



**SAFE &
SECURE
SKIES**

TWU
Carrying Australia

The urgent case for change in aviation

TRANSPORT WORKERS' UNION OF AUSTRALIA



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TRANSPORT
WORKERS
UNION



**SAFE &
SECURE
SKIES**



TWU
Carrying Australia

Aviation: an industry in crisis

The TWU is calling on all stakeholders in Australian aviation – the federal government, regulators, airports and airlines– to invest in a long-term solution to stabilise Australia’s aviation sector prioritising the interests of workers and the broader community.

Aviation is highly vulnerable to "black swan" events—such as global health emergencies, volcanic eruptions, terrorism threats, and increasingly, climate change-related disruptions.

Intensifying extreme weather conditions, including prolonged rain spells, heatwaves, and storms, are causing more frequent flight delays, cancellations, and reduced operational reliability across the industry. Without proper regulation, workers and passengers face the brunt of such disruptions.

The COVID-19 pandemic came as a huge shock to the aviation industry worldwide. But in Australia, it exacerbated the crises that had been building for years.

Long before the pandemic, for over two-decades, Qantas began gaming the system through labour arbitrage – replacing secure, well-paid jobs with outsourced, casual, or lower-paid positions. This boosted profits but created a race-to-the-bottom approach, with businesses competing for low-cost contracts— leaving workers with poor wages and customers with reduced service quality.

The pandemic exposed and intensified systemic issues across the aviation industry, triggering a crisis that continues to reverberate. Over 25,000 skilled aviation workers were forced out of their jobs, including 1,800 illegally outsourced. This hollowed out the industry, leaving airlines scrambling to rehire and retrain. As demand surged, the sector buckled under high safety issues, illegal activities, and collapsing passenger standards became widespread. Regional and business communities faced huge issues, with disrupted services and economic fallout.

The Morrison Government’s failure to provide adequate financial support for aviation workers, particularly those employed by foreign-owned service providers like dnata and SNP Security, further compounded the crisis.

For two decades, Qantas exploited employment practices, created a hyper-competitive market, and dominated it. This fuelled a boom-and-bust cycle that benefitted only executives. Virgin Australia entered administration and TigerAir collapsed. Despite its market dominance, Qantas repeatedly asked for billions in government bailouts, leaving piling costs for the government while the airline prioritised executive bonuses.

Since the pandemic, the Albanese government has taken important first steps to improve the industry. Same Job, Same Pay laws and multi-employer bargaining is helping tackle the fragmented employment structures that we see in aviation today. Albanese government’s decision to buy Rex if no buyer is found is also a huge first step in stabilising this industry. But real reform in aviation needs multi-stakeholder collaboration.

While tackling structural issues, another urgent challenge facing aviation today is its significant contribution to carbon emissions. As one of the highest-emitting industries, aviation must transition to net zero— but this cannot be achieved in isolation.

All stakeholders, including airlines, government, industry bodies, and communities, must work together to drive innovation and accountability. The path ahead is complex, and Australian aviation is currently underprepared for the scale of transformation required. Without a coordinated approach we risk falling further behind.

The TWU’s proposal for a Safe and Secure Skies Commission aims to address structural issues in the industry by establishing industry-wide standards that prevent unfair labour arbitrage, prioritises regional communities and enhances the flying experience for the travelling public. The Commission is a collaborative model to bring industry together with an independent decision-maker to navigate inevitable challenges ahead.

Impact of the pandemic



25,000+ job losses

The exodus of an estimated 25,000 skilled workers during the pandemic has led to widespread understaffing in aviation, with significant effects on the travelling public.

By the end of 2020, more than 13,500 job losses had been announced in aviation, including the roughly 2500 outsourced at Qantas and Jetstar.

Expanding to broader airport roles, CEO Geoff Culbert said 15,000 jobs had been lost at Sydney Airport throughout the pandemic.



Exclusion from JobKeeper

The Morrison Government's sudden reversal of JobKeeper wage subsidies to foreign-Government owned companies like dnata and SNP Security made it impossible for thousands of workers to sustain long stand-downs without support or income. As a result, many workers were forced to leave their jobs to survive. Some lost their homes, and some saw their marriages collapse.

By October 2020, the announcement of 1,000 redundancies gave short-term reprieve to struggling Dnata workers on unpaid stand-down.



Lack of support for Virgin

Virgin's collapse into administration following the Morrison Government's refusal to provide support led to a further 3,000 job losses as well as budget carrier Tigerair ceasing operations, removing one of the only budget options available to passengers. TWU members fought hard to gain a commitment from new owners Bain Capital to prioritise and retain jobs throughout the sale.

