



**Australian Services Union**

# Union News

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## The West Australian

### Unions Want Harsher Penalties for Air-rage Incidents

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Unions are calling for stiffer penalties to curb a 40 per cent increase in air rage incidents caused by a cocktail of alcohol and dysfunctional airports.

The Office of Transport Security said yesterday that there were 461 reports last year, up from 279 in 2008 and 67 in 2007. The incidents covered all events where passengers were disruptive on planes, including drunk passengers, altercations between passengers and other unruly behaviour.

Australian Services Union Federal secretary Linda White claimed that the penalties, typically a \$5500 fine, were not severe enough. "They are obviously not a deterrent," Ms White said. She blamed alcohol, with overcrowded airports another significant factor leading to an increase in aggressive behaviour by the time passengers boarded planes.

In October, Qantas was forced to ban spirits and full-strength beer on all its flights within WA because of the drunken behaviour of mainly resources industry workers. In 2008, the airline withdrew spirits from its flights across the country, except in WA and Mt Isa, because of slow demand but added more premium beer selections. However, after repeated problems with drunken passengers and with the support of the airlines key resource company accounts, Qantas axed all alcohol except wine and light beer.

"The expansion of Qantas Perth domestic terminal will also ease passenger tensions," Ms White said. But Ms White cautioned that airlines needed to keep staff levels up and not just rely on self check-in kiosks. Ms White said that the increased number of incidents was because staff were reporting more incidents. "They have had enough of the abuse," she said.



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