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Alan Joyce's bold vision for Qantas includes diverting the iconic Kangaroo Route through the Middle East, tapping into the rapidly growing Asian passenger market and creating a diverse, modern and multicultural workforce that is great for business, he argues, and is the right thing to do morally, reports **Anne Summers**.

MOST AUSTRALIANS had probably never heard of Alan Joyce until Saturday, 29 October 2011. That was the day the Qantas CEO made the jaw-dropping announcement, live on television, that he was grounding the entire Qantas fleet.

Who was this boyish-faced man with the thick brogue declaring that three unions were “deliberately destabilizing the company”, that they were “killing Qantas slowly”, and that “as from now there will be no further Qantas domestic or international departures anywhere in the world”?

There was immediate chaos. A fully loaded A380 about to take off for Los Angeles from Mascot was told to return to the gate; a flight descending into Hobart was ordered to fly to Melbourne; as many as 100,000 people were stranded at airports throughout Australia; and around the world, weddings and funerals and sporting events were missed, holidays wrecked. Prime Minister Julia Gillard accused the airline of acting in “an extreme and irresponsible way”.

This was an industrial drama the likes of which had not been seen since the 1998 waterfront confronta-

tion between Patrick Partners and the Maritime Union of Australia, with its picket lines and dogs and balaclavas. The difference this time was that significant numbers of the public were directly affected. This was no ordinary employer–union standoff.

The grounding was a consequence of Joyce's decision, endorsed by the Qantas board, to use that old-fashioned industrial tactic: the lockout. This was, Joyce told the cameras, “the only effective avenue at my disposal to bring about peace and certainty”. For months now there had been industrial action by unions representing pilots, the Australian and International Pilots Association (AIPA), aircraft engineers, the Australian Licenced Aircraft Engineers Association (ALAEA), and the Transport Workers Union (TWU) representing ramp, baggage and catering staff.

The unions' claims were not just to do with pay, they were “trying to dictate how we run our business”, Joyce said. The only beneficiary of all this, he said with some bitterness, was Qantas's rival, Virgin: “The great irony is that it pays less, is less unionized and does its heavy maintenance offshore. Yet there

Grounded

is no union pressure on Virgin.” For months, Qantas passengers had heard cabin announcement from pilots, who had taken to wearing red ties as a passive form of protest, asking for support for their claims. The aircraft engineers’ Federal Secretary, Steve Purvina, said he was going to “slow-bake” the airline, and had called on Australians not to fly Qantas. There had been months of rolling stoppages and lightning strikes that saw flights cancelled at short notice, costing Qantas AU\$15 million a week and creating significant disruption for passengers. Bookings were down by 25 per cent on the high-value east-coast routes, Joyce said, and with the holiday season approaching, increasing numbers of people were saying they no longer intended to fly Qantas.

This was the context for the lockout and the grounding. It was a dramatic and drastic action that eventually cost Qantas AU\$70 million in lost revenue and reparations, and judged at the time to be a public-relations disaster for causing so much inconvenience and ill-will.

Alan Joyce’s stewardship at the airline came under serious assessment. It came the day after the company’s annual general meeting, where it had been revealed that, despite the airline’s falling share price and its failure to declare a dividend, Joyce had received a 71 per cent salary increase, taking his total remuneration to just over AU\$5 million. Together with Joyce’s radical actions, this certainly polarized people. Depending on where you sat on the industrial spectrum, his tough action was either admired—he received a round of applause at a Business Council of Australia function soon afterwards—or denounced as contemptible. It was during the grounding that I first heard Alan Joyce referred to as “that fucking little Irish poofter”.

IT’S FAIR TO SAY that when he took on some of the country’s toughest unions, this Irish-born, now ten years naturalized, Australian from a tough working-class Dublin neighborhood, who has voted Labor all his life, single-handedly changed Australia’s industrial landscape. The grounding forced the unions into arbitration before the Fair Work Commission and, after three separate decisions, the most recent in January this year, Qantas has emerged victorious: the ALAEA and the TWU are both bound to abstain from industrial action for at least two years,

and the AIPA’s bid to have Qantas pay and conditions apply to Jetstar pilots rejected.

And the public seems to have forgiven him. Both international and domestic customers’ satisfaction ratings are at all-time highs, according to research done for Qantas by ANOP, and the airline has retained or regained its all-important corporate business. Qantas announced in February it was maintaining its 84 per cent share of the corporate market, renewing 40 accounts and winning 39 new ones, including several from the competition. One high-end travel agent I spoke to said all his platinum-card travelers were back with Qantas, including one who had paid AU\$8000 to get himself home during the grounding. (Qantas reimbursed him.)

