

SE Business
HD CBD
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WC 672 words
PD 8 April 2014
SN The Age
SC AGEE
ED First
PG 20
LA English
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NAB's new chief onto home truths

CBD can't wait to hear from NAB's chief-in-waiting, Andrew Thorburn, who earned a reputation as a respected straightshooter while running the bank's NZ operation.

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In a speech to the Trans-Tasman Business Circle circa 2012, Thorburn told the audience Kiwis "cling to a belief" that the value of their homes would only ever go up, and criticised "perverse signals" the tax regime sent locals when it came to savings and investment decisions.

"For example, New Zealand is one of the few developed countries in the world without a capital gains tax applying to investment in **residential** housing. We also support negative gearing and have no stamp duty on **property purchases**," said reports of Thorburn's speech.

"As a consequence, we have seen in this country a massive long-term bias towards investment in **residential property** - a non-productive asset in investment terms, albeit a critical life requirement for people and families."

While there are some differences in Australia's tax regime, CBD

can't wait to hear whether Thorburn

has a few home truths for his country of birth.

New day dawns

A week is a long time in Kazakhstan - almost 40 days, if the travails of an Australian-listed potash hopeful are any guide.

Back on February 27, Kazakhstan Potash Corporation told investors that, following a capital raising, it expected its shares to be back on

the market "during the course of next week".

Alas, the **company**, formerly known as Fortis Mining, failed to meet that target and a suspension that had been in force for more than two years continued.

During that time the **company**'s had a torrid time of it. There was the legal barney after founding directors Frank Cannavo and Jitto Arulampalam got the boot in favour of **Hong Kong**-based Madame Freada Cheung; tangles with ASIC over the prospectus, which was rejected four times; and a stoush back in Kazakhstan with the mysterious owners of the potash fields the **company** hopes to develop.

But as the sun set over the steppes on Monday night, it appeared that a new day would finally end the long darkness endured by KPC's shareholders. Executive director Marco Marcou said that following "a

very through process", the ASX had given the **company** a tick of approval. "We've just been notified by the ASX that reinstatement will be tomorrow."

Downer strifeLawyer turned class action specialist Mark Elliott has turned his ambulance-chasing skills on Downer EDI. He has launched a class action against the **company** covering the same ground as the recently settled action by litigation funder IMF. It is one of several cases on the go by Elliott, who is also targeting Leighton Holdings and Treasury Wine Estates. Downer hinted that the claim did not have enough substance at this stage to require disclosure.

"The claim does not contain sufficient information to make any meaningful assessment of the number of shareholders potentially involved in the action or the alleged quantum of the claims."

Floating into ASIC

A directions hearing begins on Tuesday for Sino Australia Oil & Gas over its alleged breaches of the Corporations Act.

For those who have missed all the fun since the **company**'s December listing, ASIC received orders against the **company** and three directors in the Federal Court last month "following concerns that the **company** might transfer funds that were raised" in its IPO "for purposes that were not disclosed, or not properly disclosed" in the prospectus.

ASIC claims the proposed transfer of \$7.5 million in freshly raised funds had "not been authorised or explained adequately to the non-executive directors and signatories to the **company** bank accounts". It says it is also reviewing whether a resolution in February to appoint two additional directors to its **board** is valid.

The **company** lodged its accounts on April Fools' Day but the stock has not traded since February 24.

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AN Document AGEE000020140407ea4800046