

MORE THAN JUST A JOB

By Rod Cowan*

ON MARCH 20, GEOFF ASKEW will retire from the position he has held for 17 years, Group General Manager Security Qantas Airways.

Taking up the lead will be Askew's second-in-charge for the past five years, Steve Jackson.

As General Manager, Group Security Operations, Jackson was responsible for six Regional Security Managers (four in Australia and two overseas), Group Business Resilience, the Crime Prevention and Investigations department, and Operations Support functions.

In his new role, he will be responsible for protecting Qantas' entire flying and non-flying assets, customers and staff. It is arguably one of the most demanding security jobs in the country, drawing on management and diplomacy skills, as well as security knowledge.

Joining Qantas was Jackson's first move into civilian life, after a military and police background. During his 21 years with the Australian Federal Police he held key command roles across a range of functions. He was the AFP's operational commander for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games and the Field Commander during the joint AFP/Indonesian National Police investigation following the 2002 Bali bombings. For the latter, Jackson was awarded the Order of Australia.

Jackson has just returned from a week in India. After a day at home, he left for meetings in WA, before returning to Sydney. When we meet in Qantas' Mascot offices, dressed in crisp shirt, silk tie, and dark suit pants, if he is tired or jetlagged, he is not showing it.

As we settle into the leather chairs of a small meeting room, if he is nervous about the new appointment, he's not showing it. Nor for that matter, does he give any signs of being pleased with himself for having won the top job.

Instead, Jackson sits, calm, relaxed, speaking in measured tones.

Security Insider: Mr Jackson, there is a sense that, like Barack Obama, you are coming in at the best of times and worst of times, with problems with the economy, terrorism, and regulatory pressures, and so on. Is this a job you would really want to do?

Steve Jackson: Absolutely. I think that is quite an interesting comparison you are using. At the best of times, because Qantas is going through major structural organisational change, is one example. Worst of times, yeah, an economic crisis where security is more broadly still perceived as being a cost centre, not a profit centre and where the people that are looking after our P&Ls are looking for people like me to do more, or as much, but with less and wanting to make sure that we are producing as much in terms of efficiency dividend back to the company. So, some fantastic challenges there, but a time, I think, to have a responsibility laid at my feet, such as I have, it is just (a) an honour and (b) such a marvellous thrill to be part of Qantas' history.

SI: From a personal point of view Geoff Askew casts quite a big shadow. I mean these are big shoes to fill.

SJ: ...yeah.

SI: any sense of trepidation in attempting to do so?

SJ: No. The reason why I say no unequivocally is that having worked with Geoff as his two-i-c, or his general manager for operations, for the last five years, I have been able to see how that shadow was cast. I have been able to see and be part of Geoff's planning and thinking about how he individually and

through him how Qantas can help to influence not just the aviation security debate but the broader security debate. I would much rather say, rather than trepidation, excitement at the prospect. Perhaps if I had come in as a new player without having had that benefit of working with Geoff, then trepidation or anxiety might be there, but I am very, very optimistic about the pathway that Geoff has hoed for the past 15 years as head of Group Security and the last five years of that working with him as part of the management team has positioned me very, very well indeed. So, I am very, very as I have said pleased to be taking the ball forward.

SI: Mr Askew was also very keen to influence the general security scene. He would get involved in things like industry associations, even sponsorships and so on. Is that something you intend to keep on doing?

SJ: Yes, absolutely. You know investing in relationships being a contributor to the broader debate, rather than just saying Yes, Qantas agrees with that particular proposition; by being a member of the [NSW] Security Industry Council; by being a sponsor of ASIAL; by having a seat at quite a number of captain's tables, which are not just [about] corporate representation. The fact of the matter is we are there because we are value adding to the debate. I have seen the value of that investment in those things you talk about, Rod, and in fact I would like to do more to the extent that obviously it is in accord with the strategic direction of Qantas. But, apart from the aviation security space, I think there are a lot of things we can continue to do to take forward a lot of the great work Geoff has done in the broader security industry. And, I am again quite excited about the prospect of being part of that and want to commit to that moving forward.

SI: The king may not be dead, but long live the king anyway, what will be different about you?

