Factsheet 15 – Why did a national airline start in Outback Queensland?

Quirky fact:
The entire Qantas A380 fleet is named after Australian aviation pioneers, including Nancy-Bird Walton, Charles Kingsford Smith, Reg Ansett, Hudson Fysh, Bert Hinkler, and the inventor of the black box flight recorder, David Warren.

Background Information

Qantas is the world’s second oldest commercial airline. Its red kangaroo emblem is known throughout the world as Australia’s flagship airline carrier. Deeply rooted in Outback Queensland, Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services Ltd (Qantas) was founded in Winton in 1921 by former Australian Flying Corps officers Wilmot Hudson Fysh and Paul McGinnness. They got the idea in 1919, after making a punishing 2,179 km journey from Longreach to Katherine in the Northern Territory, travelling on unmade surfaces in a Model T Ford.

In 1920, backed by wealthy grazier Fergus McMaster, the pair purchased a war surplus Avro 504K biplane. Only one year later, the fledgling airline moved operations to Longreach to be more centrally located, and in 1922 the company began its first scheduled mail and passenger services between Charleville and Cloncurry. The company expanded rapidly. With its growing fleet of aircraft the company supported the newly established Flying Doctor Service, carried mail between Darwin and Brisbane, experimented with international flights to the United Kingdom and by the end of its first decade, had not only opened its first capital city route to Brisbane, but also moved its head offices there.

Throughout the 1940s, rapid technological advancement and improved ground facilities saw massive growth within the aviation industry. Taking full advantage of developments, Qantas continued its push into new domestic and international markets. In 1947, success brought changes in ownership with the Australian Government buying all Qantas shares. By the mid-1990s after 50 years in operation, the flying kangaroo had built an international reputation for safety and service and was one of the world’s largest airlines. In 1992 Qantas bought Australian Airlines to service its Asian routes and in 2004 launched low cost domestic carrier Jetstar. The immediate success of Jetstar saw the company rethink its Asia strategy and in 2006 replace Australian Airlines with Jetstar services.

As an Australian-owned and operated company, Qantas has played an extraordinary part in Australian history. Through its services, the tyrannies of distance that face Australia, both domestically and internationally, have been largely overcome.

Australian Curriculum Links

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Wing Walk, Qantas Founders Museum
**Inquiry Questions**

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<td>How has Qantas been significant to our history?</td>
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<td>What were the key scientific discoveries and inventions that allowed air travel to develop?</td>
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**Points of Interest**

- **Qantas Founders Museum, Longreach**
  Learn the story of Qantas through this modern museum – a place of excitement and learning. Your students will take tours through 707 and 747 jets and see a blend of historical artifacts where preservation is paramount and hands-on exhibits focus on understanding history.

  Longreach Airport, Sir Hudson Fysh Drive, Longreach QLD 4730
  
  **Cost:** Fees apply  
  **Hours:** 9.00am – 5.00pm daily  
  **Phone:** (07) 4658 3737  
  **Email:** info@qfom.com.au  
  **Website:** [www.qfom.com.au](http://www.qfom.com.au)

- **Australian Stockman’s Hall of Fame, Longreach**
- **Powerhouse Museum, Longreach**
- **Australian Workers Heritage Centre, Barcaldine**
- **Waltzing Matilda Centre, Winton**
- **Qantas Hangar, Cloncurry**

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Department of Infrastructure and Transport  

The Australian National Aviation Museum  

Source: History of Aviation

**REFERENCES**

Qantas History  

Longreach Regional History  
[www.longreach.net.au/lre_history.html](http://www.longreach.net.au/lre_history.html)

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

Qantas Founders Museum  
Longreach Airport  
Sir Hudson Fysh Drive, Longreach QLD 4730  
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Email: info@qfom.com.au  