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HD **Banks drag down market as investment lending surges**

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Stocks

Heavy losses across the big four banks as Westpac traded ex-dividend pulled the Australian **equity** market lower. The biggest lenders all fell despite official data showing investment property lending surged in September.

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The benchmark S&P/ASX 200 Index dropped 0.5 per cent on Monday to 5524 points, while the broader All Ordinaries Index shed 0.4 per cent to 5501.4 points.

Local shares took a mixed **lead** from offshore. In the US on Friday night the S&P 500 and Dow Jones Industrial Average edged higher while the Nasdaq edged lower. In Europe the FTSE 100 was higher, the FTSE Euro Top 100 was lower.

"Many local retail investors will be keeping money aside this week ahead of the government's upcoming \$5.5 **billion** float of Medibank Private," Morgans private client adviser Ken Howard said.

Westpac lost 3.9 per cent to \$33.47 as it traded without the rights to 92¢ a share final dividend. ANZ shed 1.1 per cent to \$32.52, while National Australia Bank lost 0.7 per cent to \$32.98, with both having traded ex-dividend at the end of last week. Commonwealth Bank fell 0.2 per cent to \$82.56.

"Westpac had the strongest result of all the big four this bank reporting season, but NAB has the most room for improvement from here," Mr Howard said.

Among other blue-chip stocks, Telstra fell 0.7 per cent to \$5.73. Woolworths slipped 0.2 per cent to \$34.43, while Wesfarmers, owner of Coles, lost 0.3 per cent to \$44.67.

In **China**, National Bureau of Statistics data showed inflation grew at a rate of 1.6 per cent in October, unchanged from September and hovering near a five-year low. **China's** producer price index fell 2.2 per cent from a year ago - the 32nd consecutive month of declines.

BHP Billiton rose 0.6 per cent to \$34.68, while main rival Rio Tinto lifted 0.9 per cent to \$61.24. Australia's biggest **oil** producer Woodside Petroleum added 0.5 per cent to \$40.91.

China-backed **coal** miner Yancoal Australia plunged 27.3 per cent to 16¢ as it announced a \$US2.3 **billion** debt raising to repay mounting loans to its major shareholder.

Uranium miners got a boost from news Japan is set to restart its Sendai nuclear plant, which has been closed since the Fukushima disaster in 2011. Paladin **Energy** jumped 12.1 per cent to 37¢.

Australia's biggest **gold** producer, Newcrest **Mining**, rose 5.5 per cent to \$9.27 as Citigroup analysts upgraded it to a "buy" after last week's stronger than expected quarterly production update.

Childcare provider G8 Education was the worst performer in the ASX 200, down 4.6 per cent to \$4.60. It was its seventh consecutive session of losses.

CO wstpac : Westpac Banking Corporation Limited

IN i814 : Banking | i81402 : Commercial Banking | ibnk : Banking/Credit | ifinal : Financial Services

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