



Qantas closure of regional bases

SUBMISSION FROM THE TRANSPORT WORKERS' UNION OF AUSTRALIA

TWU background

The Transport Workers' Union of Australia (TWU) represents tens of thousands of men and women in Australia's aviation and road transport industries. With over one hundred years' experience, the TWU has been proactive in establishing industry standards that improve the lives and safety of transport workers, their families and the community.

The TWU covers all workers in the aviation industry, including in ground and baggage handling, fleet presentation, airline catering, airport screeners, refuellers, cabin crew and pilots.

Qantas base closures leave regional Australia behind

The decision by Qantas to close regional bases in Mildura, Hobart and Canberra is just the latest example of cost-cutting from the airline that will disadvantage passengers and workers, despite billions poured in by taxpayers.

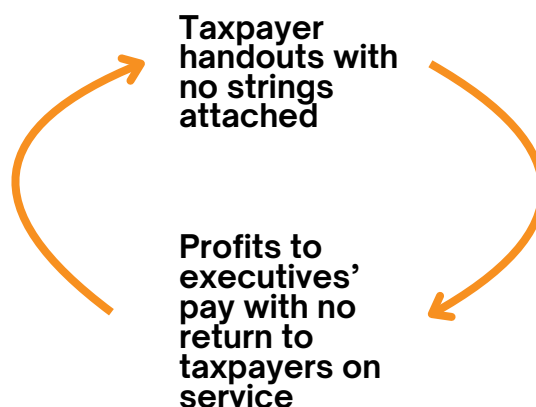
The pursuit of short-term profits by executives of privately-owned airlines and airports has consistently left workers and regional Australia behind.

The relentlessness of short-term profit motive, which as also seen the collapse of Bonza and administration of Rex, has led to a complete lack of certainty for regional Australian businesses, tourism operators and communities.

If this continues unchecked, we will see more and more base closures and potentially the shutdown of critical regional routes that aren't profitable, leaving communities disconnected

Though these bases are not as profitable as those in other capital cities, they are critical for tourism, businesses, healthcare and community connection.

Without regulatory oversight of the entire industry, companies like Qantas will continue to protect profits over decent standards for regional Australia.



Impact on workers

When Qantas announced that it was "reviewing its footprint" in Hobart, Canberra and Mildura bases, it had only recently endorsed movements of pilots to any base of their choice on the premise that all bases would continue operating.

No real consultation

On announcing that it would go ahead with closing the bases, Qantas claimed it had undertaken extensive consultation - but with the significant political, workforce and public outcry over the closures, it is clear that the decision had already been made before consultation began.

These are decisions that need to involve the whole community, instead of the dictatorship-style approach Qantas continues to use despite the huge ramifications of announcements like these.

Cost passed onto workers

Many crew have already been affected by Qantas base closures.

Though Qantas has asserted it would assist with commuting or relocation costs, the majority of this will be borne by crew, causing both financial and emotional strain to families.

Pilots said:

68%

will consider other employment

1 IN 5

have previously been affected by Qantas base closures

1 IN 2

Hobart pilots have children under 18

“ I will be forced to choose between my job and children. Leaving Hobart will mean no longer seeing my children.

“ It would split my family up. My partner will not leave Canberra, and I would have to leave my son.

“ After the Perth closure we had two options, Canberra or Melbourne. We got Canberra, and we have rented here for three and a half years due to the uncertainty..... We finally bought a house in December 2024.

“ After promises that bases were safe, this is a swift kick in the guts. Families have made major financial decisions based on assurances from management.

Relocation costs

Relocation would place significant stress on crews, from increased housing costs, to increased childcare costs from leaving extended family. 88% of partners of Hobart-based crews would need to find new employment. Those partners will need to restart employment elsewhere with many of them losing sick leave and LSL accruals for the second time following previous base closures in Cairns and Perth.

Impact on regional communities

Qantas' decision to close bases in Mildura, Canberra and Hobart follows the collapse of Bonza and the administration of Rex—all of which have significant impacts on regional Australia.

The entry of Bonza was a much-needed boost for regional communities who were often either isolated or unable to afford airfares from the major carriers. When Bonza launched, passengers travelling directly from Sunshine Coast to Mackay increased from just 18 to 45,000, an increase of 250,000%.

Rex's administration left a significant community of regional Australians stranded. With limited airline choices, passengers were left with no alternative but to pay excessively high fares, making air travel increasingly inaccessible and financially burdensome especially in cases of medical emergencies, with access to medical appointments when major cities are hours away unfeasible through other methods of transport.

Regional communities will only be further disadvantaged by regional base closures which will lead to more cancellations, less resiliency for regional flights, and a drop in standards for passengers.

Base closures could mean:

MORE CANCELLATIONS

With current base structures, recent airline performance data shows QantasLink (which services regional areas) has the best on time arrival performance and a lower cancellation rate than the rest of the Qantas group, but this could be in jeopardy if the base closures were to go ahead.

Without permanently-based crew and pilots in these locations, the closures would have the potential to cause more cancellations, particularly in Canberra, once again resulting in a decline in standards for passengers.

DROP IN STANDARDS

With the potential for pilots in particular to leave the airline over base closures, there is the potential for significant effects on the stability of QantasLink routes, and a drop in standards for passengers.

The need for a Safe and Secure Skies Commission

Without a proper system in place to ensure aviation acts in the interest of the whole community, airlines and airports will continue to make decisions with only profit in mind. Under this model we will continue to see regional Australia lose out because the routes aren't as profitable.

We need a **Safe and Secure Skies Commission** to ensure that the entire community gets a say—workers, passengers and regional Australia.

This would provide long-term stability for regional routes, and return confidence in aviation for regional businesses and communities.