



NEW STRIPES AIM TO CHANGE PERCEPTIONS OF TIGERAIR

News / Airlines



With a new uniform and a significant investment into its customer-facing and backend IT systems, Virgin Australia-owned low-cost carrier **Tigerair** is hoping to change passengers' perceptions of the airline.

“Our flights have never been consistently more punctual, our customer service never stronger and our customer satisfaction levels are now at an all-time high. It’s time to spread the word. A Tiger can change its stripes,” CEO Rob Sharp insisted today.

The improvements are a mixture of backend changes — a new website that the airline advertises as “customer-friendly”, a new system for bookings and checkin, a “new and improved” call centre, and a mobile app, together with “enhanced customer communications (like SMS notifications and flight itineraries)”.

It’s not easy to turn a low-cost carrier brand built on the perception that it is cheap and less-than-cheerful (helped along by three seasons of the Seven Network show *Air Ways*) into one that people think of in a context other than “well, if I don’t have the option of flying Qantas or Virgin Australia...”

Obviously, that turnaround has been a priority since the July 2011 suspension of the then Tiger Airways by CASA on numerous safety grounds. Now with 13 Airbus A320 aircraft currently in the

fleet, Tigerair has a 14th just announced as on the way “with new specification Sharklets on the wingtips [that] will be based in Sydney from December 8 to facilitate more domestic flying around Australia including additional services between Sydney and Cairns and between Sydney and Adelaide”.

The airline also intends to add Melbourne-Coffs Harbour services, and, subject to regulatory approval, its first international services to Bali from Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide starting in March 2016. These international leisure flights will replace Virgin Australia services, with Tigerair competing against the significantly larger Jetstar and AirAsia groups – using Boeing 737-800 aircraft wetleased from parent Virgin rather than the A320 jets Tigerair uses within Australia. These aircraft are expected to be rebranded into Tigerair livery and reconfigured with three rows of extra-legroom seats to replace the business class cabins on Virgin's 737s.

“Today marks the next chapter of Tigerair’s evolution as we continue to transform budget air travel in Australia,” CEO Rob Sharp announced today from the airline’s Melbourne headquarters. “I am thrilled to be here today to unveil our newest addition to the fleet, new uniforms for our cabin crew, pilots and ground staff, announce a new and improved call centre and numerous further customer innovations like our new-look website and upgraded check in and booking system.”

The new uniforms are smart and upmarket for an LCC – and an improvement on the older versions – although the women cabin crew’s uniforms do bear something of an unfortunate resemblance to a soft serve ice cream dipped into orange hundreds and thousands.

Yet beyond subjective questions of uniform style and promises of customer-friendly websites, the crux of the matter is what the future holds for Tigerair and its branding given the duopoly of Qantas+Jetstar and Virgin+Tigerair in Australian aviation. With both Australian low-cost carriers using orange as their core colour, would there be any purpose in a full Tigerair rebrand, perhaps to a name with less baggage?

“When we rebranded to Tigerair and the joint venture with Virgin Australia was first launched in July 2013, we made a promise to Australian consumers that we would listen and we would change. The past couple of years have been focused on rebuilding the business and putting the right platform in place for future sustainable growth, with the customer at the core of everything we do,” Sharp said. “Today I can proudly say we are delivering on those promises.”

“We’re an airline that evolves based on customer feedback and demand. All of the new product enhancements announced today makes it easier, more convenient and seamless than ever to fly Tigerair,” Sharp concluded.

It’s that ease that customers want, and the key to Tigerair’s future will be delivering a convenient and pleasant experience while also ensuring that the ancillary revenue opportunities and operational efficiency so key to finally pulling Tigerair into the black are achieved too.

