Union demands Qantas guarantee
Simon Hayes
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THE Australian Services Union has called for an iron-clad guarantee from Qantas that it will not "offshore" its call centres, despite confirmation from chief executive Geoff Dixon that the airline has reviewed its telephone sales centres and decided not to move them overseas. ASU executives said they received a verbal confirmation of the decision, to keep the call centres in Australia, from Mr Dixon at a June meeting. He told them that while the airline had reviewed the operations and considered offshoring them, it had decided not to, they said.

A letter from Qantas industrial relations head Sue Buffell in July also ruled out offshoring call centres for Qantas Business Travel and Qantas Holidays.

The news that the airline considered offshoring call centre work comes as Qantas faces a battle with flight attendants who are angry at its decision to base 400 long-haul attendants in London to save money.

ASU assistant national secretary Linda White said the union now wanted the undertakings included as part of the current round of enterprise bargaining negotiations.

"Thanks for your letter, but it isn't enforceable," she said. "If you mean what you say, put it in the EBA (enterprise bargain agreement)."

Ms White said Mr Dixon had told union officials at the meeting that Qantas would have saved money from offshoring telephone sales but had decided not to move the call centres.

Telephone sales call centres are located in Hobart, Melbourne and Brisbane. Qantas Holidays operates call centres in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, while Qantas Business Travel call centres operate in Darwin, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.

"I think they thought it was more trouble than it was worth," Ms White said.

A Qantas spokeswoman said the airline was negotiating a number of matters with the ASU, including call centres. The spokeswoman confirmed that the airline had decided not to offshore.

"Qantas is satisfied with the performance of the call centres and will not move this work offshore," she said.

"This is just one of a range of issues in the current EBA with the Australian Services Union."

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