

Engineers' strike may ground Qantas flights

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Qantas flights could be disrupted this weekend with engineers embarking on an industrial campaign over pay and conditions.

Engineers' union director Catherine Bolger says from 5:00pm today, engineers will refuse to work overtime or take calls outside of work, mainly at night.

She says the engineers at Qantas are responsible for the air-worthiness of the fleet.

"This means that they are on call out of hours and may receive two or three phone calls a night, for two or three hours at a time," she said.

"They're woken up from their sleep and they're required to devise an engineering solution to the engineering problem."

She says they will recommence work during the day on Monday, but will continue to strike each evening next week, which may disrupt flights.

"There may be some planes that are not allowed to fly if professional engineers are not there to clear them to fly," she said.

"And we really ask that passengers understand that their gripe is with Qantas management about this.

"Fatigue management and professional development is a very simple thing for them to resolve."

Yesterday there were calls for an investigation into Qantas' maintenance procedures after a plane en route from Brisbane to Melbourne had to return due to engine damage.

Paul Cousins from the Australian Licensed Aircraft Engineers Association said an examination of the engine revealed it was in urgent need of replacement.

"We had an uncontained turbine failure and that caused damage to not only the engine but the quite critical horizontal stabiliser," he said.

"We believe maintenance should be carried out to a set standard - not a set price.

"Therefore we are asking CASA [Civil Aviation Safety Authority] to investigate the facilities where Qantas outsources its engine maintenance."

Five days ago a Qantas plane heading from Sydney to Los Angeles was forced to return because of a faulty fuel pump.

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Engineers will refuse to work overtime or take calls outside of work. (AAP: Mick Tsikas, file photo)

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