Gregg said in the report the board continued to unanimously recommend to shareholders that they approve the scheme in the absence of a superior proposal and subject to the independent expert concluding the Scheme is fair and reasonable.*NCK: Nick Scali reports for the year.

Company guidance: On June 26 Nick Scali Ltd advised in recent months order intake and sales revenue have remained above the previous corresponding period. Likely full year sales revenue on both a total and same store comparative basis are ahead of the previous year by around 10% and 5% respectively.

It is expected NPAT for 2013/14 will be around $14 million, up 15% on last year's underlying NPAT of $12.2 million.

*OZL: OZ Minerals reports for the half year.

Analysts expectations: Neg $60.5 mln, 5c div/Neg $36.1 mln

*On July 16 following the June quarter production report a leading broker retained a "hold" but lifted its price target to $4.40 from $4.20. The broker said OZL has upgraded 2014 **copper** production guidance 13% to 85/90Kt while **gold** production is now expected to be at the lower end of 130/140,000 ozs with **copper ore** to be prioritised at the mill.

Cash at end of June was $155 **million**, down over $200 **million** from the $364 **million** at end December, a larger drop than expected.

*On July 15 a leading broker with a 'sell" recommendation and a $3.60 price target said it maintains its sell based on valuation. "In our view the **company** is mine life challenged with limited open pit mine life with marginal underground post 2019. The broker added the cash balance had fallen more than expected.

*Another leading broker on July 15 retained an "add" and a $5.50 price target saying production and cost beat expectations and guidance was upgraded. However the cash balance was lower than expected, hit by working capital movements and a $A30 **million** dividend payment.

*PRY: Primary Healthcare reports for the year.

Analysts expectations: $165m/$164.8 mln, div 11.1c/$165 mln/$150.1 mln/170.1 mln reported/$161 mln.

*On August 11 a leading broker retained an "overweight" on Primary Health Care with a price target of $5.760, both unchanged since July. The broker said PRY's performance has been recently clouded by the government's proposed GP co-payment. We see the associated downside to PRY as minimal for now, we retain our OW and thesis'.

*On August 6 a leading broker retained a "neutral" on Primary Health Care with a price target of $4.85.

The broker expects 2nd half 2104 EBITDA to be up 7% driven by 6.5% revenue growth from mostly higher volumes and modest margin expansion as centres mature and are back-filled. It expects investor focus to be on the cashflow requirements of the business (i.e. GP churn and new medical centre openings) and on potential changes to the government's proposal to introduce co-payments for GP visits. It notes that Medical Centre revenue growth has lagged growth in doctor numbers for at least the past two years.

In pathology it forecasts profit growth (EBITDA up 7.5%) driven by 5% revenue growth and margin expansion from operating leverage. It expects investor focus on potential fee cuts in 2015 and also on potential co payments for pathology.

*On August 1 a leading broker retained a "hold" on Primary Health Care Ltd and a price target of $4.91. The broker said the **company**'s ability to backfill GP's into its MC (medical centres) business remains a key driver of top line growth given the recent hiatus in greenfields developments.

*On July 28 another leading broker had an "add" on Primary Health Care with a $5.68 price target.

The broker said it sees continued evidence of improvement in operational metrics for Australia's largest private medical centre operator and a major pathology provider, with GP productivity gains helping to alleviate concerns surrounding GP **acquisition** costs and churn rates.

Company guidance: 7/13% eps growth, EBITDA $395/410 mln.

*SKC: SkyCity reports for the year.

Analysts expectations: $NZ121.9 mln

On July 8 a leading broker lowered its rating from "buy" to "neutral" on Sky City Entertainment with a $NZ4.15 target price.

The broker said it lowered its investment rating to reflect lower medium term earnings growth due to disruption and delays with Adelaide and Auckland casino expansion projects coupled with a higher $NZ. This could limit valuation upside over the next 12 months and create downside risk to consensus earnings.

*SKE: Skilled Group reports for the year.

Analysts expectations: $51.7 mln

*On August 4 a leading broker retained a "buy" on Skilled Group with a price target of $3.60. the broker said it expects SKE to report stable EBITDA but lower NPAT, down 6% to $55.1 million due to higher interest expense and higher D&A.

It expects net debt to increase to $149 million from $45 million last year and $133 million in the first half with net debt/EBITDA at 1.5x. This reflects the impact of acquisitions (Broadsword Marine in July 2013 and T&C Services in February 2014) and major capex (eg purchase of new vessels). The broker expects the company to provide an update on the cost reduction strategy including targets for 2015.

*SUN: Suncorp reports for the year.

Analysts expectations: $1.291.3 bln, div 60c/$1.266 bln, headline Net Profit post amortisation and NRI's $687 million/$809 mln. A final 39c div is expected.

