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# Media Release

**for immediate release**

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**Attention: Chief of Staff / News Editor**

## UNION SLAMS QANTAS HEALTH AFTER SERIOUS ACCIDENT

Chronic understaffing at Brisbane Airport has led to a serious accident yesterday according to Secretary of the Australian Services Union Julie Bignell.

A Supervisor fell from an Aerobridge used to board passengers on to planes and was found by staff lying on the tarmac with serious head injuries. The employee is now in hospital. It is believed that the staff member was performing the function which are usually undertaken by a Seat Allocator, however serious understaffing meant that no Seat Allocator had been assigned to the task yesterday.

Ms Bignell said “We have been warning both Qantas and the Division of Workplace Health & Safety for a very long time now that the chronic understaffing and poor rostering needed to be addressed before a serious incident occurred. To date, Qantas has refused to acknowledge the problem, and Inspectors from the Division have been extremely slow in responding to the situation, despite our increasingly desperate pleas for them to get involved. Who else needs to be hurt before something is done?”

Both terminals at Brisbane Airport are severely understaffed, with the Domestic terminal the worst affected. With school holidays starting today, it is evident that the situation is about to get much worse. Regular passengers will already be aware of the long queues at the airport. We estimate currently the average wait is 40 – 60 minutes after electronic check-in to the Bag Drop at Domestic, and up to 2 hours at the International terminal. The incidence of passengers missing flights due to the long wait to check baggage has increased significantly in the last year, and the “half hour before departure rule” at Domestic means that you can check in but still fail to board your flight”.

Ms Bignell also stated that Qantas is reviewing its “call forward” policy, with means that passengers during peak periods currently get called forward in the queue to check in immediately to avoid missing their flight. It is expected that this policy is to be scrapped, meaning even more irate passengers will miss their flights.

“It’s a diabolical situation for the staff, some of whom are so fatigued by the workload and rostering that they’re fainting at their stations. They are regularly abused by frustrated passengers, and some have even been hit by flying objects thrown at them.

Last Christmas, we believe about a dozen check-in staff broke down and took stress leave. Since then the number of staff appears to have decreased by 40 or 50, with an annual increase of passengers of around 10%. Qantas have refused our requests to change rostering for the remaining staff to reduce their stress and fatigue, and refuses to acknowledge the understaffing problem which is plain to see both from staff and passenger’s point of view.

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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