

14th December 2021 – Notice 11/2021



25 Stoney Creek Rd Bexley NSW 2207
Ph: (02) 9554 9399 Fax: (02) 9554 9644
email: alaea@alaea.asn.au www.alaea.asn.au
ABN: 84 234 747 620

❖ NOTICE ❖

TO: QANTAS GROUP MEMBERS

RE: END OF YEAR FEDERAL SECRETARY MESSAGE

Introduction

I write this notice on the back end of a busy year. It will not touch on every issue but will draw awareness to key and controversial matters. As we move to 2022, I look forward to us working as one as we face more uncertainty, labour shortages, and eventually a collective position of strength as aviation rebuilds. The Qantas Group cannot rebuild without us.

Whilst Qantas are difficult to deal with, they are not alone. A new Virgin CEO has seen a shift from a previous congenial relationship to one of conflict. They seem to be working in lock step with Qantas. Other airlines such as REX and United are worse. As bad as the Qantas Group may be, it is still the number one avenue of employment for LAMEs. Here is some insight.

Mandatory Vaccination

98% of members are vaccinated. For most the decision was easy. Some did so reluctantly whilst others remain opposed. This has been the most difficult matter I have dealt with in 15 years as Federal Secretary. One approach may be to say that a majority support vaccination, the majority rules. A better approach may be to say that no member should be left unsupported. It is the latter view I have adopted with the support of our Federal Executive.

This matter is stressful. It does not matter what is written, it will be wrong in the eyes of most because it will not align with any individual's view. The ALAEA is a collective, not an individual. Our position is:

- Vaccination assists aviation to recover as confidence in air travel returns.
- Governments and employers are mandating it in ways that are mostly legal.
- Many members agree and consider fully vaccinated workplaces safer.
- Some do not. Those people may not be wrong, they just hold a different view.
- The current rules do not allow unvaccinated people to work.
- We do not think those who oppose vaccination should lose their careers.
- We support them to take any form of leave or absence until the situation changes.

Qantas Group Abiding by Enterprise Agreements

For about five years, every matter we have raised with any arm of the company is met with the same response. **We disagree.** It does not matter if a member is underpaid by \$5 or \$175,000. They never fix things unless we take them to court. This notice would run forever if I was to list every example. I will only talk to one.

At Qantas mainline, many LAMEs have been underpaid for many years. So far about a million dollars has been recovered. We first raised this in January 2018 (see original email at back of this notice). Qantas denied there was a problem with the pay system. After gathering evidence for 20 LAMEs, and presenting it over several meetings, they admitted the errors. They still refused to repay the 20 underpaid LAMEs (average about \$30,000 per person). We took the matter to the Federal Circuit Court. They still refused to pay them. It was not until the case had been before the court for 18 months that they decided to settle.

The Qantas Group deny all claims as a matter of process. The only way to enforce a breached EA term is through the courts. A simple case costs a minimum of \$50,000 to run. If the matter is minor, Qantas assume unions will not be able to afford the action, and they get away with it. If a union does litigate minor disputes, it costs them a fortune. The aim is to bleed unions financially. That way Qantas can ignore EA terms without consequence.

ALAEA response to Qantas Group Tactics

For years the ALAEA outsourced our legal work to law firms. For twelve years, we have employed one Solicitor to collate the work that required legal outsourcing. Our annual legal bills were about \$500k. With Qantas trying to bankrupt unions through ever increasing legal bills, we have taken a different approach. We thought we should do this work inhouse.

Next year, ALAEA Industrial Officer Glynn Sowter and I will commence our final year of law studies. Upon completion, the ALAEA will be armed with three Lawyers. We have also

employed two law students to work casually on projects. We are moving towards an operation that can conduct business like a specialist aviation law firm. Our legal bills have already halved. We are not concerned about ongoing litigation. Small breaches can all be challenged. Qantas will not bankrupt us with legal bills in the process.

Outstanding Enterprise Agreement Negotiations

Many Enterprise Agreements covering members are expired. This includes EAs at Network, Eastern Tamworth, Eastern Line Maintenance, Qantas TSS, and Jetstar. The Qantas EA expired nearly 3 years ago. COVID has not been kind to anyone seeking a wage increase. This year Qantas declared that everyone would receive another 2-year wage freeze followed by 2% annual increases. This is just an ask from management whilst times are tough. We do not have to agree. We know that CPI is about to spiral once COVID goes. Then we will be well placed to secure decent outcomes.

The Qantas Group has been avoiding EA discussions with us. Requests for meetings are often denied. When they are confirmed, meetings are regularly postponed. This year Qantas mainline has only met with us a couple of times. They reject our claims and cry poor. The last meeting was planned in July and then abandoned by Qantas. They said - *QE is proposing to postpone this meeting as they remain focused on responding to the lockdown.* We now know they were not focused on the lockdown. They were looking for a more vulnerable target.

Qantas v Flight Attendants

The International Flight Attendants EA expired in June 2021. The FAs are vulnerable because the arrangements have Part 1 grandfathered employees and Part 2 newer employees. The newer outnumber the older by 2 to 1. Qantas is circulating an EA offer to FAs that drags the conditions of all grandfathered Part 1 employees down to Part 2 conditions. Some small incentives are offered to the new employees who outnumber the old. The offer includes a wage freeze followed by 2% increases.

Qantas has not met with the ALAEA in over 6 months claiming they are focusing on lockdowns. At the same time, they have met nineteen (19) times with Flight Attendant unions over an EA that only expired in June this year.

Our Path Forward

The ALAEA Federal Executive recently met and considered various options. It would not be

tactically wise to publish them here. All members need to know is that all options to advance our negotiations are on the table. Some key points to bear in mind include:

- The Qantas Group is short of LAMEs across the entire company.
- COVID is not over yet. When it is, our worth will increase.
- We should not undermine our worth by cutting corners.
- We should not undermine our worth by certifying without proper oversight.
- When managers talk about industrial relations, ignore them.

Next year the balance of supply and demand will be in our favour. When it is, our claims will be pursued with gusto. Look after your fellow members and enjoy the festive season.



Steve Purvinas

Federal Secretary

From: Federal Secretary [<mailto:fedsec@alaea.asn.au>]

Sent: Wednesday, 10 January 2018 10:26 AM

To: Peter Smith <petersmith1@qantas.com.au>; John Walker <walkerjohn@qantas.com.au>

Cc: Glynn Sowter <Glynn@alaea.asn.au>

Subject: Qantas Quota review

Hi Peter,

I refer to clause 16.7.5 of the LAME EA –

16.7.5 The quota shall be jointly reviewed every two years from the date of operation of this Agreement. Qantas shall ensure that all the necessary information, resources and manpower are made available for this review to be adequately and thoroughly performed.

This joint review has not been held and the EA is now more than two years old. We have concerns over the administration over the quota lists and names plus order of those waiting to move levels. Recently a member was told he was 47 on a particular wait list and later told he was 49. We don't know how this could be and suspect something is amiss.

We seek to exercise our full right to review the records held by Qantas in relation to the quotas and need to meet with you as soon as possible to complete this task. In doing so we will be requiring the names of those LAMEs in each level and the names of those awaiting advancement. Can you please confirm your availability to meet by close of business next week?

Cheers

Steve Purvinas