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Virgin Australia announces Executive Leadership Team appointments ^[2]



- Lisa Burquest, Chief People, Safety and Sustainability Officer, The a2 Milk Company, to become Chief People Officer
- Alistair Hartley, Director of Strategy, International Airlines Group, to become Chief Transformation Officer
- David Marr, Chief Operating Officer, Woolworths Group, to become Chief Financial Officer
- Nick Rohrlach, Co-CEO, Jetstar Japan, to become CEO Velocity
- Susan Schneider, General Manager Legal and Compliance, Virgin Australia, promoted to become Chief Legal and Risk Officer
- Moksha Watts, Vice President Corporate Affairs and Sustainability, The Arnott's Group, to become Chief Corporate Affairs Officer

18 January 2021: Virgin Australia Chief Executive Officer Jayne Hrdlicka today announced key appointments to the airline's Executive Leadership Team (ELT) to further drive its transformation.

Several of the new appointments replace contractors or fill vacant positions.

Ms Hrdlicka said each new member is a world-class leader with a proven track record and

deep experience in aviation or consumer-focused businesses.

“These people deeply understand our market; and they know our customers,” Ms. Hrdlicka said.

“Virgin Australia has signalled a return to its mid-market heartland, targeting value-conscious corporate travellers, small and medium businesses, premium leisure travellers, and holidaymakers who are after a great value airfare and better service.

“Our new executive team will be at the forefront of helping our team members to deliver that strategy. All the new appointees have a demonstrated commitment to staff, customers and the community and are a perfect fit with the Virgin Australia culture I have come to know intimately over the past few months.

“Today’s announcement underscores our commitment to be Australia’s most loved and best value airline for business and leisure travellers, and to build a strong company that will endure for the long term.

“We have made significant changes to the business and have real momentum despite the current aviation industry challenges. We’ve re-opened lounges in major cities, we’ve matched Qantas’ Frequent Flyer status challenge and included Qantas’ oneworld partner airlines, and we’ve increased flexibility for our customers with fee-free flight changes as our domestic borders remain uncertain. While far from finished, we are off to a good start.”

Executive leadership team changes

The Virgin Australia Group ELT will be:

- Jayne Hrdlicka, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director
- Stuart Aggs, Chief Operations Officer
- Lisa Burquest, Chief People Officer
- Alistair Hartley, Chief Transformation Officer
- Paul Jones, Chief Customer and Digital Officer
- John MacLeod, Chief Commercial Officer (retiring)
- David Marr, Chief Financial Officer
- Nick Rohrlach, CEO Velocity
- Susan Schneider, Chief Legal and Risk Officer
- Moksha Watts, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer

Last month, Virgin Australia announced the appointment of Paul Jones as Chief Customer and Digital Officer. Paul comes from Qantas, where he acted in a range of roles across commercial, operational and customer teams before becoming Chief Operating Officer in September 2020.

David Marr will take over from outgoing CFO, Keith Neate, who is to leave the business at the end of March after two stints totalling ten years with Virgin Australia.

“Keith started with Virgin Blue in 2003 and was a core part of the team who built a very successful airline. He left in 2011 and re-joined Virgin Australia in 2019 to help the team rebuild the balance sheet. Keith was a key part of Virgin Australia’s successful exit from administration. On behalf of everyone at Virgin I want to thank him for the important role he has played over the airline’s history,” Ms Hrdlicka said.

Mr Neate said: “With Virgin Australia successfully out of administration and after a total of almost 10 years with the Company, now is the right time for me to embark on the next phase of my career and take a bit of time out with my family. I wish Jayne and everyone at Virgin Australia all the very best.”

Chief Legal and Risk Officer Dayna Field has announced her decision to leave the business after more than 13 years at Virgin Australia. Given Dayna’s resignation, Susan Schneider, currently Virgin Australia General Manager Legal and Compliance and Joint Company Secretary, has been promoted to the role.

“I thank Dayna for the integral role she has played in the evolution of the Virgin Australia Group from Virgin Blue to Virgin Australia and through the successful administration process of the airline,” said Ms Hrdlicka.