In Western Australia, TWU members played a key role in stabilising Virgin Australia Regional Airlines (VARA), negotiating a strong Enterprise Agreement that improved pay and conditions for staff. This helped VARA maintain reliable FIFO services in WA.

Qantas outsourcing & ghost flight scandal

Qantas' axing of 9,800 workers disproportionately affected experienced and skilled workers, leading to a significant loss of operational capacity. This had a direct impact on passenger experience with domestic flight capacity reduced by 15% and passengers experiencing widespread delays, cancellations, and baggage issues.

At the same time, Qantas cheated the Australian public by selling tickets for over 8,000 flights that had already been cancelled, affecting nearly one million people.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) launched legal action in August 2023, alleging breaches of Australian Consumer Law, and was ordered to pay \$100 million in penalties..

The ACCC described Qantas' behaviour as "egregious and unacceptable," highlighting the airline's failure to uphold basic consumer rights.

Loss of skilled workers

More than 200 pilots vacated, leaving scarcely any with check and training duties authorised by CASA.

In June 2022, Sydney airport held a jobs fair in an attempt to fill 5,000 vacancies, but only succeeded in recruiting half the workers. A second attempt in September aimed to fill a further 4,000 vacancies.

At one stage, Qantas executives were asked to work as baggage handlers as the airline attempted to tackle the shortage brought on by its illegal outsourcing of its entire ground handling operations.

Following the refusal to reinstate illegally sacked Qantas workers, ground handling labour providers struggled to recruit workers into the lower paid and less secure jobs. Swissport resorted to flying workers from interstate into Sydney and Melbourne to cover enormous gaps, and began paying workers \$50 a day just to show up, showing that it recognised low pay was a disincentive.



The current crisis in aviation

After decades of fragmentation, Australia's aviation industry is grappling with a crisis marked by deteriorating labour standards and inadequate service quality for the travelling public.

As aviation workers experience understaffing, outdated equipment, and low wages, passengers face frequent delays, lost baggage, overcrowded terminals, and growing safety concerns.

High turnover – declining expertise of aviation workers

60%

say their safety is compromised by high turnover of staff

58%

of workers have been in the industry for less than five years, meaning fewer experienced personnel are available in critical moments



Workers are being pushed to operate in unsafe conditions, often exhausted and under intense pressure, making it a constant struggle to perform effectively and uphold customer experience.

A recent TWU survey of over 2000 aviation workers revealed that conditions at airports have hit a tipping point. Poor pay and conditions are driving skilled workers out of the industry, compromising the safety of workers as well as passengers.

Passenger safety

71%

think passenger safety is compromised by worker fatigue

65%

of cabin crew have dealt with passengers presenting risks to the public

“
I was the only person on board able to assess a medical emergency when managers were unsure how to proceed. There are too few crew members with the experience to respond quickly to serious emergencies





Friend lost his finger to a tug's tow hook, another greatly damaged his feet when they got crushed under a cargo loader

Worker safety

87%

of workers reporting being rushed or pressured to work unsafely

1 in 2

have been injured on the job



My pregnancy is high risk and I have made it known to management but feel pressured to do the full scope of the role which could put my baby at risk

Cost-cutting

Only 1 in 4

ground workers say they have up-to-date equipment

Only 1 in 5

aviation workers say they have adequate staffing numbers



Old aeroplanes mean lots of tech problems. Loss of pressurisation, engines, electrical systems and navigation systems are par for the course

Low pay and conditions

1 in 3

have had to take additional jobs just to make ends meet

92%

wish to stay in the aviation industry

but

75%

say they cannot continue under current pay and working conditions

swissport 

**PUT
PEOPLE
BEFORE
PROFITS**

 **TWU**
Transport Workers Union of Australia

CLAIM

AIRPORTS

AIRLINES

GOVERNMENT

swissport 



39%

**OF WORKERS
HAVE BEEN
INJURED**



 **TWU**
Transport Workers Union of Australia



The Qantas model and Alan Joyce effect

The current crisis of jobs, safety and plummeting standards for passengers has long been in the making under Alan Joyce's Qantas.

Since 2004, Qantas has systematically dismantled its directly employed workforce, shifting roles such as baggage handling, cleaning, catering, and customer service to lower-cost providers.

This approach has allowed Qantas to avoid responsibility for workers' wages and conditions, leading to widespread job insecurity and deplorable industry standards. The result has been a race to the bottom, where wages and conditions are continually eroded in the pursuit of higher corporate profits.