Joyce “does not have an ego that needs to be stroked. He’s got pride,” says Leigh Clifford, “but he’s totally without ego.”

Alan Joyce was just 42 when he was appointed Qantas CEO in 2008. Even today, at 46, he is younger than most of his peers, the average age of Australia’s CEOs being 53. It would be easy to portray him as some kind of wunderkind, which he undoubtedly is, only 37 when he was given the job of starting Jetstar, but there is a lot more to Joyce. From his background, to his academic achievements, to his sexuality, he is a very unusual person to be running a major company in this country.

And Qantas is not just any company. It’s not even just another airline—does anyone ever argue about Virgin? It is the flying kangaroo, it is the spirit of Australia and even though it is no longer government owned, Australians still act as though it is. We are all experts when it comes to the national carrier.

In reality, it’s just another company listed on the stock exchange, and not even an especially large one. With market capitalization of just AU\$3.7 billion Qantas is not even in the ASX top 20 companies. But, as Qantas chairman Leigh Clifford acknowledges, “its importance to Australia, its iconic status, its enormous duty of care to its passengers as well as all the



Photo: Peter Brew - Bevan, Lizard Manage Ment

unbelievably complex business issues, and the fact that it is constantly in the media” makes Qantas a company like no other. A bit like the ABC, that other iconic Australian institution that is subject to similar scrutiny and second-guessing.

So whoever runs Qantas is going to attract a lot more attention than your average CEO.

IN 2008 LEIGH CLIFFORD interviewed three internal and several external candidates to replace then CEO Geoff Dixon. Joyce was “the standout”: “He’s done serious academic study yet he isn’t a geek. He’s very analytical and creative.”

Also attractive to Clifford was his judgement that, unlike a lot of CEOs, Joyce “does not have an ego that needs to be stroked”.

“He’s got pride,” Clifford told me, “but he’s totally without ego.” Which makes him very different from the command-and-control management of the past.

“He’s a very collaborative leader,” says Lesley Grant, CEO of Qantas Loyalty, as the frequent-flyer business is now known.

Alan Joyce is unlike most CEOs in other respects too. When we think about what makes a CEO, or a leader generally, we bring presumptions, generally based on observations of previous leaders, to our expectations. We have been conditioned to think male, tall, grey hair, private-school education, married with kids and (still) a stay-at-home wife. There are other presumptions: Caucasian, no accent. Joyce checks just two of those boxes: he is a white male. But he is short in stature, his hair is reddish brown, he went to a state school, he retains a thick Irish accent and he is not married.

When his appointment as CEO was announced, the media reported that Joyce was “single”. At the time, he had been living with his partner, Shane, for nine years. Michael Kirby, the former High Court judge who had lived with his partner for thirty years before disclosing, via a slight change to his *Who’s Who* entry in 1999, that he was gay, has written movingly in his memoir *A Private Life* of the strain involved in keeping public and private lives separate. Whatever strain might have been involved for Joyce, he was remarkably successful in keeping his private life private.

There were a few rumors but no media, not even in the gay press, until Deborah Snow asked him about his partner for a *Sydney Morning Herald* profile in early

October 2011. Joyce told Snow he had been living with a New Zealand man for the past 12 years, but asked—saying that his partner was “very private”—that she not use his name. The article was published at the height of the industrial action, just three weeks before the grounding. The *Herald* did not sensationalize its scoop: there was no screaming headline, no bragging “exclusive” strap and the information was simply included in matter-of-fact fashion towards the end of the article.

Nevertheless, Alan Joyce was now officially “out”. For those so inclined, here was a new weapon to use against him. And it was used, as Joyce acknowledged when we spoke, “there’s a lot of things that were being said during the dispute and stuff that’s out there”. In a town where it is considered amusing for a comedian at a major industry association dinner to tell sexist and homophobic “jokes” about our prime minister and finance minister, for the CEO of a company like Qantas to be openly gay is no small thing.

No one doubts that the airline business is tough, and Qantas is constrained by regulations and bottom-line considerations that many of its competitors do not need to worry about. Unlike other industries, airlines are at the mercy of the weather, epidemics and terrorism as well as the constant challenges of soaring fuel costs and a high Aussie dollar. Fleets need to be replenished, services constantly upgraded, fares kept competitive, nine million frequent flyers attended to. There’s a workforce of almost 35,000 people to be engaged and managed, and 14 unions to deal with.

