

Rear Window

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Seven West's vague direction

Seven West Media's presentation of its 2010-11 results yesterday did not get off to a good start as vague directions from the company caused some analysts to go to the wrong venue. And chief executive **David Leckie** began his part of the show-and-tell shakily, but then relaxed, cracked a few jokes and handed over to a stream of Seven West executives.

Returning to the podium to wrap things up, Leckie started to repeat some of the comments he had read out earlier, stopped, repeated them again and closed the gathering by declaring Seven West was "a great company".

That came after dismissing a question about when he might retire as "boring", though Leckie said his contract ran until November next year.

That will surprise Seven West shareholders: the documents sent around for the merger of West Australian Newspapers and Seven Media Group earlier this year said the contract expired in June 2012.

The architect of the WAN-Seven Media merger, **Kerry Stokes**, was a no-show yesterday. One of the merger's main boosters, **Doug Flynn** was spotted in the crowd. Flynn, who was the lead independent director at WAN and is now on the Seven West board, left as soon as Leckie stopped talking.

Black Hawk sortie revs financial buzz

The accountants at KPMG in Sydney and their financially minded neighbours had more than shaky global financial markets to concern them yesterday with four Black Hawk helicopters shaking the windows of their King Street Wharf headquarters while on training manoeuvres around the Shelley Street precinct.

The helicopters flew around KPMG and neighbouring buildings tenanted by Westpac, Macquarie Group and American Express, giving new meaning to the management term "taking a helicopter view of the problem".

No word on whether the choppers gave the folk at KPMG any ideas to incorporate in their forensic accounting division. No truth in the rumour Westpac staff at first thought it was yet another "breaking up" stunt by rivals National Australia Bank either.

Parkinson channels a long Q

To get to the top of Canberra's bureaucratic pile, you have to be a bit of a political animal. But should his bipartisan radar ever fail him, Treasury's **Martin Parkinson** showed he could have a career in the media.

Delivering the University of Western Australia's Shann Memorial Lecture in Perth on Tuesday night, Parkinson was at the receiving end of one of the longest questions in the history of mankind.

Other than letting people know how smart he was, the verbose questioner basically wanted to know whether the federal government was overdoing its two-speed economy rhetoric.

To which Parkinson replied: "I am going to do a **Tony Jones** and take that as a comment" – a reference to the delivery style of the ABC's Q&A host and thinking woman's crumpet.

Just in case he was tempted to wade into politically turbulent waters, UWA

business school dean and former Macquarie Bank boffin **Phil Dolan** added: "You have to get back to Canberra tomorrow" – a reference to the length of the question.

Which means Parkinson – who has qualifications from three unis but sadly not UWA – probably hasn't delivered his final speech at UWA, unlike former Treasury chief **John Stone** who ended his career with an oration at the riverside campus.

Gay petition wins numbers game

It was quite a day in federal Parliament yesterday with gay marriage matters, in the wake of **Bob Katter's** half-brother revealing he was gay, threatening to overshadow the latest in the **Craig Thomson** credit card affair.

The Katter revelations did not halt Nationals senator **Ron Boswell's** campaign against recent moves by the Greens to legalise gay marriage. The Queensland senator told us he would not comment "on Bob Katter or his brother". But he did talk about the petition he had gathered "to support the existing definition of marriage as the union of a man and a woman".

There was a small hitch to the unravelling of Boswell's petition – namely, arithmetic. Counting troubles saw the number gathered revised down from 62,000 to 52,000, but this did not worry Boswell. He looked more cheery than troubled as he hauled the boxed signatures to the Senate for tabling, with each of his 70-year-old steps captured by the eager TV scribe.

However, the Katter brother revelations apparently created a late surge of support for a rival petition in favour of gay marriage by lobby group GetUp!. It got 55,000 signatures, meaning it finished in front of Boswell's revised figure.

Swearing by beer, bronze wombats

It was a big day for two attendees of an Australia Gulf Council lunch in Sydney yesterday. Leighton Holdings chief executive **David Stewart** was there, following the shock news his chairman **David Mortimer** was quitting. Servcorp executive director **Marcus Mofarrige** also turned up, before heading back for his company's results announcement. His father and Servcorp boss **Alf Mofarrige** provided the most entertaining briefing – just beating Qantas boss **Alan Joyce's** claim that those who didn't think the airline had financial issues in its international business believed Elvis was alive and working at McDonald's in Sydney's Manly – by swearing and referring to bronze wombats, beer and all-female universities in his briefing.

PwC managing partner **Joseph Carozzi** hosted the AGC lunch, at which Austrade CEO **Peter Grey** spoke. **Mark Valle** also attended.



Qantas baggage case a heavy burden

The stoush between Qantas and aviation unions is getting expensive and the Transport Workers Union is looking to pass around the hat.

But it will have to be a 10-gallon stetson. The TWU is looking for help in paying about \$800,000 in damages after being sued by Qantas over an illegal strike by baggage handlers back in 2008.

The TWU says Qantas, after spending \$4 million and two years pursuing the union and its officials through the courts, was recently awarded \$800,000 in damages for what the union describes as a "brief ... work stoppage".

According to a flyer doing the rounds (and cheekily titled "Qantas fundraiser – help save the flying kangaroo"), the stoppage followed "Qantas breaking its word about not outsourcing jobs". (Yes, it was a few years back.) The union says it will comply with the law and therefore has no choice but to hand over the money to Qantas.

When it comes to raising funds it's not uncommon for an organisation to hold a pie night or flog tickets for a mere raffle. But the sum the TWU owes is a decent one, so the union has organised a \$150-a-head fund-raiser at the NSW Parliament on September 13. (One wonders whether Premier

Barry Farrell will be heading along.)

The flyer says Qantas is "now in the hands of the New Right and its acolytes" and that management is determined to "restructure Qantas out of existence".

But Rear Window must protest at this point. Surely Qantas chairman **Leigh Clifford**, a former hardline boss at Rio Tinto, is part of the Old Right?

Anyway, the flyer also says: "This notice is authorised by [TWU national secretary] **Tony Sheldon** – one of the officials sued by Qantas." We hear Sheldon copped a fine of \$18,000. No jokes about using the union credit card to pay it, please.

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