Over two decades, Qantas systemically splintered aviation jobs.

The fragmentation of Qantas's workforce has had a significant

cascading impact on Australian aviation, intensifying competition in an already volatile market.

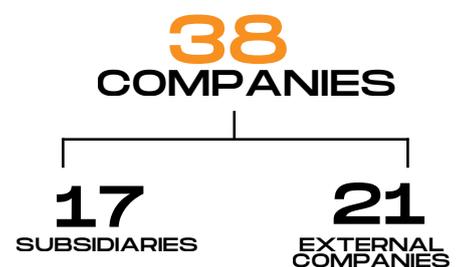
By pitting companies against one another, Qantas' strategy has contributed to aggressive cost-cutting measures across the industry.

By dividing its workforce across multiple entities, Qantas was able to reduce costs and generate substantial profit margins for itself, ultimately dominating the market. This left other airline carriers, such as Virgin and Rex, struggling to compete.

In ground operations, companies like Swissport benefited from Qantas's illegal decision to outsource 1,800 ground handling jobs. This move triggered a race to the bottom, as ground handling companies competed for low-cost contracts, undermining fair competition and driving down industry standards.

A market structure built on minimal competition, low wages, and cost-cutting not only threatens aviation workers but also compromises passenger safety.

The TWU has repeatedly warned that outsourcing and casualisation of jobs put workers under intense pressure, and that workers lacking job security are more likely to make critical mistakes.



Qantas employs workers under a total of 38 separate subsidiaries and external companies

Qantas timeline

For decades Qantas has received taxpayer-funded handouts when it has struggled, then rewarded executives with millions when it recovers. This model disadvantages workers with job cuts and wage freezes, as well as the travelling public which faces a decline in standards as a result.

1993 - TAXPAYER HANDOUTS

The Australian government pumps \$1.35 billion into Qantas (the 2020 equivalent of \$3.26 billion) to recapitalise ahead of its public float

2003 - 1400 JOB CUTS

In the midst of the SARS epidemic, and following events like the September 11 2001 terrorist attacks and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Qantas makes 1000 redundancies, with a further 400 job losses to attrition—despite record \$353 million profit

2004 - WORKFORCE FRAGMENTATION

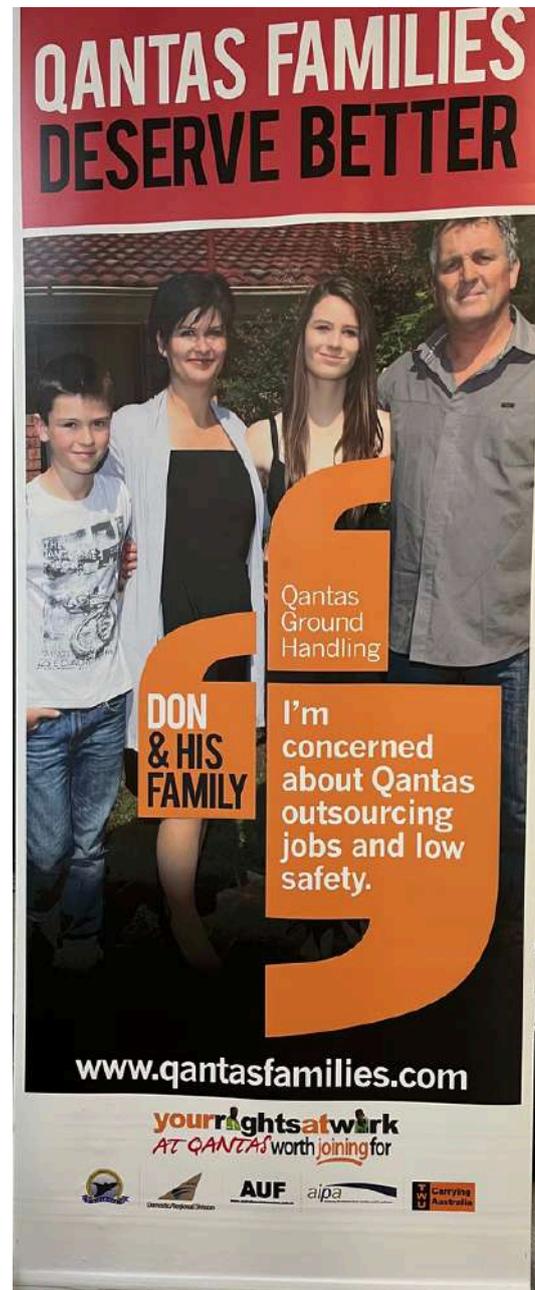
As CEO of Jetstar, Alan Joyce sets up 'Express Ground Handling' to employ workers on **lower pay and conditions** for ground handling on Jetstar aircraft

2008 - FURTHER FRAGMENTATION

As CEO of Qantas Group, Alan Joyce sets up 'Qantas Ground Services' (QGS) to employ part-time workers on lower pay and conditions to perform the same duties as Qantas Airways Limited (QAL) workers.

