



## PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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I am concerned that there is clearly confusion among pilots formerly employed by Ansett and Australian Airlines on certain important issues. This was evident during my discussions with a group of former pilots last Friday, and has been reinforced in a subsequent conversation involving a senior officer in my Department.

The Government therefore wishes to reiterate firmly its position first on the right of pilots employed by the airlines to be represented by a union of their choice, and second on the ability of pilot employees to seek changes to the current contracts on offer.

My Government has always accepted that pilot employees can be represented by a union of their choice. My Government is philosophically committed to the right of employees to be represented by unions.

Which union represents pilots employed by the two airlines is a matter for those pilots themselves.

Former pilots considering re-employment need have no concerns as to their right to be represented by a union, and clearly there are established procedures for any union that represents pilots employed by the airlines to put arguments as to the form of award conditions.

The decision of the Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) of 10 October, 1989 is central and quite straightforward.

In that decision the IRC said that, "in our view, it would be appropriate for the AFAP to make application to be bound by the awards at an appropriate time provided the bans on seeking employment with the companies are lifted, provided that the AFAP is prepared to undertake to accept decisions of the Commission and provided the AFAP is prepared to give the necessary undertakings required by the National Wage Case decision".

Further, and relating specifically to any concerns about the current contracts or awards on offer, the Commission said "the AFAP indicated that it would wish to put arguments as to the form of any awards if it were made respondent to those awards. That opportunity would, of course, be available to the AFAP if it were successful in an application to be bound by the awards".

In other words the IRC has made very clear in it's 10 October decision how the AFAP could, if it so chose, seek to be involved in the industrial relations affairs of the airline industry. First, accept the three conditions laid down by the IRC ie. lift its bans, accept the decisions of the Commission and give the undertakings required by the National Wage Case decision - no more and no less than required of any other organisation. Second, then seek to be bound by the award. Third, in those circumstances it is entirely open to the AFAP to present arguments about the award.

That this opportunity and course of action is open to the AFAP - leading to the AFAP having the ability to present arguments about the award itself - has clearly not got through to individual pilots. It is important that they accurately understand the position.

For its part the Government has made clear that it fully accepts both the right of employees to be represented by a union of their choice and the position taken by the IRC concerning a potential role for such a union.