“I think it’s the toughest gig in Australia,” says an aviation writer who has followed Joyce closely.

In his just over four years at the helm, Joyce has been bold and decisive in other areas besides his grounding of the fleet to bring the unions to heel. He quickly grounded the A380 fleet in 2010 after an engine blowout led to an emergency landing in Singapore; he’s slashed more than 1000 jobs; he’s reengineered the old blokey corporate culture and has women running half the company’s operational divisions; he’s dispatched to corporate limbo the former friend and mentor who helped get him the job; and now, to give Qantas travelers easier access to Europe he’s gone into partnership with a former enemy, Emirates, in a deal he describes as “critical for our international business”. And he took some time off in early 2011 to deal with an aggressive prostate cancer. Never doubt



G'day Oprah: Qantas flew Oprah Winfrey and her 300-strong audience to Australia for an attention-grabbing tour in 2010. Photo: qantas

the toughness of this man. He's a "streetfighter", a trusted advisor says admiringly. In his battle to save Qantas, Joyce will take no prisoners.

NOT EVERYONE AGREES that Qantas needed to be "saved". There is staunch opposition to the Emirates deal in union and some political circles. Some within Qantas would be quite happy for the airline to just focus on its profitable domestic, frequent-flyer and freight businesses and not worry about the revenue-sapping international arm of the airline.

Joyce has been criticized for not being able to pin down an Asian alliance, with Qantas having no entry point to the world's fastest growing market. People have scratched their heads at him for ditching the heart-tugging children's choir "I still call Australia home" marketing campaign, and there are questions if the Dubai stopover is going to mean lengthy middle-of-the night waits for those on Qantas flights while people flying Emirates, which has better slots,

will have smoother transitions.

"No one's seen the numbers" for how Qantas will benefit from the Emirates partnership, says one industry skeptic.

Joyce is "uncompromising" and "tough as nails", says an aviation journalist. During his interview with me at Qantas's corporate headquarters in Mascot in early February, Joyce countered every criticism. He is determined to reinvent Qantas as a modern, diverse company where every division is profitable.

He knows that means breaking with much of the past. "I knew the easiest thing I could have done during the dispute was to compromise and give in to the unions, which had happened multiple times before," he said of his decision to ground the fleet. "But I think when you are in these types of jobs you need to know when to stand and fight. The easiest thing would be to have not gone through with the fight but that's not what I learned in Dublin. I think it was the right thing to do, and anybody that's been brought up to do the right thing would do that."

Joyce was born in 1966 and grew up in Tallaght, an industrial suburb of Dublin, the oldest of four boys. His father worked in a tobacco factory and his mother was a cleaner in a sports centre. It soon emerged that young Joyce had a serious talent for mathematics, which propelled him into higher education. Relying on scholarships and his father “working multiple jobs to put me through university”, he received his Bachelor of Science in Applied Science (Physics and Mathematics) from the Dublin Institute of Technology and then earned his Masters of Science from the acclaimed Trinity College, Dublin.

His first job was at Aer Lingus, designing mathematical models to figure out how much overselling of seats was needed to ensure maximum yield per flight. He joined the Clerical Services Union. After eight years doing various jobs at the Irish national carrier, in 1996 Joyce made the move to Australia—and Ansett Airlines. He soon caught the attention of Ansett’s chief, (now Sir) Rod Eddington, who told me “I realized straight away he really knew the business and worked very hard, and was very well respected by the other managers.”

When Ansett was put into administration in late 2001, Eddington, then CEO at British Airways, rang Geoff Dixon, who was about to take over as CEO at Qantas, and recommended two Ansett people who were worth “pushing and seeing how far they can go”. One of them was Alan Joyce.

When Ansett collapsed some 15,000 people lost their jobs, their incomes and their entitlements. There were more than 40 suicides of former staffers. It all made a big impression on Joyce, who had many friends left jobless. “That was very, very upsetting at the time. There were suicides. That was horrendous.”

“The chief pilot we got at Jetstar a few years later was a pilot at Ansett,” he said in an interview with Sydney’s *Sunday Telegraph* in October 2011. “After Ansett collapsed, he had to go and mow lawns. That’s the only way he could make a living, and he did that until we set up Jetstar.”

