

# IPA MEDIA RELEASE

Institute of Public Affairs | Australia's leading free market think tank

Tuesday 11 October 2011

## Minister Out of Touch on Qantas: IPA

John Lloyd, the director of the Institute of Public Affairs Work Reform and Productivity Unit, today called on Fair Work Australia to suspend industrial action at Qantas for a four-month cooling off period.

Last Friday the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations addressed the Australian Labour and Employment Relations Association National Conference in Perth. He also commented on the Qantas industrial disruption.

He is reported by *Workplace Express* as saying he was very concerned about where the Qantas dispute was heading, that the relations between the parties were “very poor” and that a resolution would be “very difficult.”

The reality is that the dispute has seen death threats, damage to property, intimidation of employees not joining strike action and inflammatory comments. Such conduct has no place in Australian workplace relations. Surely the Government must deplore such conduct in the strongest terms.

The Minister also observed that job security was a central issue for the employees. He had reached this view from talking to staff on his frequent Qantas flights.

The reality is that many Australian workers are concerned about their job security. They appreciate the challenges their firms face in a very competitive world. Many workers, especially those in small business, know that strikes and bans orchestrated by unions achieve little, except to increase the pressure on future job security. Strikes should be a last resort and used sparingly.

Qantas has a strategy to achieve long term job security for its employees. It has plans for the airline to adapt to a very competitive market place and survive as a successful airline.

The right to engage contractors to meet varying work demand periods is important. Also, more flexible work practices and productivity improvements are valid business strategies.

The Government should recognise these requirements for a successful internationally competitive airline and support Qantas in pursuing these goals.

The Qantas engineers union, the Australian Licensed Aircraft Engineers Association yesterday warned people planning to travel before Christmas to look to airlines other than Qantas. This is an appalling tactic by a union representing the company's employees. It indicates that the unions are planning more disruption for the travelling public.

Fair Work Australia should suspend the industrial action for a cooling off period of four months. The Government should support such a move, but judging by the minister's comments this is unlikely.

**For Media Comment: John Lloyd, Director – Work Reform and Productivity Unit, 0417 130 634**