



A•S•U

Australian Services Union
www.qld.asu.net.au

media release

for immediate release

19/11/07

Attention: Chief of Staff / News Editor

QANTAS UNDERSTAFFING AT BRISBANE AIRPORT

On Friday, ASU Secretary Julie Bignell called for an urgent audit of health and safety arrangements at Brisbane Airport by authorities. Today, it was reported to the union that at least 4 staff from Brisbane Airport had been sent to Sydney Airport to alleviate staff shortages there. "I hope that's not true. If it is true, Qantas still haven't got the message that they need to do something about the Brisbane situation now, not later", said Julie. Qantas Staff at Brisbane Airport remain in the dark about how chronic understaffing is to be addressed. Whilst Qantas representatives have been quoted promising several differing figures in the media, no formal announcement has been forthcoming from the extremely profitable airline, despite high levels of public complaints.

Despite extensive discussions with the state watchdog, Workplace Health & Safety Queensland for nearly 2 years about their concerns for Qantas staff at Brisbane Airport, but no action had been taken by the Inspectors to make Qantas deal with the understaffing and high level of abuse from frustrated passengers.

WHSQ is complicit in allowing this situation to deteriorate even further. They have known about the disgraceful staffing levels for a very long time and they have entered into secret deals with Qantas to avoid prosecutions. Staffing levels are less than what they were a year ago, passenger numbers are up, and WHSQ continues to sit on their hands, said Julie.

The situation is equally unsafe for passengers who have to deal with incredible congestion when they arrive to check in at peak times. When problems occur, like a medical emergency, there aren't enough staff to cope with it, the staff who are there are not trained to deal with it, and there is no equipment like oxygen or defibrillators available on site. No staff, no training, no equipment.

What we've seen so far this week in response to the death of an 80 year old woman waiting in a long queue to check in, is a great deal of buck-passing between Qantas and Brisbane Airport Corporation about who is responsible for ensuring staff and public safety. WHSQ is once again missing in action, and we are still left with the question . why is this situation allowed to continue in the face of massive evidence that both the staff and the public are suffering?

The union believes that the police presence at the airport should be reviewed in light of the understaffing and the lead-up to Christmas. The public can also help to get the message across to Qantas by going to our web-site, maintainthestandards.com.au. As paying customers, they should expect better from a company that is on track for a billion dollar profit this financial year, said Julie.

For comment: Julie Bignell, ASU Secretary 0404 820 627

The Australian Services Union (Clerical and Administrative Branch) represents workers in the clerical, administrative and call centre industries across both the public and private sectors throughout central and southern Queensland