UNITED UPBEAT ON AUSTRALIAN ROUTES

News / Airports / Routes



United’s improved on-board offering and the use of Boeing 787-9s on all Australian and New Zealand services will ensure the airline remains competitive amid new carriers and new services in the market, a senior executive from the airline says.

The Australia-US market is currently in a period of expansion, with American Airlines commencing its own flights from Sydney to Los Angeles in December, while its alliance partnerQantas has returned to the Sydney-San Francisco route.

And there is also çapacity growth coming across the Tasman, with American to start Auckland-Los Angeles from June and United to begin Auckland-San Francisco flights the following month in cooperation with partner Air New Zealand, which itself launched flights to Houston in December.

United managing director for Japan and Pacific sales Alison Espley describes the current conditions as a challenging revenue environment.

However, Espley believes United’s revamped service on Australian routes – recent changes have included bringing back the two checked baggage allowance, as well as complimentary beer and wine, in economy – have ensured the airline is able to continue to meet the needs of the travelling public.

Schedules have also been tweaked to allow for an earlier arrival into the United States, ensuring shorter connecting times for passengers travelling to points such as New York, Chicago, Miami or

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Las Vegas.

“We are responding to what customers have told us they wanted,” the Tokyo-based Espley told *Australian Aviation* in an interview during a recent visit to Australia to celebrate the airline’s 30th anniversary in this country.



Unted director for Australian and New Zealand sales Julie Reid (l) and managing director of Japan and Pacific sales Alison Espley (r). (United)

The switch of the Boeing 777-200ER to the 787-9 on its Sydney-San Francisco and Sydney-Los Angeles services is due to take place on March 27 and 28.

Although the aircraft change means United will no longer offer first class to Australia, it does represent an improvement in the business cabin with a 2-2-2 configuration in 787-9 business cabin compared with a 2-4-2 layout on the 777-200ER featuring a mixture of forward-facing and rear-facing seats.

United already flies the 787 on its Melbourne-Los Angeles nonstop flights that kicked off October 2014.

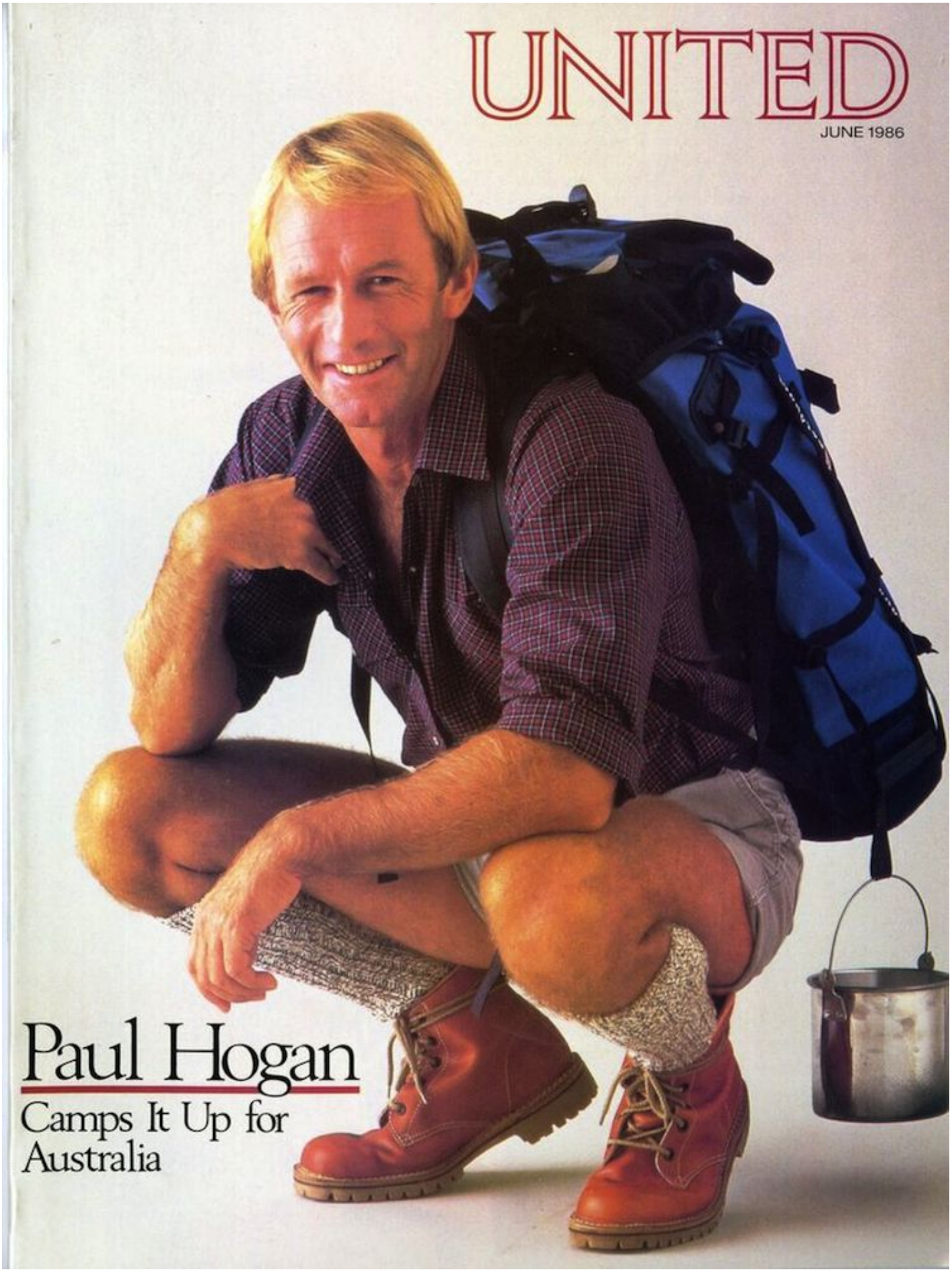
“The Dreamliner flights to Melbourne have been very encouraging and we are confident the customer satisfaction will be similar when they start flying to Sydney,” Espley said.

In terms of the impact on its Sydney-San Francisco flights following the return of Qantas on the route at Christmas, Espley said United was holding its own in the face of the renewed competition.

The United executive said the strength of the airline’s San Francisco hub with more than 100 connections, coupled with the millions of United’s MileagePlus frequent flyer members and its profile in Australia built up in the 30 years since it first commenced flights to Australia, leaves the airline in a good position to compete.

“We are very pleased with the performance of the San Francisco route,” Espley said. “It is still meeting expectations, as are all our Australian routes.”

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United featured Paul Hogan on the cover of its inflight magazine 30 years ago when it began

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flights to Australia. (United)

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