Qantas vows never to hire another worker under the original QAL enterprise agreement.

This saw 5000 job losses.



Qantas workers protest against the airline creating a new subsidiary with lower pay and conditions

2011 – FLEET GROUNDING

By grounding the entire worldwide fleet, Alan Joyce puts a stop to protected industrial action over job security from QAL workers.

This action aimed at denying workers the ability to exercise their legal rights was an early example of the disproportionate power held and deployed by Qantas.



ABC 29 Oct 2011

Qantas grounds entire fleet

2014 – 5000 JOB CUTS

After a record statutory loss of \$2.8 billion, due largely to overdue write-downs of its ageing fleet, Qantas cuts 5000 jobs

2013-2014– SEEKS FURTHER TAXPAYER HANDOUTS

Qantas seeks a \$2.7 billion bailout from the Abbott Government.

CIRCA 2015 – OUTSOURCING

Qantas outsources ground handling at some of its smaller regional ports to Swissport (roughly 10% of the business).

Qantas cuts 5000 more jobs.

2020 - LARGEST TAXPAYER HANDOUTS

Qantas receives over \$2.7 billion in taxpayer handouts with no strings attached—the largest of any company in Australia

2018 - EXTRAORDINARY CEO PAY

Alan Joyce receives a pay packet of \$24 million—the highest of any CEO in Australia, and the highest aviation CEO in the world



2020 - ILLEGAL OUTSOURCING

Qantas announces its rejection of workers' EY-supported in-house bid and outsources all ground handling and fleet presentation operations, except QLink regional work in Sydney (roughly 90% of the business).

2021-2025 - COURT RULINGS

Four Federal Court judges, followed by seven High Court judges, unanimously agree that the 2020 outsourcing of over 1800 workers was unlawful for its motivations to avoid collective bargaining and protected industrial action.

Qantas agrees to a fund of \$121 million to affected workers. It is also ordered to pay a further \$90 million as a penalty, with \$50 million to the Transport Workers' Union and \$40 million still to be determined.

2025

Qantas now employs workers across 38 different subsidiaries and external companies. The TWU is using laws passed by the Federal Government like Same Job Same Pay and multi-employer bargaining to rebuild jobs that have been decimated under this strategy, but there needs to be a broader oversight to ensure decent jobs remain the cornerstone of aviation.



Swissport case study

Swissport, an international ground handling company, has a reputation for securing low-cost contracts while paying its workers the lowest wages in the industry.

International reputation

Internationally, the company has been repeatedly exposed for dangerous working conditions and prioritising cost-cutting over safety. In 2023, the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health (National OSHA) in the U.S. named Swissport one of the "Dirty Dozen" companies in the States.

Since 2013, Swissport has been cited for at least 35 safety violations by the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

"Workers [were] exposed to raw feces [sic] and other unsafe conditions."

US NATIONAL OSHA

Model brought to Australia

In Australia, Swissport employs around 3,000 workers in ground-handling services. Its operations grew by over 300% in just four years, largely benefiting from Qantas' outsourcing decisions.

Swissport has aggressively underbid competitors like dnata and Menzies, securing low-cost contracts with airlines and airports. This race-to-the-bottom strategy has driven down industry standards, reduced wages, and increased serious safety risks for workers.

"There has been an increase of incidents where firearms have been incorrectly offloaded onto the arrivals carousel, rather than delivered to Baggage Services...effectively allowing anyone to pick the item up and walk away."

SWISSPORT MEMO TO WORKERS

Since 2017, the TWU has been exposing the serious safety crisis unfolding at Swissport, including:

- ➔ Workers forced to sleep at airports between split shifts
- ➔ Firearms left unattended at airport baggage carousels
- ➔ Passenger stairs removed while passenger door was open
- ➔ Cargo doors left open
- ➔ Plane load imbalances

Swissport itself has acknowledged its chronic under-staffing:

*"The business is acutely aware that our human resource levels are simply **not at a sustainable level** to meet the ongoing demand from the airlines. If you ever find yourself in a situation where you feel the need to cut corners or rush, please take a moment and focus on completing one task at a time, safely."*



Swissport worker survey reveals **crisis conditions**

A survey of around 300 Swissport workers, around 10% of the workforce, shows a safety crisis ongoing at our airports fuelled by understaffing and cost-cutting by clients like Qantas.

