PERTH AIRPORT LEADS THE WAY IN NEW AIRPORT CHECK-IN TECHNOLOGY

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The airline check-in process can be a drag, whether it is queuing for an automated kiosk or in a long line waiting for an agent if online check-in isn't possible for your particular flight or you have luggage to check.

To help ease the pain, Perth Airport is introducing a new cloud-based technology that would allow agents to check in passengers for multiple airlines on handheld devices anywhere in the airport - or potentially even in popular offsite locations like the city's convention centre.

Sarah Samuel, Amadeus Asia-Pacific head of sales, airport IT, whose company is behind the technology, said it could also allow for very comfortable and innovative check-in experiences inside and outside the terminal, particularly for premium passengers.

"Imagine you walk into the check-in area and you are greeted by airline ground services staff and they bring you to a cozy coffee table with a couch and check you in there," she said. "They are able to check you in without a queue."

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Perth Airport is understood to have plans to develop a new premium check-in area in its international terminal in the future which will make use of the new technology.

Agents could also be deployed with tablets at peak times to reduce queuing in the regular check-in halls or even curbside or at the airport's car parks as the technology works anywhere with a 4G connection.

"I believe it will change the face of check-in over the next few years," Ms Samuel said. "It will lead to faster processing, a stress-free experience for the passengers."

Perth Airport, which will roll out the technology to its international terminal and Terminal 2 by the end of the month, said the technology will cut passenger processing costs by more than 25 per cent for its airline partners while improving the experience. It has no plans to get rid of check-in counters, but it will no longer have to maintain its own costly computer servers onsite and will have contingencies in the case of outages or disruptions in the terminal.

The next phase of the roll-out will include automated bag drop facilities, automated boarding gates and the deployment of mobile check-in tablets in Terminal 2, which is used by Tigerair Australia, Alliance Airlines and Virgin Australia Regional Airlines.

Innsbruck Airport in Austria was the first in the world to deploy the new Amadeus technology earlier in the year, but Perth Airport is the first in the Asia-Pacific region. It comes as Perth Airport is investing $1 billion in transforming its infrastructure, which will include the opening of a new $200 million domestic pier connected to the international terminal for Virgin later this year. Virgin, like Qantas, will have its own check-in product.

Other Australian airports are also investing in technology to assist with the check-in process. Melbourne Airport last month opened its new Terminal 4, with Tigerair Australia as the launch customer and Jetstar and Regional Express set to move their operations in the coming months. It was the first terminal in the Asia Pacific region to open as a completely self-service check-in operation with 10 self serve check-in kiosks and automated bag drops.

Sydney Airport has deployed automated check-in kiosks in its international terminal in partnership with carriers such as Air New Zealand to help speed up the process.

Australian Airports Association chief executive Caroline Wilkie said the new technology at Perth Airport was another example of how Australian airports were investing in the latest technology to deliver better and more flexible services for passengers and airlines.

"As Australian airports continue to handle ever increasing numbers of passengers and aircraft movements, their adoption of innovative technology solutions will help in providing a better experience for passengers while also meeting the operational needs of their airline customers," she said.

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