In June 2011, Joyce had warned that Qantas faced an “Ansett-style extinction” unless drastic changes were made to reduce the high cost base of its international operation. One imagines these were considered words.

Joyce had only been at Qantas two years when Geoff Dixon gave him the job of creating Jetstar. It

BLACK BOX RECORDER

Links to key records in the recent Qantas story

POST-GROUNDING FAIR WORK DECISIONS + QANTAS + UNION RESPONSES

Pilots: 17 Jan 2013

- ▶ <http://www.fwc.gov.au/decisionssigned/html/2013fwcfb317.htm>
- ▶ <http://www.qantas.com.au/travel/airlines/media-releases/jan-2013/5483/global/en>
- ▶ <http://www.aipa.org.au/mediaroom/2013/760-try-again-next-year-fwa-decision-highlights-futility-and-destructiveness-of-joyces-industrial-war>

TWU: 8 August 2012

- ▶ <http://www.fwc.gov.au/decisionssigned/html/2012fwafb6612.htm>
- ▶ <http://www.qantas.com.au/travel/airlines/media-releases/aug-2012/5435/global/en>
- ▶ <http://www.twu.com.au/home/campaigns/-home-campaigns--home-campaigns-qantas/twu-pledges-its-commitment-to-securing-australia-s/>

Engineers: 23 January 2012

- ▶ <http://www.fwc.gov.au/decisionssigned/html/2012fwafb236.htm>
- ▶ <http://www.qantas.com.au/travel/airlines/media-releases/jan-2012/5355/global/en>
- ▶ <http://www.alaea.asn.au/news/e-torque/e-torque-2012/e-torque-february-2012>

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Interim Decision on Emirates Alliance

GROUNDING THE FLEET

- ▶ [Alan Joyce’s announcement](#)
- ▶ [Media release](#)

ALAN JOYCE SPEECHES

- ▶ [Tourism and Transport Forum 6 February 2013](#)
- ▶ [National Press Club 28 November 2012](#)
- ▶ [National Press Club 9 October 2012 speech](#)
- ▶ [Announcing Emirates partnership 6 September 2012](#)
- ▶ [Qantas FY12 Investor Presentation](#)

was his success there that put Joyce on the fast track. He built the airline almost from scratch, creating new routes from regional cities, substituting low-cost Jetstar flights on unprofitable Qantas routes and establishing the airline as a major player in the Asian cut-price market, in the process making it a key profit centre for Qantas.

“He surprised us all,” says Tom Ballantyne, a veteran aviation analyst. “He did at Jetstar what airlines around the world said couldn’t be done: launched a budget airline from a full-service carrier.”

He did this without cannibalizing the parent airline's routes and profits. Jetstar now operates out of Singapore, Vietnam and Japan, and is in the process of seeking regulatory approval for a Hong Kong hub.

Joyce is also an active international player on airline issues such as the environment. "You bump into him all over the world," says an aviation journalist. Last June, at its annual meeting in Beijing, Joyce was elected Chairman of the Board of Governors of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the hugely influential body that shapes the entire industry. It handles all money from ticket sales, for instance, and was responsible for the introduction of e-ticketing. The last Qantas CEO to hold the position was James Strong in 1999.

"It tells you he's respected by his global competitors and colleagues," says Sir Rod Eddington of Joyce's appointment.

But does he have similar respect from his Australian counterparts? There is no doubt his CEO peers admired his tough stance with the unions, but how do they deal with the fact that he is gay? The world we live in is far from accepting gays, and gay couples, as fully equal. "It's OK if we're entertainers, or servants," says a well-known gay Sydney man.

Many people in business I spoke to have heard disparaging comments about Joyce and his sexuality, even if these are sometimes intended as "unPC jokes", as one person put it.

"I have never felt it was negative to my career," says Joyce of his sexuality; his chairman and his board have been "very good" about it. His senior staff is mostly relaxed about their boss's sexuality, but there are some who wish he wouldn't talk about it. Some were appalled when Joyce gave a frank interview and posed for stylish photographs for *GQ* magazine last year.

Coming out to his family was "a massive anti-climax", Joyce said in an interview last year; they'd already worked it out. He must be relying on a similar reaction from his peers. Recently, Shane has begun to accompany Joyce to Qantas and other corporate events where he is introduced as "my partner". "He's met a lot of the other CEOs out there," Joyce told me, "and I've never and he's never felt unwelcome."

