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Australian flag-carrier Qantas Airways has ordered four additional Boeing Next-Generation 737-800 airplanes to join its initial 737-800 fleet of 15. The four new twinjets, due for delivery between May and July of next year, are worth approximately \$US240 million at list prices.

Since January, Qantas has introduced the 15 winglet-equipped Next-Generation 737-800s to Australian domestic routes alongside its existing fleet of 38 Classic 737s.

First deliveries of the Qantas 737-800s were achieved only 100 days after contract signature. These early airplanes already were in production as part of an order placed by Qantas oneworld alliance partner American Airlines. At the time, Qantas also took purchase rights on another 60 Boeing 737s of unspecified models.

"We have been very pleased with the integration of the Boeing 737-800 into our fleet," said David Forsythe, Qantas executive general manager -- Aircraft Operations. "It has been one of the smoothest introductions of a new type, undoubtedly helped by high levels of commonality with our existing Boeing 737s."

The four new airplanes will be fitted with 2.5-meter high winglets built in Melbourne by component manufacturer Hawker de Havilland, which also is the sole source of Boeing 737 ailerons and Krueger flaps.

"Qantas set us some tough targets with the introduction of the Next-Generation 737, and this new order is a good indication of how we went," said Rick Westmoreland, Sydney-based vice president, Sales, Australia & Pacific Islands for Boeing Commercial Airplanes. "It is great to see Qantas move ahead with this 737, and great to see the very positive Australian public reaction to the Next-Generation 737."

The digitally redesigned Next-Generation 737 is the newest and most technologically advanced commercial airliner in the single-aisle market. With a new wing and more powerful engines, the new 737s can fly higher, faster and farther than previous models, and the competition.

In addition, the Next-Generation 737 flight deck features the latest liquid-crystal flat-panel displays and is designed to accommodate new communications and flight management capabilities.

The 737 is powered by new CFM56-7 engines produced by a joint venture of General Electric of the United States and SNECMA of France. The engines meet community noise restrictions well below current Stage 3 limits and below expected Stage 4 limits.

Qantas has flown Boeing jetliners for more than 43 years, and currently operates a Boeing fleet of 130 747s, 767s and 737s. QantasLink Airlines operates another 67 aircraft, including 12 Boeing 717s. Qantas also is the launch customer for the new 747-400ER, which flew for the first time last month.

The Next-Generation family includes the 737-600, -700, -800 and -900; the Boeing Business Jet and BBJ 2 are special high-performance derivatives of the 737-700 and 737-800, respectively. History's best-selling jetliner, the Next-Generation 737 family, accounts for about 40 percent of 737 orders, or 2,028 airplanes out of 5,156 for the entire 737 line.

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