NEWS

City workforce boost at new Qantas centre

Qantas' latest high-tech centre has opened in the heart of the CBD, promising hundreds of jobs after losses in Whyalla yesterday.



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Qantas has opened its Product Innovation Centre in Pirie Street today; the centre expected to provide 400 jobs in three years.

Premier Peter Malinauskas joined AI minister Chris Picton and Qantas leaders at the announcement on Tuesday morning after returning from Whyalla where he yesterday announced more than 500 job

losses.

“It’s not the easiest day in the job when you have to look people in the eye who are losing work because of old technology that hasn’t kept pace,” Malinauskas said in relation to the Whyalla Steelworks decision to shut down its blast furnace permanently.

“And the consequence of that underinvestment is people missing out on the ability to be able to earn a living, provide for themselves and their families, and that’s that’s not fun, right.

“This is the exact opposite of that. This is about investing in new technology, innovation that then creates opportunity for people.”

The new centre was opened through a commercial agreement – with the cost not disclosed – between the state government and Qantas with the government saying it would move SA’s digital leadership forward.

Currently, 50 workers are employed at the new Pirie Street Qantas centre, with 40 more being recruited and six graduate places starting in February.

The centre is the first of its kind in Australia, and, the Malinauskas said looked “exactly like” the Qantas Club airport lounge.

Workers would use AI tools to design and develop the airline’s customer-facing services like booking flights and managing cancelled or delayed trips.

Malinauskas said the deal was a “landmark commercial agreement” between the state government and Qantas, the cost of the project remaining “commercial in confidence”.

“What I would say is this: when Qantas foreshadowed that it was determined to set up a product innovation centre somewhere in Australia of this nature, our pitch first and foremost was based on people and talent coming through the Australian Institute of Machine Learning and Adelaide University,” Malinauskas said.

“That’s our point of difference here, other governments will compete, and Qantas is entitled to run a competitive process in that regard but the focus and the emphasis is on that, and that’s a really important thing because money can’t buy the sort of skills and talent that we’re talking about.”

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