

## Alan Joyce attempts a redemption tour: TWU responds

You might have seen coverage over the last few days of former Qantas CEO Alan Joyce spruiking his new memoir, in an attempted redemption tour across the Australian media landscape.

Unfortunately for Joyce, he is not speaking to a captured Board anymore.



## Time for an aviation sector that doesn't just benefit its executives

TWU members have been lobbying for change in aviation to repair the sector that was decimated under Alan Joyce.

The public sees through Alan Joyce's continued spin that everything he did was for the right reasons—and that anything Qantas got wrong had nothing to do with him.

Joyce pushed Qantas to the brink.

Now we're fighting to bring the aviation sector back to one with decent jobs and service standards.

Read TWU National Secretary Michael Kaine's response in The Australian



### A united aviation sector can bury the Joyce era



MICHAEL KAINE

When high-profile figures embark on a redemption tour, it usually follows a predictable arc. There is a mea culpa, some contextualisation, and the clear message that they have learned big lessons.

Alan Joyce's version has followed a starkly different path. Mostly he has insisted that he was right on the big questions, while attempting to dilute responsibility for the things he got spectacularly and obviously wrong.

If this is a pitch to become a non-executive director on a major board, heaven help the shareholders, customers and workers in any company foolish enough to take him on.

Take the memoir extract published this week.

In 2020, a Qantas worker being treated for cancer asked to draw on the sick leave he had accrued over years on the job. Qantas refused, then went to court to make sure it could keep refusing.

Joyce describes that outcome as if it was something that happened to him. The matter, he writes, became a court judgment and was effectively taken out of his hands.

But it was never out of his hands. Qantas ran the case. Qantas chose the ground, framed the question as all or nothing, and asked the Federal Court for permission. The court gave it.

Permission is not instruction. Nothing in that judgment required a company then

reporting billions in assets to stop sick pay for a man in chemotherapy. Qantas decided that, and has spent six years describing the decision as though it arrived from somewhere else.

Note also the reverence for the courts. Here, the judgment is final and binding and beyond argument. Yet in the outsourcing case, where the Federal Court found Qantas had illegally sacked 1820 workers and rejected the evidence its own executives gave on oath, the same man spent four years appealing it, and still writes about the decision as somebody else's. That is the pattern, and once you see it the book stops being confusing.

He accepts the buck stopped with him as chief executive. He also states in writing that the worst decision made on his watch was Andrew David's alone. He says he has never confirmed who is in the Chairman's Lounge, yet the categories are listed in his book. He says lounge access could not sway a decision of national importance, and in the next breath, that people beg for it.

He also says the airline came within 11 weeks of disappearing, a spurious claim that has been debunked.

For a decade we called him a corporate dictator, and were told by people who should have known better that this was union hyperbole.

Then Qantas commissioned its own review. It found a command-and-control

leadership style, centralised decision-making, a dominant CEO and a culture in which people did not feel able to challenge him. The current chair says the review was accurate.

Commentators are now asking, seriously, whether he should hold a board seat anywhere. We weren't overheated. We were early.

But as we marvel at one man's stunning lack of self-awareness, we must not lose sight of the bigger picture. Yes, Joyce pushed Qantas right to the brink, incinerating its relationship with customers and splintering its workforce into dozens of atomised entities.

But what about the structural factors that made all this possible?

The illegal sackings cost the company around \$210m – \$90m in penalties, \$120m to the workers. Qantas told investors the outsourcing would save it roughly \$100m a year.

Four years of litigation, 1820 lives interrupted, and on the balance sheet it comes out as a rounding error. Any board weighing the same move can run the same sums and reach the same answer.

So here is what I'd say to the people running aviation now, most of whom are not Alan Joyce and don't want to be remembered as him.

It doesn't have to work this way. When road transport reform laws went through parliament in February 2024, they went through with

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## TWU win: Labor commits to Aviation Coordination Council

Aviation workers and the community should get to have a say on decisions in the industry. We're one step closer to that being possible.

Relentless pushes by aviation executives, including Joyce, for short-term profits has hollowed out aviation, from illegal outsourcings to base closures to the gutting of regional routes.

And the public agrees.

In a YouGov poll commissioned by the TWU:

- **79%** support the government establishing a safe and secure skies commission to hold highly profitable airlines and airports to account; protect jobs, pay and conditions; retain skilled and experienced workers; and ensure decisions are made in the interests of passengers and regional Australia, especially during times of crisis
- **86%** agreed the government was responsible for ensuring a reliable, resilient aviation industry for workers, passengers and regional Australia through a system of enforceable standards
- **82%** agreed the commission should be a place where all aviation stakeholders have a voice and work together to solve problems



## Next step: push to implement Aviation Council

Labor's commitment last week is a huge TWU win that resulted from members standing up for a better industry. We will now continue to push for it to become a reality.