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National Secretary  
**Michael Kaine**

1 February 2020

Alan Joyce  
CEO  
Qantas Airways Limited

**By email**

**Re: Serious Risk to Health and Safety of your Workforce as a Result of the Coronavirus**

Dear Alan

I refer to the above. As you are aware, I outlined the concerns of our members in correspondence to you on 30 January 2020 and as a result a meeting was arranged and attended by various Qantas and TWU representatives, including two TWU Delegates representing Qantas employees, on 31 January 2020.

Yesterday the TWU called on the Federal Government to immediately suspend all incoming flights from China to Australia in order to prevent the further spread of the coronavirus. We note that today the US has begun banning entry for people travelling from China and that the Queensland Government has also echoed our call for a ban on flights from China. We note that Qantas has also now suspended some flights for operational reasons.

Our call was not one taken lightly. However, following extensive consultation with our rank-and-file membership and elected leadership of the union we came to this view based on, among other considerations:

- The declaration of an emergency of international concern by the World Health Organisation for only the sixth time in history;
- The fact that the coronavirus has already spread to at least 21 countries including Australia;
- As at time of writing around 10,000 cases have been confirmed worldwide with tragically over 250 deaths;
- Every part of China now has cases of the coronavirus;
- Person to person spread of the coronavirus has now been confirmed;
- Air travel is the most efficient means to spread the virus;
- Australia is in a unique position as an island nation to have the capacity to suspend air travel and thus greatly minimise the risk of further spread;
- The advice regarding the coronavirus continues to change as more information is known, for instance the fact that earlier this week medical advice was that it was unlikely to spread unless a person was showing symptoms to the advice being updated a day later that the virus could spread before symptoms became apparent;
- Other major airlines, such as British Airways, have suspended flights; and
- Russia has closed its border with China and Hong Kong has been effectively isolated from China.

Most importantly our members across the aviation industry, which includes cabin crew, fleet presentation, ground crew, guest services, catering, transport and security among others, are at the frontline dealing with passengers every day. Their health and safety must be the primary concern of both of our organisations.

On behalf of our thousands of members across the aviation industry, this is why we yesterday called on the Australian Government to immediately suspend all incoming flights from China other than the Wuhan flight bringing stranded Australians home.

## **Right to Cease Unsafe Work Due to a Serious Risk to the Health and Safety of your Workers**

It is critical that the Qantas Group respects the decision of any worker who believes that servicing an inbound plane from China poses a serious risk to their health and safety (and in this case that of their family and friends) and as such elects to immediately cease work. This right extends to any worker who has a known or reasonable concern that a person carrying the coronavirus was on board any plane.

To make it clear, the TWU will stand by the decision of any worker who elects to make this eminently reasonable decision. Should any action be taken against any worker who elects to exercise this right we will vigorously defend them.

### **Threats Against Workers**

I have been made aware of an extremely disturbing direction that was issued to three workers who elected not to board an aircraft which had arrived at Sydney Airport from Beijing due to their concern about contracting the coronavirus. These workers were given letter that, amongst other things, stated:

*'It is important that you are aware that should you fail to comply with this direction, this may result in disciplinary action being taken against you, up to and including termination of your employment.'*

The letter repeatedly states that the risk to workers was '*negligible*' despite it being issued on the same day that the World Health Organisation declared the coronavirus an emergency of international concern for only the sixth time in history.

Advice regarding the coronavirus continues to evolve. A short time ago it was unclear whether person to person contact spread the virus. This has now been confirmed. Initial advice was that only a person with active symptoms could spread the virus. It has now been confirmed that a person without symptoms can spread the virus.

Under these circumstances, how such a letter could be issued is beyond belief and as such any such letters issued must be immediately withdrawn.

### **Summary**

In finishing, we are asking that Qantas:

- Respects the decision of any worker to refuse to service any aircraft arriving from China or any aircraft known or where there is a reasonable concern that a person on board has the coronavirus; and
- Any letters directing workers to service planes from China and threatening their employment if they refuse to do so are immediately withdrawn. I look forward to your response as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely



**Michael Kaine**  
**TWU National Secretary**