*On August 13 a leading broker retained a "hold" on Suncorp but with a price target of $14.17, lifted from $13.40 earlier.

The broker said it thinks there will be solid reported and underlying trends in general insurance in line with IAG (pre-reported) and non listed peers, but there will be a continued focus on growth and margin outlook from here. "We expect to see weak volumes in the bank offset by strong net interest margin (NIM) expansion.

Life insurance writedowns have already been pre-announced.

The broker added, 'substantial progress on sale and rundown of the non core bank raises the probability of significant capital management".

*On August 8 a leading broker had a price target of $14.30 on Suncorp without indicating a rating. The broker said it expects the company to declare another special dividend, the broker expects 15c with risk skewed to the upside.

The broker said expectations for the General Insurance business would have been further bolstered by IAG's pre announcement on July 24 with a similarly strong underlying margin expected for SUN along with a less weak revenue outcome.

Ex div: GMA ex 2.8c; RIO ex $1.03.1; TTN ex 4c.

Changes in substantials reported August 11 and 12 inc posted separately.

Overseas

The DJIA closed down 9.44 points to 16,560.54 points.

S&P 500 fell 3.17 points to 1,933.75.

NASDAQ fell 12.08 points to 4,389.25.

US 10yr bond yields rose 26 points to 2.448%

The US$ rose 5 points to 102.24 Yen.

The Euro fell 19 points to 1.3366US c.

The Yuan fell 47 points to 6.1580/$US1.

FTSE 100 fell 0.4 points to 6,632.42. European markets were weaker.

The Nikkei Dow last evening rose 30.79 points to 15,161.31.

Shanghai SE Comp IX closed down 3.05 points to 2,221.60.

Commodities

All dollars in this section are US dollars

In dollars per tonne for three month metal, (LME stockpiles are on a closing basis) - valued against yesterday morning's price, measured over 24 hours.

Copper fell $20 to $6,975/fell $31 to $A7519. Stockpiles fell 700 tonnes to 140,675 tonnes.

Aluminium rose $19 to $2,052/gained $18 to $A2212. Stockpiles rose 500 tonnes to 4,912,400 tonnes.

Nickel rose $100 to $18,750/gained $84 to $A20,213. Stockpiles rose 840 tonnes to 319,590 tonnes.

Zinc rose $26 to $2,330/gained $25 to $A2512. Stockpiles rose 9,475 tonnes to 715,650 tonnes.

Lead was up $5 to $2,262/rose $3 to $A2439. Stockpiles were steady at 215,900 tonnes.

Tin rose $75 to $22,475/gained $52 to $A24,229. Stockpiles fell 5 tonnes to 12,775 tonnes.

Iron Ore fell $1.30 to $94/fell $1.52 to $A101.34.

Steel billet was indicated at $425/435.

Cobalt was indicated at $32,000/32,750. Stockpiles fell 1 tonne to 539 tonnes.

Molybdenum was indicated at $28,000/29,500.

WTI crude fell 71c to $97.37/fell 89c to $A104.97.

Brent Crude fell $1.66 to $103.02/fell $1.92 to $A111.06.

*The International Energy Agency cut its forecast for global oil demand, saying in its monthly report for August that despite armed conflict in Libya, Iraq and Ukraine, the oil market today looks better supplied than expected, with an oil glut even reported in the Atlantic Basin.

*The US Energy Information Administration said July production was the most in almost 30 years. Total production was estimated at 8.5 million barrels per day, the highest monthly level of production since 1987. The forecast for next year would be the highest annual average level of oil production since 1972, the EIA added.

Spot gold was steady at $1,309/fell $1.68 to $A1411. Spot silver fell 9c to $19.94/fell 12c to $A21.50. Spot platinum fell $1 to $1,468/fell $3 to $A1583. Spot palladium rose $1 to $877/was steady at $A945.

Spot uranium rose $1.25 to $30/gained $1.31 to $A32.34.

Uranium news last night (may or may not have a bearing on price jump)

MetroNews Canada reported last night, "Hundreds of unionized workers at a uranium mine and a processing mill including about 540 employees of Cameco's McArthur River mine, the Key Lake mill, as well as catering and cleaning staff at both sites have threatened to go on strike to back contract demands. Negotiations are scheduled to wrap up on August 28 and if there's no agreement by then, the workers will go on strike for the first time ever at a Cameco mine.

Overseas eco news

In US eco news, the Budget deficit narrowed again in July due to tax revenue increasing at a faster pace than government spending. The Deficit from October through to July fell 24% to 4460.45 billion vs the previous corresponding period, the US Treasury Department reported.