High turnover

1 IN 3 have worked at Swissport for less than a year

Frequent injuries

39% have been injured on the job

Unsafe pressures

73% are pressured to work unsafely **71%** say they're under-staffed

"Corners are being cut so we can get aircraft out in time."

Equipment risks

60% say they have outdated equipment

Safety issues ignored

1 IN 2 say their safety concerns are not resolved

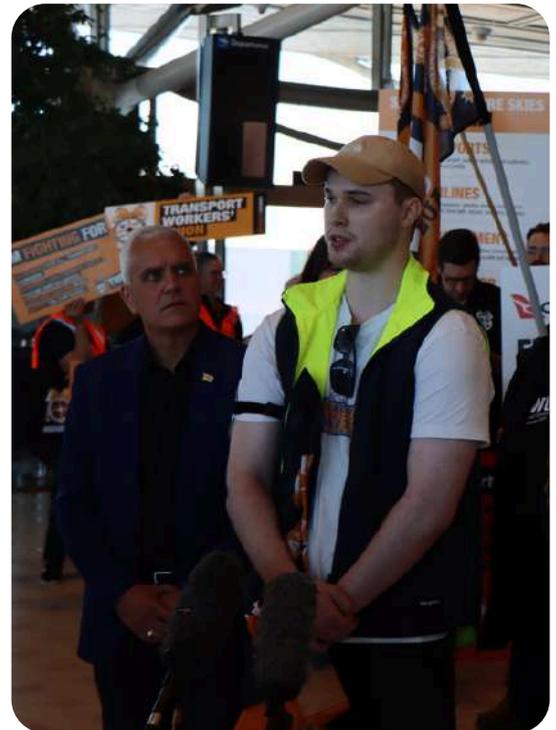
"Reports get ignored—even when I've reported uncontrollable tugs or a tug that was about to catch fire and giving us massive headaches because of oil leaks."

Brisbane Swissport worker almost **loses leg**

On Christmas Eve in 2024, a 21-year-old Swissport worker almost lost his leg when it was dragged under a baggage tug.

He sustained life-altering lower leg injuries and following the event, others were directed to continue working by Swissport managers.

In risk assessments Swissport has said its controls for this type of incident are "totally effective."



Swissport is a company that has demonstrated constantly that they prefer schedule over safety.

They've proven that they prefer young workers that are new to the workforce, and they constantly abuse them.

I've witnessed several people fainting, needing medical care and ambulances on the job.

RYAN CRESDEE, FORMER SWISSPORT WORKER

Airline collapses

The pursuit of short-term profits by executives of privately-owned airlines and airports has squeezed the margins of other airlines operating in Australia, leaving little room for the entrance of other airlines.

This predatory competition is the key reason for a history of airline collapses in Australia. Each time an airline entered administration or shut down, it isn't just the company that suffers—the consequences were also borne by passengers and workers alike.

Passengers are left stranded with cancelled flights, often without compensation or easy alternatives. This leads to significant inconvenience, financial loss, and disrupted travel plans.

For regional communities, the impact is even more severe. It leaves entire towns without regular air service, affecting local businesses, tourism, and access to essential services.

Ansett

The collapse of Ansett in 2001 was one of the largest collapses in Australian corporate history. When Ansett was operating in Australia, it had a market dominance of almost 40% domestically.

At the time, the TWU worked closely with administrators and other unions including the ACTU to ensure workers got their entitlements—over \$700 million after a decade long fight.



15,000 job losses



Workers fought to save Ansett



Tigerair

Tigerair Australia collapsed in 2020 with no government support and no regulatory oversight. Despite attempts to establish itself as a budget airline, it faced strong competition from Jetstar and other carriers, making profitability difficult. Its parent company, Virgin Australia, also went into administration, and was forced to shut down Tiger Air due to lack of support.

During its collapse, TWU called for greater protections for workers and pushed for job security measures, urging Virgin Australia's new owners, Bain Capital, to retain as many jobs as possible.

The TWU also worked with Virgin Australia to help retain its international and regional footprint, ensuring it remained a strong second airline in the country.



