

Monday, 31 October 2011

Unions welcome Fair Work Australia decision; now Joyce must get the planes back into the air

Qantas must immediately resume flying its planes following Fair Work Australia's decision early this morning to terminate the airline's industrial action, says the ACTU.

ACTU Secretary Jeff Lawrence said Qantas CEO Alan Joyce now had no excuse not to restart all services after his extraordinary and pre-meditated decision to ground the entire Australian fleet on Saturday afternoon.

Mr Lawrence said Qantas employees would turn up for work today ready to do whatever was necessary to get the planes back in the air. He welcomed the government intervention which had been the circuit breaker in the dispute, and said the next priority was to resume negotiations in a spirit of reconciliation.

"This decision by Fair Work Australia removes any reason for Qantas to ground its planes," he said. "The tribunal has sheeted home to Alan Joyce full responsibility for the actions which caused massive disruption to the travel plans of thousands of Australians and the economy.

"The decision means Qantas must negotiate about the legitimate claims over job security and outsourcing unions have been pursuing for 15 months. This is a sensible decision by the bench.

"It is a pity it took government intervention to force management back to the bargaining table after such needless disruption. But it now means we can get back to negotiating in good faith, as unions have been seeking to do for weeks.

"But Australians have a right to ask: what did Alan Joyce achieve with this decision to ground the fleet? Qantas has made headlines around the world for all the wrong reasons due to this management action. The damage to the brand is immeasurable.

"Thousands of passengers around Australia have been stranded because of Mr Joyce's action. And Qantas' entire workforce are now fearful about their future. And Qantas has failed in its meanspirited attempt to lock out workers pursuing legitimate industrial claims. Did Mr Joyce ever consider the innocent bystanders who would be affected by his action?

"But despite their shock and dismay at what Mr Joyce has done, Qantas workers have performed magnificently in the face of enormous pressure, and we pay tribute to them.

"It needs to be repeated that workers at Qantas are simply seeking to negotiate new pay and conditions, and some guarantees from management about job security. But bargaining at Qantas had broken down because of management's refusal to negotiate.

"Our immediate priority now is to work with management to get the planes back in the air, but then we will approach negotiations in a genuine spirit of conciliation and expect Qantas management to do the same.

"The key issue for negotiation is the future of Qantas jobs in Australia, and there must be a continuing role for the government during these talks to ensure job security."

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