SJ: The last few years working with Geoff was my first entree into the corporate world, following 21 years in the Australian Federal Police. What will be different about me is that my apprenticeship is now over. I am able to now have the opportunity to practice the art of being a security professional with an enormous breadth of experience from my police service days and before that my military service. Having seen how Qantas as a major corporation works, having looked at some of the things that we have done well and some of the things we have not done all that well in the past, what will be different about me is continuing the emphasis on investing in those relationships and moving to a different dimension in terms of almost a paradigm shift in taking a security organisation, or part of an organisation, such as Group Security, and removing once and for all the notion that we are corporate cops. We have progressed the customer value proposition internally to a position now where we are able to show that early engagement with Group Security within



Steve Jackson

Qantas as part of growth plans, as part of new business ventures, is very, very important. So, what will be different about me is taking the opportunity to put us ahead of the game Notwithstanding the opportunities that Geoff had given, this now gives me my chance, gives me my head to do something different, as well as carry on some of the great work that Geoff Askew did in the time that he was here.

SI: The role has changed somewhat. It is now split into two areas, where the regulatory area will be handled by someone else and you get the rest. How can that work?

SJ: It can work in a number of ways. It is about trying to separate from the core security outcomes issues, such as the regulatory affairs space. We need to bear in mind, of course, that much of the regulatory affairs dimension impacts so significantly on the execution of security programmes and operational security outcomes I am responsible for delivering. It also broadly helps bring in other elements of regulatory management that previously in security we did not have, [such as] more involvement in the CASE [Civil Aviation Safety Authority] space than we had before. Things are changing such that we are not able to silo a security team out of the broader [issues], as we currently have within the Qantas Group, we are part of risk and insurance. So, where the separation of responsibilities now differ, [it now] permits us to become involved in a far greater range. Having said that, of course, it is going to present its challenges. With my colleague that heads up the regulatory affairs and resilience part of risk and insurance, the onus is on us to ensure that we reduce wherever we can the confusion that the separation might

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create. I'm not saying it is going to be a trouble free road but one that we are charged with making work.

SI: In terms of your suppliers, are they going to see anything different, or are systems so set that really the person at the top does not change things that much?

SJ: Well, look, you could answer yes and no to that question. I mean, the approach the preferred three-supplier model that Qantas security has with its security service providers we will not change. We are very, very satisfied with broad security outcomes that our partnerships with those security providers present. I think we can always do things a lot better than what we have done in the past. I have just recently visited India to spend some time with the parent company that acquired the former Chubb Protective Services, SIS India. One of the obvious takeouts for me, as part of our relationship with security service providers in Australia, is the constant effort that we must continue to put in to investment in the people.

Simple concepts are often overlooked by companies I'm pleased to say Qantas is not one of these that regard contractual relationships with suppliers to be a master/servant relationship. That is not something that we have

practiced in Qantas Group Security in the past and I have no intentions of doing that in the future. So, to the extent that the great foundation that my predecessor, Geoff, positioned Group Security, in terms of its collaborative relationship with suppliers, won't change one bit. But, I do want to ensure that we continue the emphasis on looking at the people, looking at the ways that we, as a customer, can require our services providers to push up on training and investment in the training and development of their people. Through that, something that is quite important to me, is moving further down the path to professionalisation of the industry. That's a space that I personally want to become involved in.

SI: In that professionalisation do you includes things like the working relationship with police?

SJ: Absolutely. If I can give you an example of what I mean by that, I had the opportunity during my time in the Australian Federal Police to be the operational commander for the AFP for Sydney 2000. I know it is a long time ago now, but what sticks in my mind there was to see how closely the NSW Police, the Federal Police, and the organisations for Sydney 2000 worked together with the private security industry. My perception post-Sydney 2000 is perhaps opportunities lost. I'm not seeing that we leveraged as much as we could have done from those great things that occurred prior to and during the [Olympic] Games. It was proved to be able to have been done, so no one can say this is impossible, that private

security and police can never work together, because they did. I think it is important for us to look back and see what it is we did, and what we have done to continue that relationship moving forward. I think it is important that we do constantly move to bridging that gap between the private security industry and the police. I'm not talking about exchanges with the police force, I'm not talking about mixing and matching responsibilities, because they are two distinct functional outcomes that are required, but that there is vast room for improvement for the two sectors to work a lot closer together.

SI: One of the sticking points there is the image of the security industry, as you hear ad nauseum, year after year, is not good. Do you think work can be done on improving that image?

