

The Australian Government regards interference with civil aviation using lasers as a very serious threat, and in cooperation with our State and Territory Governments, has taken a number of measures to apply and enforce laws against this threat.

Since 2007, in order to address the problem of interference with aircraft by the use of laser devices, Australian law has prohibited conduct that interferes with a crew member of an aircraft in the performance of his or her duties or threatens the safety of an aircraft or of persons on board an aircraft, wherever the conduct may occur, including on the ground.

In addition, state and territory governments, seeking to address the threat to aviation safety, have variously made the possession of a laser-emitting device a weapons offence, and/or expressly made it an offence to shine a laser towards an aircraft. Specific laws enacted vary across jurisdictions within Australia.

In recent years a number of cases involving the use of laser devices in relation to both civil and state aircraft have been referred to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions for prosecution. Sentences imposed have depended on the severity of the offence committed but have included monetary penalties and incarceration.

Identifying the source and perpetrator of any laser-related occurrence remains a challenge. Under Civil Aviation Safety Authority procedures, flight crew are expected to advise the relevant air traffic control authority as soon as possible on observing or being affected by a laser event. Upon receipt of such a notification, air traffic control contacts the relevant law enforcement agency, with a request to attend at the likely location from which the light emanated and attempt to identify and, if possible, apprehend the perpetrator(s).

With the development of more sophisticated technologies and methodologies, the Australian Government looks forward to further progress in the prosecution of laser-related events, as part of global efforts to address this threat to civil aviation.