*US job opening (JOLTS) across the US economy reached a 13 year high in June with 4.7 million job openings on the last business day of June, up from 4.6 million at end May the Labor Department reported. It was the highest number of openings since February 2001. Meanwhile 2.53 million Americans quit a job in June, up fro m2.49 million in May and the highest level since June 2008 when the US economy was in recession, suggesting more strength and flexibility in the US labor market.

*The Eurozone ZEW economic sentiment index fell to 23.7 below the previous 48.1 and the forecast 41.3.

*The German ZEW economic sentiment index fell to 8.6 from 27.1 previously and vs the forecast 18.2 to the lowest level since December 2012.

*The British Retail Consortium reported non-food retailers had a 'stellar month" in July, with sales of furniture particularly strong, but food sales fell again. Overall, total retail spending rose 1.3% from a year ago. Like-for-like sales - which strips out new floor space - fell 0.3%.

Overseas equity news

*In the US of the Dow 30 there were 14 stocks higher and 16 down.

AT&T led the way higher, gaining 17c or 0.49% to 34.64 followed by Travelers and United Health.

United Technologies led the way down, falling 81c or 0.77% to $104.91 followed by General Electric and Pfizer.

Newmont rose on speculation it may woo Barrick again, MarketWatch reported. Pioneer Natural Resources fell on a broker downgrade. Tesla Motors fell slightly after hitting an all time high on Monday.

Energy stocks fell the most on the fall in Brent crude.

*In Europe national benchmark indexes fell in 11 of 18 western European markets.

Henkel fell 5.3% to Euro 78.16. The German maker of everything from Loctite glue to Persil washing detergent said earnings growth will slow in the second half as the conflict in Ukraine and the Middle East harms business. Fugro fell 10% to Euro 27.42 on a broker downgrade. National Bank of Greece rose 4% to Euro 2.35, Piraeus Bank rose 3.9% to Euro 1.35 while Banca Popolare di Sondrio in Italy rose 3.3% to Euro 3.24 and Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena rose 4.8% to Euro 1.08.

In Germany the second biggest lender Commerzbank rose 1.7% to Euro 10.62.

*In London broker Hargreaves Lansdown was the biggest faller after UBS bank started its coverage of the stock with a 'sell" rating, shedding 2.9% to 1,050p.

Royal Dutch Shell fell 1% to 2,376p on the fall in the price of crude.

On the upside, Sports Direct led the way, rising 3.1%.

Prudential also performed well after the insurer reported that profits were boosted by its US and Asian businesses. Prudential closed up 2.2% to 1,368.5p.

Outsourcing firmSerco rose sharply in early trading but lost ground during the rest of the day after reporting earnings.

The company's chief executive Rupert Soames said "trading was poor in the first half" but that the company was maintaining its profit guidance for 2014.

In the broader market, analysts said geo-political factors were still influencing trade.

"The Ukraine situation is going to be simmering for a while. We had a good bounce back yesterday, but we're still in a downtrend. I'd still be selling any decent rallies," said Berkeley Futures associate director Richard Griffiths.

In other news

Readers comment

Two Readers, to whom grateful thanks, put "pen to paper" on awareness of the lessons from the history of the Western world and refrain from judgement on the Middle East:

(abridged)

*One Reader said "It took the British several hundred years (from 1066 to about the 1800-1900s) to make the transition to something resembling our modern view of civilised society and .. not without massive bloodshed, inhumanity and turmoil... I work in IT and in any IT implementation this process of change management of the people is one of the biggest project activities and it is a lot more than just training in the new system...

"The social changes, and in particular the recognition that women are actually people with equal rights, have been massive. .. Remember the hoo-hah around women in public bars, the first female pilot, equal wages and we've only just in recent years become used to female leadership in any areas (let alone politics and business). I can remember some apprehension at my first female boss .. And then there is our very own boat people fiasco, starting with jailing of children and just going on from there. All accepted in very recent (and even current) times.

"We shouldn't even start on racial discrimination issues ..

"I don't have an answer any more than anyone else, but one does really believe that if one ignores the violent and totally misaligned extremists that exist in every society and are so visible in the Middle East (and elsewhere) today then it should be possible to work out what the people want and progress towards it".

*The other Reader said, "As if the Americans and their lackeys in Britain and of course good old Oz haven't created enough terror, which future generations will come to curse when the inevitable payback ensues, there's Julie Bishop and almost in lockstep, Labour's Bill Shorten jumping back into Iraq as a "humanitarian mission". And of course our media/Western media as it leads public opinion applauds this 'strength"."

Both Readers separately agreed that fundamentally, all of us are the same and want the same things from life for ourselves and our families, irrespective of race, religion, culture or degree of civilisation.

One Reader added, "The smile on a baby's face is the same the world over".

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