

Media | Release

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Record breaking summer at Christchurch Airport adds millions to southern regions

A record summer is underway at Christchurch Airport, with a 16 percent increase in passenger numbers driving around \$150 million of new GDP into the regions of the South Island.

Chief Commercial Officer – Aeronautical, Justin Watson, says hard work by the airport’s business development team is paying huge dividends to the regions of the South Island.

“This is outstanding growth and will top 20% in the month of February,” he says. “It will move the Gateway to the South Island from around 5.9 million passengers last year to close to 6.4 million passengers this year and the most passengers the airport has ever handled in a single year.

“Plus, each passenger generates on average one other person who comes to meet and greet them, so we could see close to 800,000 extra people through the terminal this year. All that means in January or February we are likely to see the airport’s busiest day ever and a number of other records set”.

This summer will see:

- double-daily 777 services by long-standing airline partner Singapore Airlines, which has lifted services to Christchurch from 365 to 393 p.a.
- a 400% increase in A330 services from China Airlines
- Qantas adding a new 737 summer service between Christchurch and Brisbane flying four times a week
- a new year-round 787 China Southern Airlines service direct from Guangzhou, starting at three times a week
- significantly increased trans-Tasman services from several airlines including Virgin Australia
- increased domestic services from Air New Zealand and Jetstar

and next year a new Virgin Airlines 737 service to the Cook Islands.

“We estimate our new and additional services will bring in an additional 50,000 international visitors over the next 12 months,” Mr Watson says. “At an average visitor spend of \$3200, so that is more than \$150m in visitor spend – the majority of which stays in the South Island.”

Official statistics show when Christchurch is the gateway, visitors leave around 86% of their spending in the regions of the South Island. No other gateway is that productive in terms of spreading the benefits across the regions.

Mr Watson says Christchurch is the only city in Australia and New Zealand with population of less than 550,000 not only enjoying long haul international air connectivity, but also seeing strong growth and expanding international connections.

He says international travellers through Christchurch have never had so much choice to get from and to anywhere in the world, thanks to increased numbers of flights through key international hubs such as Singapore, Guangzhou, Taipei, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane - providing connections to key markets such as Japan, China, South East Asia, Europe, Africa and Australia.

“Our integrated terminal will accommodate the extra people and we should avoid the congestion expected at other airports. We still expect our normal easy transit between domestic and international flights, plus we will have extra staff and volunteer Ambassadors to assist all our visitors.

“The retail team has also introduced increased retail and food and beverage offerings into our award-winning terminal, to reflect the increasing numbers and varied tastes.

“We are ready to extend the famous southern welcome to the thousands of extra passengers. Alongside our multi-language signage, we have more Mandarin-speaking staff at the airport this summer, reflecting the fact that many more of our arriving international visitors will arrive from Asia and not speak English as their first language.”

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For further comment, please contact:

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Christchurch Airport – bringing the world South

Christchurch Airport is the natural gateway to the South Island, which has long been the brand engine room of New Zealand.

It is the busiest and most strategic southern air connection to the world's trade and tourism markets, having welcomed almost six million passengers in the past year.

The airport is a major driver of the South Island regional economy, with some 6000 personnel working on the airport campus making it the largest site of employment in the South Island. It is one of the partners in the "South" initiative, which sees all 15 regional tourism organisations working collegially to promote the South Island.

Christchurch Airport's new integrated terminal was completed in April 2013 and is a factor in the airport consistently being rated by an independent international quarterly travellers' survey as the best airport in Australia and New Zealand.

Visit christchurchairport.co.nz for more information.