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# Media Release

**for immediate release**

**7/12/06**

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

## **PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT UNION SAYS GET TO AIRPORT 3 HOURS EARLY TO FLY THIS CHRISTMAS**

Secretary of the Australian Services Union Julie Bignell today issued a Public Service Announcement to the traveling public. Ms Bignell said "Both Qantas terminals at Brisbane Airport are severely understaffed, with the Domestic terminal the worst affected. With school holidays starting next Friday, 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, which 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.

The Union has referred the problem to the Qld Division of Workplace Health & Safety and is waiting for their response. Any relief at this late stage though is unlikely to benefit passengers. It's too late to fix the problem in time for school holidays and Christmas, and we recommend you get to the airport as early as possible, 2-3 hours before your flight to make sure you get on it.

We also urge the traveling public not to take out their frustrations on the staff, who are bravely battling on with minimal support or acknowledgement from the highly profitable company, currently being eyed as an excellent investment for overseas private equity companies.

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