

Ansett staff sing for Christmas pay

**Daniel Hoare
AAP**

FORMER Ansett workers yesterday demanded that John Howard begin distributing the proceeds of a \$10-a-ticket levy imposed after the airline's collapse more than 14 months ago.

The small group of disgruntled ex-employees — who gathered outside the Prime Minister's Sydney residence — told Mr Howard that the airline's administrators, Mark Mentha and Mark Korda,

had reneged on a promise of a 10 per cent payment on outstanding entitlements before Christmas.

Mr Howard told the group that he would seek advice from Transport Minister John Anderson about what could be done to release funds from the airline's administrators.

"If there's anything we can do to push the administrators, we will," he said.

Transport Workers Union NSW secretary Tony Sheldon said the Government had not

done enough to help the former employees, and called on Mr Howard to release the proceeds of the \$10 levy immediately.

"There's still well over \$300 million owed to some 16,000 Ansett workers and their families, and they are facing their second bleak Christmas," he said.

"We were all told — the whole Australian community — that (ticket tax) money was going direct to those families and it hasn't happened."

Opposition tourism spokesman

Martin Ferguson said the Government was raising \$11 million a month from the ticket levy, despite the fact it would recoup in its entirety a loan to Ansett's administrators.

"The time has arrived for the Howard Government to abolish the \$10 Ansett ticket tax and in doing so make sure that workers' entitlements are met in full," he said.

But Mr Howard told the workers that the Government had met all of its obligations to them.