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## PM backs approach by Qantas on staff jobs

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Qantas' decision to mandate COVID jobs after surveys showed its 22,000 staff overwhelmingly backed the move has been hailed by the Prime Minister as the "right model" for other businesses seeking to do the same.

With the government determined to largely leave mandatory jobs to individual companies, Qantas' decision will stand as a template for other big firms from mining to hospitality feeling compelled by health and safety rules to require jobs for their workers.

Some employer groups were left frustrated by the government's stance after a roundtable yesterday with unions, regulators and Attorney-General Michaelia Cash, and issued statements suggesting some of their members would move individually to require jobs.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said it was a decision for individual companies, but praised Qantas' approach. "They have a reasonable position to be able to make this request, and they've gone about it, I think, in a very engaged way," Mr

Morrison said. "They've shown, I think, the right model about how you go about this."

Even within the aviation industry, the national carrier's move will have an impact on more than 10,000 other staff employed by contractors and suppliers that Qantas chief executive Alan Joyce said were now working with the airline on their own vaccination plans.

The decision also moves the mandatory vaccination debate into a new phase, showing more com-

panies are willing to stare down union criticism.

Unions objected to Qantas' plan. "An employee should not have to decide between a job and a job," said Australian Licensed Aircraft Engineers Association secretary Steve Purvinas.

The Transport Workers Union and Australian Services Union took aim at the lack of vaccine supply.

"It's mystifying, disturbing and unnecessary," transport union boss Michael Kaine said of the decision by Qantas.

As the Qantas news broke yesterday morning, unions and employers were meeting with Attorney-General Michaelia Cash and regulators to discuss the rollout. On issues including indemnities for the side effects from vaccination and which businesses are allowed to require jobs, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry chief executive Andrew McKellar said businesses did not get the answers they need. "We need some leadership on it from government," Mr McKellar said.

Australian Resources and Energy Group boss Steve Knott was similarly critical, saying there had been political paralysis.

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