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THE Australian sharemarket has firmed slightly to reach its highest close in around six years, boosted by strength in the resources sector.

CMC Markets chief market strategist Michael McCarthy said leads from overseas markets had been positive.

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Also, commodity prices had been reassessed in light of improved economic growth data from **China** on Wednesday.

"That has been one of the key supports for the market. The resources sector has been one of the best performers all day," Mr McCarthy said.

The repeal of the carbon tax had added to the positive momentum in the resources sector.

Mr McCarthy said the local bourse wasn't moving much either up or down as investors awaited more earnings reports from companies in the US and the start of the Australian **company** reporting season in two weeks.

Based on preliminary closing data, in the resources sector, global miner BHP Billiton lifted 30¢ to \$38.55, Rio Tinto climbed 81¢ to \$64.75, and Fortescue Metals gained 8¢ to \$4.66.

Mount Gibson **Iron** firmed 3¢ to 71.5¢ after recording positive production data.

Oil and gas producer Woodside Petroleum advanced 25¢ to \$41.87 after it lifted its annual production target after a double-digit rise in second quarter production levels and sales.

The major banks were mixed. ANZ rose 6¢ to \$33.21, National Australia bank picked up 2¢ to \$34.00, Commonwealth Bank dropped 14¢ to \$81.21, and Westpac fell 25¢ to \$33.64.

Department store operator David Jones was 1¢ higher at \$3.99 after the Federal Court approved its **sale** to South Africa's Woolworths.

At the close on Thursday, preliminary figures showed that the benchmark S&P/ASX200 index was 3.5 points higher at 5522.4 points.

The broader All Ordinaries index was up 5.4 points, or 0.1 per cent, at 5509.9 points.

The September share price index futures contract was nine points higher at 5483 points, with 26,839 contracts traded.

National turnover was 1.82 **billion** securities worth \$4.56 **billion**. AAP

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