



# BRIEFINGS //

QANTAS Pilot Council

**TO // Qantas Short Haul and Long Haul Pilots**  
**FROM // AFAP Qantas Pilot Council**  
**DATE // 2 April 2026**  
**RE // QPC Briefing No 11 2026**

## **QPC Briefing No 11 2026** **LH EA – Blank Lines**

Blank Lines (BL) continue to drive roster instability and income loss. It is one of the most consistently raised issues by pilots. Previous protections that offset BL income loss, such as Element 3B, have been removed over time.

What remains today is a system in which pilots bear the financial and lifestyle risk without meaningful protection. The company knows this. EA11 does not fix it. Members are being asked to vote on an agreement that preserves this problem.

Pilots' concerns about roster stability have grown significantly since negotiations began and indeed since the In-Principle Agreement (IPA) was reached last year. Recognising this, it is now a priority for the AFAP to find solutions both in the short term and the longer term into the next EA.

What we have heard through Company webinars and communication is that without BL, Pattern Line Holders (PLH) would have no stability. Whilst this might be true, the issue is that Blank Line Holders (BLH) suffer significant financial losses from being on a BL, as well as zero stability.

The AFAP has explored and identified numerous ways to avoid the financial hit of a BL, as well as mitigators to reduce the frequency of BL rotation. In addition, the AFAP is reviewing pilots' agreements from around the world. There are alternatives to providing the coverage the company requires and the stability of rosters and income pilots desire.

Blank Line overuse is driven by three choices made by the company:

- Over-crewing in many fleets and ranks
- Ignoring the 15% BLH cap in RM19.3
- Expanding exclusions from BLs (Carer's Lines, management, training)

What is frustrating to pilots is that the cost to reduce the financial strain on BLH would be relatively small in the context of Qantas' consistent record profits in recent results. EA11 proposes the introduction of a 5 or 8 hour passive payment for BLH, which equates to approximately \$1 million dollars per year.

Last year alone, Qantas was ordered to pay \$190 million dollars for illegal work practices. But it will not spend more than \$1 million to protect pilot's income stability and reduce their roster volatility. The company can afford to fix this, they have chosen not to.



## Carer's Lines

Carer's lines have consistently been identified as a primary driver of high BLH rotation among pilots. Interestingly, during PLFs, senior management has been openly critical of the AFAP for identifying Carer's Lines as a substantial contributor to the problem.

However, when members and the AFAP have asked management directly how the Company will mitigate against increasing Blank Line rotation, the response has repeatedly turned to restrictions on Carer's Lines in the EA11 proposal. This inconsistency undermines the Company's position.

Carer's Lines **are** necessary, yet even the Company admits, when convenient, that they contribute to BL growth. Yet EA11 introduces no real limits on Carer's Lines eligibility or changes that would make Carer's Lines targeted at supporting pilots with caring responsibilities not as a vehicle to avoid Blank Lines.

The result is predictable: the more Blank Lines, the more pilots are forced to seek Carer's Lines, and the cycle accelerates.

When EA11 negotiations began almost two years ago, pilots were told that Carer's Lines eligibility would likely be tightened to match the federal legislation definition, making them harder to access.

There were also discussions about introducing parental lines and more flexible work options to help with this change, but these ideas were later abandoned by the Company. This would provide carers with the option of a dedicated structure that supports caring responsibilities consistent with other industry agreements.

The only relevant clause in EA11 allows a pilot "with a nominated percentage that is greater than, or equal to, 80%, may apply to be excluded from the allocation of a blank line based on their carer's responsibilities. The Company may refuse such an application on reasonable business grounds."

This clause is vague and creates confusion, as EA11 does not clearly outline who qualifies for Carer's Lines or how carers can be excluded from blank lines.

In summary, despite previous claims that changes to Carer's Lines would resolve Blank Line issues, EA11 fails to do so.

## BLH Payment

EA11 introduces an 8 hour or 5 hour passive payment for BLH allocation/assignment.

