

Media | Release

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CHRISTCHURCH AIRPORT RUES AIRLINE DECISION

The news AirAsia X will soon stop flying direct to Christchurch has been met with dismay at Christchurch Airport.

Christchurch International Airport CEO Jim Boulton says he is very unhappy the airport will lose its direct link to Kuala Lumpur.

"We are bitterly disappointed at the airline's decision to end the Kuala Lumpur to Christchurch direct flights, but understand the situation AirAsia X finds itself in," says Mr Boulton.

"AirAsia X began planning the Christchurch-Kuala Lumpur service in early 2010. Since that time aviation fuel prices have increased by more than 30 percent and are forecast to stay high for the foreseeable future," he says.

"That has put huge pressure on the airline's low cost model, and, combined with the length of the Kuala Lumpur to Christchurch sector, has made the service unprofitable for the airline, which has been offering fares as low as \$99. "

Mr Boulton says the AirAsia X direct flights from Kuala Lumpur to Christchurch have had average loadings of almost 80%, with some months near 90%. He says forward bookings for the next couple of months are promising, despite the airline recently withdrawing its connecting flights to Europe on which many travellers relied.

He says the airline's year of flying here has proven the route is viable, highlighted by AirAsia X winning an international award for "Best Network Performance" at the World Routes Awards 2011.

"We are very sorry to see AirAsia X depart, but sincerely hope we can welcome it back in the future. CIAL had invested years of work into attracting the carrier to Christchurch and we hope that work can be banked as an investment in a future service.

"I feel greatly for the tourism industry in the South Island. Many operators have told us how much the AAX service has delivered in direct new business, so this loss will be felt through the entire industry".

Mr Boulton says AAX is working with Air New Zealand on proposals to offer travellers who've already booked beyond the end of May, on flights to Christchurch via Australia.

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Christchurch International Airport – New Zealand's Tourism Gateway

Christchurch International Airport welcomes almost six million passengers a 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. 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.