Leigh Clifford has met Shane "quite a few times", the board chair told me. But there are still limits. Someone who is close to Joyce told me he is approaching

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it "in steps". With each interview, he opens up a fraction more. He's allowed me to use his partner's first name but I agree not to disclose Shane's last name, or where he works, and to not republish a photograph of the couple taken when they attended the opening of the Museum of Contemporary Art early in 2012.

"He's a nice guy, he's a very quiet guy," says Joyce of Shane, "and I don't want to bring him into the public light. I really don't."

Joyce says that he has endured "more racial insults than I've had over my sexuality" and he is quick to complain when it happens. In late 2011 Joyce angrily confronted federal MP Bob Katter over his comments, in the context of the grounding, that foreigners were taking over Australian companies. I told Katter "You are probably the first person that said the Irish are too intelligent," Joyce told me. "Usually, it's the other way round."

Senator Bill Heffernan had to apologize for saying Joyce came "from a long line of Irish bomb makers" when he fronted a Senate estimates committee in early 2011. The *Australian* newspaper quickly withdrew a column by Imre Salusinszky in 2010 that mocked Joyce's accent: "Oi don't nu 'oy oi can moike it any clearer for yer" was one of the lines Joyce objected to. And the TWU hired a comedian who used words like "tink" for "think" to parody Joyce at a mock press conference after the Qantas 2012 AGM. (A YouTube video of this is still on the TWU website.) When the race and sexuality barbs are combined, they make for the kind of brutal insult I heard leveled at Joyce during the grounding, which is by no means uncommon in conversations in business and union circles. Which, despite his brushing it off, must have some effect on the man.

"My own experience as a homosexual man made me very sensitive to discrimination. If you have tast-



ed irrational discrimination, you do not like it,” says Michael Kirby.

The same is true of Joyce. He feels an affinity for marginalized groups and he despises bullying and any form of aggression in the workplace.

“He sees gender equality as one piece of building an organization where equality is a key element,” says Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick. “And that includes race and sexuality.”

“Culturally the organization was just dreadful. There was bullying, including from some of the women,” someone who worked in the corporate area of Qantas during the mid-2000s told me. “At the time Alan Joyce was setting up Jetstar. It was a very different culture. He was highly respected by that Jetstar crowd who were all young and energetic.”

He is now trying to do the same thing at Qantas. “If you can tap into it and use diversity in a business you can actually have a big strategic advantage,” Joyce told me. “So it’s great for business. I also think it’s the

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right thing to do morally.”

In late 2010 Joyce joined Male Champions of Change, a group of CEOs who had been signed up by Elizabeth Broderick to take the lead in improving gender equity within their organizations. (Other organizations involved include Telstra, IBM, ASX, Woolworths, the federal Treasury and the Defence Department.)

“I’ve found him a very committed CEO to deal with,” says Broderick. “He has high integrity.” When Joyce reorganized the company last year, he included three women in the nine-member Executive Team, the top management group in Qantas: Lesley Grant, Jetstar CEO Jayne Hrdlicka, and Olivia Wirth, head of government and corporate affairs. In 2012 women held 31.5 per cent of senior management roles, a stark transformation for what used to be a very blokey place, but to ensure continuing diversity, Joyce has

introduced targets: 35 per cent of senior roles are to be filled by women by 2015 and 40 per cent by 2018.

WOMEN ARE NOW captains and airport managers and financial officers. Last year 60 per cent of the graduate intake was female, exceeding the 50 per cent target. With not much of a pipeline in some still male-dominated areas, Qantas has been sending its female pilots and engineers to schools, “getting young women to start thinking about these jobs as career opportunities”, says Joyce.

“Alan has made Qantas a much more contemporary company,” Grant told me. “He walks the talk on diversity generally, especially on gender, and the results speak for themselves. It had been a predominantly male company. Now we have a multicultural workforce with over 90 difference nationalities. We are reflective of modern Australia.” The contrast with the company led by Geoff Dixon could scarcely be starker. Yet while Dixon described Joyce to me as “an outstanding executive”, the former CEO was part of a group that recently sought to oust Joyce and overturn his strategy for the airline. Late last year the group, led by investment banker Mark Carnegie and another former Qantas executive Peter Gregg, with trucking magnate Lindsay Fox and adman John Singleton, took a small position on the Qantas share register and began seeking support from unions and key investors for their plan to sell the highly profitable frequent-flyer business, partially float Jetstar, and possibly ditch the Emirates alliance in favor of developing a similar link with an Asian airline.

