

## Media | Release

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### **New 'dogged' approach to safety at Christchurch Airport**

Christchurch Airport has welcomed a new 'employee' – and provided her with her own water bowl and a kennel to sleep in.

'Jet' is a 14 week old purebred border collie puppy who will soon be gainfully employed scaring birds away from the airfield.

This is the first time a New Zealand airport has used a dog for this job, although they are used effectively in the US, Europe and Australia.

Jet will be looked after and work alongside the Airport's Senior Airfield Safety/Wildlife Officer, Norm Mannix, who ensures the airfield is clear of birds which pose a major risk to aircraft.

"Until now we've used sirens, lasers, stock whips, rockets, firearms and pyrotechnics to scare birds off the airfield. We even broadcast the distress calls of various species through loudspeakers to encourage them to leave. Jet provides us with another tool."

Norm Mannix says it's important to have as many tools as possible to scare away birds.

"Birds are quite clever and get used to scare tactics, so you've got to rotate them around. Dogs though are more effective as birds view them as a predator."

Before she is unleashed into her new role, Jet, will go through a rigorous training regime.

"She is spending three months around the airfield getting accustomed to the noises associated with the airport, then will spend three months with a dog trainer in North Canterbury, learning whistle and voice commands until she can instantly be recalled."

Already Jet is showing signs of intelligence.

"She watched me hook her leash over the tow ball on my ute the other day and promptly took it in her mouth and unhooked it," laughs Norm.

Christchurch Airport's Chief Fire officer Peter Moore says the airport will eventually have two dogs at work on the airfield.

"They will each be assigned to a Wildlife Officer who rotate on a roster. The idea is we will always have a dog on duty at the times birds are most problematic onsite – dawn, midday and dusk," he says.

Peter says Christchurch Airport is proud to be leading the way in using dogs for this job.

"I personally have seen these dogs working at airports in Copenhagen and on the Gold Coast, so know they are another useful tool in the work airports do to keep passengers as safe as possible."

Norm Mannix is confident Jet will do an excellent job once she's had her training.

"We have caught her sleeping on the job a couple of times but, she's a baby, so we do let her away with the odd kip. I can't crack down on her too much – she's the most popular member of staff!"

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For further comment, please contact:

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### **Christchurch Airport – bringing the world South**

Christchurch Airport welcomed 5.7 million passengers in the past year, 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. 81% of international visitors to the South Island are welcomed and farewelled at Christchurch Airport.

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 6000 people.

Government policy currently offers 'Open Skies' over Christchurch until 2017, giving favourable consideration to airlines offering new services to and from the city.

Christchurch 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.

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