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Savage Qantas jobs cuts a devastating blow for workers and the economy

The savage job cuts at Qantas today are a devastating blow for the workers and their families and will see Australia plunge further into a jobs crisis.

ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver said the 5000 sacked Qantas workers are paying the price for poor management decisions and a Federal Government that is out to cut jobs and wages.

"It is not the fault of workers that Qantas is locked in an unprofitable bidding war with Virgin and other foreign government backed airlines, it is not the fault of workers that Jetstar Asia is not making a profit and nor is the rising global cost of fuel the fault of workers," Mr Oliver said.

"Where did the 5000 figure come from? If workers are going to bear the cost of management mistakes then there must be consultation with the workforce around how that decision was made.

"Qantas seems to have a plan for cuts instead of a plan for growth. What kind of business model is that?"

"Sacking these 5000 workers is not a viable, long term business plan; it's the easy way out for Qantas. All we have seen today is a plan for cuts, not a plan for growth and the sustainable future of the airline."

"Unions call on the Government to support these workers by providing Qantas with a debt guarantee subject to a commitment from Qantas to protect workers against job losses and on the airline demonstrating they have a sustainable long term business plan which is not reliant on a spiral of job cuts."

Mr Oliver said that unions would meet with the Qantas CEO and senior executive on Friday to seek a commitment to minimise job losses, support Qantas employees through the transition and ensure a sustainable long term business strategy is in place that promotes growth.

"Qantas workers are amongst the most productive in the country with each worker generating around \$205,000 for the airline on top of the cost of their employment.

"Half of the Qantas workforce earns on average, less than \$50,000 a year yet in the past five years Qantas has doubled its number of executives and their salaries have risen by 82%.

"Qantas' solid reputation has been built of the back of its loyal and hardworking staff, the same people that Alan Joyce called upon in December last year to stand united with him in calling on the Government to support the airline. Little did the workers know it would cost them their jobs.

"Those 17,000 Qantas workers that heeded the call deserve more from airline management and their government.

"The truth of the matter is that Qantas wants the backing of the Abbott Government and in return has sacked 5000 workers, and will undermine the job security of those that remain.

"Mr Abbott has told Qantas to get its house in order which for the Liberals, is code for sacking workers.

"They did it at SPC, they've done it at Qantas and what we'll see in addition to jobs going offshore is local workers being reemployed on contracts with lower pay and less conditions – that's the Government's agenda."

Mr Oliver said Australians expect their Government to stand up and fight for jobs, not do deals with big businesses to sack their workforce.

"The Abbott Government has said their ultimate goal is to change the Qantas Sales Act and they agree that will result in jobs going offshore. Whilst other governments invest and support their national airlines, we would stand to lose our national carrier and tens of thousands more jobs.

"Make no mistake, this is a Government that is boldly and unashamedly going after workers in this country.

"At a time when unemployment is at record levels and Australians are being confronted with rising job losses every day-the Government can't just stand idly by."

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