

12 September 2017

Wellington

MEDIA RELEASE

Support for local airports welcomed

The New Zealand Airports Association (NZ Airports) has welcomed the support of New Zealand First leader Winston Peters for small regional airports.

NZ Airports chief executive Kevin Ward said that its FlyLocal NZ campaign has been gathering support since it was launched at the Beehive in late July. The association's campaign aims to raise awareness among local communities and politicians of the unfair funding system imposed on smaller airports.

"We are urging regional New Zealanders to take up the cause of the long term funding for local airports in the final days of the election campaign, said Mr Ward.

"Regional airports with a limited number of scheduled passenger flights find it hard to fund infrastructure projects. We know that there is a continuing stream of upgrades and redevelopments required at small airports across the country – for example to keep runways and landing lights at a proper standard.

"We have been calling on visitors to our FlyLocal.NZ site to contact all the candidates in this election and make them aware that there is a role for central government to play in supporting local airports.

"We know that councils are fully committed to their airports, but we feel it is unfair on the local community to shoulder the cost burden at a time when road and rail projects receive generous funding.

"Air travel to the regions is part of the national transport system, like state highways. Small airports should have a government funding support, as roading does. We are asking for cross-party support to address this in the next Parliament, and we welcome the New Zealand First policy.

“Air links are essential to regional economic growth, air ambulance flights, jobs, social cohesion, and disaster response” said Mr Ward.

“That is something all election candidates should get behind”.

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