

Australia follows EU, US in allowing mobile devices in-flight

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A file photo shows a Virgin Australia aircraft on the tarmac at Denpasar airport on the resort island of Bali, in April, 2014

Passengers on Qantas and Virgin Australia from Tuesday will be allowed to use mobile electronic devices in-flight with limited restrictions after a relaxation of the rules by the country's aviation authority.

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) move, which followed

similar decisions by the US and European Union last year, allows passengers to have their devices on "flight mode" during taxiing, take-off and landing.

This disables [cellular service](#), so passengers will still not be able to make calls or send texts.

"The results of (work done in the United States and Europe) were released late last year and earlier this year and it basically concluded that modern aircraft are not at risk of interference from modern mobile phones, tablets, e-readers and so forth," CASA spokesman Peter Gibson said.

"Once you have assessed that there are no safety issues, there's no reason to put people through that inconvenience... of having to turn their devices off and turn it back on again."

Previous regulations banned the use of electronics during taxiing, take-off and landing due to fears they could interfere with an airplane's navigation equipment.

The changes took effect for Qantas' and Virgin Australia's domestic and international flights.

Qantas said it had "conducted rigorous testing to assess the impacts of [electronic devices](#) on the safe operation of aircraft".

"We are confident that these devices are safe to be turned on, but in flight mode, for the duration of each flight," it said

Virgin welcomed the decision, noting that a "significant proportion" of its customers travel with at least one smartphone or tablet.

Other Australian-based airlines, Jetstar and Tigerair, have not yet applied to operate under the new guidelines, Gibson said.

He added that he "would be surprised" if more airlines were not permitted to use mobile devices in all phases of flight in the future.

"Certainly we can say all the next-generation aircraft—the ones made in the last 10 or 15 years—won't have a problem," said Gibson, adding that it was only older aircraft where interference concerns remained.

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