QANTAS TO KEEP AIRBUS A380S PAST 2020; TALKING TO BOEING ON 777X JETS- EXEC

News / Airlines



Australia's Qantas Airways Ltd plans to keep its Airbus Group long-haul A380 aircraft in service beyond 2020, when many will be around 10 years old, a senior executive said, even as it conducts talks with Airbus rival Boeing Co on the latter's next-generation B777X jets.

"The A380s do a great job on the markets that they operate," said Gareth Evans, head of the company's international business, speaking to Reuters in an interview on Thursday. Qantas currently operates a fleet of 12 of the jumbos.

"They are big units on big thick routes like Los Angeles and London, flying into slot-constrained airports," said Evans. "You want to have a fleet that is simple, but you need to have vehicles that do the right job for you."

With the latest variant of Boeing's popular 777 aircraft not due to enter into service until early next decade, Qantas remains in talks with both the American aircraft manufacturer and its Airbus about their latest aircraft, Evans said.

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While an order is not imminent, Evans said, conversations with Boeing revolve around the "scope and capability" of the 777X, which will have two variants, a 777-8 that will have a longer range, and a 777-9 that will be able to carry more passengers but have a slightly shorter range.

"It does look interesting though because of its range capability, said Evans. "When you are an airline that is based in our part of the world, those are things that are important to you, an aircraft that can reach major cities around the world out of Australia is attractive."

In the meantime, exercising additional options for Boeing's 787, beyond the eight that the airline ordered in August 2015, will depend on how the international airline market grows, said Evans.

The eight 787-9s will initially be deployed on services to North America and Asia, even though the plane can reach points in Europe non-stop from Perth in Western Australia.

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