

A380 GATE SETBACK

Airport delays Emirates again

■ **Geoffrey Thomas**
Aviation Editor

The arrival at Perth Airport of the world's biggest passenger plane, the 517-seat A380, has been delayed again because the completion of the boarding gate complex has been pushed back to March.

Originally, Perth Airport promised Emirates that it would have the A380 boarding facility ready by this month but in December the airport confirmed a five-month delay.

Perth Airport chief executive

Brad Geatches said this week that Emirates has been advised that while the actual gate complex would be delivered by the end of November "there are a number of other elements that impact the passenger experience that require additional time".

"We are currently reviewing our construction timetable and program and discussing with Emirates the most appropriate time that we can introduce the A380 gate and deliver the quality of customer service we both want to achieve," Mr Geatches said.

According to airport sources, the delay revolves around the fact that the new international terminal expansion, which includes the Emirates lounges, will not be ready.

Mr Geatches said that "the timing has also been impacted by a decision to make further investments in the international terminal".

The new Emirates first-floor business class lounge is scheduled for completion early next year.

"Overall, our objective is to ensure there is a good level of service when A380 operations are introduced," Mr Geatches said.

The A380 gate complex is a challenge for the airport because it is striving to fast-track one part of an extensive terminal expansion that includes a new domestic pier that will be home to Virgin Australia.

The actual A380 gate is to be located at the junction where the new pier will join the existing international terminal.

Emirates last year expressed concern about the delay. President Tim Clark said "this is not good news for Perth Airport, Perth and WA and Emirates".

The airline is operating three

daily flights using 365-seat Boeing 777-300s.

It has been looking at a fourth daily service — particularly in peak times — but prefers to operate the 517-seat A380.

Emirates has found that the A380, in its configuration with a bar for premium classes and show-ers for first class, is a hit with passengers.

The Dubai-based airline is the world's largest operator of the A380 with 34 in service and another 56 on order. It plans to have all 90 in service by 2017.



Many flights: The team go up again.



Specialised: The modified A300.



Easy mark: Professor Danail Obreschkow playing Aussie Rules in zero gravity during the experimental flights.

No bail for accused trafficker

■ **Christiana Jones**

Accused drug trafficker Marc Quaid yesterday lost his second bid to be released on bail.

The former soldier and security company operator, whose brother Fabian Quaid was jailed on drug trafficker charges, is accused of being the "senior organiser" of a syndicate that planned to distribute up to \$4 million of methamphetamine and heroin. He was charged after the seizure of 17.2kg of drugs.

It is alleged that in March Mr Quaid directed a co-accused, Roberto Zanon, to go to the vicinity of a Highgate church with 8.75kg of methylamphetamine where Mr Zanon allegedly supplied the drugs to another man. Later that month, it is alleged that Mr Quaid went to a Highgate high school and met a man whom he supplied with a box containing four vacuum seal bags containing methylamphetamine weighing about 4kg.

The drugs were later seized after a drug bust at a Malaga factory unit. After a failed bail bid in Perth Magistrate's Court in April, Mr Quaid yesterday lost a Supreme Court application for release.

Mr Zanon and another man, Daniel Scott Williamson, have been charged in relation to the alleged drug bust. Mr Zanon has been granted bail.

Football scores big in zero gravity experiment

■ **Michelle Wheeler**

The field was smaller — 4m by 4m — and the uniforms were jumpsuits but there was no mistaking the oval ball in what could be the first game of AFL in zero gravity.

The match was led by a young Perth physicist and played in French airspace last week aboard an A300 plane refitted for scientists to do experiments that require

weightlessness. Research associate professor Danail Obreschkow, from the International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research at the University of WA, started the game while on a European Space Agency flight to study the physics of bubbles.

Each flight begins with a strong acceleration, in which the aircraft shoots up at a 47 degree angle, before the pilot turns off the thrust to start the freefall and 22 seconds of

zero gravity. Last Tuesday, the scientists went up 31 times.

"It's the same feeling as if you are inside an elevator and someone cuts the cable and the elevator falls down," Dr Obreschkow said. "You feel your stomach coming up . . . your body feels like it's falling apart. A second or two later, you realise that actually everything's fine, your organs are perfectly in place and you feel quite free."

The researchers are using the zero gravity conditions to create a spherical bubble so they can study the force released when the bubble collapses.

They hope understanding the forces at play can help minimise the dangerous effects of bubbles such as the eroding of ship propellers and help harness bubbles for medicine, such as removing kidney stones without needing to operate.

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