



Proposed amendment of the Mobile Phone Jammer Prohibition
IFC 15/2008

Qantas Airways Ltd
Submission

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Introduction

Qantas Airways supports the proposed amendment to the *Mobile Phone Jammer Prohibition*. This amendment is part of the regulatory framework that enables Australian airlines to provide advanced passenger communications services already permitted on airlines in other parts of the world including Europe, the Middle East and Asia. Following a successful trial of inflight mobile phone services and technologies, Qantas plans to launch mobile communications onboard selected aircraft from early 2009, should appropriate regulatory approval be granted. The advanced passenger communications service we can offer as a result of the proposed amendment is highly valued by our customers, enabling them to remain connected whilst flying. Voice connectivity is a feature of the technology but will not be activated as part of the new service.

Trial experience

In 2007, with the assistance of the ACMA, Qantas was the first airline in the world to trial pico cell technology that enabled customers to send and receive SMS and emails inflight. Qantas worked with the ACMA and Aeromobile to trial this service on one B767-300 domestic aircraft from 19 April 2007 through to 27 January 2008. SMS and GPRS data services were active during the trial evaluation.

Pico cell technology enables customers to remain connected safely whilst flying. A critical component of the onboard system is the Network Control Unit (NCU) which controls passenger mobiles, ensuring they connect only to the onboard system. The NCU ensures that the customers' mobile terminals do not attempt interference with aircraft avionics and terrestrial communications networks.

The nine month evaluation proved a success on a number of parameters. Firstly, from a technical perspective, there were no reports of interference with aircraft systems, terrestrial networks or with passenger electronic devices. Other airlines around the world have since been operating with similar systems and have reported like results. All aircraft systems, including the avionics supporting the mobile communications onboard aircraft service undergo a comprehensive airworthiness certification process to ensure that there is no interference to critical aircraft communication, navigation and surveillance systems.

Customer demand for the inflight mobile communications service was evident based on passenger research and service usage during the trial. An overwhelming majority of customers expressed support for the ability to stay connected whilst inflight. Qantas is committed to delivering this service to its customers, and is ready to operate Aeromobile system equipped aircraft on commercial services within Australia should regulatory approval be supported.

Summary

There is proven experience of this service within Australia, without interference to terrestrial networks, and as a result Qantas endorses the proposed amendment to enable mobile communications on aircraft within Australia in line with customer demand.