In 2020 TWU members campaigned to #SaveVirgin

3,000 job losses

Bonza



The entry of Bonza was a much-needed boost for regional communities who were often either isolated or unable to afford airfares from the major carriers. When Bonza launched, passengers travelling directly from Sunshine Coast to Mackay increased from just 18 to 45,000, an increase of 250,000%.

With the Sunshine Coast a key focus of the budget airline, Bonza's collapse in 2024 came as a huge number of job losses not just from directly hired roles but with a loss of adjacent jobs in the tourism sector, food and beverage supply companies to accommodation providers.

300 direct job losses

Rex administration

Rex Airlines entered voluntary administration in July 2024 because of a cannibalistic and unregulated market that allowed Qantas to dominate at the expense of workers and passengers.

As a result, thousands of Rex workers faced stand downs, job losses and uncertainty over their future. Many had previously experienced illegal outsourcing from Qantas, as well as redundancy from the earlier Ansett collapse.

600 job losses

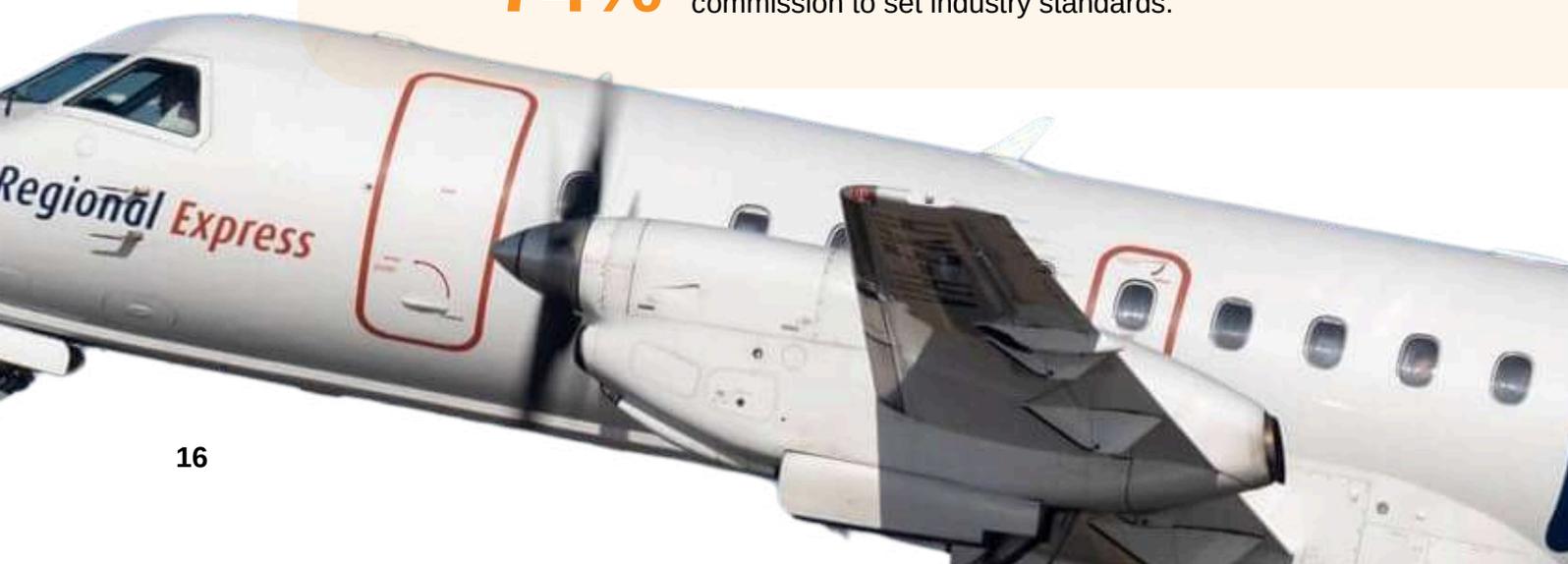
A YouGov poll commissioned in 2024 by the TWU revealed strong public support for government intervention in aviation.

YouGov poll shows strong support for saving Rex

71% of Australians backed the government stepping in to ensure Rex continues servicing critical regional routes.

75% supported the idea of the government taking an equity stake in failing companies like Rex during bailouts—up from **62%** in a 2020 YouGov poll

74% supported establishing an independent commission to set industry standards.



Impact on regional Australia

Rex's administration left a significant community of regional Australians stranded. With limited airline choices, passengers were left with no alternative but to pay excessively high fares, making air travel increasingly inaccessible and financially burdensome especially in cases of medical emergencies.

