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## Ansett: a 10 year journey by workers and unions comes to an end

Australian unions will today reflect on a 10 year journey alongside thousands of former employees of Ansett airlines to ensure they received as close to 100% of their entitlements as was possible.

The Ansett fleet was grounded by administrators on 14 September 2001, leading to the demise of the 65-year-old airline and one of the largest corporate collapses in Australian history, impacting on the lives of 15,000 employees.

From day one, unions were determined that those workers should not be left out of pocket, and worked closely with administrators KordaMentha over the past decade to extract every cent they could for the workers.

The final dividend payment was made earlier this month, bringing the average payment to 96 cents in the dollar of their entitlements. In total, employees have received \$727.5 million in 14 payments.

“The collapse of Ansett destroyed the livelihood of thousands of people, and has caused immense pain over the past decade,” said ACTU President Ged Kearney.

“This has been a long and arduous journey, not only for Ansett employees but for their unions.

“The payment of almost all of their entitlements will not ease that pain, but delivers some justice to the Ansett workforce.

“Shortly after the airline was grounded, the workers faced receiving just a fraction of what they were owed.

“The ACTU and Ansett unions worked tirelessly, both publicly and behind-the-scenes, to ensure the workers were not shortchanged. That included making sure employees were at the front of the queue of creditors, and seeking the administrators realised every possible cent in asset sales and that was paid to the employees.

“No workers should have to go through the same long ordeal as those at Ansett, just to receive what is rightfully their money.”

Ms Kearney said the Ansett collapse had highlighted deficiencies in the General Employee Entitlements and Redundancy Scheme (GEERS), most of which have now been rectified by the Gillard Government’s Fair Entitlements Guarantee. It means 97 per cent of eligible workers will receive all the redundancy pay they are owed because of the removal of a cap on redundancy payments at 16 weeks.

“These changes have been in place since January, but need to be enshrined in legislation so that no future government can take them away, and workers are not left in the lurch again,” Ms Kearney said.

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