

6 September 2006

The Manager
Regulatory Development Section
Pricing and Policy Branch
Australian Communications and Media Authority
PO Box 78
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

By email: radiocommunications.licensing.policy@acma.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam



Australian
Mobile Telecommunications
Association
ABN 98 065 814 315
First Floor
35 Murray Crescent
Griffith ACT 2603 Australia
PO Box 4309
Manuka ACT 2603 Australia
Ph +61 2 6239 6555
Fax +61 2 6239 6577
Web www.amta.org.au

Re: Proposed amendment to the Notification that the Australian Communications Authority Prohibits the Operation or Supply, or Possession for the Purpose of Operation or Supply, of Specified Devices, made on 4 March 1999.

The following submission is made on behalf of the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA).

AMTA is the Australian mobile telephone industry's peak body. AMTA's members include mobile phone carriers, handset manufacturers, network equipment suppliers, retail outlets and other suppliers to the industry.

AMTA's charter is to promote an environmentally, socially and economically responsible and successful mobile telecommunications industry in Australia.

Our industry's revenue was \$10 billion in 2004-06 and was estimated to have been \$11.9 billion in 2005-06. It employs about 34,000 people and its contribution to the economy is larger than the free-to-air television services industry and also larger than the newspaper printing and publishing industry.

Background

AMTA, on behalf of its members, has been involved in the issue of mobile phone use on aircraft over a lengthy period. Media reports have highlighted such use as an aircraft operational safety issue and AMTA has responded on behalf of its members.

As far as AMTA is aware, there is no substantiated proof that mobile phones can interfere with aircraft systems within the passenger cabin. Modern aircraft are designed to meet stringent international safety standards, including requirements dictating comprehensive shielding of the planes' wiring and electronic systems. This is done to prevent electromagnetic interference.

In fact, aircraft routinely deal with large sources of electromagnetic energy from high-powered airport radar systems.

However, mobile phone use on board an aircraft can cause interference with terrestrial mobile phone networks when an aircraft is in flight. Potentially, several mobile phone

base stations could pick up the same signal from a mobile phone call made from an airplane flying over many sites. Multiply this effect by hundreds of phone calls being made from an aircraft in a holding pattern over a major city and the network could become overloaded.

Despite there being no proof that mobiles used in the passenger cabin can cause interference with aircraft systems, our industry has co-operated with the airlines and regulators to support current rules on the use of mobile phones in flight.

ACMA's proposed trial on aircraft

AMTA wishes to raise several issues regarding the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) announcement of a gazette notice to amend the Radiocommunications Act 1992 in order to license a device proposed for a trial to allow mobile phone services on board aircraft in flight.

1. AMTA supports the expanded opportunity for consumers to have access to mobile telephony and data services while undertaking air travel. AMTA also recognises the need for all safety and technical issues to be taken into account in assessing this new opportunity. Against this background, AMTA supports the ACMA initiative to undertake a trial to assess mobile phone use on board aircraft in flight.
2. AMTA notes that your background paper raises the issue of the licensing framework for the trialling of radiocommunications devices on-board aircraft will include a mandatory reporting system that will include the "assessment, recording and reporting of any incident of interference to existing terrestrial radiocommunications." AMTA believes it is very important that the industry is kept informed of the trial's progress and if there is any interference with other communications systems adjacent to the GSM bands.
3. AMTA is concerned about the possibility of interference into other communications systems adjacent to the GSM bands. If the aircraft is flooded with the wide band RF noise to stop selection of ground-based networks, will this adversely impact on other communications systems because of leakage from the aircraft? Will there be a height restriction on the aircraft before the system is operational?
4. Apart from technical issues, AMTA notes the potential need to address so-called etiquette issues if the trial is successful and mobile phones are introduced to commercial flights.

AMTA encourages customers to use their mobile phones in a responsible manner and to be considerate and aware of situations where using their mobile phone might cause problems to others. Features such as text messaging, answering services, call diversion and vibration alert can be used to receive important calls without disturbing others. Venues can also assist by reminding mobile phone users of the etiquette of mobile phone use.

AMTA believes we have an important role to play in educating users about mobile phone etiquette and facilitating the widespread use of mobile phones in a responsible and courteous manner.

It will be important for airlines to manage the introduction of in flight mobile phone calling to ensure that passengers can enjoy the benefits of their mobile phones.

It would be important for passengers on aircraft to be aware of etiquette issues to ensure that people could enjoy the benefits of mobile phones. The normal rules will apply in the air as they do in minding your mobile manners on the ground.

People's sense of personal space varies in each situation. Making a call in the confined space of an aircraft could infringe on other passengers' personal space. Some US carriers are advising passengers to text instead of talk to make sure they do not disturb others.

AMTA has an etiquette guide, Mind your Mobile Manners, to help people use their mobile phones in a responsible manner and to be considerate and aware of situations when using their mobile could annoy others (see attached).

Conclusion

AMTA supports ACMA's initiative to conduct a trial and supports the expanded use of mobile telephony and data services on aircraft in flight following assessment of relevant technical and safety issues.

AMTA, on behalf of the industry, would appreciate and expect to be kept informed of the progress of the proposed trial of devices on-board aircraft for the provision of GSM mobile phone services.

AMTA would particularly want to be informed of any technical limitations identified in the trial such as interference with other communications systems adjacent to the GSM bands.

Finally, apart from technical considerations, there are etiquette issues that airlines must manage to ensure that passengers can enjoy the benefits of their mobile phones while recognizing the specific characteristics of phone use in a confined environment. AMTA is prepared to work with the airlines on appropriate etiquette education.

Yours faithfully

Chris Althaus
Chief Executive Officer
AMTA