

Qantas to pay \$21k to illegally stood down worker

Today, Qantas agreed to pay \$21,000 in compensation to former health and safety representative Theo Seremetidis for being unlawfully stood down after he raised concerns about worker safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The compensation order by the District Court of NSW includes \$6,000 for economic loss and \$15,000 for non-economic loss. The order follows charges made by the NSW safety regulator against Qantas for the targeting and standing down of a trained health and safety representative fulfilling his legal duties under the Work Health and Safety Act.

An investigation by SafeWork NSW was prompted by concerns raised by the Transport Workers Union, which revealed the unsafe practices within Qantas. This included assigning workers to clean planes arriving from COVID hotspots without adequate personal protective equipment, COVID-safe training, or proper disinfectant measures – for example, relying only on water and a single rag to clean multiple tray tables.

The District Court of NSW is yet to decide the penalty figure that will be imposed on Qantas.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary Liam O'Brien:

“Theo is an inspiration to health and safety representatives across Australia. Thanks to the support of the Transport Workers Union, Theo’s case shone a light on the valuable role that HSRs play in keeping everyone safe at work.

“This is a win for workers’ rights and safety advocacy. When corporations like Qantas ignore the safety concerns of workers and their representatives, people get hurt and their wellbeing suffers. HSRs are some of the unsung heroes of our workplaces.”

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