The group had two plans, says an aviation journalist who closely tracked the episode. “Plan A was to make a killing,” he told me. “Plan B was far more ambitious: a showdown of the old guard versus the new guard, but there wasn’t support for it.”

Steve Purvinas of the ALAEA weighed in, telling the ABC’s *World Today* that Qantas “is going to be destroyed under the current leadership of Alan Joyce and his mate Leigh Clifford”.

Few others agreed. Joyce says he had emails from pilots, his mortal enemies from the lockout, saying they did not want the airline broken up.

Plan B collapsed but Plan A won: the group walked away with an AU\$18 million profit when they sold down their shareholding. But it was the end of a long

and close association between Joyce and Dixon. Joyce demanded that Dixon step down as chair of Tourism Australia (TA), which Qantas had worked with in the past—they jointly brought Oprah Winfrey to Australia in 2010—and with whom it had a AU\$44 million, three-year funding arrangement. That money is now withdrawn, and redistributed to state tourism bodies.

The Qantas board was “enraged” at the behavior of “two previous executives who did well out of the company”, Clifford told me.

Their anger stemmed from Dixon’s initial denial that he was part of the group stalking Qantas. Joyce

“I need to leave this company with a legacy, with a future, and I feel a huge obligation to do that.”

angrily accused his former mentor of briefing against the company and of having a clear conflict of interest in his continuing to chair TA.

“Alan Joyce has made it pretty clear we won’t be re-engaging with Tourism Australia while [Dixon’s] involved,” Clifford told me. The man who gave Alan Joyce the Jetstar job, who used to call him “my little Irishman”, and who dined once a week with his protégé, now has the blackest of marks against him.

AUSTRALIANS WILL start flying the new Kangaroo Route via Dubai from 31 March. Joyce rejects “the camel route” joke. “The Kangaroo Route is Qantas’s brand going to London with a stop,” he says. In the past this was Bahrain or Karachi as well as the more familiar Singapore or Bangkok. Travelers who were irritated at having to fly via Heathrow to other European destinations can now go anywhere with just the one Middle Eastern stop. Joyce says the airline booked “over a thousand passengers to Vienna, which we didn’t sell before” in the first week of the new arrangement, while destinations such as Milan and Barcelona are getting “phenomenal numbers”.

He expects Australians will embrace the time-saving and the ease of connecting not just to Europe but also to African and other Middle Eastern countries.

Many people I have spoken to agree, although there is considerable nostalgia for the sights and smells of the Asian stopovers. Qantas said this is not an issue since only 5 per cent of people ever left the airport.

In March 2013 Joyce will have been in the job for four years and four months, exactly the average tenure of an Australian CEO. Turnover in CEOs is high and rising, with 59 departures from ASX200 companies in 2011 compared with 33 in 2010, according to global management consultants Booz & Co as reported by *Leading Company* last November.

But Joyce, who in August 2011 launched his five-year turnaround plan for Qantas International, says he has “no intention of going anywhere”.

He dismisses my suggestion that his chairmanship of IATA is the perfect perch from which to survey the global aviation jobs market: “Qantas in my view is the best airline in the world and it’s the best aviation job in the world.” He has Clifford’s strong backing: “Alan’s got a task to do and I’ll be supporting him every inch of the way.”

If the alliance with Emirates succeeds, it will be another extraordinary chapter in the airline’s 93-year story. Only KLM has survived longer with its original name. Qantas, the tiny carrier that started in outback Queensland, will have evolved into an international network of two airlines, one a premium legacy carrier, the other low cost, that service both globally restless Australians and a near infinite number of Asian travellers.

Unlike most businesses, where you are either turning things around *or* trying to hang on to what you have *or* to grow something from scratch, Qantas has to do all three. If all goes to Joyce’s plan, he will have “fixed the problem we have” (international), “not lost the big advantage we have” (the domestic business) and “taken advantage of the big opportunity we have” (expansion into Asia).

“I need to leave this company with a legacy, with a future, and I feel a huge obligation to do that,” says Alan Joyce. The Qantas that celebrates its centenary in 2020 is likely to be totally unrecognizable from the airline it was in 2008. And it will have been largely the work of an affable Irishman who now calls Australia home, and who is in the throes of redefining what it means to be a business leader in this country. ❖

