

SE Business  
 HD **THE MARKET Banks to share rescue**  
 WC 361 words  
 PD 3 June 2014  
 SN Illawarra Mercury  
 SC ILM  
 ED First  
 PG 14  
 LA English  
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THE Australian sharemarket has closed modestly higher as strength among the banks outweighed weakness in the **mining** sector.

CMC Markets chief market analyst Ric Spooner said investors were still chasing stocks that offered attractive dividends in relation to their share price, such as the four major banks.

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On the other hand, **mining** stocks were still being affected by falling **iron ore** prices but had gained some encouragement from better-than-expected manufacturing figures out of **China** over the weekend.

"Today has been what is becoming the typical tussle for the Australian market, with the big-yield stocks like the big four banks, Telstra and Woolworths all continuing to be bid upwards," Mr Spooner said.

"And the big **iron-ore** stocks mainly heading in the opposite direction."

Mr Spooner said investors would be looking towards Australian GDP (gross domestic product) figures, retail sales and trade balance data to be released over the week to gain further insight into the state of the Australian economy, plus the monthly meeting of the Reserve Bank of Australia on Tuesday.

In the resources sector, BHP Billiton was down 42¢ at \$36.59, Rio Tinto was down 7¢ at \$59.23, but Fortescue Metals added 8¢ at \$4.49.

**Mining** contractor Ausdrill fell 11¢, or 11.28 per cent, to 86.5¢ after it again downgraded its full-year profit forecast, this time by nearly 30 per cent.

Origin **Energy** was 54¢ lower at \$14.55 after it said it will pay \$865.57 **million** for a **stake** in WA's offshore gas fields.

Among the major banks, National Australia Bank was 39¢ richer at \$33.88, Westpac found 18¢ to \$34.60, ANZ lifted 22¢ to \$33.71, and Commonwealth Bank strengthened 67¢ to \$82.26.

Toy distributor Funtastic lost 0.9¢, or 13.04 per cent, to 6¢ after it halved its earnings forecast and announced the departure of its chief executive.

The benchmark S&P/ASX200 index was up 26 points, or 0.47 per cent, at 5518.5 points.

National turnover was 1.3 **billion** securities worth \$3.58 **billion**. AAP

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