

Media | Release

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Christchurch's Marathon Taking Off

The Christchurch Marathon has been a highlight on the South Island calendar for 31 years. Now the announcement of a new principal sponsor sees it poised to become a major national and international event.

The City of Christchurch International Marathon Trust has announced Christchurch International Airport as the new principal sponsor for the annual Queens Birthday Weekend event. The new sponsorship comes with a re-branding that will see the event now known as the "Christchurch Airport Marathon".

Inspired by the 1974 Commonwealth Games Marathon, the annual Christchurch International Marathon was established in 1981 and instantly became the South Island's major marathon event. In 2010, the 30th anniversary attracted 5861 runners and walkers from 14 countries, which made it the second biggest marathon event in New Zealand. But the City of Christchurch International Marathon Trust Chairman, Daniel Reese, says the new principal sponsorship will see the event become even bigger.

"The Christchurch International Airport partnership is hugely exciting for us," says Reese. "It will give the event added awareness and added security from which to do some long-term planning. And because the Christchurch International Airport reach is truly international, their involvement opens doors and introduces a promotional muscle that the event has previously only dreamed of."

Catering for a wide cross-section of people is the basis behind the success of the Christchurch Marathon to date. Along with the historic Commonwealth Games beginnings, it caters for runners and walkers of all age and ability. As well as the classic 42.2k distance, options include a half marathon, 10k and the Kids' Mara'Fun.

"This event exists because Christchurch has a major marathon tradition and the organisers have a passion for running," says Race Director Chris Cox.

"The Christchurch Marathon is recognised as New Zealand's fastest marathon course and we always attract New Zealand's strongest running race. But people come from different fitness backgrounds and have different goals, so we provide something for everyone."

"Not everyone has the time or inclination to train for a marathon, but most people can achieve a half marathon or a 10k if they want to challenge themselves, and the Kids Mara'Fun makes it a family occasion."

It is this rare combination of history, prestige and community popularity that has attracted the Christchurch International Airport partnership.

Jim Boulton, Chief Executive of Christchurch International Airport, says the marathon event is a natural fit for the airport company's sponsorship portfolio. "We want to actively support events that bring people into the city through the airport as the South Island's tourism gateway, and this event brings people from all locations nationally and internationally.

"The airport is committed to the success of the tourism industry in Canterbury and the wider South Island, and it's our firm belief that the Christchurch Airport Marathon, as it will now be known, will become a major drawcard for people to come here. There will also be increased benefits for the region in terms of extra visitor dollars."

Christchurch International Airport has signed on for five years, with option for a further five years after that, which Reese says allows the event to think bigger.

"The travel and networking avenues available to us now are huge. It opens the door to airline partners, accommodation partners, wider marketing avenues, and new initiatives such as participants travel promotions on both a domestic and international scale."

Cox makes no secret of their goals: "For 31 years we have been the South Island's biggest marathon event and New Zealand's premier marathon race. But now, the new Christchurch Airport Marathon has the potential to be New Zealand's biggest and best marathon event full stop. That's our goal."

The 2012 Christchurch Airport Marathon Event is scheduled for Sunday 3 June.
Entries are now open at: www.christchurchmarathon.co.nz.

For any further questions please contact:

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Christchurch International Airport – New Zealand’s Tourism Gateway

Christchurch International Airport welcomed 6 million passengers in 2009/2010, ranking as New Zealand’s second largest airport. The Airport occupies a unique position economically, as the South Island’s busiest and most strategic air connection to the world’s trade and tourism markets. In addition, the airport plays an important role as the South Island’s major domestic hub servicing all New Zealanders, enabling passengers to connect to a full spectrum of destinations throughout New Zealand. Christchurch International Airport is a major driver of the regional Canterbury economy, generating airport precinct related jobs for nearly 5000 people.

Christchurch International Airport is owned and operated by Christchurch International Airport Limited (CIAL). CIAL was established as a limited liability company in 1988, and ownership of CIAL is now shared by Christchurch City Holdings Limited with 75% and the New Zealand Government with 25%. The company’s vision is to be recognised as New Zealand’s leading tourist gateway.

Christchurch International Airport is a carbon neutral company and has received carboNZero certification from Landcare Research following a detailed measurement and analysis process. CIAL is the first airport company in the Southern Hemisphere to attain certified carbon neutral status and is the second carbon neutral certified airport company in the world.

Visit christchurchairport.co.nz for more information.