SJ: Yes, I do. I think one of the things is about having individuals want to belong to a professional organisation and a professional industry, by continuing to market the desire for

small businesses, for large corporations, for managing directors and owners of security companies, to continue to inculcate in the minds of their people that they are part of a professional workforce. All organisations have got areas

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that badly bring down the standards. It happens in Qantas, it happens in the police, it happens in the security industry. You read about it everyday in the papers. I think what we need to do is to continually set the bar higher and encourage people to aspire to reach the standards of the bar, but don't put the bar that high that it is out of the reach. We need to understand that the skills, competencies, and the raw talent that many of the people that enter the security industry have are, in some aspects, different to the people that might aspire to, or join the military or the police forces. But, when you unpick and analyse it closely, the differences really are not that great. It is about, I think, the interest that employers and people like me show in the raw talent and the individuals. Give them a reason to aspire to being a professional, by allowing them to grow, by giving them opportunities, by showing them, yes it is a job, but there is a bit more to it as well. I often say, [as] when I addressed the SIS training academy in India, that it is not people like me who are on point or carrying out a security function at two o'clock in the morning. When they are dealing with an incident, I'm asleep; I'm at home in bed. It is the individual, often very junior, who is there having to exercise judgement, decision making, having to exercise discretion. It is about wanting to continue to impress on those people that they are the ones making the difference, not people like me. My job is just simply to encourage people to take the challenge forward. We need to do a lot more to recognise the fact that they are the guardians of the gate. I'm afraid, Rod, that we have

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not done that all that well in the past. I saw lots of evidence in the last couple of years of us starting to go down that path but I think we need as a broader industry I'm not talking about Qantas Security Group now, I am talking about our part in the broader industry to get that passion alive. We'll not get it in everybody. We're not hoping to get it in everyone. I think That's just an aspiration that you can't achieve. But, there is a component in everyone that needs to be exploited and it is more than just a job.

SI: Quite often though, what it takes is leadership within the industry. Do you think security managers do enough to demonstrate leadership within the security profession?

SJ: Umm, yes and no. I think security managers perhaps even in their own right often typecast themselves into a particular category of managers. I reflected on this when I filled out that part on the immigration outwards card about what is your occupation? What do people like me, what do my managers put down as their occupation? You could put down you are a security manager. You could put down that you are an airline executive. You could put down that you are an executive manager or a business manager. You are all of those but you are more than a security manager, as well. So, I think security managers need to remember that often they come from, as I did, a particular background, either green or blue, and it is very difficult to make the move in your own brain space to move out of that mould, because more often than not security managers are very, very good at their job. They are very good practitioners of the art of security. Many of them are already security professionals, they are recognised widely in the field that they have come from, but often then, moving into a corporate security field, there is a different dimension there. By moving from a background that may be military or police, into then dealing directly with individuals in the private security industry, speaking frankly, I think we need to be careful about our own prejudices about how we regard others in the security industry, either in large organisations or small organisations. All of these things together are fairly significant challenges. [With] all these components in that desire to find the holy grail of professionalisation, which is a holy grail in any walk of life, whether it be professionalisation of police [or] of the security industry, there are significant challenges that won't be able to be overcome overnight.

SI: There is a sense in which, after 9/11 security was the flavour, it was the exciting thing, there is a sense in which

it is not as hot a topic anymore. Is that a fair evaluation?

SJ: It is one evaluation. One of the greatest enemies that private security and other dimensions of security face is complacency. It is always a hot topic following an incident. Just recently having experienced life in India for a week, it is a hot topic there, following what happened on 26th November. It is a hot topic in other parts of the world experiencing security incidents and security situations. We need to be very, very careful in the Australian space, particularly, that we do not fall into a false sense of security, because at home, on home soil we might be going through a time where we are not experiencing the [same] degree of security incidents, security situations, that other countries overseas might be. It is up to people like me and other security professionals to keep the focus on the debate and to show constantly that we are value adding to the business outcomes of Qantas, in my case, and for my colleagues who are in other corporations, the business outcomes for their companies. I think this particularly is one of the great danger areas for all of us and, if you fall behind the eight-ball on this, it is very, very hard to recover. Often then you are in an environment where you are in the first few hours of responding to a situation and it is hard to get traction back when you have lost it.

SI: There are going to be a lot of people looking at you, whether they work for the suppliers or within Qantas. Now that you are in the top job, is there anything you would like to say to all those people?

SJ: Yes, there is. We need to be honest. We need to be honest with our people and ourselves. We need to continue to show where we value add to the various business models that we might be part of. We need to make things less complex. What we need to do, as well, is we need to show that we are adventurous and we are willing to take risks, as long as they are properly assessed. And, I think what we need to do, as well, Rod, is we need to constantly remind ourselves that it is not people like me that are the important ones I'm just a team leader, at the end of the day. It is about the people who are working with us and ensuring that we give them the best support, the best direction that we possibly can.

SI: Well, all the very best with leading that team, Mr Jackson, and thank you for your time.

SJ: Thanks, Rod.

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