

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**13/2/10**

**ACTU PRESIDENT SHARAN BURROW  
TWU NATIONAL SECRETARY TONY SHELDON**

## **UNIONS TELL QANTAS: FIX SEX-DISCRIMINATION FIASCO NOW**

The Transport Workers Union has filed an application for a general protections dispute with Fair Work Australia that seeks to reverse a recent decision by Qantas to bar all women from 47 new permanent positions created at Sydney Airport.

Qantas recently replaced 67 temporary positions with 47 permanent staff after it merged its cabin cleaning and ground handling operations at its international division.

The TWU will argue that Qantas indirectly and directly discriminated against the 14 sacked female employees because Qantas froze all the women out from retraining while male employees were offered that opportunity, and subsequently hired.

The ACTU has voiced its support for the TWU's application.

"I've been working faithfully for Qantas," sacked worker Jessica Wang said. "We thought we would be rewarded with a permanent job, Qantas has slammed the door on us."

TWU National Secretary Tony Sheldon said the move illustrated a cascading culture of impunity in Qantas.

"Where is the accountability at our national airline? The airline's growing culture is one where they believe they are not accountable to the law, not accountable to employees, not accountable to passengers, and not accountable to shareholders.

"Qantas is running a bubblegum HR operation: employees are chewed up and spat out.

"These fourteen women, these breadwinners for Australian families, are bravely standing up for women at Qantas and every woman in Australia.

"The Australian community will not tolerate their mothers and sisters and daughters being thrown on the scrap heap simply because they are women.

"In denying justice to these women, our national airline stands condemned before the Australian community."

ACTU President Sharan Burrow said the peak union body backed the TWU's case.

"Women face considerable barriers to greater participation in the workforce," ACTU President Sharan Burrow said.

"The union movement is committed to structural changes to remove these obstacles, such as better childcare, flexible working arrangements and pay equity.

"But employers must lift their game, and the behaviour of Qantas is disgraceful.

**[CONTINUES]**

“We are steadfastly committed to ensuring that all forms of discrimination at work are eliminated.

“Qantas is an Australian icon, and I expect them to play a lead role in providing a workplace that is free from discrimination.

“The new Fair Work Act provides for the fast resolution of this kind of dispute and I expect the independent umpire take a hard stand on this kind of outdated behaviour.

“If the CEO isn’t prepared to step in and ensure some common sense in this matter then the independent umpire should ensure that these women get a fair go.”

**ENDS**

Note for journalists: Jessica Wang is one of the 14 sacked employees whose case is being brought before Fair Work Australia. None of the sacked women were offered opportunities to retrain or transfer to other positions whilst male employees were. Qantas’ action has placed a severe financial burden on Ms Wang and her colleagues.

**Media Contact (Tony Sheldon): Seth Tenkate 0408 463 199**