

26 September 2019

MEDIA RELEASE: NZ AIRPORTS ASSOCIATION

New Zealand flying blind on aviation

The New Zealand Airports Association (NZ Airports) says air travellers to the regions and regional communities will soon feel the loss following Jetstar's announcement that it will leave four regional routes, but there are valuable lessons for the future.

"There will always be volatility in airline routes, competition and activity levels, said NZ Airports chief executive Kevin Ward, so we need to learn from major setbacks for air travellers such as this one, and build a more resilient and transparent aviation system.

"New Zealand is flying blind when it comes to good data and reporting on aviation, says Mr Ward.

"The public and the government are very poorly informed. There is no official collection or publication of what is happening in terms of passenger numbers and flights to specific towns and cities, domestic air cargo volumes, which city-to-city routes are growing or shrinking over time, the standards of on-time performance and cancellations, or what is happening to average air fares."

"New Zealand is way behind in this public transparency compared to other countries. Our neighbours in Australia have a well-developed system and regular publications that could be a model for us, said Mr Ward. "Major improvements should be empowered through the Government's current review of aviation law."

"Better information would certainly have helped competition regulators when the code-share agreement between Air New Zealand and the Qantas Group was proposed a year ago, potentially affecting Jetstar's future operations in New Zealand."

"It's difficult enough to determine what is in the consumer's interest and what isn't when airlines propose joint commercial arrangements that affect normal competition, and doubly so without good data and historic trends at a detailed level.

"It's in everyone's interest for those decisions to be as well-informed as possible, said Mr Ward.

“There are real consequences for air passengers and regions, as we can see. New Zealand should bring in comprehensive data collection and reporting now, to protect passengers’ interests and vital air connectivity in the future.”

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For further information please contact:

Kevin Ward
Chief Executive

kevin.ward@nzairports.co.nz

(021) 384 524
(04) 384 3217