



Update on Qantas and the Coronavirus

ASU officials are urgently seeking information from Australian airlines regarding their response to the Coronavirus outbreak and the precautions being put in place for ground operations staff with direct passenger contact.

ASU officials and Qantas some airport delegates attending an Airports Workforce Planning meeting met with Qantas on Thursday 30 January and talked through the airline's response. We were dissatisfied with this briefing and urgently sought a further meeting with Qantas' safety and medical experts and industrial relations team to brief ASU officials and delegates on Qantas' response to the coronavirus, and also to discuss the implications on the handling of affected client airlines and the industry generally. We have scheduled a meeting with Qantas on Tuesday 4th February to canvas all these issues. We may also talk further about the response at our National Qantas delegates meeting on Wednesday 5th February.

Due to the nature of global travel, airlines workers are regularly exposed to overseas outbreaks of communicable diseases. Many of you will remember SARS, bird flu and swine flu outbreaks. ASU members working for most major Australian airlines should have procedures in place to contain outbreaks such as Coronavirus. We are in constant contact with the ITF (International Transport Workers Federation) – they are the global trade union for airline workers and they are at the forefront of advice on what is best practice globally in the airline industry. We are also in contact with all major airlines and ground handlers to talk about their response and also with other Australian Unions in our industry.

What we know from other companies

In some companies ground operations members have hand-sanitising packs, masks and gloves being made available to them by their employer and they are being supported to make their own decisions about how best to take precautions in relation to using personal protective equipment. In Qantas at present the company say they will supply masks to staff who request them but nothing else.

The medical advice about the effectiveness of masks and gloves to adequately protect members from communicable diseases we are told is actively being discussed. For this type of health issue, masks are most effective for a symptomatic person to prevent further contagion and may protect you when you are working in direct contact with a symptomatic person. Gloves are also effective but only if they are changed regularly and are not used instead of good hand hygiene and sneeze/cough hygiene.

If you or someone you know becomes unwell or concerned that they may have symptoms of Coronavirus, immediately seek medical care. Symptoms of Coronavirus can range from mild illness to pneumonia. Affected people may experience fever, flu like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and headaches, and difficulty breathing.

How to protect yourself and help prevent the spread of the virus

Unless you are in direct contact with a person displaying symptoms, good hygiene practice is your best protection from the virus.

The ASU provides the following advice based on Australian Government Department of

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Health information, as follows:

- Practice good hand hygiene and sneeze/cough hygiene.
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water before and after eating as well as after attending the toilet.
- Use hand-sanitising packs.
- Avoid contact with others (including touching, kissing, hugging, and other intimate contact).

More information is available at:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-information-sheet>

Keep updated

Details about Coronavirus are changing every day. The safety and well-being of our members is our highest priority. We are continuing to monitor the latest updates and will come back to you when we have more information. We are also monitoring the industrial situation – as we know when flights are cancelled jobs are affected.

If you have any other concerns about your welfare at work you can always talk more with your Union delegate, your Union organiser or contact your branch.