

Opening statement-Teri

The Aviation sector across the world has been hit hard by Covid 19.

Airlines across the globe are grounded.

The aviation industry must be supported as we are part of the core transport infrastructure of this nation. Airlines need to be prepared and ready to get Australia back on its feet once this crisis is over and this means keeping crew trained and ready to get back on planes.

Cabin crew have become a casualty of this pandemic, and most are struggling not just financially but emotionally, JobKeeper has been life support for the aviation industry and its employees.

We did a survey of our membership and based on that survey, 87 % of cabin crew said that they could not survive or meet their commitments without Job Keeper.

The decision this morning to reduce Job Keeper will have a significant effect on cabin crew who have been unable to find alternative employment. Our members have spoken about a loss of dignity because they have not been able to find alternative work , Job Keeper in its current form has allowed them to survive.

WHS

We are concerned that there is a policy issue when it comes to notifiable incidents. The harmonised WHS laws seem to be interpreted by some employers as not requiring COVID19 to be a reportable incident in the workplace. With one airline suggesting that the requirement to report COVID19 could be likened to a need to report an ingrown toenail or a pimple that occurred at work.

There is a real need for specific regulations around WHS in the aviation sector where aircraft are a unique and not traditional workplace.

The experiences with PPE are compounded when airlines are suggesting that it is almost impossible to contract COVID on an aircraft. An idea which has been contradicted by other health professionals.

We ask that consideration be given to ensuring that COVID-19 and any pandemic like illness be a mandatory notifiable incident to the relevant Safe Work regulator without exceptions.

Differing Isolation Requirements

Prior to the grounding of airlines there was considerable inconsistencies in the management of COVID-19 between the States and the Federal government.

Cabin Crew had been given various exemptions from isolation and hotel quarantine requirements and there was conflict between Federal and State orders.

State and federal bodies such as the State Policy and Border Force were providing different advice and instructions to Cabin Crew about whether they were required to self isolate, self quarantine, be in hotel quarantine or were exempt.

Many Crew had police officers turning up at their houses asking why they had left their homes after arriving back from overseas completely unaware of Federal exemptions.

This was incredibly stressful and Crew would carry their exemption letters to try and clarify with police that they were doing nothing wrong and had not broken any rules.

Personal Protective Equipment

In the early stages of the pandemic, our members were being told by airlines that they didn't need to wear a mask or gloves in their workplace.

Cabin Crew were on aircraft with no social distancing requirements, carrying passengers from around the globe and from known Covid19 hotspots until the groundings.

To date Rex is the only Australian airline that has mandated the wearing of masks.

Initially the lack of PPE was a serious issue. We had depleted stock due to the bushfires and air quality in places like Canberra where on some days it registered the worst air quality in the world.

There was also an issue of the perception of safety, versus the reality. Airline management seemed more concerned about the appearance of gloves and masks being used because it might cause concern with passengers.