

Keep Qantas jobs in Australia: nationalise Qantas!

*Statement by the Communist Party
of Australia (Marxist-Leninist)
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Qantas bosses, and the big business interests behind them, may have temporarily stopped airline workers and their unions from continuing their industrial campaign in the fight for job security, protecting living standards and keeping jobs in Australia.

But their despicable tactic of grounding all domestic and international planes without advance notice, locking out workers, and treating tens of thousands of passengers and the public with complete contempt, exposed the naked face of the profit hungry corporations. Qantas' actions only served to galvanise wider public support and union movement solidarity for the Qantas workers' struggle.

Qantas manufactured the industrial crisis by grounding all planes to enable it to use provisions in the Fair Work Act to stop the unions continuing their legitimate and legal industrial action. The unions' limited industrial action was confined to a sum total of only 6-8 hours' of short stoppages by two unions over the past 9 months and during the protected bargaining period. The Pilots' Association did not even engage in brief stoppages, but its members wore red ties and made announcements to passengers explaining their concerns about outsourcing and offshoring of Qantas operations.

A strong public outrage and sympathy for Qantas unions' battles to keep jobs in Australia is growing. More calls are made to take the privatised airline back into the public hands. Spontaneous community support is spreading. A national Red Tie Day on Friday November 4 was held to show solidarity for Qantas workers, with sympathisers wearing a red tie or top.

Fair Work – an instrument of big business interests

As for Fair Work Australia, it has shown its true nature by doing precisely what the Qantas Board and other big corporations expected and terminated all legal industrial action by unions. It has exposed itself as an instrument of big business interests. In reality much of the previous Liberal government's WorkChoices is continued in Fair Work's legislation and powers.

And what about the Federal Labor government? A "true" Labor Government would have supported the unions' position before the FWA, rather than going along with the Qantas



Board's schemes to stop workers taking even limited industrial action.

Unions argued in FWA for a suspension of industrial action so as not to extinguish workers' limited, and hard fought for, right to take industrial action. So, why didn't the government support the workers' legal position represented by their unions? Then we need to ask questions about the role of the Labor Party, parliament and the courts, which are there to keep workers' struggles confined to within the limits of protecting profit making by big corporations and banks who hold and control power in Australia – the likes of multinationals Qantas, BHP-Billiton, CitiBank, Rio Tinto, and Murdoch.

How could the unions ever stop Qantas from moving the whole or even part of its operations, offshore through a restricted enterprise bargaining process in the courts? This could only be won by a bigger unions' and community campaign to keep Qantas in Australia and maintain Australian safety standards.

Who is the Qantas Board?

Alan Joyce is only the public face of the Qantas Board. He is the front man behind whom the real Qantas owners and plotters hide. That's why he was given a 71% pay rise that increased his annual salary to a mammoth \$5 million. It's dirt money, danger money.

Qantas Chairman is Leigh Clifford, the former CEO of Rio Tinto, the giant multinational that spearheaded attacks on mining workers and unions in the 1990s. Rio bosses aggressively pushed Australian Workplace Agreements (individual contracts) for its workforce, and continue to roll out its anti-union mission. Clifford, the union buster, smashed picket lines and orchestrated a lock-out in the Hunter Valley coal mines.

Another Qantas Board member and former Rio Tinto Director is Richard Goodmanson, past President and CEO of America West Airlines. Under his management heavy cuts in spending on maintenance resulted in huge

operational and mechanical problems for the airline. The airline was embroiled in many battles with its workers and unions.

Another Qantas Board member is Dr John Schubert who is also a Director of foreign multinational BHP-Billiton. He is also former President of the Business Council of Australia and provides a link between the Qantas Board and the BCA. It is through such links that the ruling class of multinational corporations constantly plans and discusses its tactics in the war on working Australians.

The Business Council of Australia is the peak body of mainly multinational corporations and exercises immense power and influence over Australian government policies – Liberal or Labor. It represents the most extreme reactionary policies against Australia's working people and our rights and liberties.

Who really Owns Qantas?

A tiny handful of Qantas shareholders control over 80% of total voting shares.

The top four of these, a group of giant multinational financial monopolies, hold over 70% of these shares. The largest Qantas shareholder is J. P. Morgan Nominees Australia, a subsidiary of the global J. P. Morgan Investments.

The second largest is HSBC Custody Nominees, next is National Nominees and the fourth largest is Citicorp Nominees. These four investment funds are also some of the biggest finance capital shareholders of Australia's four main banks – CBA, NAB, Westpac and ANZ.

J. P. Morgan, HSBC, Citicorp and National Nominees are also the top four shareholders of BHP-Billiton and Rio Tinto. They are in the top 20 list of shareholders in many corporations, including oil, property, construction, Leighton Holdings, Lend Lease and others.

The interconnections between these giant multinational corporations and finance capital and their executives

ensures their policies and plans are carried out in a co-ordinated way.

For a broad based campaign in support of Qantas workers

Qantas has turned a new page by escalating attacks on its workers and the unions. In the midst of a major capitalist economic crisis, it set a new stage for more vicious attacks by capital on the whole of the working class and the union movement.

The union movement and the working class are compelled to step forward and support airline workers and their unions.

Failure to take co-ordinated and broad based action to assist the airline workers will lead to further weakening of working conditions, job security and workers and union rights in Australia. A lack of decisive action by the union movement will send a message to global big business that the trade unions in Australia are unable to resist attacks by corporations on workers' conditions and living standards. This is not a message workers of this country want to send. The cost will be the jobs and conditions of all workers throughout Australia.

The working people in Australia are crying out for true working class leadership. The best thing Australian Council of Trade Unions could do for Qantas workers and the union movement is to initiate a broad based public campaign of unions and communities to stop outsourcing and moving Australian airline jobs offshore, and to fight for job security and workers' rights and conditions. A groundswell of public outrage with Qantas' industrial tactics and plans to move Australian jobs offshore should inspire and give confidence to the ACTU and all unions in this critical fight.

Qantas' attacks need to be met with a broad based campaign. Taking Qantas back into public hands is already a part of this campaign.

- **Protect Qantas workers' jobs and conditions**
- **Nationalise Qantas**