

**Senator Glenn Sterle** (Western Australia) (16:37): I present the report of the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee on Qantas jobs, together with the *Hansard* record of proceedings and documents presented to the committee.

We have seen a fair bit of unhealthy activity within our aviation industry in Australia in the last few months. I want to allude to some alarming figures. On 27 February of this year Qantas Airways Limited announced an underlying loss of no less than \$252 million before tax and a statutory loss after tax of \$235 million for the six months ending 31 December 2013. You would have to be living under a rock not to know that lately there is absolute turmoil within Qantas Airways, and I think I am free to say that.

We saw an extreme situation a couple of years ago, when I was at the Qantas AGM in Sydney, when the board, the CEO and the chairman all awarded themselves significant pay rises on the Friday afternoon, and then about 27 hours later the CEO came out, with the endorsement of the chairman, with a notification that he would ground our national carrier 48 hours later because of the threat of Qantas pilots wearing red ties. It was absolute union turmoil, and how dare the Transport Workers Union have two 20-minute stoppages, or something like that. Since then the cost to the nation cannot be measured by that irresponsible activity from Mr Joyce, ably supported by Mr Leigh Clifford, the chairman, and by all the board members, who in my humble opinion were absolutely guilty of that same crime upon our nation.

To think that people, who were heading for funerals, weddings and significant events around the country, were grounded with absolutely no forewarning. To think that people in the United States were leaving LAX, were pushed out—and this was reported by the pilots—off the air bridge and all of a sudden were returned with no notification, unloaded off the plane and told, 'Sorry, you're not going back to Australia. We don't know how long this is going to last.' Anyway, we have had Mr Alan Joyce from Qantas Airways storm-trooping the hallways of this fantastic building, snivelling up to members of the opposition and wanting all the help from the government to pull him out of the mire because of some absolutely disgraceful business decisions taken by him and the board.

Time does not permit me to go into how I really feel. The committee had a hearing, which was held in Sydney, and had representation from a number of people. Mr Joyce from Qantas Airways and Mr Gareth Evans, the CFO from Qantas Airways were there. There was representation from Miss Linda White, Assistant National Secretary of the Australian Services Union, whose members are absolutely panicking because they do not know if their jobs are going. We also had Mr Tony Sheldon from the TWU as well as others. What I have to absolutely focus on is that Qantas's answer to the mire they have put this company in, to drive the shares through the floor, to put absolute fear into the hearts of the workers, was to announce the loss of 5,000 Australian jobs. But, wait, there is more. When I asked Mr Joyce at the hearing, 'Could you guarantee that there would be no more jobs lost, Mr Joyce, Australian jobs, to offshore, or overseas, or to making full-time employees part-time?' he could give me no guarantee. He could give the committee absolutely no guarantee.

Madam Acting Deputy President Boyce, time is against me. I want to thank the submitters, I want to thank the senators who were with me on that day of the hearing and who ably supported our inquiry. I also want to thank those who appeared before us. I want to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary of the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee, Mr Tim Watling, ably backed up by his crew and their fantastic work. I will have a lot more to say on this. I will have a lot more to say on Qantas. I will have a lot more to say about my thoughts on the management of Qantas Airways over the last five or seven years.