Regional businesses

This disruption also created considerable uncertainty for regional businesses, many of which rely on consistent and affordable air links for freight, workforce mobility, and access to broader markets.

Access to healthcare

Rex's routes, many of which are not flown by other carriers, are also critical when it comes to healthcare, with access to medical appointments when major cities are hours away unfeasible through other methods of transport.

Intervention from Federal Government

Just as TWU worked with Virgin Australia to bring it out of administration, the TWU also took a proactive stance in advocating for government intervention to prevent the collapse of Rex Airlines.

While the airline was struggling under a market dominated by aggressive tactics by Qantas, Rex's internal governance issues with Australian Securities and Investment Commission's legal action raised serious questions over the airline, making government intervention imperative.

Following the release of the YouGov poll and consistent calls from workers to intervene to save Rex, the Albanese government first acquired \$50 million of Rex's debt from its major creditor, PAG Asia Capital, making the government the primary secured creditor.

Later, the Federal government announced that if no suitable buyer is found, it is ready to buy Rex and operate it as a state-owned airline to ensure critical regional air services continue.



Rex serves as another case study highlighting broader instability in aviation – marked by unregulated market structures and placing short-term profits at the cost of workers and the flying public.

Declining standards for the travelling public

With declining standards in aviation, complaints to the ACCC regarding the industry have risen by nearly 200% since 2018. This is a clear indicator that customer experience at our airports has significantly dropped.

Over the 2022 Easter school holidays, airport chaos saw passengers waiting two hours to get through security, countless passengers missed flights through airport delays or cancellations, with record numbers of lost luggage.

But this combination of delays, cancellations and lost luggage had been in the making for over a decade through a Qantas-led strategy of workforce fragmentation.

2022 airport chaos

Only
63%

of Qantas, Virgin, Rex Airlines and Jetstar flights arrived on time

Up to
1 IN 10

bags were mishandled

Qantas' reputation reached rock bottom when Joyce's successor CEO Vanessa Hudson apologised to customers, claiming an "industry-wide labour shortage" was the source of the airline's woes—despite it having created the issue to begin with through over-zealous redundancies and illegal outsourcing, all while receiving the most money in taxpayer handouts out of any company in Australia.

Tackling the root cause of poor customer experience —not just the symptoms

In 2024, the TWU welcomed the Federal Government's Aviation White Paper, which recognised the need for federal intervention in a deregulated industry that has prioritised profit over people.

But with decades of systemic decline of standards in aviation, real reform cannot happen unless the workforce that keeps aviation running is supported with secure jobs, fair pay, and safe working conditions.

When Qantas faced public outrage over delays and lost luggage, the pressure was pushed onto already overworked ground staff, particularly those at outsourced companies like Swissport. Despite management acknowledging staff shortages were causing safety issues, the response was not to invest in workers but to demand more from those already stretched too thin. This cycle cannot continue.

For too long, aviation workers have borne the brunt of cost-cutting measures. The industry can only be cleaned up when strong protections for both consumers and workers are built hand in hand.

Workers are already using new industrial laws, such as multi-employer bargaining and Same Job, Same Pay, to push back against insecure, underpaid work. However, these measures alone cannot undo decades of systemic exploitation.

While the TWU supports Federal government's White Paper, aviation cannot be reformed without safe and secure jobs and industry collaboration.

Improvements in aviation with Closing Loopholes legislation

Same Job Same Pay

The Same Job Same Pay laws fought for by TWU members and passed by Albanese government is a significant first step in tackling decades long fragmentation in aviation led by Qantas.

Across the Qantas Group the airline spent the better part of two decades creating wholly-owned subsidiaries or outsourcing to labour hire to drive down wages and conditions.

Using Same Job, Same Pay laws, TWU is now working to rebuild these wage structures and is improving the pay of cabin crew and ground workers.

Jetstar cabin crew and Qantas Freight ground workers will see annual pay rises of up to \$8000 with the legislation.

Multi-employer bargaining

Along with Same Job Same Pay laws, the TWU will use multi-employer bargaining to ensure industry-wide improvements in standards, preventing companies like Swissport to compete for low-cost contracts and drive down standards.

Using these laws, the TWU is fighting structural challenges created by a two-decade long fragmentation of workforce. But a long-term regulatory system with checks and balances on job outsourcing, and contract undercutting is critical to ensure aviation jobs are protected and workers are respected.

