



Peter Meakin, head of news and current affairs at Seven Network, will leave the role at the age of 70. Photo: CHANNEL NINE

Seven's news maestro departs

Ben Holgate

Seven Network's outgoing veteran news and current affairs head Peter Meakin, 70, attributes his success to hiring people smarter than him. "I don't reckon I'm that good," Mr Meakin said yesterday after announcing his decision to step down. "I was content to bask in other people's reflected glory."

But Mr Meakin's ability to put his finger on the public pulse made him a key executive in helping two TV networks — Nine and more recently Seven — become number one in ratings.

Seven West Media chairman Kerry Stokes said while the term "legend" was often over-used, it was apt in this case.

Mr Meakin followed former boss David Leckie over from Nine after falling out with management under John Alexander nine years ago.

"I think there was a feeling that if we could do Nine over, it would be a worthwhile exercise," Mr Meakin reflected. "We had a point to prove".

Back then Seven did not have "a winning culture", he said.

But after two or three years, the Leckie team began to turn it around, and Seven dominated TV ratings for six years up until Nine's resurgence this year.

Mr Meakin said Mr Leckie was "a sort of loud, enfant terrible of television, a man of few words, many of them unprintable", who has "a real feel for TV and great loyalty to his staff".

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Peter Meakin, Seven Network

Mr Meakin said he raised the prospect of stepping down with Mr Leckie before his old boss, whom he has known for more than three decades, stepped down as SWM chief executive mid year.

"I thought it was time to give someone else a go," he said.

Mr Meakin's successors — Rob Raschke, who becomes director of news, and Neil Mooney, the new director of public affairs — were

among the several people he had nominated for the roles.

Mr Meakin highlighted the late Kerry Packer as one of the "unforgettable" people he had worked with, saying the former Nine Network owner "was a very, very funny ... and a very tough man".

Despite the successes, Mr Meakin made news himself on two occasions. One for a heart attack not long before joining Seven — "I haven't had a recurrence, mercifully". And another for drink driving. His original sentence of 14 months' weekend detention was reduced to 250 hours of community service plus an eight-year driving ban.

"That was an act of total stupidity which I will eternally regret," he said, adding that he was "deeply grateful" for what he called the "forgiveness" of Mr Stokes and Mr Leckie in allowing him to continue at Seven.

Mr Meakin will continue at the network as an adviser on news and current affairs until mid 2013.

As for what happens after that, the father of four from Sydney has no plans to stop work.

Tasmania not out of woods yet on permits

Marcus Priest

Tasmania and the federal government are fighting over who is entitled to carbon permits — worth up to \$7 billion — that may be created by the Tasmanian Forestry Agreement.

Under the agreement reached last week to end the long-running dispute between conservationists and the timber industry, half a million hectares of state forests will be protected from logging in return for a federally-funded timber industry bailout.

Last week, Tasmanian Premier Lara Giddings indicated her government also wanted to generate domestic carbon permits from the logging reduction through the new Carbon Farming Initiative.

The Tasmanian plan would cut the amount of forestry credits the federal government could claim towards meeting its national emission reduction target and need a change to the CFI.

Last year, Prime Minister Julia Gillard wrote to Ms Giddings expressing concerns about the plan. *The Australian Financial Review* has obtained a copy of a letter from federal parliamentary secretary for climate change, Mark Dreyfus, to Tasmanian climate change minister Cassy O'Connor warning against Tasmania claiming carbon credits from new forestry reserves set up with \$300 million in federal funding.

"There should be no 'double dipping' with respect to carbon credits that may result from forest land entering into new conservation reserves as a result of Commonwealth funding," Mr Dreyfus said in the letter, which was dated October 10.

"Any funding provided to support the establishment of reserves would need to be accounted for when determining the potential for carbon crediting."

International carbon accounting rules in the Kyoto Protocol, which Australia has re-signed, state coun-

tries can claim "forestry management" credits from a reduction in logging below expected levels. These credits count towards a country's national emission reduction target.

This emissions reduction would also allow the federal government to increase the pollution cap from 2015 and enable it to sell more carbon permits to Australian companies.

ANU Centre for Climate Law and Policy associate director Andrew Macintosh said the federal government would be the big winner from the Tasmanian forestry peace deal. It would receive 8.2 million forestry management credits a year, worth around \$7 billion in additional revenue under the carbon price scheme between 2016 and 2030.

"By concentrating on the old fights, the Tasmanian government has passed up a major opportunity and the Commonwealth is guaranteed a return of about \$7 billion but paid only \$300 million," he said.

A spokesperson for Mr Dreyfus said there was potential for credits under the CFI from Tasmanian forests. But in determining whether they were entitled to CFI credits from reserves arising from the agreement, federal funding was relevant.

"The Tasmanian government has done a considerable amount of work on the potential for CFI projects with Tasmanian forests and the federal government and Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency will continue to work closely with them," the spokesperson said.

A spokesman for the Tasmanian government said it believed Mr Dreyfus's letter would allow the state to realise the carbon benefits from trees in the new reserves.

"These are complex issues, and the Tasmanian government will work with the Commonwealth to realise the opportunities that could be opened up through the potential sale of carbon credits on international compliance markets," he said.