During negotiations, the AFAP repeatedly sought clarification from the Company as to whether the preliminary projected line, or the projected line would be used to calculate whether a pilot was projected to be a BLH and therefore entitled to the 8-hour or 5-hour payment. As you would be aware, a pilot must bid for a blank line before the final projected lines are released.

In this week's Company webinar, the company stated that the BLH payment will be based on the projected lines after the final run, not preliminary. This means that pilots must bid for Blank Lines before knowing what they will be paid. This removes any ability to make an informed decision. How many hours you will receive should be clear at the point of decision. EA11 does not do this.



# BRIEFINGS //

QANTAS Pilot Council

The AFAP considers this poor drafting. If the Company intends to introduce a payment entitlement, the Agreement should clearly explain when and how that entitlement applies and allow the Company to capitalise effectively on the additional payment.

## Possible Solutions

Despite the volume of feedback received from pilots, and despite Blank Lines being one of the most commonly raised concerns across the pilot group, it has become increasingly clear that Qantas has almost no interest in resolving this issue in any substantive manner in EA11.

Solutions must address why people are motivated to take carer's lines and why blank lines are unpopular. The common answers are roster stability, particularly around days off and income loss while on a BL. The QPC firmly believes any solution will require more than tinkering and business as usual thinking. Big solutions are difficult and time consuming. However, we believe that the blank line situation has reached a point where this is required.

A workable package drawing on current or past provisions of the LH EA could include:

- Income protection (Element 3 or equivalent) for forgone overtime (AFDPs)
- Allowance protection (Element 5 extension) for forgone allowances
- Practical commuting support (confirmed staff travel flights)
- Changes to bidding rights and priority for carers if not participating in blank lines

Whilst beneficial, these changes would not completely resolve the Blank Line issues outlined above. As such, the QPC has been in contact with Pilots' Unions in the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom through our connections as members of the International Federation of Air Line Pilot Associations (IFALPA) to review practices around the world. We have also reviewed EAs negotiated by the AFAP for long haul operations at Virgin Australia and Jetstar.

Other airlines provide coverage and flexibility for the company while ensuring income and roster stability in a number of ways.

- Reserve rosters similar to BLs (US Carriers) however these agreements have superior terms for trip trading, dropping and bidding as well as commuter protections
- Rostered reserve patterns along with flying patterns (Air Canada)
- Reserves rostered immediately before flying patterns (Virgin Australia)
- A limit on the number of reserve days per roster (Air Canada, Air New Zealand, Jetstar, Virgin Australia, Qantas Short Haul)

In our view, most importantly, common to many pilots' agreements, including Air New Zealand, Jetstar (B787), Virgin Australia Long Haul and, of course, Qantas Short Haul, is that work cannot be assigned on some or all days off without pilot agreement.

This summary shows that there are solutions out there. However, the current negotiation process has not provided any opportunity or appetite on Qantas' part to pursue changes. This is a choice by the company which benefits them and places financial and lifestyle strain on you. EA11 does not fix these issues.



# BRIEFINGS //

QANTAS Pilot Council

## Conclusion

Pilots are experiencing increasing instability and income losses due to Blank Lines. This has worsened due to poor establishment management at the establishment and rising commuting pressures.

EA11 does not resolve these issues and introduces unclear, unreliable compensation. The Company is aware of the problem but has chosen not to address it. Other airlines have implemented workable alternatives. Members are now being asked to decide whether to accept or reject this outcome.

## Questions and Feedback

If you have any questions or feedback please contact your AFAP Qantas Pilot Council representatives at [gpc@afap.org.au](mailto:gpc@afap.org.au), or the AFAP legal and industrial team of Senior Legal/ Industrial Officer Pat Larkins ([patrick@afap.org.au](mailto:patrick@afap.org.au)), Senior Industrial Officer Deanna Cain ([deanna@afap.org.au](mailto:deanna@afap.org.au)) or Executive Director Simon Lutton ([simon@afap.org.au](mailto:simon@afap.org.au)).

Regards,

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