



Flywell --- is it just a fancy name?

Earlier this week you may have seen a big announcement by Qantas management about the so called “Flywell” scheme they have devised to get domestic flying back to as close as normal as soon as possible. Of course everyone wants that but it is hard not to be a bit cynical when effort is put into a snappy name, a very schmick video, a press conference and consultation with government but no one talks to the staff or their unions about the health and safety implications of the “new” program until days after the PR blitz.

No one consulted ASU members or delegates prior to the announcement and today we finally got a briefing where we also learned that actually no other work group affected was consulted before the announcement either – not flight attendants, not pilots, not ramp and baggage staff ...not anyone.

Apparently we are supposed to take some consolation in this – everyone was treated with the same level of contempt not just those working at airports. In our view this abject failure to consult anyone is nothing to take solace in, it just points to a wholesale failure to take heed of the Occupational health and safety laws that the company must obey across the country.

We demanded a meeting with Qantas management for ASU delegates and officials about how Flywell will be rolled out and today we had it and confirmed that there will be local meetings with ASU delegates, HSR reps and management to talk about how the plans will be rolled out in airports and lounges. We mention lounges because as we know the lounge staff are currently stood down until 30 June but the Qantas video to passengers mentions the measures that will be implemented in lounges there seems to be no plans to open these yet, despite what the video says, we asked for clarification on the intentions with lounges and expect clarification next week.

Flywell, which is supposed to be about reassuring passengers about the safety of flying in a COVID-19 world, also envisages increased passenger access to hand sanitizer, Perspex shields at check in and service desk counters, mask packs for passengers and importantly increased training for staff. On this latter point we asked about how the training will be delivered, will it be compulsory for anyone rostered to work and when will it be available --- training is all a “work in progress” apparently despite the roll out of “Flywell” being targeted for 12 June 2020 (or maybe not). Some of you may have participated in town halls at airports and become aware that many of the airport management were not in the loop either about this program and are now scrambling with implementation.

What happens next?

Your local ASU delegates and officials together with all HSR reps at airports will be participating in local consultations ASAP next week to discuss what is planned --- better late than never you could say but as we reminded the company they have legal obligations to do this. If you have suggestions make sure you let your local ASU delegates and organisers know too.

We have also programmed another national meeting on Wednesday 27th May where we want a number of our unanswered questions about training, hand sanitizer provision, mask disposal protocols etc. to be answered as well.

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Flywell affects all Qantas Group companies

The “Flywell” program is a Group wide program, so not just for Qantas airways staff – it affects airport staff in QantasLink and Jetstar – we have said we must have consultation meetings for those companies too, also we want a briefing on what directives the Qantas group is giving the ground handlers they have working for them in some ports as there are ASU members working for those ground handlers as well. So if you work in Jetstar or QantasLink stay tuned for an update on the briefings we will have with them.

Finally – Health and Safety is a very important matter, it should not be treated flippantly and as flying increases we must ensure that it is at the forefront of everything we do, we all know that, we just have to keep Qantas group management accountable too and make sure they prioritise the actual processes not just the public relations spin.

Need more information?

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If you are not a member of the ASU now is the time to join --- <https://www.asu.asn.au/asujoin>