



OHS at Qantas

invasion of privacy is a hard pill to swallow

a joint newsletter of the Qantas unions

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My Health Is My Business!

Qantas staff and their unions are prepared to work constructively with Qantas to ensure a safe working environment for all employees and the general public.

There is no place at work for those impaired by drugs or alcohol. We all have an obligation to ensure that the workplace is as safe as possible.

Qantas union members are firmly of the view that Qantas' plans to force through a new Alcohol & Drug policy, which includes random testing, will not provide a safer working environment.

Random testing is unfair and a gross and unwarranted infringement of personal privacy for all Qantas employees.

What Qantas wants

Qantas has announced plans for a zero tolerance random alcohol and drug testing program that targets any drug – legal or illegal – including prescription or over-the-counter medicines.

It is not just alcohol and illegal drugs that are being targeted, some over-the-counter cold and flu medication are included in Qantas' banned list of medication that must be reported.

Qantas wants to force every employee to inform their supervisor of the type of medication they are on, why they are taking the medication and in certain circumstances, to provide permission for Qantas to speak to their doctor.

Random urine and breath tests will be undertaken. External contractors will take breath tests and urine samples from you at short notice in a toilet. Under the proposed policy, ignorance is no defence.

Positive testing or a refusal to be tested can result in disciplinary action and possible termination of your employment.

Why the unions are concerned

Qantas unions want a policy that is fair, works and takes into account the dignity of the employee.

Qantas' proposed policy is a gross and unwarranted invasion of the privacy of every Qantas employee.

Qantas has not undertaken a risk assessment prior to developing this policy. If Qantas does not have any realistic idea of the nature and extent of the problem, (*which by all indicators appears to be lower at Qantas than in most workplaces*), how can any issues be resolved appropriately?

Qantas' proposed policy is aimed at 'weeding out' a problem not addressing the causes and treating them. Education, rehabilitation and support have taken a back seat to discipline and fear.

While the Qantas policy recognises that an employee's performance may not be impaired while traces



of a drug or alcohol are detectable within their system, Qantas nevertheless states that this will still be considered a serious breach of policy and may result in termination.

Qantas has conveniently ignored fatigue and other causes of impairment as an issue. Qantas has advised unions that fatigue monitoring and testing will not be a part of this policy.

Let's get serious about Health & Safety

Union members are constantly raising occupational health and safety issues at Qantas. Many of these issues remain unresolved.

It's time to get serious about health and safety. Real concern and cooperation, not gimmicks and confrontation are what we all need.

What the Qantas unions offer

- A constructive joint effort to ensure there is a safe working environment.
- A non-discriminatory policy that protects privacy and offers support, assistance and education.
- A non-punitive approach where disciplinary action is a last, not first, resort.

- A comprehensive and cooperative health & safety approach that deals with all health & safety problems.

Qantas unions have developed an alternative proposition which has at its heart a proposal that puts an obligation on employees not to attend work when they are or believe they may be impaired by drugs, alcohol or fatigue.

The unions' proposal also allows for non-intrusive impairment testing in specified circumstances.

Some State Governments have passed legislation adopting similar arrangements to those proposed by the joint Qantas unions.

Qantas unions take health and safety seriously. Qantas should do the same. Random testing will do nothing more than drive the problem underground.

Unions are offering a joint approach, including joint studies and education campaigns.

Qantas Unions Oppose Random Testing

Qantas unions oppose random alcohol and other drug testing. We have no confidence that the tests will be random and less

confidence that such a policy is effective or fair.

What next?

The Qantas unions will be working together to ensure random testing is not introduced by Qantas.

If you feel that **your health is your business**, you need to become involved in this campaign. For further information contact your union.

**Qantas Unions
Working Together**

Authorised by: Australian Council of Trade Unions (**ACTU**); Australian Licenced Aircraft Engineers Association (**ALAEA**); Australian Workers Union (**AWU**); Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (**AMWU**); Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers Australia (**APESMA**); Australian Services Union (**ASU**); Communications Electrical and Plumbing Union (**CEPU**); Flight Attendants' Association of Australia – Domestic/Regional Division & International Division (**FAAA**); Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union (**LHMWU**); National Union of Workers (**NUW**); Transport Workers Union (**TWU**).

