

Banned for a George Bush T-shirt

By Mark Dunn
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AN Australian was barred from a London-Melbourne flight unless he removed a T-shirt depicting George Bush as the world's number one terrorist.

Allen Jasson was also prevented from catching a connecting flight within Australia later the same day unless he removed the offending T-shirt.

Mr Jasson says Qantas and Virgin Blue were engaging in censorship but the airlines say the T-shirt was a security issue and could affect the sensitivities of other passengers.

"The woman at the security check-in (at Heathrow) just said to me, 'You are not wearing that'," Mr Jasson, 55, said yesterday.

Mr Jasson, who lives in London and was flying to Australia to visit family on December 2, said he was first told he would need to turn the T-shirt inside-out before he would be allowed to board the Qantas flight.

"I told her I had the right to express my opinion," he said.

"She called other security and other people got involved. Ultimately, they said it was a security issue . . . in light of the present situation."

After a prolonged argument about freedom of speech and expression, Mr Jasson said a Qantas gate manager said he could not fly at all unless he wore another T-shirt.

Mr Jasson said his clothing had already been checked in and he was forced to buy a new T-shirt – this time with London Underground written on it – coincidentally the site of a terrorist attack last year.

"I felt I had made my point and caved in," Mr Jasson said.

But after arriving in Australia, Mr Jasson said he put his Bush T-shirt back on and was again banned from boarding a connecting flight – this time a Virgin Blue plane from Adelaide to Melbourne.

"It was argued other passengers could be offended," Mr Jasson said.

"I said it was most offensive that I would be prevented from expressing my political views."

Mr Jasson said the T-shirt often sparked comment from people in the street.

A Virgin Blue spokeswoman said the airline had a policy to ban offensive clothing and bare feet. "Most people use common sense and don't go out of their way to offend people," she said.



Allen Jasson ... and his T-shirt. Picture: Bill McAuley

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