

BRETT LANGFORD, OUTSOURCED QANTAS GROUND WORKER:

Thank you to Michael Kaine and to all of the dedicated hard working members and officials of the Transport Workers' Union for the opportunity to speak today.

I wish to also acknowledge the 2000 workers that Qantas made redundant, because these are human lives, loyal, dedicated, hardworking men and woman with families to support, children, morgages, bills. They are not collateral damage as qantas lawyers labelled us.

As a young boy when my family went to the airport I would look out the terminal window and watch the Qantas guys on the ground working amongst the aircraft and I thought it was the coolest job to have. If I could tell my younger self anything now, I'd tell him not to bother.

I had worked at Qantas Ground Services in baggage and ramp for a little over 8.5 years. I was also a health and safety rep and a delegate for the TWU.

Qantas loved to talk a big story. The great public image of the Spirit of Australia. The best example of this is R U OK day. Qantas would get their own internal socials, external socials and preach about how much they supported R U OK day and the mental health of its workers. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have been treated like old model cars, sold off by the dodgy second-hand car salesman.

A number of staff are now suffering mental health issues as a direct result of the extremely poor and stressful times and situations they have been forced to deal with throughout this entire process.

I personally now suffer from an anxiety disorder that when triggered can and has brought on physical sickness, it's extremely embarrassing and very hard to cope with.

Another point I wish to raise is one that disgusts me to my core. It was so ironic it was laughable. On the very day Qantas and its very expensive lawyers were in court to appeal the ruling that the outsourcing was in fact deemed illegal, Qantas launched its staff loyalty programme. I'm going to borrow a quote from Greta Thunberg - how dare you. How dare you, Qantas. You had loyal staff, loyal hardworking dedicated staff who missed Christmases, birthdays, Easter, moments in their children's lives. And you threw us to the wayside and called us collateral damage.

Which brings me to my next point. While I don't have access to the exact figures, I do know that one of Qantas arguments against the reinstatement of the outsourced workers was due to the difficulty in running the process in reverse, more importantly the cost to the business would be too great. Exactly how much are Qantas' lawyers and legal team costing to continually fight and appeal every aspect of the court case to keep us from having our job reinstated?

Qantas is all about saving money, first of all they were the largest recipients of JobKeeper, you remember that? The no strings attached handout to keep workers connected to the employer. How did that work out for them again?

On top of that, this government has time and time again handed millions of no strings attached money to Qantas to keep it afloat ... where is the accountability for that? On top of that also in 2018 QGS were promised a financial year bonus for all our hard work in the previous year, of course this one came with strings attached. We had to sign off on our new EBA , something we never got the opportunity to do before being kicked to the kerb, what happened to that money?

Between the absurd amount of no strings attached money the government has handed Qantas, the absurd amount of money Qantas saved by not paying its workforce its promised bonus, and the absurd amount of money that its CEO Alan Joyce receives including his bonuses that he conveniently got paid, I just find it a tad convenient that Qantas in its latest financials has again cried poor to support its claims in court.

Qantas safety record has now also taken a dive on the list of worlds safest airlines, 1st to 7th, I can tell you that it comes as no surprise to the outsourced ground handling workers that this has happened. Outsourcing work to the cheapest workers in a safety and security sensitive area means that corners are cut, staff are in and out of the business like Grand Central, standards are not being met and it's only a matter of time before disaster will strike.

The new ground handling companies are trying to get the same amount of work done with less than half the previous workforce, who lack the thousands of years of knowledge and collective experience to meet a low-balled price point quoted to get the contracts and somehow still make a profit for themselves while exploiting workers.

Ask any ex-Qantas worker who has been with the company for 10, 20, 30, 40 plus years, Qantas was a workplace that people felt proud to be apart of. They were proud to don the uniform and wear the logo of the national airline that calls itself the Spirit of Australia. They had decent pay and conditions and job security. You were a part of the qantas family

These days the only way Qantas could call itself the spirit of Australia, is from the souls it has sucked the life from; its proud and dedicated workforce before they were put out to rot. What Qantas has done and continues to do is as unAustralian as a Prime Minister who takes off for a holiday during a national crisis. He might as well have done the same here because his silence is deafening.

