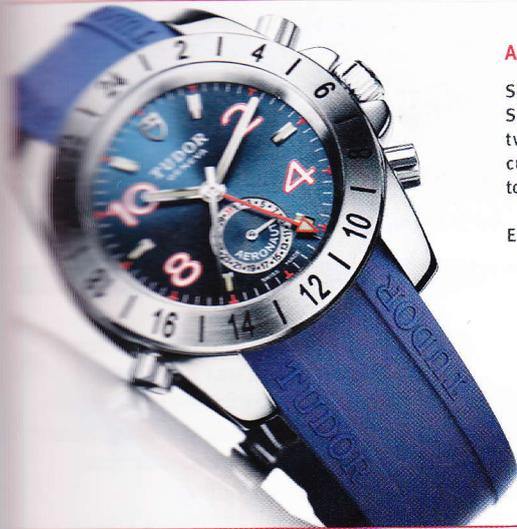


months, it declined in the second half due to the credit crunch, the executive director of the industry body Senior Australians Equity Release Association of Lenders (SEQUAL), Kieren Dell, says. He predicts a bright long-term future thanks to an ageing population. The total value of the sector will be a minimum of \$4.6 billion in 2012, and possibly twice that amount, Trowbridge Deloitte figures show.



#### AERONAUT

Self-winding mechanical movement. Simultaneous indication of the time in two different time zones. Sapphire crystal, screw-down crown. Waterproof to 150 m. Steel case 41 mm.

Enquiries phone 02 9258 8288



**TUDOR**  
TUDORWATCH.COM

## Keep it clean

• Australia's clean technology sector will produce some losers, but it is bound to trigger things.

That is the frank assessment of John O'Brien, who this month launched the Australian Cleantech Index, a tool for tracking the performance of clean technology stocks on the Australian Securities Exchange.

While similar products are available, O'Brien, a former Origin Energy renewable energy specialist, claims this is the only index that groups all 14 clean technology subsectors – from solar and wind to waste management and environmental services.

"For the first time, we will be able to provide a picture of the Australian cleantech industry's growth in a single measure," he says.

At the time of the index launch, the combined market capitalisation of the companies included was \$13 billion.

Recycler Sims Metal Group was the largest at \$3 billion; skylight manufacturer Skydome Holdings the smallest at \$5 million.

Trials of the index showed that it increased by 42.9 per cent in the 2007 financial year, outperforming both the S&P/ASX 200 and the S&P/ASX Small Ordinaries indices. Since January, however, it has fallen heavily.

O'Brien says it will be fascinating to see what happens. "There'll be some big losers in there but overall the pie has got to get bigger."

The index will be published monthly at first, but O'Brien is seeking a partner that will enable it to be put out in real time.

Luke Forrestal



## Baby boom

• A record number of migrants and the highest birth rate in a generation last year produced Australia's highest population growth rate in 20 years.

Figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that a total of 179,100 migrants arrived and 264,300 babies were born in the year to September 2007. It was the largest number of births in the country for 26 years.

Western Australia recorded the largest percentage gain in population, 2.4 per cent, following by Queensland and the Northern Territory (both 2.2 per cent), Victoria and the ACT (1.5 per cent), New South Wales and South Australia (1 per cent) and Tasmania (0.8 per cent).

Immigration boosts the workforce, so the economy can expand without putting excessive pressure on wages, inflation and interest rates. It means higher demand for new homes and goods to go into them. That's a boost for the housing industry and retailers. Skilled migration means employers can fill positions, promoting a positive cycle of employment, spending and investment.

But there are short-term downsides to population growth. Immigration leads to demand growing faster than supply as migrant families contribute to demand, but only those migrants who work contribute to supply. Migrants also add to demand before they find work. These factors can add to inflationary pressures.

Georgina Dent



**1%**

Increase in the New South Wales population in the year to September 2007



**\$13b**

The combined market capitalisation of the companies included in the inaugural Australian Cleantech Index



• THEY SAID ...

**They've lost the battle to prevent a recession – the new battle lines are being drawn, and they want to prevent a deep recession**

UBS economist James O'Sullivan on the US Federal Reserve's latest interest rate cuts