Chief Commercial Officer John MacLeod has announced his intention to retire and will continue in the position until a replacement is found.

Chief Information Officer Cameron Stone recently resigned from the business to pursue another opportunity.

“Our executive team has played a significant role in setting us up for the future, particularly during the past 12 months as the team successfully led the airline through its most turbulent period. I thank them all for their hard work, passion, resilience and commitment to Virgin Australia’s success. The foundations they have laid during administration are vital for the next chapter in Virgin Australia’s history,” said Ms Hrdlicka.

The new executives will join the business over the next several months.

New executive biographies

Lisa Burquest will join Virgin Australia as Chief People Officer on 1 February 2021. Lisa comes to Virgin Australia from The a2 Milk Company, which she joined in November 2018 and has recently held the role of Chief People, Safety and Sustainability Officer. Lisa has over 26 years’ experience across a wide breadth of human resources roles including senior positions at BHP Billiton and Origin Energy. Prior to joining The a2 Milk Company, Lisa was Executive Manager of Human Resources at Qantas and Executive Manager of People and Communications at Jetstar between 2013 and 2018.

Alistair Hartley will join Virgin Australia as Chief Transformation Officer. Alistair has nearly two decades of experience in strategy in the aviation sector, including four years as Head of Operations Strategy and Crew Logistics at Virgin Atlantic Airways (UK) and five years with Jetstar Airways, including as Head of Strategy and Executive Manager Network, Planning and Strategy. Alistair will join Virgin Australia following more than five years at International Airlines Group (IAG) in the UK, most recently as Director of Strategy.

Paul Jones will join Virgin Australia as Chief Customer and Digital Officer, as announced in December 2020. Paul comes from Qantas where he has worked since 2011 in a variety of customer, operations and technology roles including most recently as Chief Operating Officer. Paul has worked in aviation, fast moving consumer goods and technology businesses in Australia, the UK and US. Prior to Qantas, Paul was Chief Information Officer and Vice President of Integration at Mars, based in the US.

David Marr will join Virgin Australia as Chief Financial Officer in February 2021, bringing extensive experience in the retail and consumer industries. David spent the last nine years with Woolworths Group, including almost six years as the Group's Chief Financial Officer before being appointed Chief Operating Officer in August 2019. Prior to Woolworths, David held senior executive roles at Tesco in the UK, API and the Foster's Group.

Mr Marr said: "I'm excited to be joining Virgin Australia and being part of the turnaround of one of Australia's great brands. I'm looking forward to working with the team and helping build a world-class airline."

Nick Rohrlach will join Virgin Australia as CEO Velocity. Nick comes from Jetstar Japan, where he has been Co-CEO and Executive Director since September 2017. Before this, Nick held a number of Executive positions at Jetstar, including Executive Manager of Customer and Strategy and was also responsible for the launch of Jetstar in Hong Kong. He brings a deep understanding of consumers in aviation markets throughout the region. Prior to that, Nick was at The Boston Consulting Group, working in their Sydney and Dubai offices for nearly eight years with airline and other clients across the world.

Susan Schneider has been promoted to the role of Chief Legal and Risk Officer. Susan has been with the airline since September 2012 in a variety of roles. She is currently General Manager of Legal and Compliance, responsible for the day-to-day operations of Virgin Australia's legal, compliance and privacy functions. She is also joint Company Secretary and will assume sole responsibility for that role. Prior to Virgin, she worked as a corporate lawyer specialising in mergers and acquisitions and equity capital markets in Australia and the UK.

Moksha Watts will join Virgin Australia as Chief Corporate Affairs Officer on 1 March 2021. Moksha brings deep experience across the public and private sectors in government, communications, industry and international policy. Prior to joining Virgin Australia, Moksha was Vice President, Corporate Affairs and Sustainability at the Arnott's Group. She has significant experience in the global aviation industry having held positions at Etihad Airways, Jetstar Airways and Qantas Airways.

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