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Abbott has a choice: save or sack Qantas workers

Tony Abbott has a clear choice to make when Cabinet meets to discuss the future of Qantas tomorrow - save Qantas workers, or open the gates to sack even more of them.

ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver said Qantas workers are already unsure if their jobs are safe following Alan Joyce's decision to sack 5000 workers and are now wondering if the Government will step in to secure their jobs.

"Tony Abbott can be the Prime Minister he said he would be and stick up for jobs by providing Qantas with a debt guarantee," Mr Oliver said.

"The alternative is that Tony Abbott can deny Qantas a debt guarantee, throw the national airline into further turmoil and uncertainty and open the gates for Alan Joyce to sack even more workers.

"Australia is in the midst of a jobs crisis and it's time the Prime Minister put his money where his mouth is and support Australian jobs.

"It is appalling that the Abbott Government has said that their ultimate goal is to change the Qantas Sales Act which they acknowledge will result in jobs going offshore.

"Unions call on the Abbott 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 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.

"Workers want to know how Qantas decided to sack 5000 workers. Where did that figure come from?

"There has been zero consultation from Qantas and all they've got is a plan for cuts instead of a plan for growth. What kind of business model is that?

"Unions are seeking to work constructively with Qantas and we'll keep doing that but we're not satisfied with the response from Alan Joyce and Qantas management so far.

"Qantas has rejected a request for an independent review, wants to cut 5000 jobs even though they can't identify where they will come from, rejected considerations of alternatives to save costs in order to minimise jobs losses and have failed to give any undertaking on job security for those remaining. This isn't good enough."

Mr Oliver said it was clear that to get the backing of the of the Abbott Government, Alan Joyce did the bidding of Tony Abbott and sacked 5000 workers but has so far got nothing in return.

“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.

"Whilst other governments invest and support their national airlines, Australia stands to lose our national carrier and tens of thousands more jobs."

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