Jetstar case study



JQD

Parent company employing cabin crew with good pay and conditions



Team Jetstar

Wholly-owned Jetstar subsidiary created to undercut conditions from JQD



Altara

Labour hire company employing cabin crew directly on the Award, with no pathways to direct employment or even payment for training



Tour East Thailand

Part-owned subsidiary at one point paying international crew just \$2.16 an hour

Until Same Job Same Pay legislation these three groups of workers were doing exactly the same job—but all on different pay and conditions.



SAFE AND SECURE SKIES CLAIM



AIRPORTS

Prioritise airport, aviation workers and customers over record profits.



AIRLINES

Ensure all workers, whether directly employed or contracted, have safe, secure, and fairly paid jobs.



GOVERNMENT

Establish a Safe and Secure Skies Commission that ensures the aviation industry is safe and sustainable.



REGULATOR

Review objectives of regulators to ensure safe outcomes for all aviation workers and the community.

The TWU's Safe and Secure Skies claim

The TWU is calling on the federal government, regulators, airports and airlines to invest in a long-term solution to stabilise Australia's aviation sector.

With aviation in crisis, the fragmented and broken structure of aviation is worsening – with no accountability for repairing the systemic issues.

The Safe and Secure Skies Commission (SSSC) provides a framework for reform by bringing key stakeholders to make binding decisions that lift standards, improve safety, and rebuild a sustainable aviation industry

Claim on airports

Australia's airports must step up and regulate fair and safe jobs, ensuring that workers and passengers are prioritised over record profits. Airports should commit to:

- Establishing service contracts that uphold worker safety and job conditions.
- Implementing airport labour standard contracts that guarantee fair pay and safe conditions for all airport workers, as seen in other global airports.
- Supporting an independent tribunal to set employment protections across the aviation supply chain, including within airports.
- Improving worker facilities, including parking, childcare, rest areas, and affordable public transport.
- Engaging aviation workers in discussions about workplace health and safety (WHS).
- Consulting with the workforce on the impact of automation, AI, and emerging technologies on aviation jobs.

Claim on airlines

Australia's airline industry must ensure that all workers in the aviation supply chain—whether directly employed or contracted—have safe, secure, and decently paid jobs. Airlines must take responsibility for ethical and sustainable employment practices by:

- Guaranteeing fair pay and decent working conditions for all workers in the supply chain.
- Ending the practice of contracting work out to the lowest bidder, which drives down wages and conditions.
- Supporting the establishment of an independent tribunal to set industry-wide employment protections.
- Ensuring Same Job/Same Pay principles apply, whether a worker is directly employed or contracted.
- Advocating for government equity stakes in airlines rather than mass bailouts that do not benefit Australian workers and communities.
- Consulting with the workforce on the future of aviation jobs, particularly regarding automation, AI, and new technologies.

Claim on regulators

Aviation regulators must be strengthened to ensure safe outcomes for all aviation workers and passengers:

- Reviewing and improving CASA's safety regulations for flight crew
- Strengthening CASA's approach to fatigue management, rosters, and working hours
- Expanding CASA's scope to include regulation of ground crew
- Enhancing engagement between regulators and aviation workers
- Conducting an industry-wide consultation with pilots, cabin crew representatives, and international aviation bodies

Claim on government

To ensure a safe, sustainable, and resilient aviation industry that serves Australian workers, businesses, and communities, the Federal Government must establish a Safe and Secure Skies Commission with the power to put in place:

EMPLOYMENT AND SAFETY STANDARDS:

- set and enforce employment and safety standards across all aviation stakeholders, including airlines and airports.

A FRAMEWORK TO MAKE CRISIS DECISIONS:

- provide decision-making guidance for the industry during crises such as pandemics, extreme weather events, and other disruptions.

WHOLE-INDUSTRY APPROACH:

- foster better collaboration and consultation across the aviation industry.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

- hold airlines and airports accountable for fair treatment of workers.

FAIR PAY AND CONDITIONS:

- implement fair pay rates and conditions industry-wide to prevent exploitation.

WORKER CONSULTATION:

- Place aviation workers at the centre of policy-making and regulatory decisions.

INDUSTRY SUSTAINABILITY

- Conduct a review of the long-term sustainability of Australia's aviation industry, ensuring economic, environmental, and social sustainability.

Building a sustainable future for Australian aviation

Australia's aviation industry must be built on principles of fairness, safety, and sustainability. By holding airlines, airports, and regulators accountable and ensuring government intervention into the industry, our claim calls for prioritising regional Australia, building safe aviation jobs with decent pay and conditions, and good standards for the travelling public.

We call on all stakeholders to commit to these reforms and work towards a future where Australian aviation remains a world leader in ethical employment, safety, and sustainability.





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